Collected Writings
of
W. T. Turpin
# Table of Contents

**Preface** ................................................................. vii

**Light for the Pilgrim Path, Volume 2** ................................................................. 1

- Christ the Sanctuary and Support of His People (Isaiah 5:1-4; 6:15; 7:10-14; 8:5-17) ................................................................. 1
- The Grace and Sympathy of Christ (Luke 4:14-22; 7:11-16, 36-50) .................................................................................. 1
- Our Place in Heaven And Path on Earth (Hebrews 10:10-23; Ephesians 2:4-7; Hebrews 12:1-4, 13:10-16) ............. 5
- The Resources of Faith Amidst Present Confusion, Lecture 1: 2 Timothy 2 ................................................................. 12
- The Resources of Faith Amidst Present Confusion, Lecture 2: 2 Timothy 3 .................................................................................. 16

**Light for the Pilgrim Path, Volume 3** ................................................................. 21

- The Power of the Glad Tidings (Romans 1:16-18) ......................................................................................................................... 21
- Pilate’s Three Questions (Matthew 27:21-28) ................................................................................................................................. 27
- The Finished Work ................................................................................................................................................................................. 29
- The Fruits of Christ’s Victory (Matthew 27:45-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 15) ........................................................................... 34

- “The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from Among the Dead” ......................................................................................... 39

- The Fact of Christ’s Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-17) .......................................................................................................................... 39
- The Character and Power of Christ’s Resurrection (Acts 3:13-16; 4:1, 2; Philippians 3:7-11) .............................................................. 50

**The Salvation of Jehovah; Being Addresses on The Book of Exodus** ................................................................. 61

- Chapter 1: Exodus 3:7-10 ........................................................................................................................................................................... 61
- Chapter 2: Exodus 3:9-22 ........................................................................................................................................................................... 66
- Chapter 3: Exodus 5:1, 2, 22, 23; 6:1-9 ......................................................................................................................................................... 70
- Chapter 4: Exodus 12:2 ........................................................................................................................................................................... 75
- Chapter 5: Exodus 14 .............................................................................................................................................................................. 81
- Chapter 6: Joshua 3:9-17; 4:1-10 ......................................................................................................................................................... 85
- Chapter 7: Joshua 5 .............................................................................................................................................................................. 91

**Practical Truths** ................................................................................................................ 97

- “Waiting” (2 Samuel 23:13-17) ......................................................................................................................................................... 97
- Devotedness (2 Samuel 23:13-17) ......................................................................................................................................................... 98
- The Wilderness -- The Land, The Lessons of Each (Deuteronomy 8:1-9; 11:10-12; 26:1-11) ............................................................. 101
- Reality (Judges 7:1-8) ........................................................................................................................................................................... 102
- “At His Feet” ..................................................................................................................................................................................... 104
- The Peculiarity of Our Calling ..................................................................................................................................................... 106
- “Lukewarm, And Neither Cold Nor Hot” ......................................................................................................................................... 108

**The Christian: What Is He? Heavenly or Earthly? His Standing, Power, Pathway, and Testimony; His Failure and Restoration** .................................................................................................................. 111

- Chapter 2: 2 Kings 2:6-22 ................................................................................................................................................................. 116
- Chapter 3:1 Samuel 17:48; 18:4; 31:1 6; 2 Samuel 1:11 27; John 20:11-18 ............................................................................................ 120
- Chapter 4: Jeremiah 2:1-13 ............................................................................................................................................................... 124

**Christ: His People’s Portion and Object** ........................................................................ 135

- Chapter 1: The Rock and the Rod (Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 34:1-7) .................................................................................... 135
- Chapter 2: “The Father of Mercies, And The God of All Comfort” (2 Corinthians 1) ........................................................................ 138
- Chapter 3: The Treasure, Vessel, and Power (2 Cor. 3 and 4) ........................................................................................................... 140
- Chapter 4: Our Place And Its Consequences ................................................................................................................................. 141
- Chapter 5: Our Portion, and Its Consequences ............................................................................................................................... 143
- Chapter 6: Surpassing Glory and Surpassing Power (2 Corinthians 3:7 - 4:9) .................................................................................. 144
- Chapter 7: The Artificial and the Spiritual (2 Corinthians 3:18) ....................................................................................................... 149
Chapter 8: John’s Dying Note (John 3:25-36) ................................. 150
Chapter 9: Christ, the Object of Affection and Sympathy ................. 151

Remnant Times: As Illustrated in the History of Enoch, David, and Daniel .......................................................... 153
  Chapter 1: The Christian’s Pathway and Hope (Genesis 5:18-24; Hebrews 11:1-6) ................................. 153
  Chapter 2: The Christian’s Dwelling Place (Psalm 27:4-6) .................. 158
  Chapter 3: Separation, Dependence, Suffering (Daniel 1; 2:13-23; 3:12-30) .................. 163

“All Things of God” being Six Addresses Delivered in London, October, 1885 ........................................... 169
  Chapter 2: The Revelation from God and of God (John 1:14-17, 28-43) .................. 175
  Chapter 3: The Divine Object (John 1:35-51) .................................. 181
  Chapter 4: The Divine Center (John 1:38-43) .................................. 187
  Chapter 6: The Coming of the Lord in Relation to the Saved and the Unsaved 1 Thess. 4:13-17; .................. 199
     1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 5:1-10; 2 Pet. 3:10-13)

Our Pilgrimage and His Rest: Notes of Lectures .......................................................... 205
  Chapter 1: Cleansing and Communion (John 13) ................................. 205
  Chapter 2: The Garden of Herbs and the Cared-for Land (Psalm 84) .................. 210
  Chapter 3: A Threefold Cord (John 14:16-31) .................................. 216

Occasional Papers, Vol. 1 ........................................................................ 222
  “One Thing” (Mark 10:17-27; Psalm 27:4-6) .................................. 222
  “His Heart and His Hand” (Numbers 13; Joshua 14) .................. 225
  The Servant of the Lord .......................................................... 227
  “Delivered Unto Death” (Gen. 32:24-31; 2 Cor. 12:7-10) .................. 230
  “My Earnest Expectation” (Phil 1:23-25; 3:17-21) .................. 231
  Divine Affections and Their Object .................................................. 232
  The Ensnauling Effects of the Visible .................................................. 234

Occasional Papers, Vol. 2 ........................................................................ 237
  Manasseh and Ephraim (Genesis 12:51, 52) .................................. 237
  The Power of Weakness (Genesis 32) ............................................. 238
  “My Thoughts are not Your Thoughts” (2 Corinthians 12:1-10) ....... 240
  This Side Jordan and Beyond .................................................. 242

Occasional Lectures, Vol. 3 ........................................................................ 245
  The Person in The Place (Acts 26:13-18; Philippians 3:7-21) ................. 245
  The New Power and the Condition to Receive It (Acts 1:1-14; 26:16-19) ................. 246
  The Holy Ghost and Faith (Ephesians 3:14-21) .............................. 249

Occasional Helps, Vol. 1 ........................................................................ 251
  Listening, Beholding, Following .................................................. 251
  Under Fire (Luke 12:22-34) .................................................. 253
  Salvation, Liberty, Food and Safety (John 10) .................................. 255
  “Rest . . . Rest” (Matt. 11:28-30) ............................................. 256
  No! No! (John 6:37) .................................................. 257
  A New Well -- Springing up into Everlasting Life .................. 257
  Conviction and Confidence (Lev. 13:38-46; 14:1-7) .................. 258
  Doing Truth (Matt. 15:10-28) .................................................. 260
  The Veil, the Rocks Riven, the Graves Opened Matt. 27:51, 52 .................. 261
  The Blood-Sprinkled Lintel Exod. 12:22, 23 .................................. 262
  “O Death, Where is Thy Sting?” .................................................. 263

Printed Pamphlets ........................................................................ 265
  Deliverance and Service Notes of a Lecture Jonah 3, 4 .................. 265
  The Family of God 1 John 2:12-29 ............................................. 268
  Human and Divine Circumstances (2 Corinthians 1 and 12) ............ 278
  Kadesh and Hor (Numbers 20) .................................................. 279
  The Attractive Power of Christ Crucified: The Separating Power of Christ at His Coming
| Chapter 1: "Behold My Servant" (Mark 1:1-11) | 418 |
| Chapter 2: Sealed With The Spirit (Mark 1:12-20) | 423 |
| Chapter 3: His Ministry (Mark 1:21-38) | 429 |
| Chapter 4: The Leper Cleansed (Mark 1:40-45; Leviticus 13:45, 46) | 434 |
| Chapter 5: The Palsy and the Publican (Mark 2:1-17) | 439 |
| Chapter 6: The Cure and the Call (Mark 3) | 444 |
| Chapter 7: The Sower And The Rester (Mark 4:1-23; 35-41) | 449 |
| Chapter 8: The Demoniac of Gadara and the Ruler of the Synagogue (Mark 5) | 455 |
| Chapter 9: The Unwearied Yet Rejected Servant (Mark 6:1-4, 7-9, 12-16, 30-37, first clause, 45-51) | 459 |

"The Man Christ Jesus": Being Addresses on the Gospel of Luke | 467 |

Chapter 1: Luke 2:1-14 | 468
Subject Index ................................................................... 513
Scripture Index .................................................................. 519
Preface to Second Edition

Some books and papers were not obtainable for this present collection. One book is:

Light for the Pilgrim Path, vol. 1 (and 4 and up, if such ever existed).

Perhaps Occasional Lectures, vol. 4, and up, exist, but this is not known at the time of this printing. This is also true concerning Occasional Helps, vol. 2, and up, and Occasional Papers, vol. 3, and up.

A pamphlet, The Field of Ephron and the Cave of Machpelah is also missing.

For this second edition, some typographical errors have been corrected. Moreover, in the first edition some of W. T. Turpin’s papers were reprinted under different titles and these duplicates have been removed. However, the actual material in the first and second edition is essentially the same.
It is a solemn fact, but it meets us in every portion of God’s word, that the creature breaks down everywhere: and that is not confined to any one period or time, or to those who were distinguished by greater or less favor. It is the common history -- I was going to say, lot -- of man, no matter where we look at him, irrespective of how favored or signally blessed of God; it is the same sad history all through. And it is very striking to see that it is true of men collectively as well as of man individually; that is, it is not merely true of man as man, but, what is exceedingly solemn, it is equally true of those who are brought into favor corporately. The place of blessing has never been kept by any creature. That is what is so solemn, and yet it is this we have to be established in, as to our souls. It is one of the very first grand principles of God’s word, that not only has man, as a creature under responsibility, utterly broken down, and come short entirely of God’s glory, but, beloved, there is another truth that is connected with it which is more humbling and solemn, namely, that man, blest, brought into divine favor, and surrounded with tokens and marks of sovereign mercy, fails as much in respect to the mercy as he failed with respect to his responsibility.

Now this is a great fact from God for us to be settled in, as to our souls, because, when we pass from it in its individual aspect, and look at it corporately, whether in Israel or in the church, it is the same sorrowful story. Here, in the prophecy we have been reading together, it refers, of course, primarily, and in its literality, to Israel; but then, remember that, while it is a great fact fully attested in scripture, it is impossible to have right thoughts of God’s ways, if we ignore the great reality that Israel’s hopes were thorough and complete for the time being, and a great deal more so; because, for that which will be spued out of Christ’s mouth, there is no hope whatever, no recovery for it; whereas, through grace, there will be a recovery and restoration for Israel.

But now, what I do desire to occupy your thoughts with this evening is the great moral principle which underlies all this -- simply that our hearts may be exercised in what we have left for us in that which remains of the journey. It is well for us to be able to look around, and to say, I know what I have. It is a very easy thing, in one sense, to be able to say, I know what I have not; but that will not help us. If I were to dwell all the evening upon what we have not, or what we have lost, or what has been taken from us, it might be exceedingly useful; and God gives that its place, so as to exercise consciences, and awaken up the sense of our true whereabouts; but then it would not minister comfort, or help, or vigor, or power to any one whose soul and heart longed to know whether there were any resources or reserves that could be fallen back upon, so that one could say, Well, thank God, though we are as bad as bad can be, He is as good as He ever was. That is what really comforts and sustains our poor hearts; and, more than that, one

I have often been struck by the words which occur in the Lord’s ministry from the glory -- I mean His ministry as set forth in the churches in the Revelation: “Remember from whence you are fallen” -- not to what you have fallen, but from what -- a very different thing. If I say, there is where I was set, there is where His own wonderful grace gave me to rest in Himself, and that is what I have left; then I have a true measure of what I have got down to. The position of divine grace I have fallen from is the only true measure of what I have descended to. It is not, remember where you are, down in all the distance and wretchedness of the condition you have dropped into, but it is, “Remember from whence you are fallen,” and that is deeply painful to one’s heart.

Well, now, there are two things here, in chapters 5, 6, we have read tonight. In chapter 5 the prophet brings in the nation
as guilty on the side of their own positive responsibility with respect to favor. God has done everything He could do; that is, He is looking back: “What could have been done more in my speaking of it as responsible here upon the earth remember, I am speaking of the sphere of profession, I am interest and care upon it; I have done everything. And what has been the issue of that? “It brought forth wild grapes.”

If we apply that principle now to Christendom -- and remember, I am speaking of the sphere of profession, I am speaking of it as responsible here upon the earth as a whole, not of the body of Christ; I am speaking of the house in its widest and fullest sense; because, if I speak of the body of Christ, I speak of that which Christ forms for Himself; that which He builds and that which man builds are distinct. I am not speaking of that, but of the assembly in its house aspect, where responsibility comes in, and -- mark this distinctly -- in connection with divine favor too; because you must have privilege to incur responsibility. There is no use in trying to convict any one of responsibility, if you do not prove their privilege. Therefore, when I look at the church in its house aspect as a privileged, favored corporation upon this earth, I see there is wonderful responsibility. Well, now, I say what could God have done that He has not done, if I look at it in that way? Can any one lay a charge against the diligent care, and the wondrous goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, with reference to the church, in that respect? Was not everything done? Is not the New Testament filled with the evidence of that? But now, look at the professing church for a moment. What has it produced? “Wild grapes.” Man, as an individual, has done it; Israel has done it; Christendom has done it. If I look back at individuals, or at Israel, or at Christendom now, it is, “wild grapes.”

That is ch. 5. I merely want to touch the leading points in it, so as to get at the subject that is really filling my own heart this evening. In ch. 6 we have another thing; and here the prophet represents the nation; and it is not that he is looking back here, as in ch. 5, but looking on. He represents the nation, and the nation is brought in as unfit for the glory of God. Every one can see how true that is of us individually. The glory of God is that which most convicts us, individually. People think there is nothing so convicting as their failures but that is a great mistake. There is conviction on that side, no doubt -- I do not question it at all, because of what you have done, it undoubtedly tells upon him. But, beloved, let me tell you this, it is a great deal more solemn for a soul to get into the presence of light that is so deep. Hence you will find that the people who have the deepest sense of their own moral obliquity before God in the holiness of His nature, are the people who have lived upright lives; whereas, with base sinners, though, no doubt, truly and really converted to God, people who have lived uncommonly bad lives, who have plunged into every kind of sin, their sense of it is taken more from the acts than from the nature, and consequently it is not anything like so deep. Hence you will find that people of that character are more disposed to dwell upon the enormity of their crimes, their evil ways and course, and all that is true. I do not question it at all, yet it is not the same thing as when the glory of God has measured me, and I find I am vile, even at my best. It is not merely that I am bad in my badness, but I am intolerable, even in what I think is the best part of me -- the cup is found in Benjamin’s sack.

That is a different thing entirely; and you will find how that is the point about which souls are very much astray. It is not that people do not know they are sinners -- not at all. Many know right well -- according to the confession they often make -- that they have done that which they ought not to have done, and have left undone what they ought to have done; but I tell you what they do not know -- that “in them,” that is, in their flesh, “dwells no good thing.” It is a wonderful thing when a man (I speak of him now individually) has found himself out in the light of the glory of God, as the prophet did here, so that he positively is brought to this, that all the respect he had for himself is gone; he then loses self-respect, and what is the measure of his conviction? Surely not his sins, but God’s glory; and, beloved, it is an immense thing to have been brought, so to speak, into the presence of the glory of God in that way. What makes it so interesting here, is, that it was the glory of the Lord Jesus. The New Testament tells us that. “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (John 12:41). This is the glory of Christ as Jehovah -- it is the glory of Jehovah. But, I say, what a wonderful thing for a creature to measure himself with that glory! What is the result of it here?

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.

Now, as I said, in ch. 5 he looks back, but in Isa. 6 he looks forward, and in both you get the nation completely set aside morally because of their condition -- they produced wild grapes. In the light of the glory of God they were discovered unfit for His presence.

Now what comes next is that which is more especially filling my heart this evening. In such a condition of things as that, has God any reserves? I do not say resources, but reserves. Can you say in your souls, Thank God, I know something of His reserves? Has He reserves? He has! What a wonderful thing it is to be able to say to one another, God has reserves! That is what Isa. 7 unfolds. And what is the condition of things when it is unfolded? What brings it out? A wrecked nation, whether on their own side, or in the presence of His glory; wild grapes produced under His culture, and a moral unfitness for His glory. Now what can God do for a people like that? When we come to this ch. 7, we have the virgin’s Son to meet it.

A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

That is where I see Christ as God’s reserve. What a blessed, wondrous reality for the heart to grasp -- Christ as God’s reserve! “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign,” saying, as it were, I take you at your lowest; you want a sign; you have not faith to trust in my simple word—you are reduced to that. It is a state of very bankruptcy; you have got into a condition of total wreck, and now you want a sign. I will give you a sign: “A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.” What a marvelous intervention of God! God, in the goodness and resources of His own nature, equal to Himself. Oh, here is
something that is beyond all human ability to command. And what I see is this -- when God works, when He brings out His reserves, He chooses the time when every avenue is closed up, every door, so to speak, shut. That is the moment when faith ought to look up, and say, God has reserves, and now is the fitting occasion for Him to bring them out. That is a great encouragement for us tonight; because you look around, and as you see the state of things, you say, "Who will show us any good?" -- many say that now, but we have reserves too -- "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us." And does He not do it as truly as He does here in this chapter before us? Think of the words, "He shall be called Immanuel." That is, Jehovah of Sabaoth becomes Immanuel, that is, God with us, in the person of the virgin’s Son, and He is the great reserve of God for a state of wreck and ruin, as God depicts it here for us.

I speak of all this tonight, because I believe nothing will give confidence in God except to see what He is, and how He can act. He acts suitably to His own nature and character; and when you see that He has that in Himself, above and beyond all the misery, and wretchedness, and ruin, what comfort it gives your heart, that, in the darkest moment, faith can enable you to say, Well, we have not got beyond the mighty power of the living God; we have not got beyond the resources and reserves of God. We may have utterly broken down in every sense and shape, but still, in the darkest moment God will show that He is God. That is what will keep our hearts quiet, and if we have not received that, we cannot be quiet. If it is not a settled thing in our souls that God is God, and will act as such, we cannot be in repose; it is impossible, we are bound to be restless and disturbed.

But there is a spot where we can rest, if our souls can lean upon that great fact: God has reserves, and He brings them out at the time when man can only say, It is all over with us, as the godly in Israel might well have said.

And now I want you to come with me to Isa. 8 for a moment, where we see what the effect of this reserve is. That is what ch. 8 really unfolds, viz., that this blessed One, who was the virgin’s Son, brought forth by God as His own precious and wondrous reserve, to fulfil all His thoughts and purposes, becomes the great test; and that is what you find now. Could anything be more morally applicable to the existing state of the church of God? I question if it be possible to find a scripture that will present the moral features, the great salient features, of the present condition of things under the eye of God, more distinctly than this one. I speak of the church in its widest sense. I am not limiting it now to any number of people who falsely assume the title to themselves, but as God speaks of it. And the church of God is of much wider dimension than many people think. Look at the state of it now! Look at its present condition! Could anything be more applicable to its existing state than what we find in this chapter 8, namely, that this reserve, this blessed Son of His bosom, the virgin’s Son, the mighty God who became man, and did bring all the grace that was in God down into man, as well as take all the sorrow that was in man up into God, He is the One who is the great test in the condition of things here brought out. What you find, then, here, is, that there was the most perfect and thorough rejection of Gods reserve on the part of some, and there was the most blessed sustenance and comfort for the hearts of others in that One who was God’s reserve.

Now what is the question of the present hour? Are our hearts really exercised about it? What is the spiritual outlook? Let us ask ourselves what is the great question of the moment. One word answers that question. It is a matter of Christ. Be assured of it, it is so. It always was, from the moment that Christ came here; from the moment that the blessed One was here revealed in all His blessedness, the whole power of Satan was put forth to bring into contempt this reserve of God amongst those who professedly accepted it. So it is now. Let us refuse most positively the wile of Satan now, who, by his agents and dupes, would, if possible, shift -- at least to sight -- the great question of the hour from its true issue. It is an insidious, deep plan of the devil to conceal himself and his acting. The whole question now that is agitating men’s minds generally, and the church of God too -- not any portion of it, but the whole -- is, as to whether the Christ of God is to be pre-eminent, whether He is to have the whole and complete sovereignty, and be bowed down to, in every particular. That is the question now, and I believe you fail to perceive the solemnity of the hour, if you do not see that. If it is a mere personal matter, or a mere difference of judgment, or disputation about this point, or that, though they have their importance in their place, if it be only that which you see at present around you, you have failed to take in the real question of the moment. We are in danger of losing sight of what the whole object and aim of the enemy at this juncture is about, and that is to set aside, if he can, the Lord Jesus Christ from His absolute sovereignty over the affections, hearts, ways, manners, tone, and temper of His people. Every question resolves itself into that, and our God would have us awake, as it were, and in individual exercise of heart before Him.

Let me ask you affectionately tonight, and let me say it to myself as well as to you, can you sit down in your own room, and close the door, as it were, upon yourself and God; can you, as in His very presence, in all the light of it on your soul, say to your own self, Is there a corner in this heart of mine where He does not reign supreme? That is where the real exercise should be found. People may talk about settling things, and it is, no doubt to some, very interesting work; but who can settle hearts? and it is hearts that need to be settled. If you could get hearts settled, if the condition of soul in His saints was regulated by His grace, how simple what I have been speaking of, and then how easy all would be, and owning the entire, complete sovereignty and sway of that blessed One in our hearts, all questions would then be easily and quickly solved; the occasion would only manifest Christ supreme, and it would be -- oh, what a triumph of His grace! -- over every rival claimant, either for affection or subjection, it would then be truly in us all,

“A heart submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer’s throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.”

It is the individual condition of those who compose the corporate thing, the individual state of soul in which the saints are found, and the place that Christ has over their affections and hearts, that determine everything; and therefore it is of the first
moment to be exercised in our hearts about it. Let me put it, therefore, to us all this evening: Is Christ all? I do not care to inquire what you are, either to Him, or for Him, that flows from what He is as known in grace and truth objectively; but what He is in all His own beauty and fragrance, in His personal blessedness, as an object worthy of supreme occupation, as Lord and Christ, worthy of the heart’s subjection, glad and willing, too, to own His will and ways, sanctified to His obedience, thus delighting in the Father’s delight. Oh, what blessedness! Now all this is the simple result of our individual state of soul, with reference to Christ, because it is simply a question of Him.

Let us just look at it here for a moment in Isa. 8. What is sought for, instead of Him here? What is accepted instead of God’s reserve? Mark it well. Look at v. 9:

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries, gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces . . . Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought,” &c.

What is the meaning of that? Take the literal scripture, what does it mean? It is this -- that man will turn to human sources, will turn to man in some shape or other. Look at the thing now. What is it marks the state of professing Christianity to-day? Babel, that is, man without God. He is sitting in his tower, contemplating his own greatness, and name, and either ignorant of, or indifferent to, that which is to come upon it all. What is Christendom but that? And what is that greatly-desired good, so much longed after by some, to obtain which, it is proposed to surrender everything distinctive? Is it not to be carried into an unholy unity on the shoulders of compromise? Is not this just the counterpart of what is going on outside in the world? And, dear friends, that which is prominent in the age is always the snare of the saints of God, if they are not watchful; it is solemn, what is true in the age in which we live, and that which gives it its character, is that which is heaving the professing church of God at this present moment, and it is this very thing which will creep in, and eat like a gangrene, until it characterizes even that which ostensibly bears the name of God in profession before men. It has always been the case; the very thing that arose, and swelled, and worked destruction in the world, was always the snare of the people of God. It was so with reference to Israel. What was its snare? They would be like the nations around, and they gave up God, and turned to human resources. That is what you get here, in this chapter now before us.

What brings all this out is God’s reserve, which is a contemptible thing in the eyes of man. People scoff at the thought that you must have nothing else but Christ -- that you must not have human system, human ways, human learning, and intelligence; and this grows up, under the devil’s care, so stealthily and insidiously, that at last it overpowers everything, and all that is spiritual dies out, because all that is carnal has come in. But Christ remains the great test of it all -- the test by which everything must, and will, be judged.

And now one word as to the immense comfort that is brought out here in the midst of this condition of things. I ask my brethren’s special attention to it. Mark what you have here in v. 13: “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself.” Oh, how He delights in that word, “himself.” I am struck with it in the Old Testament, as well as in the New.

Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken, and be snared and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples; and I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him”[Isa. 8:13-17].

Now what we have here is this: that when you get a condition of things as here pictured and manifested, whether corporately or individually, this blessed One who is refused and rejected -- perhaps not in so many words, but still rejected, if He is not supreme in the hearts of His people -- I say this blessed One becomes the stay, and solace, and cheer, and sanctuary, and hiding-place of the hearts that turn truly to Him. Is not that exactly what is true to-day? If we turn to the New Testament, we shall find the same thing complete; just look at Rev. 3, and is there not an exact counterpart of what we have been considering in the prophecy of Isaiah this evening? Mark it. See v.7 of this chapter. In the terrific state of departure, even Laodicea, the last state, too, of the church, we have that which alone can keep and maintain souls from it, even the blessed grace of His own Person thus made known: “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.” Well may we say, How blessed! and when we consider that condition of things, what do we find? Why, God’s reserve! “These things saith he that is holy.” Thank God for that! Thank God there is such an One faithful and true, “he that is true.” Everything here may be in misery and wretchedness, but still there is a most complete, a most perfect and most blessed exhibition of His own Person for the hearts of the faithful. And He is the sanctuary for His people to-day, “the holy, and the true.” He will never give His people up, let foolish people rave as they will; and not only that, but He is the One who embodies in His own blessed, wondrous, gracious Person all that the heart could possibly claim, all that the affections could really look for, all that is necessary and needful in the midst of such a condition of things. I say, beloved friends, faith wants more than ever, and the heart delights more than ever, to turn to the Person of the Christ as God’s reserve. You may say everything is broken to pieces, but has Christ failed? Is He changed? “He shall be for a sanctuary.” What a wonderful thing! Now I ask you, Have you found it? Can you say you know God’s reserve? You know what it is, and how all is sure and safe in Him. This it is which alone strengthens faith. If I see what Christ is -- and when I say “see” Him, I do not mean in the sense of observation, but “see” in the sense of my soul as real apprehension of Him by faith -- when faith lays hold upon what Christ is as God’s reserve for the most bankrupt condition of things, I say, “Thank God, there is a sanctuary for me.” He is “the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, the prince of the kings on the earth.”

Oh, beloved, the Lord, in His grace, lead every heart here to have good courage, and good cheer too; and not only this, but to be deeply exercised -- the deeper the better -- so that we
may entirely and fully stand in His grace, and never give up our confidence in God. Let our confidence in God and in Christ be of such a nature, that we can afford to say (and it is a most precious word), “I will wait.” The moral magnificence of that is beautiful beyond description. Every one can be in haste, but to see a person who can afford to wait, is a wonderful thing; because there is nothing that marks moral greatness so much as endurance. It is not what a person can go through, but what he can bear, what he can endure. That is the test; and nothing can lead to waiting in one’s soul, save this, that we are deaf and blind to every single thing that is around. How blessed to close the eyes to the tumultuous storm, and to all the strife of words, and the din and the confusion of the hour! How can this be reached? Simply by listening to His blessed voice, that unmistakable voice, that, to faith, familiar voice of the Son of God above all the storm, and above all the rage of the elements.

Thou wondrous Sun of Glory!
Light and Port art Thou to me;
Not for light, nor calm, nor haven,
In the storm and on the wave,
Thou guidest me at every hour,
Thrice blest, from无数次 to me.

The Grace and Sympathy of Christ

Luke 4:14-22; 7:11-16, 36-50

My object in connecting these precious incidents in the Lord’s ministry on earth -- His personal dealings with men -- recorded in Luke 7, with that familiar scripture in ch. 4, is, that we might dwell a little this evening on the fulfillment of His own word, which was so peculiarly and exclusively applicable to Himself. For surely there never was one on earth who could bind up the broken-hearted, or open the prison to the captive, but Christ; but it is not even that -- blessed and beautiful as it is to accomplish it, but who was presenting all the value and preciousness of that work that was yet to be accomplished in His own holy Person down here, and who could attract, and did attract, by His grace, a poor wretched, miserable creature into the place of all others upon earth where she was least likely to be welcome. There was not one spot where this woman could expect to find so little countenance as in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and there was no person on this earth that was less likely to be tolerated in such a place than

Now we shall look at these two scenes in a different order from that in which they are presented here; and we shall begin with the last, and for this reason: that before you can know the sympathy of Christ, you must know the grace of Christ. I believe there are many who look for the sympathy of the Lord who are not really settled and established in His grace. You will mark what we have in the end of ch. 7. It is salvation, it is the revelation of salvation, it is the revelation of the forgiveness of sins; for all these things come in. You do get salvation, and you do get forgiveness of sins, unquestionably. The Lord says to the woman, “Thy sins be forgiven thee -- thy faith hath saved thee -- go in peace”; but what we have essentially, is, that from which all these spring -- the revelation of a personal Savior. Now think what an immense fact that is for the heart. You may say to me now, Oh, you are speaking of the gospel to us. Will you bear with me, beloved, when I say earnestly, affectionately, and from conviction, that I believe this is the very thing that we need. Why, you can never get to the end of the gospel; for the gospel is the revelation of the heart of God, a much higher thing than the unfolding of His counsels, blessed and wonderful as they are. The heart of God is propounded and unfolded to us therein, and what, may I ask, could be more wonderful than this?

What makes this scene so precious to us, is, as I said, the fact that it is a personal Savior for the very vilest; and I am not speaking now merely of the way in which a person may get the knowledge of relief for conscience. If a person came in distress as to conscience, I should turn to the Epistles to the Romans and Hebrews, and see the way in which the Spirit of God treats of the value of Christ’s work as clearing the conscience, so as to put us uncondemningly in the presence of God; but I am not speaking of that now. What I have before me this evening is the blessed One Himself, who had not yet done the work, who was about to accomplish it, but who was presenting all the value and preciousness and blessedness of that work that was yet to be accomplished in His own holy Person down here, and who could attract, and did attract, by His grace, a poor wretched, miserable creature into the place of all others upon earth where she was least likely to be welcome. There was not one spot where this woman could expect to find so little countenance as in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and there was no person on this earth that was less likely to be tolerated in such a place than
this woman of the city. They were just the two opposites, the extremes of mankind -- a Pharisee and a woman of the city, the great contrasts of society.

This Pharisee’s house is where this scene took place; and whether I think of the house where the blessed One was found, or the one to whom that house belonged, or the person who was drawn, by the exquisite grace of the Lord Jesus, into that unwelcome place, to express in His own holy presence what that grace had made her in the depth of a broken heart, it is a wonderful scene; because, observe, the center of it all is a personal Savior. Now, you may tell me you know the work of Christ, and I shall not question it; I shall not discredit the least your title to that; but this I do ask: Do you know, so that you can adoringly speak of it (in humility, but still as a real fact), the Person of the Savior? Has the Lord Jesus Christ become so really a living, glorious Person known to your heart, that you can say of Him, “He is the One I have come in contact with; I know Him personally, and I made His acquaintance when I could not go near any one else; there is One there I came in contact with, who left His impress of grace upon my heart, which is indelible”?

That is what we want to lay hold of. You will get an illustration of it in another scene, a familiar one, in this same gospel. It was exactly the same thing that laid hold upon the heart of Simeon, in ch. 2, a godly Jew, all whose prospects, as far as this earth was concerned, were then superseded. This earth was the prospect and promise of God’s ancient people, and here was one waiting for the consolation of Israel; but when he came into the temple, and when he personally came in contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and has the Babe in his arms, what is his confession? His cup is full; he has seen God’s salvation, and he can close his eyes upon every earthly prospect. He can do that which certainly of itself was not a bright prospect for a Jew -- could die, the very thing at which Hezekiah shuddered. Hezekiah could not bear the thought of dying; he was a servant of God, but could not bear to die; but here is a man who can gladly pass now from every prospect. When he has the child Jesus in his arms, he is like Jacob with the living Joseph before his eyes; what does he say? “Let me die!” And, beloved, that is the effect of this personal knowledge of Christ. You may think the longing of the apostle in Phil. 3. “That I may know him," and what is so wonderful as that? That was the special word to the “fathers,” in John’s Epistle? “I write unto you fathers, because ye have known him.” And, beloved, that is the effect of this personal knowledge of Christ. You may think it is speaking of a mere common-place thing, but what I feel is, that, to a large extent, we have lost sight of it. I feel it myself; I constantly go down before the Lord, to ask Him to keep alive in divine freshness in my soul the sense of that blessed One being a real living Man before God. I feel that just as it was the habit to talk about the Spirit of God as if He were an influence instead of a Person, so we can get to think about Christ, until all the blessed reality and distinctness of His personality as the One who lived and died and rose again for us is faded from our souls. We are in danger of losing the sense that He is really a Man upon the throne of God in heaven, that He is the same Jesus there, and that though His place in heavenly glory is different, yet He is not altered in Himself. What a wonderful thing that is for the heart of a poor, wretched, worthless creature! -- to say, I know a Man up there on the throne of God, who is the living Person and object for my soul’s affections, and that as I come in contact with Him personally, I have rest. It is a most wonderful moment to our hearts when we get the sense of it, and that is what really gives the soul unction -- though I hardly like to use the word, because it has been misused. Yes, personal intimacy with Christ gives a Savior, and freshness, and reality of soul. You could not come in contact with that blessed One personally, and not be filled, in measure, with the grace and affection and beauty which shine from Him. It leaves its mark upon you. I do not speak now of the way in which this is accomplished; you will find that in 2 Cor. 3, the way in which we have to do with Him personally. “We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” -- that is, the Lord Himself in glory, in that new sphere where He is; and what is the effect of it? -- “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” It is a living, glorified Person with whom the soul by faith comes in contact by the Holy Ghost: and though it is not a visible thing, yet it is a reality, a divine reality. The effect of this is seen, not only in a case such as that of this poor woman here; but look at it in the servants of God, the same thing is true of them. I was struck with this in thinking of the Old Testament saints, before God was revealed in trinity, and when it was only God in unity. What is it {that} marks the history of the saints? Personal dealing with God. Enoch “walked with God”; and if you take a man in trouble and difficulty, like Joseph, you find “the Lord was with Joseph.” If I look at the children cast, for their faithfulness, into the burning fiery furnace, I find this record, that there were “four men loose, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Was not that a Person? It was not merely a question of His being able to keep and sustain them; I do not deny that, but it was more than that, it was His presence. The Lord grant we may have a better sense of it in our hearts; that what we may long for increasingly is, to know His presence in personal living power, so that we can say, “that I may know him,” and what is so wonderful as that? That was the longing of the apostle in Phil. 3. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” There is nothing beyond this; though I am speaking of the simplest thing, yet it is most profound. What was the special word to the “fathers,” in John’s Epistle? “I write unto you fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.” It is not possible to get beyond that; and I press it now because I feel that these are days in which one of two things is likely to happen to us -- either that we shall get our minds and thoughts occupied with the evil instead of with Christ; or that, if we are preserved from being occupied with the evil, we shall get our hearts filled with ourselves -- spiritually, I mean, not naturally; how we have been enriched and blessed, and what we have been brought into, and so forth, and thus be as barren and powerless as we can possibly be, in fact really self-complacent.

The only remedy for either of these is the sense of the Person who has made all good to me. It is that blessed Christ of God who was down here in circumstances of suffering and humiliation, and is now up there in glory, but a man still. He has carried manhood to the throne of God; and by faith I can see there, a real man, on the throne of God in heavenly glory, unalterable in affection, the same in all the grace and blessedness and beauty of His Person as He was when He trod this earth -- the same in tenderness, in kindness, in grace. What a wonderful reality! The Lord by His Spirit imprint the sense of it deeply upon our hearts, that we may long to live more personally in contact with that blessed One.
And now look at this woman again for a moment, as an illustration. I need not dwell upon Simon the Pharisee. Observe the contrast between him and the woman. The Pharisee probably thought there was none so good as himself, and, no doubt, he wanted to gain some credit for himself by asking the Lord into his house; while this poor woman, owning herself as a miserable and broken-hearted creature, has Christ filling her thoughts. It is all Christ. What was it, beloved, first of all drew her in there? She did not know the forgiveness of sins -- she did not bring that in, for as yet she did not possess it; but what did she bring in? only a broken heart; and let me assure you of this one thing, a broken heart is just the very condition which gets the knowledge of the blessedness of the Person of Christ, because it was a broken heart He came to look for here. It was the misery of man that brought Him here. You know, beloved, it is a wonderful thing to think of it, and yet it is true of us all, saints as well as sinners, that in our joys we were far away from Him, but in our miseries He came near to us. It was our miseries which brought Him near. You will find it was nearly always a scene of sorrow and misery that was the occasion for His displaying the grace of His Person down here in this world; and I have often thought that it was in the Lord that that word found its fullest and most blessed verification, “it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.” Was it not to the house of mourning that He came? What is this world but a great scene of misery? It was that which as it were attracted Him, and He makes known in it all the grace of His Father, and all the love of His heart. It was that which brought this woman in to Him -- the grace which shone in His blessed Person. And now see the effect of it. The first thing is that she must get where He is. That is always the effect of grace; the desire to know Christ is not natural to any of us.

I may just say, that there is a possibility of speaking about these things in a human way -- about loving Christ as though it were a human affection. I feel increasingly the need of being watchful as to this. I am speaking of divine love -- the affections of the new man which are called out and satisfied by the Person of Christ. It is not any wrought-up feelings in hearts -- that is a very easy matter; but it is the objective presentation to faith of the Person of Christ, which is the spring of the subjective affection of the new man! and therefore you find this, that you have desires after Christ, and long to know Christ just in proportion as He is objectively before your soul. If He is the One before your soul, you will long to be with Him, but it is all formed by Him, and gratified by Him, and therefore Christ Himself becomes the spring and maintainer of the affections of the new man.

Now I say then, it was grace which drew this poor woman in. What is so beautiful in it, is to see how she faced all the difficulties; all that stood in her way in Simon’s house were never once thought of. Oh, the power of having One who is above all the difficulties simply before you! You never then think of difficulties. Like Mary in John 20, she is so intent upon finding Him that nothing deters her -- nothing will keep her away. The Lord, by His grace, grant that we may know what has been called the “expulsive power of a new affection,” even that blessed Person of Christ in the soul. It is that alone which turns all other things out.

Well, there is not only the sense in the woman’s soul, “I must get near Him -- nothing can keep me out”; but the next thing you find in her action is, she cannot make enough of Him. Everything that I have (though a poor broken-hearted creature), my poor tears, the hair of my head, I put them all down at His feet. My ointment -- all that I have is too little to express the appreciation that His own Person has created in this poor broken heart of mine; I can only give Him my tears and my sins. This is, as it were, her language, and that of her act. That is exactly the thing that the grace of His Person elicits and that He wants; that is what He came into this world to seek for. What a blessed reality to think that He came to look for tears and sorrows and broken hearts! Are not we just the very people that He wants, the poor, the halt, the blind, the lepers? I could never describe the comfort it is to know that the moment I have got down to the very lowest conceivable point, there He meets me. I ask you, what company in scripture would you like to associate yourself with? Which of the companies in scripture is Jesus at home with? and which will you take as the one fittest for you to link yourself up with? This is what would find out where we really are -- all of us -- the company we each would take as suitable for us. It is the very principle of those verses I read in Luke 4. To whom was He sent?

He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

If you can find souls with these marks, that is where He is found, and to meet such surely He came into this poor world. This woman answers exactly to this description, and so she fitly comes in there, laying at His feet all that she has, with her tears and her sorrows, with the sense that she cannot make too much of Him. It is exactly what we see in Nathaniel, when he has the revelation of the Lord personally before him; he cannot sufficiently exalt Him. “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.” There is no title of glory too great to put upon His head. Many crowns will not be wanting to express all that the heart has found in Himself. Blessed be His name, on His head are many crowns, and to have them there is the joy of the heart that knows anything of His personal excellency.

One cannot but be struck with the manner of the love that this woman exhibits -- the beautiful, refined delicacy of the way in which this poor broken-hearted creature desires that the blessed Lord should know what He had impressed her poor heart with. Everything she has she lays at His feet; that is the very first way to have to do with Christ. Suppose it was a poor sinner now, who had never known the forgiveness of sins, it must be the same. He must know Christ, and must come to Him as this woman did. I believe the fruit of not preaching Christ is not {sic, omit “not”} apparent in the imperfect apprehension of salvation we see all around us. Peter went down to Samaria, and what did he preach? Christ. Paul went to the synagogue, and what did he preach? Jesus as the Son of God. It is so in the scriptures, where ever you turn; so much so, beloved, that often, when one has turned over the scriptures, the heart sinks, as it were, with a sense of how little we have caught the spirit of this blessed principle that runs through the whole book of God. I do not depreciate, on the contrary, I magnify the riches of His grace that gives the whole value of His work in detail to
clear conscience. I am speaking of the necessity of knowing the Person of Christ, because it is so lost sight of and forgotten. It is not that I would take away from the appreciation of His work, but to increase it in our hearts by the sense of what it is to have deeper personal knowledge of the Lord, as the One who has accomplished all so perfectly.

But now let us look, not merely at Him in His exceeding grace as a Savior, but at the other scene where, in the grace of His heart, He comes out as the One who is able to sympathize; I mean, that scene at the city of Nain in the earlier part of the chapter. Here is a scene of every-day life; that is what makes it so interesting to our hearts. “He came to Nain” -- you know that Nain means “beautiful.” He came to the beautiful city, and what does He find there? Exactly what is characteristic of this poor world around us. Is not this world beautiful? Would God turn out from His hand anything that was not beautiful? When He surveyed all that He had made, we have the record of what He said, “Very good”; but what do we find now? Death is in it; it is characteristic of this world. There is not a leaf, nor a tree, nor a plant, nor a field, nor a flower that grows that is not beautiful, but there is death on everything; and I tell you more than that, and it ought to have a great response in the hearts of His own people who are here tonight -- not merely death, but if I know this blessed One that I speak of, it is His death. That is what has happened in this beautiful world.

Well, quite in keeping with what I have been saying, here is this sad and mournful sight to meet the eye of the Lord: “There was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” Could you conceive anything more mournful than that? It is like the prophet when he came to Jericho. It was a beautiful place, but the water is nought, and the ground is barren. And that is what this world is -- not this world as it was in the days of Eden, or before the fall; but we are in the world as the fall had left it, and characterized it, with all the fruits of sin, and not only that, but the fruits of man’s will as well for more than eighteen centuries since that blessed One was murdered in it. We are in a world where sin and death soil everything that is beautiful. The only comfort is, and it is blessed indeed, that He was here in it, and therefore when He meets this spectacle of sorrow (mark how exquisite it is), the personal sympathy of Christ comes out. What is the first thing that touches Him when He comes upon the scene? “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.” There is not either a cry expressed, or a groan unexpressed, from the hearts of His poor people which He has not most perfectly measured. It reminds me of that beautiful scripture where Jehovah speaking of His concern about His ancient people Israel, when He unfolded the purpose of His heart says, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry.” What a thought for our hearts, beloved, that there is One up there on the throne of God in heaven who sees the struggles, and knows the pains and trials and pressure of each of His own poor saints down here on earth; and if you have a trial, or a difficulty, or a bereavement, or a sorrow, there is a heart up there on the throne of God that enters into it, and knows all about it. And what I find is this, that just in proportion as this precious sympathy of Christ is not known, human sympathy is sought for. I do not deny that human sympathy is very sweet to the heart, but it is, after all, only the expression of its own powerlessness. We may go and sit down beside the sorrowing one, or go and try to comfort a bereaved one, but how poorly we can do it! Sit down beside a poor sheep of Christ, tossed and tried, and attempt to introduce that one into the presence of its Shepherd and Lord, and you see how poorly you can do it! How many of us take it up as if we were performing a duty? We say a few words because we know it is “the right thing” to say. It is the greatest mistake for any one to be happy about saying “the right thing.” But just try and be a channel to convey the grace of the heart of Christ to meet a case like that, and you will see how different it is, and you will feel how little the sympathy of the Christ is flowing through you as the vessel for the comfort of the sufferer. It is just as He Himself has impressed your own heart that you can give an impress to another. You cannot learn it as men learn theology; there is no way by which any one of us can get the impress of either the grace of Christ or the sympathy of Christ, except as we personally know Christ for ourselves. I must personally be in contact with Him for myself, before I can be versed in His grace or sympathy.

Look at Him here. What did He do first? Does He exercise His power first? No. What is the first thing that attracted Him, the dead man carried out? No. It was the broken heart of the living one, of the widowed mother; this did arrest the all-seeing eye of the Lord. The Lord saw, and He had compassion on her, and wiped away her tears. Do you know such a Christ? Has He ever been so near to you as that -- has He wiped away your tears? Do you enjoy the blessed consciousness of the fact that when you were in loneliness inexpressible, in trial, in difficulty, with every human light gone out, and not a single bright spot left, there was One who came beside you, and gave you the sense of His presence, and to know that He was there with you in it all? It is not merely that He took you out of the circumstances, but He walked with you through them. As the apostle could say, “There stood by me this night an angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve”; and a dark night it was too, but look how he is able to comfort everybody else, and what is his standpoint, what has he had comfort from? Just this that I have been quoting, the “angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve”; and a dark night it was too, but look how he is able to comfort everybody else, and what is his standpoint, what has he had comfort from? Just this that I have been quoting, the “angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve,” who stood by him; and now, he says, I can comfort you from the same source where I get my comfort from. And more than that, when he is forsaken -- and you must expect to be forsaken if you follow the Lord, and you will have to walk alone, it is the day to walk alone, in that sense. God grant that I may never deny for a moment, as some have denied, all the truth that is connected with our being together, still together, and yet alone will be our experience as we follow Christ this day. If you follow Christ you will be left as Paul was left, and what does he say? “No one stood by me; all forsook me.” And I trust I am not uncharitable when I say that I do not believe there is more faithfulness to-day than there was then. “All forsook me”; but what follows? “Nevertheless the Lord stood by me.” There is the Person again; and, the apostle does not say that the Lord strengthened him, and stood by him, but the Lord stood by him, He gave him the sense of His own personal company, before He exercised His power for him, and that is exactly what we get here. He meets the heart and wipes
the bitter tears away, He binds up the broken heart. The first thing He does is to touch that widow’s heart -- before He touches the bier. Do you know what that is? It is exactly what He did with Mary in John 11. He does not say a word about raising Lazarus, Why? Because He Himself was filling her heart. He did raise up Lazarus afterwards -- and death cannot exist in His presence; but first He must comfort the bereaved heart. So it is here -- the first thing is to heal the broken heart, to say “weep not”; and then, “young man, I say unto thee, arise!” And then look at the blessed and exquisite grace of Christ: “He gave him to his mother.” He might have claimed Him for His own, but no, He exhibits all the perfection of His human sympathy, as well as all the power of His Godhead -- the sympathy of the man, and the power of God.

The Lord, through His own rich and sovereign grace, use the word this evening to stir our hearts up to desire that we may come more in personal contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and be able to say what is not really a great thing -- ought not to be so: we know one Person as we know no one else on earth, One whose heart is, beyond all concepcion, interested in us and occupied with us. There is no one on earth to whom you can tell your wanderings, and your coldness, and your indifference, and your half-heartedness, and know that you would meet with the grace that would over-reach everything, and with the power that would impart strength to you. That is what Christ does -- a living Person with whom I come in contact; through whom I not merely know salvation, but to whom I find it my solace to go and unburden my heart about everything, knowing that there is not a circumstance, however trifling or small, but there is a response in grace to everything I may bring.

The Lord acquaint each of us more with the grace of His blessed Son; so as to secure more allegiance, and more devotedness, and more true-hearted following and serving of Himself -- for His own Name’s sake!

Our Place in Heaven And Path on Earth

Hebrews 10:10-23; Ephesians 2:4-7;
Hebrews 12:1-4, 13:10-16

I have read these scriptures, as the best I think of, to present a subject which is of the deepest importance -- the double character of a Christian, his place in heaven, and his path on earth. It would not be correct to speak of his place on earth, but I do speak of his distinct and definite place in heaven, and if he has a place there, he can have none here, for when it is a settled thing that we have a place in heaven, we must be strangers here; so that I speak of place as to heaven, path as to earth. I feel how deeply important it is that our souls should be exercised as to how far we know our place in heaven.

But I would first say a word on Heb. 10, as to the question of the state of our conscience, and liberty of approach (with reference to it), into the holiest, in the light of His presence. There is a distinct difference between this and Eph. 2, where we are taken up as dead in sins, and by the quickening power of God raised out of the state of death and distance we were in, and set in a positive place, in heaven in Christ; it is a new creation we get here, “quickened together with him, raised up together, and seated in him,” not yet with Him, that we shall be by-and-by. To faith we are placed there now, we shall be as to our body in a “little while.” If this be so, then we are out of man and out of earth. What does this mean? That we are out of man as to our standing, no longer in the lost ruined condition of the first man, and out of earth as to our habitation, home, or rest.

Heb. 10 sets forth how we have liberty of approach to God. We find three things in it: first, the will of God planned the work; second, it was accomplished by the work of Christ; and third, borne witness to by the Holy Ghost. If it has been divinely planned (v. 10) and divinely accomplished, there must be a divine Person to bear witness to it (v. 15); thus the conscience is put uncondemningly quiet in the presence of God, and if it be a question of worship, we have liberty to come with holy boldness into the holiest. I know no other place of worship -- of course I do not mean we are not here as to our bodies, but our worship really belongs to heaven; it is too late for earthly worship, this is suspended for the time being: there will be an earthly temple and an earthly worship in the coming day, but not now; any attempt at it is contrary to the present mind of God. His own Son in heaven is the Center of God’s thoughts now. He is gathering a people round Himself (though they be still treading the sands of the desert) whose home and thoughts and affections are all in heaven, and who find this earth a place of trial and suffering. Thus we see that the blessedness of the truth of ch. 10 consists in this, it sets the believer in the presence of God, in the holiest, with an uncondemning conscience, where only one man, of one tribe, of one nation, on one day, could come. Now it is the place where every Christian is entitled as to his conscience to come at all times, and more, not as a matter of mere favor, but of righteousness with God to have us there. How could it be otherwise if the Lord Jesus Christ glorified God down to the depth of that death to which I, as a sinner, was exposed; and if God has glorified Him up to the heights of the glory He is now in? God could not do less; in giving us a place of liberty in His presence He is putting honor on, as well as expressing His infinite appreciation of, the blood of His own Son. I would ask each one, have you that kind of conscience? have you an uncondemning quiet in the light of the holiness of God? It may be a strange question to ask, but believe me, half of the difficulties people have are really difficulties as to their conscience; the conscience is not at rest. With many a one when there is not this knowledge of grace, when deliverance is not known, an outbreak of their wretched nature leads them to find the workings of the old man within, and then they begin to wonder if they are Christians at all, whether they have, as is said, the root of the matter in them; the secret of it being the fact that the conscience has never known full liberty; the soul is in bondage because it has never known grace, never been brought into the light where God is in all His grace. Blessed be God, nothing can ever undo that perfect work which has set us there. There is a great difference between these two things, knowing the clearance of all our sins, and seeing by faith the end of ourselves. There is one thing God never does, He never imputes sin to the believer, He never remembers our sins, and He never forgets us; “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Therefore we can say, “Having boldness to enter.” Man would never have written such a word, he would rather have
said, Come with fear and trembling. God says “boldness,” because He puts honor on the blood and work of Christ, which give us boldness as to our conscience to enter into the very holiest. What does God put His seal on? not on our intelligence, but on the work of His own Son. He seals the believer by His Spirit, and says as it were, that is my property! There is not an instance where testimony is borne to the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sins is received by faith in Christ, but the Holy Ghost comes down and seals that person. In Rom. 8:16, we get the Holy Ghost spoken of as “witnessing with our spirit,” that is His indwelling in our bodies. I grant that in too many cases, souls have been too often turned to His work in us, rather than the work of Christ for us; here it is the effect of His presence in us, His personal indwelling; the sinner having been washed from all his sins in Christ’s blood, the Holy Ghost is given and witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God.

I now turn to Eph. 2. In the end of Eph. 1 we have the blessed fact that Christ Himself is taken out of death by the power of God; the glorious Man is here displayed who went down into death, and glorified God in the lowest place of death and judgment where the grace of His heart led Him, and is by the power of God taken out of death, and in contrast to everything here, He is set “far above principalities and powers,” &c. They are the terminus as it were of all we can reach, but they are the point of departure for Him. I find all these selected simply as points of departure. He is constituted Head over everything to the church.

In Eph. 2 we find the same power working in the heirs; the “power” in ch. 1 is the same “power” as in ch. 2 and ch. 6. As a Christian I belong to heaven, I have lost my place on earth, am I a loser or a gainer? If I have lost my status as connected with Adam, and my place as connected with the spot where all the ruin was effected, I have a new status connected with the last Adam, and the place where He is is the home of my heart. What a cheer for the soul to know the place where my Savior is, as my home! Here death is on every side, failure, sorrow, dissatisfaction, it all belongs to this world; even the brightest day here comes to a close; the sun is setting on all here. But oh! to know a brighter scene where our Savior is, where the sun never goes down, where all is unfailing brightness and blessedness; thank God, this is the scene we belong to.

I should like to trace out the steps which lead to this a little. John 12:23 is an important and blessed scripture. Here we have John 12:23 is an important and blessed scripture. Here we have the work of Christ for us; here it is the effect of His presence in us, His personal indwelling; the sinner having been washed from all his sins in Christ’s blood, the Holy Ghost is given and witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God.

Let us now turn to Acts 2 for a moment, when we have seen how He could identify us with Himself, but as the One risen out of death. There must be a Man in glory, and that man the One who was on the cross. This was the wonderful new thing brought out -- a Man in glory, who had been under the judgment of God for sin on the cross, who was in Joseph’s tomb, “received up into glory.” Now the Holy Ghost comes down from this glorified Man, and baptizes believers into one body, who are now united to the Head in heaven, and equally to each other on earth. We have a place in union with that blessed One where He is. We could not talk of being united to Him as God, but there is a Man (He was God too) in the glory of God, who glorified God even to death, and by the Holy Ghost we are united to that man glorified -- we are one with Him. Wonderful reality! I am the fruit of His death, but I am united to Him in glory. He is the root from which I have my origin! blessed reality for the soul! The last Adam has superseded every other man. What can be more wonderful than that I am one with Him. Have you the blessed sense in your soul that you are united to Him? the same Spirit dwells in Him as in you. It would be a poor thing to be in heaven -- alone! what would the place be without Christ? Well might we say --

“Were I in heaven without my Lord,
It were no heaven to me.”

No. I am united to Him where He is, which never could be known because this wondrous reality never existed before. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . but God hath revealed it to us by His Spirit.” Sometimes affection for Christ is mistaken for union with Him. In Canticles there was the longing of the heart after the Bridegroom, but no union; unsatisfied affection, because not possessing the Object of its affection, like “hope deferred which maketh the heart sick.” I thank God we are one with Him now, all we wait for is the day when we shall be with Him for ever, and then will come out what we often sing --

“Thou shalt to wondering worlds display,
That we with Thee are one.”

Then His redeemed ones will come out in all His beauty and glory. Thus I trust we can see how, as the risen One He gathers around Himself (after being refused by Jew and Gentile) a few good-for-nothing things like us, and unites us to Himself in glory. This gives us a very definite place as well as character. In Acts 7 we see how this comes out into practice. Here is a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost; the consequence is, he looks up into heaven, his affections, his desires, his Object, his
heart, all are in heaven, his power, too, his sustinament, all are from heaven; the sorrows, the rejection, the stones, are all connected with this scene. What do our hearts most turn to? Take one day; what have we thought most of to-day? What have our affections been engaged with to-day? The spot that engages the heart of a man is the spot that to him is home; there is the spot his affections encircle round; he may have other interests and occupations, but the place where his heart is, is his home. Is it so with us as to heaven? Is it the one bright, blessed spot whither the eye delights to turn? Stephen looked up steadfastly, and saw the glory of God, and a Man in it; here was the true amber spot (see Ezek. 1:4, 5), the Man who suffered on the cross in the glory; seeing Him is the secret of power to enable a man to meet everything here. If it be objected that this goes too high, I reply it practically goes down very low, it empowered Stephen to bear the stones and martyrdom, and to pray for his enemies; his own cup was full, he had nothing to ask for himself, he prays for those who were murdering him. I should rather say, give me the doctrine that produces that! It is not so much the fact of union, as the Person we are united to, that should be before us, not something we have obtained, but our delight is in the One who has won our hearts for Himself. We are united to One who is the Man in glory, the Object and delight of the heart of God. If we had the most beautiful spot on earth which the most skillful art of man could prepare, and no heart to share it with us, what would it be? It is the One we are connected with our path. If we, as runners, are running through this world, then we have no thought of settling down here, “run with endurance” (that is, go on to the end), not manifesting a little bit of patience to-day, and fainting to-morrow, but persistently going on to the end. A racer, or a wrestler, expects opposition; we are disposed to be taken off our guard by it, for we are so little accustomed to live outside this world. Do you believe everything in this scene opposes you? There is not an element in this world which will not minister to that which is against you as walking with God, unless we disallow it. If we do not feel the opposition, it is clear we are going with the tide; if we live in a bad atmosphere, we do not know how to appreciate good air. Do we feel, beloved friends, the incongruity of the scene we are in? The security of a swimmer is opposing the element around him; as we all know, a living fish goes against the stream, a dead fish goes with it.

Take Ex. 16, 17, we find two things go to make up their journey in the wilderness — gathering the manna, and doing battle with Amalek. We must live in the sphere of life which is heaven, feeding there, doing battle here, running through it, seeking to finish our course with joy; not wanting to get out of it because of the way; this is selfishness, like Elijah, who said to the Lord, Take away my life, or Jonah, who thought he did well to be angry; for if we know the reality and power of the blessed, wonderful things we have been speaking of, we should go through it unmoved by any one thing, all we meet with would only be an occasion of victory over it. I believe the Lord often places many things within our reach, to test how far our hearts have found treasure in heaven, they are tests by the way, which manifest how far we can count all things loss for Christ. The passage in Phil. is often quoted as applying to bad things, but it is not so, it is advantage after the flesh, and these were “loss and dung” to Paul. Oh, what a blessed testimony to see a man going on through the world enduringly, persistently to the end! What keeps him? “Looking unto Jesus,” the Man on the throne, who has gone the road before us. He has trodden the perfect path of faith, and He is now the crowned One; we are to take the eye off Moses and Abraham and self, and fix it on Jesus, Jesus only. In Heb. 13:10 we find the blood of the offering was brought into the sanctuary, and the bodies burnt outside the gate. We are brought in, as to our conscience and our worship, where the blood was brought, but what about Jesus as to this world? He was crucified outside the gate. If we have a place in heaven, and are united to that blessed Man who is in the glory of God, what about this world?

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

What does this mean? I fear it is limited in the thoughts of many of us; they make their religious associations their boundary, but is it not going outside this world, as such? Are you outside with Christ in your ways, your family, your business? We are to expect reproach — but whose reproach? — “bearing his reproach.” With many, their church position is outside, but not their hearts; their words are outside, but they themselves really are within. Oh, that we might be people of one object as we move through this scene! — that we might be priests to God, and kings, in true royal bounty, to this poor world, not looking to get anything from it, but to dispense, to communicate to it, and, praising God on our way to glory, plainly declaring that we seek a country. What a blessed cheer for the heart that we have no continuing city in this scene of blight, vexation, and sorrow!

May we be as those who have a home in heaven, and who are running a race here, our hearts and joys and expectations outside the ordered system here, and in the place where our Savior is; this the scene of our trial, pressure, testing, the place where we are at school, being trained and educated, but going on enduringly till we reach that blessed One in heaven. If you are trying to be a testimony, you never will be one; occupied with Christ, there is the formative power of Christ in us by the Holy Ghost, then we shall be a testimony of what His grace has made us, and to His praise and glory for ever.
The Resources of Faith
Amidst Present Confusion
Lecture 1: 2 Timothy 2

It is profitable to look at any portion of God’s blessed word, but especially that part of it which bears on times that we ourselves are in. If there be a purposed distinctiveness in any portion of the word which was intended to bear in a special way on the peculiar position which we occupy, then, I say, we are bound in every way to give special and peculiar attention to it.

I suppose there is hardly a Christian anywhere, who is walking with the smallest exercise of conscience before God, who will not freely own that we are in a remarkable era, of this world’s history. And I trust that you would refuse, with all your soul, the horrible idea that (though we are positively in the midst of the confusions which God has distinctly marked out prophetically in His word, and which He says in this very epistle characterize “the last days”), we are here, left simply, to do our best in them. Mark, beloved friends, that notion, if accepted, would not merely minister to the self-will, self-conceit, and human judgment of poor creatures like us, but it would be a slur on the character and care of our God. It would be a slur on the love of Christ for His people and His Church, to say that we are here allowed to grope our way as best we can in the very confusions that are marked out in this word, every kind of wickedness increasing and getting to a head on every side -- and yet without one single special instruction for us, without one single truth marked out especially by the Spirit of God to apply to the circumstances in which these times involve us; no, it is this special care of God that makes the second epistle to Timothy, as no doubt many of you know, of special and peculiar value to the saint of God at this present moment. And this is the reason why it has been on my mind just to call your attention for a little to some two or three leading facts and features that are brought out in this chapter. The next chapter I hope to refer to next week, if the Lord will.

Now, first of all, let me say this distinctly to you; and I do so now for the sake of those I have before me who have not had the same opportunity of instruction, or of having these things brought before their consciences, as no doubt many of the elder and aged have had. I notice that there is a distinct character marking both these epistles to Timothy. The first contemplates the house of God here upon this earth in its order; so much so that you will find all the minute directions, even to the distribution of money, marked out. There is no point omitted that could possibly bear upon the well-being of the saints of God, looked at as His house; because it is in that character and aspect that both epistles regard it. It is well to know this, and to be assured of it. There are these two things in Scripture; and I do not hesitate in the least to bring them out, because I am sure of the truth of them in my own soul; and I feel it is wrong not to speak distinctly where one is sure of the truth: one is responsible to God as His servant for speaking what one knows to be His truth. If one were uncertain about it, it would be better to be silent; but if one is clear and distinct as to the truth of God, then there is no reason why it should not be spoken plainly.

There is, then, God’s house, the sphere of His Spirit’s activity, God’s habitation, here upon this earth; and there is beside that, and distinct from it, Christ’s body. The expression “church” is applied to both these; both when it is the house of God -- the sphere of profession -- that is meant, and when it is the body of Christ, composed of all true members here upon this earth, united by the Holy Ghost to the head in heaven.

Now the epistles to Timothy do not contemplate “the body” at all. That is not their subject; that is not what the Spirit of God is treating of. He is treating of that which owes responsibility to God as His house, His habitation, where He dwells, where there is the rule and authority of His Spirit. This may clear the ground a little, perhaps, to those who do not know these things; and remember, I am speaking tonight more with reference to such, than to those who are already acquainted with them. It was really such who were in my mind when I came here.

When we speak then, as we do, of “the ruin of the church” -- and you constantly hear people speaking of it -- what does it mean? It certainly does not refer to the “body of Christ”; and yet it is a true expression. It means what is found in Scripture; namely, the ruin, the confusion, the thorough break-up, through man’s incompetency, of what was committed in trust and responsibility into his hand by God. That is what is meant by the ruin of the church; but that is not the ruin of Christ’s body. The body of Christ is as safe as the Head Himself; therefore when we speak of the ruin of the church, we speak of a thing that is true; but at the same time you must be distinct in your mind, and in your thoughts, as to that which can get into disorder and confusion, and that which is outside the sphere of man’s responsibility entirely; because the body of Christ was never committed to man’s responsibility, whereas the house of God was.

Now I see all this distinctly and clearly in Scripture; and how can I refuse what I know to be the truth? You may say, “I do not see it.” Very well, then, I say, the Lord help us to search His word more humbly, and whatever is true, the Lord enable us to see it. Only let us beware of any will about it, that is all; because that always hinders in the things of God.

When I come to the second epistle to Timothy I find the house in confusion. It is broken up. I find every sort of thing in it that ought not to be there. Look at this one verse for a moment, though it is anticipating a little; I mean the twentieth verse.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor {2 Tim. 2:20}.

I do not know any passage of Scripture that is more entirely misinterpreted and misunderstood than that; and there is an expression current, which I daresay we have all heard sometime or another, which no doubt has a certain amount of truth in it. It is built upon this Scripture, and the force and power of this Scripture is thereby in measure taken away. The expression is this, “the great house.” There is no such expression in Scripture; but that the house of God, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:21), is contemplated in 2 Timothy as having become, through man’s failure in his responsibility, like unto “a great house,” with every sort of thing in it, bad and good. There is no such thing in that verse as “the great house”; but the apostle is likening the “house of God,” in the confusion in which it is found at this present moment, to “a great house,” with every
sort of vessel, clean and unclean, in it. I simply note this now, because it marks out in the most distinct possible way the difference between the two epistles -- the house, in the first epistle, in order; everything arranged and ordered by the Spirit of God, and Timothy instructed how to carry himself there; dangers there were on the horizon, the prospect of what would be developed when the apostle was off the scene; the incipient principles were at work whilst he was there, but to come to a head when he was removed. Still, the thing was there in its order, and in its correctness; but when you come to the second epistle, you find the exact contrast of all that -- viz., confusion, things turned upside down, everything out of gear; and the Holy Ghost has marked out through the apostle here for Timothy, and for the saints of God at the present moment, what kind of conduct and character they were to exhibit, and what path they were to pursue, in the midst of this confusion.

Well, now, I will speak of two things, and that will somewhat limit me, in connection with this second chapter tonight. The first is this, that I see increasingly in Scripture that you cannot take up the directions which are so plainly marked out in God’s word with reference to any time in our history, or to any conduct that God looks for from His children, apart from moral condition. That I see everywhere in Scripture. You might have the most perfect code of directions marked out by God, but what good are they to me if my condition of soul is not in some way answering to it? I cannot take them up, I cannot apply them, I cannot use them for myself, unless I am walking with God; and you will find that is the way people break down. It is in the application of the truth where they break down, rather than in their intelligence of it; this is where the difficulty is. There must be a condition of soul suited to God Himself before I can really take His truth and use it for myself in the clearing away of difficulties, or the marking out of my path; or before I can be piloted by it, according to the chart and program of the blessed God Himself, in the midst of all the confusions in which I find myself enveloped in these times.

This then is the first thing in the second epistle. There are certain moral qualities which the apostle seeks to enforce upon Timothy, his son in the faith. In the third verse we have --

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life;

and so on. That is all moral condition of soul -- a certain state which the apostle seeks to awaken Timothy to a sense of, in order that he might be fitted to make use of these blessed directions of God with reference to abounding disorder. This is very important for every one of us, old or young; because, be assured of it, half the difficulties of saints of God arise from their condition of soul. It is the state people are in that produces the difficulties; and I do not know anything more detrimental than handling the things of God, if I am not in communion. I do not know anything that is more searing to the conscience, or that has a more lowering effect upon the whole moral tone of a man, than to take up the things of God out of communion. It has a peculiarly deadening effect upon the soul. And that is the reason why I believe you will see, everywhere in Scripture, that there is no thought in God’s mind of a saint of God, either in his individual walk, or as a member of the Church of God, being led apart from that moral quality and tone of soul, under the power of His Spirit. Be assured there is no provision of God for saints not walking with Him. That is an important thing to get clearly before our souls. God has made no provision available to us, apart from characteristics in us, suitable to Himself. Without this, you cannot get people to see and comprehend the things of God; and that is where I think the harm and mischief has been, that there have been attempts to educate people into God’s things. You can never do it. It is through moral condition of soul, and this alone, that we are able truly to discern the mind of God; and thus we see how distinctly the apostle marks it out with reference to Timothy.

Now the first quality that is spoken of here is a very important one. Remembering the hardships that would be met with in such days as second Timothy contemplates, he says, “Thou therefore endure hardness.” You are not fit to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ in days of confusion and disorder unless you can endure hardness. That is the very first quality that the apostle looks for in Timothy; and it is one that we want, every one of us. Of course it was needed in an especial way in one who was to be in such a prominent position as Timothy, but it is needed for every saint of God. I do not hesitate to say that a person at this present moment who cannot endure hardness (after his measure, of course) is entirely unfitted for that which God contemplates as to His people now. The rest will come by-and-by -- blessed rest it will be; but this is the time to go through the hardships, all those things that belong to a suffering testimony in the midst of a world that has rejected and cast out the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I feel is this, that if there were a little more loyalty to Christ in our hearts, more genuine devotedness to His person and interests, we should not want to be in any different circumstances to those He was in Himself; and (if such were the Lord’s will) we should be ready to be thrown into the very forefront in testimony for Him; for it is the path of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the path of His servant. There is really no difference, and therefore you are not carrying upon you the marks that God looks for in His people in the midst of such a scene as this, if there is not the capacity to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You are to be like a soldier campaigning, able to put up with everything.

There is another thing here that is important; that is, in the fourth verse:

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Now there is immense wisdom -- blessed wisdom -- of God’s Spirit in the very expressions that are employed in that verse. He does not say, “No man that warreth undertakes the affairs of this life.” He does not say that a man who is warring gives up his lawful occupation and calling. There is a vast difference between a person taking up a lawful calling which God has distinctly marked out for him, and entangling himself with it. The point which the Spirit of God presses upon Timothy here is the entanglement. No man that wars entangles himself; he does not allow the thing that his hands are occupied with to be a net all around him; so that he has not energy, or spiritual desires, or real power of heart, to be for Christ. On the contrary, he keeps
himself free, although his hands are occupied with his lawful calling. In spirit, in his affections, he is free; so that he may "please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Look how wonderfully *objective* all this truth is, in order to produce a *subjective* state in us. You will never have a subjective state answering to God or to Christ, unless there is an objective power before your soul to produce it. You cannot *get up* a subjective state of soul suitable to God. You become a mere legal ascetic if you attempt it. There must be an object which is distinctly before the eye of your soul, with reference to which every thing is handled by you. Look at it here "to please" -- whom? yourself? No. Anybody else? No. But "Him who hath chosen you to be a soldier." You see in this warfare the apostle keeps the eye of the one who is enduring hardness, and walking through the scenes of confusion into which "the house" has fallen, on that blessed One who is outside and above all, and he makes *His* pleasure to be the commanding power of the heart.

Alas! how little that is the case with any of our hearts! How very little that comes before one’s soul all day long -- "Am I doing this for the one who has chosen me? or am I seeking to do the best thing for myself; and leaving Christ outside, as it were?" You may say, "I have got Christ as my object." Well, of course I do not dispute it, though it is a great thing to say. One hopes and trusts in one’s own soul that one is true as to that; but mark, there is another thing. Christ may be my *object*, but is there the *diligence of heart and soul* to be *suitable to that object*? That is the *thing*. And it is just as He is before you, and you have got His pleasure before you, and you study it in order to get tastes, and longings, and desires that are after Him -- as you consider Him, as you view everything in relation to Him, you get *power to do* things suitable to Him.

Thus, then, the apostle expresses it, "that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"; and he goes on, in the next verse, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, unless he strive lawfully"; that is, being subject to the whole order and mind of God and of Christ.

The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

And now we come to a scripture that I want particularly to press upon you. How is all this made good? You may say, Well, it is not much the fact that makes this familiar to your minds. I refer to the well-known passage in the epistle of John, where the apostle says,

Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

That scripture ought to be rendered exactly as this one now before us; viz., "confesses Jesus Christ, come in flesh"; and, "confesses not Jesus Christ, come in flesh." That is, it is not so much the fact *about* the Person as the Person Himself, in a certain condition.

So here, it is the company he puts the saints into, with reference to the confusion of the house -- that which is before us tonight. What does he say, then, when he wants to produce these moral qualities in the man who has to carry himself in the midst of this confusion? "Remember Jesus Christ, of David’s seed, raised from the dead." It is wonderful that he should thus link us, as to company, association, and power, with the One who, although He was the seed of David, and therefore entitled to every thing as Messiah (for that is the thought here), takes it all in resurrection. He was rejected in this world by man, refused in everything; though, in virtue of His death and resurrection, as well as the glory of His person, He will by-and-by take up all things in heaven and earth. Such is the company in which He places us. May I not press this upon your hearts tonight? because it is an aspect of Christ’s death which I do think is forgotten. We are familiar with the *victim*-character of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not sufficiently think of the *martyr*-character of it. He died in *both* characters. He died as a victim; that is a wonderful truth. What should we have without it? But He died as a martyr at the hands of man for the testimony of God, whose faithful witness He was. His death as a victim settled the whole question of our sins; but it is in connection with His martyr-sufferings and character that we, through grace, can be really on the road of testimony with Him. We could not be on the road with Him in His atoning sufferings. We have all the blessedness that flows out of it, but we could not be on the road with Him as to *company*; but we -- wonderful thing to think of! -- are privileged to be on the road with Christ, in any sense in which the heart apprehends this fact, that He was a martyr for the truth of God in this world, which would not have either God, or Himself, or the truth. In the same measure as I can enter into it, I am in His company, and it is exceedingly blessed to the heart.

In this company of “Jesus Christ raised from the dead” the apostle puts in this word, “My gospel.” There is a distinctiveness, and a speciality, and a peculiarity about those words linked with Paul’s testimony, which the Lord give you to work out for yourselves, if you have not done so already. “My gospel.” It is not the gospel in the abstract, but the peculiar character of testimony which was committed to Paul, and entrusted to him, as one “born out of due time.” All this, then, marks out the moral condition that the Spirit of God, through the apostle, seeks to create in Timothy, as demanded by the terrible circumstances in which the house of God is found in these days. Let me pass over from the ninth verse, where these things are pursued in further details, to the sixteenth:

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will
increase unto more ungodliness [2 Tim. 2:16].

Here we get a little description of what was in this house of God. “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” Now, these men were in the “house,” and they had introduced this doctrine into it. Just look for a moment at the solemnity of it. If the resurrection is past already, then we are in our ultimate state; if the resurrection is past already, we may settle down here as comfortably as we can: this is the effect of such a doctrine: it brings the most terrible principle of worldliness and earthliness into God’s house; therefore it is that the apostle marks it so distinctly, though it was but one of the things which were then in the “house.”

Now mark what he says: “Nevertheless” -- (notwithstanding all these vain babblings, notwithstanding the janglings that were there, the evils of doctrine and practice too), “the firm foundation of God stands.” That is a wonderful thing to have before one’s soul. Notwithstanding all that man may do with what is entrusted to him in responsibility, although he may make the most terrible havoc of God’s things, and introduce the most fearful confusion into God’s house, “nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands.” Nothing can touch that, nothing can alter that; it is a firm foundation; there it stands. There is a seal to it and I should like to dwell a little upon this seal. It is a seal with two sides. “The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Now that, beloved friends, is God’s side. We have nothing whatever to say to that side of the seal, except humbly to own the fact, “The Lord knows them that are His.” What a mercy it is that we have not the word to say, or decide who are His! No saint of God has to do that. Because, just look at all the mistakes, the ten thousand mistakes, that are made, and would be made! But now mark what is the other side.

Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity [2 Tim. 2:19].

That is our side of the seal. God’s side of it is, “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Man’s side is, “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” That is, let every one who puts himself under the authority of that Lord, every one who knows the truth of that Lord, and the claims of that Lord, depart from iniquity.

Now how many saints of God are falsely using this scripture -- perhaps some in this company tonight -- as a kind of relief in the midst of the terrible confusion into which the house of God has fallen at this present moment, and amid all the vain janglings and noise around them. Many Christians -- not only those that are outside God’s thoughts at this present moment, but many that own this truth -- say, “There is a dear child of God, a beloved saint of God, a beloved servant of God, in such and such a position, surely he cannot be wrong?” I reply that is not your side of the seal at all. You are using God’s side of it. “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” You say, “But is not so and so a Christian?” I answer, I am not disputing it; but that is not the question. The question for me is, not who is the Lord’s; but, Who is departing from iniquity? Here is the question, -- Who, having owned His claims, are suitable to Himself? A most solemn question, and that is the meaning of “departing from iniquity.” Where is the person that departs from iniquity? How little that is in our minds!

Remember, I am speaking upon what I know. I remember perfectly well how that scripture came to myself, and what use I made of it. I know, alas! too well how easily one seeks to use Scripture as a warrant for continuing every sort of unsuitability to Christ; because a person who is religious -- and by that I mean any one who has a desire after the things of God, in contrast to the mere worldly -- if there are certain things that please such a person, and his own will takes the lead in them, he will always think he has the word of God to back him up. And therefore, when people are in false associations and memberships so called, at this present moment -- and I do not say it hardly -- you will always find this is the scripture which they misapply, totally misunderstanding the mind of God about it; and they say, with reference to any one of these associations, “It cannot be so very wrong; for are there not many dear saints of God in it?” I do not question the presence of such for a moment; for there are saints of God to be found in all the ramifications of Christendom: there are many that would put to shame some who are outside of them, and therefore we have not anything to boast of. It is not that one would stand up and throw a stone at one’s brother, but I am speaking of the truth, and not of people; and the truth is more dear and precious than the people.

Let us not then be found in the misuse of God’s side of the seal. I see those who are, without doubt, His people, scattered up and down, and mixed up with all kinds of things; but here is the point for me: it is an individual word; and I speak it as an individual word for every person’s conscience here tonight, Have you departed from iniquity? “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord” -- that bows to the authority of that Lord -- “depart from iniquity.”

Now, beloved friends, I trust I need not answer another question; viz., How much? There are some that positively do seem to imply they would raise that question, How much? Oh, I need not answer that question! Surely there is no necessity whatever to answer such a question as that. Because -- observe, and nothing is more solemn, deeply solemn, to our hearts than this -- viz., What am I associating the name of Christ with? That is the question. If we thought of that, and pondered over it, see how differently it would tell upon the things we are connected with. How much iniquity! Am I to put the name of Christ with the smallest particle of iniquity? Surely not. The Scripture, then, is as simple as it can be: “Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity” -- all iniquity. Mark now how it brings out the next verse.

For in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor [2 Tim. 2:20].

That is, the house of God, the sphere of profession here upon this earth, has become, in analogy, like unto a great house, with vessels, clean and unclean, in it: which is simply the meaning of the passage. God’s home, the sphere of profession on this earth, has become, through the incompetency of man, who had responsibility with respect to it entrusted to him, like a house with all sorts of vessels, good and bad, in it.
What is to be done? Now, observe, you cannot leave the house. Bear with me for a moment; there is a little difficulty in that, to some. What I mean by leaving the house is this, that you cannot give up the profession of Christ. There is not a Christian here tonight who would do that. Hence you cannot get outside the sphere of the profession of His name; you cannot leave it. God never tells you to go out of it; God never says you are to get out of this scene of confusion. If He does, show where He says so. No; I cannot get outside of it. Supposing I had the will to get outside, I could not do it; it is out of my power. What then am I to do? Just read. “If a man purge himself.” How simple. Look how individual it is -- intensely individual. “If a man purge himself from these” -- that is, from the vessels of dishonor that are in the house, from all the elements of confusion that are in the house -- “he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work.”

Now I do not touch what is collective at all tonight; I hope to treat of that next week, if the Lord will, in connection with the third chapter. But here we have the simple claim of the truth of God on the conscience, as an individual saint of God, in the midst of the confusion into which the house has fallen in these times through man’s folly. The Holy Ghost by the apostle addresses me and says, Have you purged yourself from those vessels of dishonor? Have you purged yourself from those things that are unsuitable to Christ in the midst of this sphere of profession? He does not say, “If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a Christian, or a true believer in Christ” but, “he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use” [2 Tim. 2:21]. Oh how many there are that are not sanctified, not meet for the Master’s use! Do let me drop these words into your hearts this evening, because they have a bearing upon us, as well as a historical direction for our path and ways down here. Those words of the Spirit of God come to us with trumpet voice, even to the very oldest of us here, and even to those who have, in mercy, been given to know what it is to escape from the corruptions and confusions which crowd the sphere where His name is named. Do you not see how plainly God is keeping us up, practically, to the maintenance of the truth? It is not simply to glide into it once and for all, but there is to be the daily inward maintenance of what is outwardly expressed; and therefore there must be the cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; and remember that the filthiness of the spirit is worse than the filthiness of the flesh. Some people would make the latter worse; but it is not so; that is a shame to us, but the other is a dishonor to Christ. Some people would make the latter worse; but it is not so; that is the very thing that a Christian glories in, he rejoices that Christendom is the house of God, He will judge it. No one denies that Christendom will be judged; on what ground, then? Because it is His house. He has a claim on it, He has authority over it. It is an entire blunder to say, as many do, that because it has become confused and in ruin, because man has introduced all sorts of false materials into it, that therefore it ceases to be, in responsibility, the house of God. I will tell you what it has become. It is a witness to confusion; but it does not cease to be God’s house, because of this confusion.

Well now, the apostle here, speaking to any saint of God (because it is individual here) wishing to find his or her way, in the confusion in which everything is, says, “If a man therefore” -- what? Leaves it? How can he do that? Let me dwell a little further on this for the sake of many who may not understand: you cannot leave this house of God. Are you prepared to give up the profession of Christ’s name? Leaving the house would be as much as to say that you give up the profession of the name of Christ; in other words, you would cease publicly to profess that you were a Christian. If a person could go out of the house, that is what it would amount to. It would be an entire disavowal of the distinct and open profession of Christ’s name. You cannot do that. That is the very thing that a Christian glories in, he rejoices to profess the name of Christ.

But the words of the Spirit of God, through the apostle, to any one seeking His path in the midst of confusion, are these -- much more difficult than going out of the house, if that were possible -- “If a man purge himself” from what is unsuitable to God in the house, “he shall be a vessel unto honor”; &c. And, beloved friends, it is that purging one’s self from vessels to dishonor that are found now in the house of God here upon this

The Resource of Faith
Amidst Present Confusion
Lecture 2: 2 Timothy 3

There is one point in the second chapter which we had under our consideration last week, to which I must revert for a moment this evening, so as to make that portion of our subject complete. I allude to the twentieth and twenty-first verses; and if I recapitulate a little, it is simply to keep up the connection with what I propose to look at in this third chapter tonight.

Observe how the apostle presses this truth of the house of God -- all-important, not only in the consideration of the epistles before us now, but of any portion of Scripture; because you cannot grasp the mind of the Spirit in the epistles, unless you intelligently understand the difference between the Church of God in its responsibility as His house, and the body of Christ, in its perfection before God. The latter is before the apostle distinctly when he likens (in this twentieth verse) the “house of God,” the sphere of profession, committed to man in responsibility as a builder, not to the great house, as we noticed last week, but to a great house; that is, he takes up the figure of a house, any house, with all kinds of vessels in confusion in it; and he likens the house of God, which he calls the “church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,” to this house. He says this is what it has become in man’s hand; God entrusted it to man, as the sphere of his building, and that is what he has made out of it. He has reduced it to that state, that it is compared to a great house, with everything in it, clean and unclean.

And now comes the solemn question, What is a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do in that state of things? And what becomes a child of God, awakened to the sense of the confusion in which everything is, the wreck which the house of God has become, how is he to walk according to God? What is called Christendom is really “the house of God,” let people say what they will. I will only say in connection with it: If you deny that Christendom is the house of God, you take away the ground upon which God will judge it. It is because it is His house, He will judge it. Now no one denies that Christendom will be judged; on what ground, then? Because it is His house. He has a claim on it, He has authority over it. It is an entire blunder to say, as many do, that because it has become confused and in ruin, because man has introduced all sorts of false materials into it, that therefore it ceases to be, in responsibility, the house of God. I will tell you what it has become. It is a witness to confusion; but it does not cease to be God’s house, because of this confusion.
earth that entails upon us trouble, exercise, anxiety, difficulty, and persecution. When I see I have to retain and keep my place in the house, but to purge myself from the vessels of dishonor that are in it, then I am called to exercise of soul, nearness to God, to know what is suitable to His tastes, and what is not suitable; and a boldness, which nothing but devotedness to Christ can really give, a determination that at any cost I will glorify Him. And therefore, says the apostle, “If a man therefore 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.”

Now I do not deny that there are *instruments* whom God in His grace uses, which have not purged themselves from the things that are unsuitable; but mark this, they are not *vessels to honor*, they are not sanctified vessels, not meet for the Master’s use, and not prepared to every good work. I could not deny that God uses as instruments many who are mixed up with all the things that are unsuitable to Him in the sphere of profession. There is one thing -- just let me suggest it in passing, because it may be helpful to bring in what is closely connected with this subject. A difficulty presents itself to some people with reference to the gifts which Christ has given to His church, because these gifts are found in all sorts of associations. Now mark this, the gifts are in the *whole church*, not in *part* of it; and when you see intelligently that this is the case, that the gifts are scattered over the whole thing, and not found only in one part of the church, then you are not in the least surprised if God in His sovereignty is pleased to make use of the gifts, though they may be in associations unsuitable to Him. Many a person argues *to a false position*, because of the sovereignty of God in the use of some gift. Now I cannot argue so at all. I may argue as to His sovereignty, or as to the fact that the gifts are in the whole church; but I understand this clearly from Scripture, that in order for a man to be a vessel suited to the Master’s use, sanctified, and prepared unto every good work, he must be purged, and therefore it comes down to the individual thing, “If a man therefore purge *himself*” &c.

Now that is the first practical point which the Spirit of God brings out in connection with the disorder in which this sphere of profession is found. The first thing is, I have to purge myself from the things that are unsuitable to Him in this house of His. Mark the next verse, and then we will proceed to the third chapter:

Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, *with* them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

The pathway of God for His people in times like these would not be clearly marked without that verse. I can conceive this, that many a person might have confidence in God sufficient to say, “Well, I will purge myself.” Many a person says, “I am not connected with any of the associations.” And I am not speaking this unkindly, or disrespectfully, with reference to any denomination so-called. Many say, “I am not mixed up with any of the associations which are found in that sphere which has become confused. I am apart from them all.” But observe this, the apostle does not say that a man is to purge himself so as to remain in intense *individuality*. There is not a word of that in Scripture. Therefore that meets the question of the condition in which you will find Christians sometimes now. They say, “I am apart from the whole thing; and I am standing all alone by myself; and I am not with anyone else.”

But mark this, it is “follow with.” Who are we to follow with? Now just leave out for a moment the beginning of that 22nd verse, so as to make the sense a little clearer, and read the passage thus:

Follow with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart [2 Tim. 2:22].

There are certain characteristics of this following -- “righteousness, peace”; but just leave them out for the moment. The associations, then, what are they? What is their character? Not that I am to be an individual unit, that is clear. Not a person isolated and alone, associated with no one else. It is “follow with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.” What is the meaning of that? I have no hesitation in saying that it refers not so much to *individual* purity of heart, as to *corporate* purity. That which is in the mind of the Spirit of God here, is *collective* purity; that is, a purity marking the association. Those who are gathered together in the association which is spoken of here are those who meet on the ground of the word of God with a devotedness and affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking the maintenance of His name, His truth, and His honor, in the non-toleration of everything that would be unsuitable to Him. That is, I believe, what the apostle speaks of when he says, “Them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”: purity of heart, integrity of heart, and personal devotedness to Christ, are the characteristic marks of the association that I am *bound* to seek when I have individually purged myself.

Thus we have the two things, very distinct and marked, as to the path which becomes the saint of God in days contemplated in 2 Timothy.

Well, now I will say one word on the 24th verse: the infinite wisdom and blessed care of God the Holy Ghost in putting these words in connection with what has gone before, is manifest. He says in this verse,

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth [2 Tim. 2:24].

Because there is nothing that makes more demands on the patience, meekness, and long-suffering of the saint, than to be called to walk in a path of entire separation and isolation from all that is unsuitable to Christ in such days as these. And that is the very reason why those words are put in there by the Spirit of God; a seasonable exhortation to Timothy, and, of course, to every saint of God in measure. Every saint of God is a servant in one sense, though of course Timothy was in a special sense, and therefore more exposed to the attacks, and trials, and difficulties which beset the path.

Let me recall to your memory then these three things before we pass on to the third chapter. The first simple direction of the Spirit of God is, that I am to purge myself from what is unsuitable to Christ in the house; then, that I am to follow all these characteristics of godliness *with* those that are corporately pure; and last, that I am to maintain this position in patience,
When we come to the third chapter we find what comes down more to our own times, because we have in it the distinct features of this present moment. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall be present" (not "come"). These are the very times in which we are. We are in the perilous times of the last days. Now the first thing the apostle does is to give a description of certain great characteristics of these times. I do not dwell upon them, because I believe most here are familiar with them. When we come to the fifth verse we have what unquestionably fastens all these characteristics upon the present period, and that is, "having a form of godliness." It is a wonderful thing that with all that is enumerated in those verses, all the covetousness, boasting, pride, blasphemy, and so on, that mark these days, there should be this "form of godliness": with all these salient features of the very times we are in, there is to be found around it and over it a specious pretext or form of godliness, but without "the power thereof."

That this really brings the subject down to our days must be allowed. Is there any one here tonight so lacking in observation as to the character of these times as not to see that the apostle is exactly describing them? If you were asked to delineate them, you could not do so more accurately than this; you could not select certain great features of character which would more adapt themselves to the circumstances we are in than in these verses before us. Is it not what is all around us? Is there not an increasing, growing "form of godliness"? Is not religion entwined around everything that men take up? You must remember, there is a very great difference between "religion" and Christ. Man will do anything for "religion." He is "religious" in his very nature; and thus "religion" is connected with everything. There must be a certain amount of "religion" about everything to give it respectability in the eyes of man, and to make it palatable -- oftentimes to an uneasy conscience.

But where is the "power" of it? Now you must know very well that men will not have Christ, and that is why I make the distinction between "religion" and Christ. People must have "religion," they have no objection to it whatever; but when it is Christ, when it is what is suitable to Christ, when it is what is becoming the claims of Christ, the honor of Christ, it cuts, like a knife, far too deep for such an age as this; and thus it is people reject it, and throw it off.

Now I would speak even to those here this evening, who may have escaped from the corruptions that are in the professing house of God. Although we may have escaped, through sovereign grace and mercy, so as to stand outwardly upon a divine position, it is quite possible for us to put that position in place of Christ. And where a person puts any position, be it ever so divine or true in itself, in place of Christ, he will lose the power to retain that position, suitably to Christ, and sooner or later he gives it up. Because you never can maintain anything of God except as in relation to Christ. That is the safeguard of your heart, and a power to keep the affections of your heart true to it.

Now here, you observe, it is very distinctly said that there is all the outward show of godliness, and that is on the increase. There is formality and profession abounding, and everything of the kind is freely accepted and freely owned, but the "power" is wanting. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.”

Well, I pass over the next verse:

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, 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.

Such are the actings of the promulgators of this false system that abounds. When we come to the eighth verse, we find another character of present days; a distinct mark is that eighth verse of the present time. "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be made manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

The apostle here is likening the characteristics that are found in this great show, this empty pageant of religion without the power of it, to what took place in the history of Gods dealings with His people Israel, when He was bringing them out of Egypt into Canaan. There were the magicians of Egypt (they are those referred to here) who sought to set aside the power of God through Moses, in the hearts of His people; not by open opposition -- not by distinct, hostile, inimical display; not that, but something a thousand times more dangerous, it was subtle imitation. It was the imitation of the real thing which was attempted by Satan, through Pharaoh’s magicians, to turn aside the power of God through Moses in the deliverance of the people. There is a saying with which many here are familiar; viz., “history repeats itself.” That is perfectly true in divine things, as in human; and here you have Satan repeating himself. The very effort of the devil to hinder the deliverance of Israel, through the hand of Moses, is the principle which is resorted to by him in Christendom, at this present moment, to set aside the power of God through Moses in the deliverance of the people. There is a saying with which many here are familiar; viz., “history repeats itself.” That is perfectly true in divine things, as in human; and here you have Satan repeating himself.

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I feel it is exceedingly important, and very solemn, to read such a word as this, and connect it with the past history of God’s dealings with His people, and also with the present moment -- that as Jannes and Jambres, by their imitation of God’s doings, sought to withstand God’s working, so do these also “resist the truth.” And I would say to my brethren in the Lord this evening, be not without exercise in your consciences and hearts as to whether you are lending yourselves in any sense to a principle like that; because I believe there is far more of this imitation passing current, and receiving countenance, amongst the saints of God, than we have the smallest idea of.

There is one peculiar element about all this, one special feature -- it is all intensely human; and the more a thing appeals to what is human, the more general is its reception on all sides; it is acceptable and attractive. But the moment you introduce what is divine, that which makes demands upon a person’s conscience, and brings a person to stand totally outside the whole platform of the first man, as such, and to have to do with “the
second man,” the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is another matter altogether. And therefore you find now that any effort in Christendom that seeks to benefit man as he is, will be acceptable to the mass. Why? Because it does not ignore, and disallow totally, the standing of the first man as such; in fact, it works from the first man as a basis. It seeks to ameliorate him, it gives him a place, it seeks to operate upon him, whether upon his religious feelings, like ritualism, or upon his intellectual feelings, like rationalism. You get these two things -- ritualism and rationalism, allowing the status of the first man in a religious way and in an intellectual way.

These are world powers. You know well -- you must be conscious -- that these are growingly popular. There are a certain large class that are caught by each of them. Now I call that imitation; it is Jannes and Jambres repeated. It is exactly the same thing over again as that by which Satan sought to obstruct the deliverance of God’s people. And therefore, says the apostle to Timothy, warning him with reference to it,

As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be manifest unto all, as theirs also was [2 Tim. 3:8].

Where then is the security? I answer, as I have often done before, that the only security for any person against what is false is, knowing what is true. I do not believe any one is ever safe against that which is spurious unless he knows the genuine article. You must know the real thing not only in order to be fortified against what is false, but in order to be able to unmask it. Is it not solemn to think that there are numbers of God’s saints who could not tell you what is false? Why? Because they do not know what is true. They have not the knowledge of the truth, by which to weigh that which is false.

Here, then, is the preservative: the apostle says to Timothy in this 10th verse, “Thou hast fully known my doctrine.” Now, may I ask you, What does the apostle really mean, what has he in his mind, what is the purpose of the Holy Ghost in speaking in that way? If you were asked tonight what is Paul’s doctrine, what answer would you give? He speaks of something special, something peculiar -- “My doctrine.” What was it? Let me tell you in as few words as I can. Paul’s doctrine started with this -- the total and complete setting aside and non-recognition of man as man -- the utter denial of the first man before God, and the putting of everything in connection with the second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His death closed the history of the first man, and in His resurrection became the last Adam, the second Man, the beginning of God’s creation.

That is what Paul’s doctrine especially rested on; that was the basis of it. Of course I do not mean to say that he does not include here the Church, the body of Christ -- what he calls elsewhere “the mystery” -- but, mark this, even the truth of the church, the mystery (that is, the taking Jews and Gentiles out of their respective nationalities, and uniting them in one new man to the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have it in Eph. 2), all this stood for its basis on the redemption work of Christ, which was itself the complete setting aside of man in the flesh, and placing everything in connection with the second Man. The whole truth of the Church, the body of Christ, flows from that. And therefore Paul’s doctrine may be described as specially that which brought out the complete setting aside of man as a child of Adam before God, and the union of Jew and Gentile in one body, united by the Holy Ghost to the Head in heaven, and equally to one another on earth. Paul says to Timothy, “You have fully known my doctrine”; and, at this present moment, not a soul in this company tonight, is safe from the hostile wiles and imitations of Satan unless he knows Paul’s doctrine. You are not, be assured, safe without this; you may be tripped up at any moment by the subtility of Jannes and Jambres, unless you are versed intelligently in your soul in what the apostle speaks of here, by the Spirit, as “my doctrine.” Unless you know that, you will not be able to unravel the mysteries, cunning, and imitations of Satan at this present time.

Now Timothy (and is not this open to every saint of God today?) had “fully known Paul’s doctrine,” not partially known it. In connection, there is a passage I should like to refer to in Col. 1:24, 25, “Who 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 church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to complete the word of God,” i.e. “to fill up the word of God.” What he means is, that until he had by the Holy Ghost brought out the special truth which God had committed to him to be the minister of, the testimony of God was not filled up. The testimony of God, or “Word of God,” comprised all that we have in the New Testament Scriptures, and in the New Testament Scriptures, minus “the mystery”; but the moment that the apostle brought out what is called “the mystery” -- i.e. something that was hidden, but is now revealed; as soon as he had brought out this special revelation which was committed to him, exercising his stewardship in bringing it out, then the word of God was complete; and the whole word of God, His testimony, as the fortifying power to keep His people in the midst of the hostilities and imitations of present times, was then fully filled up.

Now it is to this that the apostle alludes here, when he says to Timothy, “You have fully known my doctrine.” The whole word of God is complete. The testimony which God has provided for His people to guard them against the counterfeits and imitations, and everything else that Satan would bring against them, is embodied now in the Scriptures; and hence it is that the apostle refers to the Scriptures a little lower down, when he says, “From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”

There are thus three great realities in 2 Tim. 3 upon which the apostle would ground Timothy and the saints of God, as their security with reference to everything that besets them. There was Paul’s doctrine which was pre-eminently the truth of Jew and Gentile, united into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven -- with the “manner of life” corresponding to it; that was the first thing. Then there was the person of Christ, in which everything was secured for eternal life, and for God’s ways even upon this earth; that was the next. And then there were the Scriptures, the revelation of the one and the other.

The apostle thus casts Timothy upon this blessed word of God, which is able to make a child wise unto salvation, and to fully furnish the man of God for every good work. And if ever
there was a day when the saints of God needed to be recalled with more distinctness than ever to that blessed, precious revelation and communication of His mind, these are the days. It is to be feared there is little deep searching of God’s word; and there is this danger, lest which is based upon scripture, and founded upon it, though blessed and useful in its place, should take the place of the authority of God’s own blessed book, in the hearts and consciences of His people, and make them correspondingly deficient as to power, and firmness, and definiteness, amid a hostile Christendom. Because, be assured, if it is not the Scriptures that are at the foundation, if it is not the word of God that is the power of our souls with regard to everything, every position I take and occupy, then our faith is simply standing in the wisdom of men. And I do say that we are not free from that danger. We as much as others are exposed to the snare of our faith resting in the wisdom of men instead of the power of God. It is the Scriptures, the word of God alone, which can furnish and perfect (ἀπροφάγος) a man of God for every good work.

I will say a little upon the latter part of the tenth verse. “You have fully known my doctrine,” which he connects with “manner of life.” Now, here is the terrible lack, more or less with us all; that is, as to the “manner of life” which is suited to “my doctrine.” What is the “manner of life” as he expresses it, which he connects with his doctrine? I have no hesitation in saying that it was a practical maintenance of heavenly citizenship in an earthly scene. I believe his “manner of life” was that complete, total, thorough strangerness, heavenly strangerness, in the midst of a scene that is pre-eminently earthly, and in the midst of a world characterized greatly by those who profess to be in the midst of a world characterized by those who profess to be complete, total, thorough strangership, heavenly strangership, in an earthly scene. I believe his “manner of life” was that saying that it was a practical maintenance of heavenly citizenship.

This it is which makes it solemn to every one of us. A man may say, “I know what Paul’s doctrine is” but let us challenge our hearts, is there “the manner of life”? Are there the circumstances, habits, ways, appearance, suited to that doctrine? And mark how he lays as much stress upon one as the other. It is not simply, “You have fully known my doctrine,” but “doctrine, manner of life”; and then he tells the features of this life, “purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience” (endurance). All these are to be combined with the maintenance of a distinct isolated, heavenly citizenship, and narrow path in a hostile world.

I know very well we are sometimes inclined to plead the narrowness of the path as an excuse for the narrowness of our affections. That will not do. If a man says, “My heart is narrow because my path is narrow,” I say he is ignorant, foolish, or worse; if your heart is narrow it is because you are not near enough to Christ; that is the true reason. Oh; the nearer I am to Christ, the more I know what it is to have personal fellowship with that blessed One who has brought me into such a wondrous position; the narrower will my path be; but I shall seek to have my heart large. That is, my heart will expand in proportion to my knowledge of the heart of Christ; and at the same time my feet will traverse more closely the path which He has marked out for me.

The Lord, by His Spirit, fix these things upon our hearts this evening! I feel it is a subject of the deepest importance for every one of us, in view of the nearness of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have positively arrived at the beginning of the end. If the apostle could say, by the Holy Ghost, that it was “the last hour” -- “little children, it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18) -- how much more are we in the closing seconds, as it were, of that last hour? And ought there not to be in your heart and mine, not merely a desire to be found in a clean path in the midst of the corruptions around us, but if Christ is our object, ought there not to be in our hearts at least this longing to be suitable to Him? It is not merely that I may be suitable to the claims of my conscience. I believe many are satisfied with that. I do not overlook it, but what I am stating now will secure that. But the thing is, suitability in the power of life, and in the affection of a heart that draws its springs from a love that never changes! It is suitability to my object, and how can I know what is, unless I personally know Himself? It is from Himself I get the expression of His mind and will, His desires and His tastes. How much do we study the pleasure of the One that we delight to call our object? What exercise of heart does it give you to be suitable to Him? What exercise of heart do you go through to find out what He would like, and when you have found out what would please that blessed One, who is so little pleased in this world, how much self-denial is there to carry it out?

Remember, too, that you will never get motives apart from your object; and you never get the satisfaction of your desires except in the Person who creates those desires in you. Oh, what one looks for increasingly is, such a real, whole-hearted, genuine desire to be suitable to Christ, that blessed One, the rejected man on earth, but the accepted, glorified Man at God’s right hand, pursuing my way in the face of the hostilities, confusions, and imitations that are in His house! And do not forget that it is His house still. You may call it “the great house,” if you rightly understand the expression; but it is His house, “the house of God.” It belongs to Him. He has authority, claims, rights, over it, and He will judge it.

Here we are, then, in the midst of all this, with Himself set before us as the spring and power for all that is suitable to Him; and if we are looking for His coming, and expecting Him, what delight to the heart to desire through grace that which is suitable to Himself. What a blessing it would be if there was a little more of that amongst us, nothing about us that could prevent us from looking forward, with a welcome and anticipation of joy, to His coming for us any moment.

The Lord, by His Spirit, set Him before us increasingly, and give us a more true desire to know His mind; and cast us more upon the word of God in these times; more upon the blessed revelation of God, so that we may know what we are standing upon. I maintain there is not one of us who ought not to be as certain about his position ecclesiastically, as he is about his soul’s salvation. You ought to have as much divine certainty about the one as the other. Because if it is contained in this book, then I ought to be sure of it; divinely certified because my soul is resting upon this unerring testimony; just as I know the truth with reference to my title by the blood of Christ.

The Lord bless His word by His Spirit, and create a desire in us to know its depths, for His own name’s sake!

The Power of the Glad Tidings

Romans 1:16-18

This is one of the most comprehensive statements of the Spirit of God with respect to the glad tidings, and the apostle, observe, beloved brethren, gives this as his reason for not being “ashamed of the gospel.” The expression, “of Christ,” is not in the original, the statement really is, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” I need not say that it is the gospel of Christ in one sense, and it is the gospel of God in another sense; but he is speaking of it here simply without reference to its being either of Christ as through Him, or of God as from Him, it is simply the gospel in itself, the good news: “I am not ashamed of the good news.” Now some people are ashamed of it. Are you? A great many people are ashamed of it, and for different reasons, but still they are ashamed of it. Are you ashamed of it? Why are you ashamed of it? It will uncover all your filth, and your wretchedness, and your nakedness, and your destitution, and your misery, and your ruin. It will do that for this reason -- that it is God’s great extrication for sinners out of that condition, His extricating power for them. And the deplorable part of the matter is, that people are in that plight and are not conscious of it; they are not alive to the sense of it, their souls and consciences are not moved by the deep danger that they are in. Men and women who are unconverted, who are living away from God in their sins and lost estate, unforgiven and guilty, are hanging over the precipice of hell, unconsciously. If a man finds any one walking over a precipice like that, and goes with rather a rude grasp and lays his hand on the shoulder of the person that is in danger, and roughly, it may be, seeks to awake him out of his sleep, you will say it is rough, but oh! beloved friends, how kind, what marvelous mercy to be arrested before it is too late. And it is just that kind of thing that you find so frequently in the minds and hearts of people, that they shrink back from this, they are averse to it, they are positively ashamed of the gospel. It is said that the only person that really is ashamed of his God and his religion, is the person who at least made a profession of the true God and the true religion. The worshiper of false gods, he is not ashamed of his religion or his god. What a strange thing to think, that the professing Christian is the only person that is really ashamed of his religion. The Mohammedan or the Turk, or the heathen, is not ashamed of his religion, nay, rather he glories in it; but the professor of Christ is ashamed. Now the apostle says, “I am not ashamed.” He glori ed in it, as we know; it was that of which he made his boast; he exulted in it.

Now let me for a moment or two seek to interest your hearts and consciences in the thought of what the gospel really is. And if you look a little further back in this chapter, you will find a divine definition of it, a most precious unfolding of what the gospel is in its own nature. The apostle says he was “a servant” -- a bondman, “of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle” -- a called apostle, an apostle by calling -- “separated unto the gospel of God” -- he was set apart to it. What a sense it gives the heart and conscience of what the gospel is in that way, when God conceived it of such preciousness and value in His eyes that He said, There is a man whom I will separate unto that very thing, I separate him to the service of that gospel; and go where he will all this wide world over, whether he makes tents (for he was a tent-maker) or whether he is engaged in any other trade, still, there he was, he was Christ’s bondservant, and he was separated to the gospel, and his making the tents did not in the slightest degree take away from the fact, that he was separated unto God’s gospel; that for him was the great thing; whether he made few or many tents the gospel was that to which he was called out, separated to it and sent out for it, “separated unto the gospel of God.” Now mark, what the Spirit tells us this gospel is -- “which he had promised before by his prophets in holy writings.” It was never, beloved friends, a thing known in former days; it was promised, but I need not say that a promise and the accomplishment are not the same thing. A promise of God is equal to an accomplishment as to the certainty of the thing being brought about; but there is a vast difference between a thing coming out in full blown accomplishment into plain light and a thing being promised.

Now God had promised to Israel a deliverer, one who was to deliver that people, and there were promises in the Old Testament scriptures of glory and blessing, even unto Gentiles, in the coming days. But now we are come down into accomplishment; and what God delights to do is to take things out of pattern. God put them into pattern, and God takes them out of pattern; and you and I are living in the days when they are taken out of pattern; we have come to the day of accomplishment, when the promise is made good. But it was promised in holy writings. And now look at the promise, and then you will find what the gospel is --

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be
the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection out from among the dead {Rom. 1:4}.

Now there you have the gospel. And the gospel in that way is summed up in two things, that is to say, there is the Person of the One who gives all its blessedness, and substance, and preciousness to the glad tidings, there is the Person of the Deliverer, namely, “Jesus Christ our Lord, made of David’s seed according to the flesh.” Here we have the Person, even the Savior. What is the good of telling me about a salvation that has not in it all the value and preciousness, and all the divine stamp of the One who alone was competent to work out such a salvation, suitable to God and suitable for sinners? Because the more you tell me of the vastness of the salvation, and you do not tell me of the Savior, there is an aching void and want in my heart. Oh, be assured, the more you tell of the nature of the work and the fulness of it, the more poor hearts will crave to know, Who is competent to do it? where was the Person who could give effect to that? where was the One who could accomplish that? where was the One who could hold up one hand to the throne of God in the heavens, and stretch another down to the deep need of a poor wretched creature like me in his sins and misery? Where, for instance, was the One who could meet the earnest longings of the heart of a Job when he said,

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both?

Where was the One who could span the eternal throne in the heavens and stoop down to pick up a poor, wretched, guilty, lost, miserable, hell-deserving sinner like myself in this world? That is what I want, and therefore the first part of this wonderful glad tidings concerns itself with the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” this blessed Person, the Deliverer, the One who was competent to accomplish a divine work. And more than that, as you will find in Heb. 1 creation is attributed to this blessed One as Son. God rolled these worlds into existence by His Son, made everything by the Son; “By him were all things created.” Look at creation, who could do that? Who could bring worlds into existence? No one but a divine Person; the Son made the worlds, “by whom he made the worlds.” Now mark this. That same One who made the worlds, who, as the God of providence, upholds everything by the word of His power, by whom everything was created and made here, became the purger of sins. It was just as much a divine work to do that on the cross, on the ground of which you and I, as poor, wretched, guilty creatures, could get the forgiveness of our sins, as it was to roll this world into existence, and the One who could do the one was the only One who could do the other. No one but a divine Person could come down here into this world, and become a man, in order that He might make purgation of sins. It was none else than He who made the worlds, who upholds them by the word of His power, who by Himself, having made purgation of our sins, took His seat, and took it as of title, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, He was entitled to sit down there in virtue of His work, so that we may say He sat down in wondrous right in heaven. The very One who came down here, and emptied Himself, and became a man, and bore the judgment of the cross, and accomplished it all perfectly and fully to the infinite satisfaction of Him who sent Him. He, when He had done it all, and finished it all, and perfected it all, leaving not one single thing that had not stamped upon it the divine mark of the perfection of Him that could impart perfection to His work, as soon as ever He had done it, He took His seat in right there. What a joy to look at Christ seated in right in heaven, not by permission, but in right! And in the right of His saving work, in all the right and efficacy and completeness, measured by the eye of God, as God alone would measure it, Christ has taken His seat at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

Now this is what you get, beloved friends, in that blessed Person. And it is a wonderful thing when the heart gets personally acquainted with Him in that way in its misery and wretchedness, and says, That is my Savior. You can understand well how the apostle, though he was the vessel of inspiration, and God was moving this vessel to communicate His own mind in the various writings that are brought out -- yet how suited the vessel was for the special work that God had called him to. For this very one, Saul of Tarsus, was the man to whom that blessed One had spoken on the road to Damascus, a persecutor, an injurious person, a blasphemer, a man that wasted and made havoc of the saints of God, who hated Jesus, who hated Christ in glory, to think of him being arrested by that blessed One, addressed by Him, called by name, that Saul had heard his own name on the lips of that blessed Jesus, you may understand what a vessel he was to bring out the glories of His Person and the perfections of His Saviorship, if I may use the word, to bring out the mercy and compassion of the heart of Christ, as he was divinely inspired to communicate these things; so he says it was “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, made of the seed of David according to the flesh” -- his own nation, for he was a Jew -- “but declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection out from among the
Now this is the first thing in the glad tidings. It concerns Christ. It concerns the work, but it concerns the Person who did this work, and all the blessedness of it. And then the work itself, that work which has perfectly glorified God according to all His own holy, righteous nature, and met the deep needs of the sinner.

Now that is what the apostle says he is not ashamed of; he is not ashamed of the gospel.

And now he tells you why he is not ashamed of it. I am not ashamed of the gospel for this reason -- it is God’s power. Now this is a day in which every kind of contrivance is put into force to benefit and ameliorate the condition men are found in; but man cannot do it. You have got every kind of thing developed, but what are they being developed into? Every conceivable kind of moral corruption. Is the condition of things better, the moral state of society better? The circumstances of men, are they better? Let us fairly and fearlessly look at it. You have an age of invention, science extended, marvelous manifestations of man’s reason and powers, education advancing, making vast strides on every hand, discovery after discovery; but look at the condition of man morally, is man better? Are his social relationships better? Is man himself better? Beloved friends, it is a development that is almost too black to look at, a development into every sort of wickedness as marked as it was in the days of the flood. And those days immediately preceding the flood, though they were not of course up to and equal to the progress of the present day, yet they were remarkable days, days of discovery, though they were infantine days, “there were giants in the earth in those days.” But what was the earth when God looked at it? Filled with violence and filled with corruption. The two great principles that overlapped each other on this earth, which necessitated the divine bringing in of the first great judgment that swept that generation away from God’s eye, they are just the principles you find abroad in the world to-day -- violence and corruption. That is what the earth witnessed in those days, and that is what the world witnesses in this day -- violence and corruption.

Well now, you may try and bring in every kind of remedial measure -- and I do not question the social good for a moment, the social advantage resulting from certain machinery and certain expedients that have been put in force, but you cannot reach the root of the disease which is there. God has but one thing for fallen man, and that is His gospel, that is all. You cannot change the condition of fallen man as such, you may lay off one vice and another, but you have not changed the root principle which is there. Thank God for all the civilization and government of the world, though the foundations are being fast loosened at present, still there is the principle of government accepted and owned by the world as such. And hence, evil doers, lawless men, are shut up in prisons and reformatories, which is right enough in government, but this does not change the nature of the man that is thus sentenced. A man undergoes a sentence of imprisonment because of crime, and he is shut up for life it may be, or for a term of years, but unless God intervene in His grace, that man comes out in principle and root as he went in. The occasions for the manifestation of sin are taken away from him, he has not in prison the opportunity to sin; if he had, he would sin as before; he comes out unchanged, unaltered; shut up it may be for years, if the occasion comes in his way, that which he is, declares itself, he is unchanged in nature: “that which is born of the flesh, is flesh.”

Now the gospel is God’s power; and a power is not a remedy. There are no words that I more dislike in my very inmost heart than to speak of the gospel as a remedy. A remedy? I hold it to be a miserable word to apply to God’s gospel. Remedy? No, beloved friends, but power; it is the power of God. And what is the power of God? The gospel. And what is the gospel? The gospel is concerning His Son Jesus Christ; first of all as to His Person, and secondly as to His work.

Now look at one scripture for a moment in connection with that work of His, where you find the same thought presented by the Spirit of God, and mark the words of the Holy Ghost in these verses (1 Cor. 1:18) -- “For the preaching of the cross” -- which has to do with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ -- “is to them that perish foolishness.” Is it foolishness to any one of you here this evening? Do you consider it a foolish thing? Do you look at it as a vain thing for a man to stand up and speak of these things? Then you are perishing; God says you are perishing; “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.” How solemn the word of God is, how it finds us out, how it detects us as to where we are. “To them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.” “The preaching of the cross,” the shameful part of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, that part that man gave Him, for man nailed Him on that tree, man nailed Him on a gibbet between two thieves, the very shame and opprobrium connected with that cross; “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.” And mark, more than that, beloved friends; because he says in verse 22, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The gospel is the power of God, the preaching of the cross is the power of God, Christ is the power of God. Here you get the gospel, the subject of the gospel, and that part of it too, the cross, the shame of it, the opprobrium of it, everything that could make it contemptible in the eyes of man, all linked up with God’s power. Says the apostle, I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God to extricate poor, wretched, ruined, lost, hell-deserving sinners from their misery and their guilt; and God can reach them in this estate by that gospel concerning His Son Jesus Christ and His finished work on that cross.

But more, beloved brethren; it is the power of God unto what? Because there will be a power of God in judgment. There is a day coming when the power of God will be manifested in destruction. There is a day coming for this world when God will judge it in righteousness; He is saving sinners in grace out of it now. But I tell you tonight, sinner, the day of judgment is appointed, and the judge is ordained. “He has
appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. ’ That day is coming, and that day will be the witness, the marvelous witness, of the power of God to destruction, when the besom of judgment shall sweep this earth of those who have rejected Christ and refused God’s great salvation, and there will not be a solitary ray of mercy in that blackness, not a solitary ray of light in that darkness. That day is coming. And oh! if that day should overtake you, sinner, in your sins, if that day should find you an unwashed and unforgiven criminal in your sins, if it shall find you out of Christ in your sins, and out of Christ, as the result of having refused, despised, rejected, neglected God’s great salvation! What then? How solemn to think of these things! God has appointed the day; He has ordained the judge. And who is the judge? That Jesus whom you, sinner, are rejecting this night; that Jesus whom you refuse, it may be, in your heart of hearts this moment, that Savior in whose face you see no beauty to desire Him, a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; you hide your face from Him; He was despised and you esteemed Him not, though He was the bearer of our griefs and our sorrows. And it will be He, it will be that same Jesus. Oh think of that, beloved friends. There will be the power of God in destruction, the power of God in judgment.

This world has often seen the power of God in judgment. Was it not so in the deluge? Was it not so when the springs of the earth beneath and the windows of heaven above were opened, death had no mandate to stay its force, but reigned triumphant round and round the world. Was not that the power of God to destruction? And the coming day will be His power in destruction and in judgment; but now, blessed be His name, and thank God for it, in the Marvels of His grace, now He is sending forth through the silver trumpet of His gospel, the tidings of the power of God to what? The power of God to Salvation. I do long to interest your hearts in it. We find here power connected with salvation—the Lord be praised for it. We could all connect power with judgment, with destruction, but how blessed to connect it with salvation. “It is the power of God unto salvation,” the power of God to set a poor, wretched, hell-bound slave of Satan free from his sins and misery, the power of God to wash your soul, sinner, from all its crimson stains tonight, the power of God unto salvation to extricate you, to deliver you, to take you out of that bondage, to set you free from that thraldom, to take away the slavery from off your conscience, to take away the fear of death. Yes, there is upon the hearts of men, if they are exercised in conscience, the fear of death. I remember well myself when I was afraid of death, when I could not look at death. And I know right well it is so, for I see strong men who are afraid to look at death, they do not like to see death, would go any distance rather than see a man dead, rather than see all that is left when the last great enemy has done his awful work. I know people cannot bear to look at it; they shrink from it. Why? What is the reason?

There is a terror and fear no doubt, but why? To look into sightless eyes, to see a cold marble brow, and a tongue silenced for ever, what is there in that? Nothing in the mere physical part of it; but it is this -- “after death the judgment.” And men and women in their consciences know that. You know perfectly well, however the devil may try to steel that poor heart of yours, however he may try to rock you to sleep in his awful cradle, you know there is a hereafter, you know there is a day of reckoning, you know the moment is coming when everything will be brought to light, every secret thing brought out, when God will hold high inquest. Oh! you know that. There are lucid moments of conscience in the hearts of men, and they fear and quake as they think of eternity. Yes, this is true, even though they go to what just suits their will, and their passion, and their pleasure, and their lusts, they give themselves over to the devil to lull them with his soporifics and drug them with his drains; they give themselves over to the devil because they wish to have the world and its pleasures and the lusts of their own heart, but for all that, they have wretched moments, moments of misery -- may God grant such may come upon some of your consciences here tonight, these waking moments.

There are waking moments, when man suddenly, as it were, wakes up to this; yes, eternity, hereafter; there is a hereafter, there is a day of reckoning coming, there is a moment at hand when God will have something to say, when I shall have to give account of myself to God, when I shall have to stand before God. “As I live, saith Jehovah, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” Such are the thoughts of these moments, friends. These are the lucid intervals in the moral madness that men are found in, lucid intervals when conscience asserts its prerogatives in men. Oh, how solemn to think of it; as one looks at the stream of human beings passing along, where, oh where, are they going? I confess to you, I never walk the streets of this great city without feeling a heavy depression over my heart as the multitude passes before my eyes, the millions of this great London with its sins and sorrows. Where are they all going to? What is to be the end, the issue of it all? What will eternity be for all these men and women? What road are they traveling? What will be the goal of all this? Where will they be found? Ah! beloved friends, it is very easy to trifle, but I do not believe that any person in his sound, calm mind as men even -- I do not believe for one moment that any man is such a fool as to believe that when a man dies, he just dies like a brute-beast, that he dies like a dog, and there is the end of him.

I know perfectly well people may adopt such views, in order to steel their hearts, and in order to get over the uneasy convictions of conscience, but I believe there is in the bosom of man a conviction which is implanted there, and which asserts itself. There is a day of reckoning coming, there is another time at hand, there is a day of judgment impending, a day of assize, when God will bring everything into light, the secrets of hearts, the counsels of hearts, the things that are hidden there in your hearts, men and women, the secret things you have buried, as you think, deep down there, that you think nobody knows; God will bring every secret thing out, He will make manifest all the hidden things of darkness.

But now, beloved friends, thank God that while that day still tarries, there is at this present moment a power of God unto salvation, and that the gospel is God’s power to set persons free from their sins, to give them the knowledge of the
forgiveness of their sins, and to know this as a present reality, the purging of their consciences from every spot and stain of sin now, so that they can have and enjoy the forgiveness of their sins, have peace with God now in their souls, and have heaven begun now on earth. The gospel is indeed “the power of God unto salvation.”

Now mark this other word a moment here. To whom is it the power of God? Who are they for whom this gospel is intended? Is not that a very interesting subject for all our hearts? Who, again let me inquire? How can I get it? says one. I would give everything to get it, says another. You cannot get it for anything. The wealth of empires, the wealth of worlds, would not buy it. No money on earth could purchase it, it is priceless, as far as value is concerned, nothing in that way can secure it. I know very well God is pleased to raise that question in hearts, Whom is this for? how does this reach a sinner? You say to me, You have told us of God’s power to salvation, you have told us God has got but one power to reach poor, wretched, lost men, and that is His gospel; that His gospel can come down to where we are in our misery and ruin and lost estate, and reach us there, and take us out of it, but how are we to get this? Now listen to the word a moment, a deeply interesting and most precious word it is. “It is the power of God unto salvation” -- to whom?

I remember when I was young I was taught, and I suppose most people here tonight were taught in their youth, beloved friends, that which I know I found clinging very hard to my poor, wretched heart many a day afterward; I was indoctrinated, trained, taught, educated in the idea, that if I conducted myself properly, if I was a good child, God would love me. There never was a more thorough denial of the gospel of the grace of God than that. And, beloved friends, look at the form that has taken. It may seem a very small thing in the nursery to have been taught at one’s mother’s knee and to have been trained up in that kind of thing, but the strength of early impressions is marvellous, it is wonderful what a hold they have over the heart, and how long they last. In proof look at the religious shape, the theological shape, that doctrine has taken, look what that simple instruction, false as it is in root and principle, has developed into in theology and religion and so-called Christian teaching, that a poor sinner is so to comport himself, so to carry himself in his conduct and in his ways, as to secure the love and goodness of God. And that idea, beloved friends, is spread abroad on every hand, and it is that which a great many people are really affected by, so that they refer to their conduct for their acceptance and for their interest in Christ. And I feel assured there are some here tonight who are in that condition.

A person told me not many days ago, whom I believe to be really safe, through the precious blood of Christ, that they were very happy in the knowledge of Christ’s salvation when they were walking well, but that they were exceedingly uncertain about their soul’s salvation when they were walking badly. Well now, if they had said they were very happy in communion and fellowship with God when they were walking well, and that they had lost communion and lost the sense of His presence when they were walking ill, they would have said what was quite true and right. But to say they had lost the sense of their acceptance, that they were not sure that their souls were saved when they were walking badly, but they were sure their souls were saved when they were walking well, was to attribute the salvation of their souls in some wise to their conduct. Now this is utterly false, beloved friends, and a perversion of God’s gospel, it is a destructive denial of the truth of God, and I will say, never was there a more destructive denial than this.

Observe how the truth is here in a nutshell. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, not to every one that merits it, not to every one that makes good a title to it, but “to every one that believeth.” Is there any priority in order? There is; and most precious and beautiful is the priority in order -- “to the Jew first,” and then to the Greek, but the principle of blessing is the same for both. The ground upon which a Jew receives eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ and forgiveness of his sins to-day, is the same as that upon which the Gentile receives eternal life and the forgiveness of his sins. There is not one way of salvation for the Jew and another for the Gentile. The testimony goes to the Jew first, and rightly, because that was the order of God’s ways; the Jew first in the order of testimony, and the Gentile afterwards; but the ground or basis of blessing is the same. And in this epistle the apostle brings home the great double ground upon which this dealing of God with men, whether Jews or Gentiles, in this world, takes place, he looks at all men in the same common plight, all guilty sinners before God, guilty and alive in their sins before God, short of the glory of God, covered all over with filth and corruption, and he says, There is “no difference.” He looks at the Jew, and he says, as it were, You belong to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, your nationality is all right, it is true Jewish blood you have in your veins, like Saul of Tarsus it may be, a Jew both on father’s and mother’s side, we might say not a drop of Gentile blood in your veins; and then he, as it were, looks at the Gentile, and he says, “There is no difference,” all are alike before God; “They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Though the Jew has marvelous privileges as belonging to that ancient people, beloved for the fathers’ sakes, still, morally before God, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. And, beloved friends, how blessed this is. There is this wonderful “no difference” principle -- both guilty, both in their sins.

Now look at the other for a moment. In Rom. 10, when he speaks again of Jew and Gentile, there is a magnificent unfolding of God’s grace. He says there is no difference in their own estate between Jew and Gentile, they are both guilty and both polluted in their sins; but he goes to the divine side, and says, There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Oh, how blessed to think of Him carrying that “no difference” principle up to the heart of God! He carries it down to my corruption, and He carries it up to the throne of God in the heavens. He brings that “no difference” principle to put us all in one common plight of guilt; and He brings that “no difference’s principle to wake up our hearts in confidence; “The same Lord over all is rich” -- it is not a little bit of mercy, a little bit of salvation, a little trickling bit of love and
forgiveness, but “rich (oh that you might get the sense of it); the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” -- how simple that is -- “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Have you ever called upon Him? Have you ever shut yourself up in your own room, in the dire distress of your heart, with the thought of the judgment day that is coming, with the thought of your sins, both staring you in the face, and you having to meet God, have you ever thus shut yourself up to call upon that name? “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Whosoever,” high or low, rich or poor, black or white, good or bad, great sinner or little sinner, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Oh, beloved friends, how blessed that gospel is which comes down like that to where we are! How blessed is the power of God unto salvation that meets us just as we are! It is God’s power unto salvation to every one that believeth; and you know calling upon the name of the Lord is believing. “How shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?” And, thank God, He has sent and does send out preachers of His grace. Thank God, He also says of those He sends, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace”; they are as beautiful, says God, in my eyes as the Messiah’s; for it is the very passage that is referred to Messiah in Isaiah; in ch. 52, speaking of Him as the introducer of blessing to His people Israel, it says,

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

And in the New Testament, these very words that are applied to that blessed One are applied to the ones whom He has sent as the messengers of His heart and His love to a world lying steeped in its iniquity and in its sins, to bless them by His gospel, which is His “power . . . unto salvation unto every one that believeth.” Oh, beloved friends, may the Lord in wonderful grace give your hearts to seize hold of the preciousness of this rich and great salvation of God tonight. Have you found it? that is the question. Do you desire to have it? Should you like to have the forgiveness of your sins? Should you like to have that weight from off your conscience and that burden from off your soul? You may say, I do not know how to get it; but should you like to have it? Oh, believe me, that is the way God puts it; the devil tries to get you to connect it with power in you, but God has connected it with will. Think of the Lord, how He wept over the city; oh, how touching! Bear with me a moment, if I am importunate with earnestness of heart, beloved friends. I look at the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Missionary, Servant and Prophet in the midst of Israel, the Messiah of that people, beloved for the fathers’ sakes; when He was down here upon earth, and came to the city, it is said, “When he beheld the city, he wept over it.” To look upon it thus, that city as it were, broke the heart of Jesus. “He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day” -- and this may be just “thy day,” sinner, tonight -- “the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Oh, how solemn those words! Ah! says the Savior, it is too late now, the day is past, the hours are fled, too late now; oh, if thou hadst only known in thy day! Think of it, beloved friends, His heart as it were broken, when He surveyed the condition of His people, the state of the nation. “If thou hadst known” -- known what? “The things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Beloved Friends, I would plead with you earnestly tonight: I would plead with you affectionately. You have tonight; you have this moment. Do you desire to be saved? If you are not saved, will you come and be saved tonight? Come and trust that living, loving, precious Savior tonight. Come and cast yourself upon the fulness of that redeeming love to night; come now. Yea, come and listen to His own words. Hearken, He pleads with you as He entreats you to come, as He says to you, “Come.” How often those words were upon His lips! How often He said, “Come”; as He stood in the highways and byways of this world: “Come, come.” And ere the books of this precious scripture were closed, ere the last words of revelation and inspiration passed from the vessels, you remember well what expression that word gives to that loving longing in the heart of Jesus when you read those precious words in Rev. 21,

The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come;

and then, because the church always has the heart of Christ, though, alas! some of His people have not, but the bride has the heart of the Bridegroom, she turns in the affection of the Bridegroom’s heart to a poor, thirsty, dying, starving, perishing world, and she says, as it were, Is there one thirsty soul here, let him come, “let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Will you be that one tonight? Come now; if you have never come before, come tonight; come and trust Him; come and be a receiver at His hands; come and hear the words of life from His own lips this night; come and cast yourself upon that precious Savior and that finished work. I plead with you earnestly and affectionately. It may be the last opportunity you may ever have; you may never hear it again. Before another Lord’s day, before another morn comes round, before another hour, it may be all passed away, and the life that now beats within your breast may be fled; therefore I plead with you earnestly, affectionately, and urgently, and entreat you to come; come now; come this night; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is that you have need of Him.”

Pilate’s Three Questions
Matthew 27:21-28

The chapter from which these verses are taken records the details of the blessed Lord’s trial before Pilate. Who was this Pilate? First, he was the Roman governor of Judea, said to be a man that exercised excessive cruelty during all the time of his administration; this seems to be borne out by Luke 13:1.
Next, this Pilate was a man who had no *special* or *peculiar* animosity to the blessed Lord; on the contrary, he had a very distinct sense of his innocence, and sought to give effect to it by releasing Him. According to Pilate’s wife, the Lord Jesus was “that just man”; according to Pilate himself, Jesus was not only “this just person,” but was declared to be One in whom no fault was found. But Pilate had a large stake in the world of his day, and besides he was Caesar’s friend; if he could have secured the one and maintained the other, he would have let the blessed One free; but, failing this, he cast in his lot with the rejecters and murderers of Jesus. What a picture of many a one in the present day! Friends, is it a picture of you? It is impossible to take sides with Christ and the world. “No man can serve two masters.” Which is your master, Christ or the world?

The three solemn questions which he puts to the Jews respecting Jesus, are:

1. “Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?”
2. “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?”
3. “What evil hath he done?”

Now with respect to the first question, it may be well to state that it was, we believe, a custom among the Jews at the time of the passover to have a prisoner set free, in token or commemoration of the great deliverance which Jehovah had wrought for them. Pilate, knowing this, seized the opportunity as a door of escape for himself in his miserable dilemma. Alas! what is man not capable of? But if his question exposes himself, and the agonies of a conscience in its unrest, it also fully manifests the state of Israel and that of all men morally. It brought out into the full blaze of light man’s *picture* of himself, and the agonies of a conscience in its unrest, it also fully manifests the state of Israel and that of all men morally. It brought out into the full blaze of light man’s *choice*. Mark it well, the Jews have set before them the murderer Barabbas, and the spotless, holy Jesus; Barabbas means son of Abba! Was the devil mocking them with the name? This man was the display of satanic power in a twofold way: first, as a murderer (see John 8:44), and next as a rebel against the very authority that Pilate was appointed to vindicate and uphold. The Jews loved Barabbas as they hated Jesus. They choose Barnabas -- “Not this man but Barnabas.” Here, then, is the solemn representation of the world’s *choice*: a rejected Savior tests all men. Men and brethren, suffer me to appeal to you as to where you stand with respect to this solemn test. What is Christ to you? Have you bowed in your sins and misery and owned Him as your Savior and your Lord? Have you found in the blood of His cross a *discharge from all the guilt of your sins*, and the condemnation you are exposed to in consequence? Have you seen, further, in that blood, His blood, your *peace with God*, made once and for ever? Be assured that *pardon* and *peace* are both to be found there, and *only there*. He is the peace, He made the peace; He preached peace. Men and brethren, have you got it?

Further, this question of Pilate, which manifested the condition of Israel, sets forth, as it were, in type the *moral state of man* -- man’s *choice* of sin and Satan, rather than good and Christ. Deeply solemn is the fact that man, as such, has no heart for God, he prefers his lust, his vanity, his pleasure even, to the Christ of God. “When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men.” “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.” These are the prophetic and historic declarations of God as to this fact, that the one thing that is strong in the world, and in man’s heart, is enmity against Christ.

Further, observe, friends, how this choice was “*their will*” (Luke 23:35). Oh what words! Sinner, in your sins and nature, guilty and away from God this night, behold here the picture of yourself, your *will* against Christ, your *choice* made, anything or any one but Him. Hearken, I beseech of you, to the words of the Lord Jesus in respect of all this, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, He says to the women who followed Him with bewailing and lamentation, the fruit merely of natural feeling excited by affecting circumstances: “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Deeply solemn words! And why weep? Because days of weeping were coming, when it should be said to the mountains, “Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us!” Oh think of this! “Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?” How truly has it been said, that man rejects the green tree, and God rejects the dry!

For Israel *then* life was there in very truth, in the Person of Jesus the Son of God, and they refused it, and are given up in consequence; but *now* all is found, and *only* found, in a dead and risen Christ. Oh, may God give you to weigh and ponder these momentous realities in his presence; as I once more put the question to your conscience, *What is your choice*?

Second question. Having made their choice, Pilate again inquires of them with respect to the One whom they had rejected: “What shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?” It suggests to the mind the thought of the blessed One being, as it were, in the way. How can He be got rid of? How disposed of? Hearken to their cry: “Let him be crucified!” They thus constitute themselves the “murderers” of the “Just One”; and when the actual moment had arrived, He was nailed to the cross by wicked hands. The cross is thus the expression of the world’s united hatred of the Christ of God. “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against Jehovah, and against his Christ.” All classes and conditions of men were represented in this: the debauched and bloody Herod; the cunning, world-loving Pilate; the idolatrous Gentiles; the religious people of Israel. Men and brethren, you and I were represented there, we have a nature and hearts of like stuff with those who nailed the Savior on the tree; in that motley confederacy, we can easily see ourselves; the same blood is ours, the same wicked hearts and hands, the same alienation and enmity and pride; and, in that awful cry which man howled out in the hatred of all that was and because it was good, “Crucify him, crucify him,” our voices joined. How solemn to reflect on this, ponder it well, oh sinner! you that still and *now reject* and refuse God’s great salvation. Think, oh think, of that day that is coming, when
God will demand of the world, What have you done with my Son? If you die in your sins, unsaved, what answer will you give to that question? If the Lord Jesus comes for His own, and you are left behind, what will you do, where shall you appear?

But observe this, beloved friends, that whilst man with wicked hands nailed the Savior to the cross; we can, through grace, announce to you the blessed news, that there, too, we, through faith, can see nailed by God every demand and claim that was “against us” -- that was “contrary to us” (Col. 2:14); there, too, the whole array of principalities and powers was spoiled, a show made of them openly, the blessed One triumphing over them; there, too, faith can see the end of man judicially before God: verily, it would be impossible to overrate the magnitude of the cross, looked at from either the divine or human side.

Now we come to Pilate’s third question: namely, “What evil hath he done?” Oh think of all the value of this monosyllable “He!” The brightness of the Father’s glory and the expression of His substance! It is of Him, in the blessedness of His Person, in the grace and goodness of all His ways, that all scripture testifies; His name runs like a golden thread throughout the divine record: we may, by faith, hear the whisper of that name in Eden; see, by faith, its revelation in promise, and its type in sacrifice; hear again the harp of prophecy, as it sweetly wafts along the ages the preciousness of that name! Men and brethren, what think ye of Christ? How do you meet the challenge of the Roman governor? How did the men of that day meet it? Why, with more clamorous demands, with louder voice, “they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified!” And Pilate, conscience-blunted, worldly-minded, unrighteous Pilate, in the presence of the tumult of those who hated Jesus for His goodness, delivered to be crucified Him whom he there and then confessed to be “this just person.” Be assured of it, the test of every one and everything is Christ. The solemn word of “all the people,” the terrible words, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” made them guilty of the blood of Jesus; and they are to this day the abiding witnesses of their sin and hatred of Him who was nothing but goodness.

Then the soldiers, in derision, and with all that brutal violence which became them as heathens, and common, heartless executioners, do that which shall be rendered to Him in glory by the Gentiles in praise and worship -- and Jesus, patient, spotless One, goes through it all in meek submission, bears it all in perfect obedience to His Father. He felt it all, while enduring it all; but there was a far deeper and a more terrible anguish than all the malice of God-hating men. It is characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew to bring out into the foreground the dishonor heaped upon the Lord, as well as the insults offered to Him; while Mark gives prominence to the forsaking of God. It is this last none can fathom, as another has most tenderly and blessedly expressed it: “His heart, His soul -- the vessel of a divine love -- could alone go deeper than the bottom of that abyss which sin had opened for man, to bring up those who lay there, after He had endured its pain in His own soul. A heart that had been ever faithful was forsaken of God. Where sin had brought man, love brought the Lord; but with a nature and an apprehension in which there was no distance, no separation, so that it should be felt in all its fulness. No one but He who was in that place could fathom or feel it. It is too wonderful a spectacle to see the one righteous man in the world declare at the end of His life He was forsaken of God. But thus it was He glorified Him as none else could have done it, and where none but He could have done it -- made sin, in the presence of God as such, with no veil to hide, no mercy to cover or bear it with . . . ‘a worm and no man’ before the eyes of men, He had to bear the forsaking of the God in whom He trusted.”

Oh friends, men and brethren, what think ye of this? Here is solid resting ground for sinners, guilty and lost. Here, where hatred against love in God was manifested, the perfect love of God, doing for him that hated both God and Christ that which condemned the hatred, and blotted out for ever the sin which was the expression of it. Here, where every attribute of God was vindicated and upheld, the soul believing finds peace and rest.

Let me intreat of you this night to look to Jesus, Jesus who was crucified, who is risen and glorified, and having in His Person, as a Man in heaven, the marks He received in His body on the tree; in whose once marred visage now shines all the glory of God. The united voice of all time says, Look to Jesus! Earth, with its sins and sorrows, says, Look to Jesus! The ever-opening grave says, Look to Jesus! Hell, with its miseries, and heaven, with its glories, both say, Look to Jesus! He is coming—coming quickly! Soon His voice of mercy shall be heard no more. Oh! then, to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts; hear His voice now in all its blessedness and in all its love, sounding it may be for the last time in your ears -- “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and none else.” But if you still refuse and still reject, I warn you a time may be at hand when, in the solitary hour of death, no human voice shall be heard, this proffered grace of God in His preached gospel will be revived in your memory and sound in your soul with the terrible, awful conviction -- Too late! Too late!
The Finished Work

I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do (John 17:4).
It is finished (John 19:30).

Both these expressions, beloved friends, relate to the same transcendent subject. There is just this difference between them, that in ch. 17, the blessed One is anticipating the completeness of all that was about to be accomplished. He is looking forward to the work of the cross, the bearing of the judgment, the drinking of the cup of wrath, the enduring of the forsaking of God, the bearing of His people’s sins in His own body on the tree; He looks at it all as having been passed through by Himself, before it actually was done; He looks at it as done, as He was entitled to do, for He knew what was before Him, what He had undertaken; He is standing, as it were, in resurrection, and looking back, and He utters these precious, blessed words into His Father’s ears; verily there was no other ear that could appreciate that utterance, it was only God that could measure all that was conveyed in these precious words of Jesus, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” And then, when the history of this great reality had come out in all its solemnity, and the anticipation of it had passed into the literality of the fact, even when He was on the cross, as soon as He had drunken that dreadful cup that no one could drink but Himself, when He had passed through everything in order that no part of scripture should be unfulfilled, not merely that all the will of God might be done, but that the whole word of God might be maintained and fulfilled to the very letter; He said, “I thirst,” and they took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it to His lips, and when He hadreceived the vinegar, He said, “It is finished.” So that what He had anticipated in chapter 17 passes into actual fact in chapter 19, “It is finished.” He used one word in the language in which He spoke, translated into three words in our Bibles, but one word passed from His blessed lips; oh, how expressive of everything (and that is the comfort of it for our souls tonight) that establishes God’s glory, and lays the basis for our everlasting security and blessing.

Now let me try and interest your hearts in all those things that lie around these utterances of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, first of all, observe that in John 17, the history of man as a responsible being down here upon earth is regarded as very nearly over: that history of responsibility, with all its failure, all its shortcomings, all its utter unsuitability to God, was drawing to a close, there had been really but one man, Adam, and he could never be made suitable to God. Do you believe that, beloved friends? It was impossible to make the first man suitable to God, he had been tried, let me say; Who tried him? God tried him. There is one great piece of intense ignorance and folly that men’s minds are willing to hold fast to, and that is that men are being tried now. It is all false, beloved friends. God is not testing man now, He is not trying man now. As long as God was dealing with him as a responsible being down here in the world, God was testing him. It was not a question then of salvation. The salvation of perishing sinners and the trial of responsible men are two distinct subjects, which you can never make one and the same thing; there is no identity between the two; more than that, the salvation of perishing sinners according to God’s own mind and heart was after the trial of responsible man. It was when man had been tested, as he was tested, in every conceivable shape and form, under every kind of administration and dealing of God. There had been no kind of testing that God had not subjected the creature to. Everything had been put in requisition by God Himself, so as to bring out the effect of the test. The last trial that man was subjected to was this, that God in lowly grace, in the Person of Jesus, was here amongst men. And though, thank God, there is no subject that is more precious to the heart of the Christian than to think of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, to trace those precious footsteps in all their ways of mercy, and goodness, and love, the footsteps which He has left, as it were, upon the desert sands of this poor world, to trace the mercy that was imprinted upon this howling wilderness in every footfall of that blessed One, yet remember this, that Christ, as down here in the world in all His grace, and preciousness, and goodness, and mercy, and tenderness, and kindness, only brought out the wileness and repulsive nature of men as represented by that one Adam, the first Adam; for there had been only one man before God as a representative, and that was Adam. And the very mercy, goodness, grace and kindness of Jesus as man down here, God revealed in lowly grace, only elicited this, that there was not the smallest appreciation of the goodness that was not in any human heart, but which was presented so blissfully in the path of Jesus. And that is what makes the life of Christ on earth the most solemn test of man in every part of his life.

I was speaking last Lord’s day evening how that came out in Pilate’s questions. His own conscience was uneasy, Pilate would have given worlds to have let Jesus go free; if he could have kept his position in the world, he would have liberated that blessed man: see how Pilate was tested; what tested him? Jesus. What tested the Jews? Jesus. It was He who tested every class of men. There never had been such a test as He. It has been said, and said truly, that a living Christ on earth is a testing Christ. Oh, beloved friends, we cannot have that pressed too much upon our thoughts. They spat upon Him, they rejected Him, they refused Him, they hated Him, they scorned Him, they cast Him out, they nailed Him up to a gibbet; you did it, I did it, all classes of men did it; we were all represented there. Around the cross were the representatives of all classes of man; there you and I were, there our ruthless hands nailed that precious One; we spat in His face, we said, “Not this man, but Barnabas”; we refused Him. And that was what Christ brought out and elicited by His perfections. I do not know anything more solemn than to think that the goodness, the absolute perfectness of Jesus, called out the wileness of man’s heart. “For my love,” He says, “they gave me hatred”; “they hated me without a cause”; you will find amongst men, that taking man with man, there is some sort of appreciation, even in men who have not got goodness themselves, of goodness when they see it in another; but men did not appreciate the goodness that shone in Jesus.

Now if you look at John 17, there is a little word there that seems very simple, but how much is conveyed in it! Observe the attitude of the Lord Jesus in John 17? “He lifted up his eyes
to heaven.” Do you think that is a meaningless expression? What did it mean? All is over here on earth; it is all over with man as man; man is ruined; the first man Adam involved the whole race in the ruin of his fall, and involves the inheritance that was set under him vanity as the result of his fall. And look abroad upon the whole face of the earth at this present moment, and what do you find? A groaning creation. What is the reason of it; why should this earth groan? It was subjected as an inheritance under the headship of the first Adam. If I look at the cross, I see the utter alienation of man’s heart from God; and if I look over the face of this whole world, there is not a groan that goes out of it (and God knows it is a place out of which groans are continually going, and on which tears are continually falling) which does not distinctly declare man’s ruin. Jesus is not insensible, to the groans of a groaning creation, and in that coming day,

“He’ll bid the whole creation smile,
And hush its groan.”

Do you think Christ is insensible to its groaning now? Think of what it was to Him as His eyes looked over the whole thing. There was not in it a single bright spot. “He lifted up. his eyes to heaven,” as much as to say, All hope must come from there now; all here is closed, the inheritance defiled; man a ruin. Some way or another, there is something attractive to people about ruins; they like to look at ruins; but think of this ruin! And look at the attitude of Jesus; “He lifted up his eyes to heaven,” and anticipating the work He was about to finish, He says, “I have glorified thee”; that is, the first thing. He says to the Father. You were outraged in the scene of your own creation; man, the creature of your hand, the noblest structure of your creative power, outraged you in the scene, that was rolled from the Creator’s hands; I have glorified you, I have vindicated you in every righteous, holy claim on the earth.

I have finished the work which thou gavest, me to do.

Now look for a moment at two or three things in connection with Jesus taking this place here, because it is most precious for our souls as we have to do, with Him as a Savior. First of all, speaking of Him now as a man down here upon earth, He was the only one that perfectly met the whole heart of God. What a wonderful thing for our souls to think that all the purposes, all the thoughts, all the desires, all the longings of the heart of God in a man were perfectly met by Jesus! There was one Man, very God, but very man, as truly a man as He was verily “God over all, blessed for ever,” this blessed One as man down here upon earth, perfectly met every thought, every desire, every longing of the heart of God. I am not speaking of the relationship in which He was as the eternal Son ever in the Father’s bosom, but of His having become man. You remember that wonderful, beautiful anthem which was sung by the angels when He was born as a babe, and touched our nature, so to speak, in its very weakest point; He did not come out like Adam, a full-grown man from the hand of God, but He passed through all the stages of human life here, He was born a babe, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a manger in all the lowliness and all the weakness of the circumstances in which men were found down here. And you remember what that anthem was, those notes which reached up to heaven, “Glory to God in the highest.” “I have glorified thee on the earth,” connect the beginning of His life with the end of it, if you please here. “Glory to God in the highest,” said the heavenly host, “and on earth peace, good pleasure in men. Why? Because His Son had become a man; the complacency of God in the poor race as expressed by that blessed One becoming a man down here “good pleasure in man.” And although peace was not made good at that moment, and it awaited the cross to give it a foundation, yet how precious it is to see that the state of blessing was born in the birth of the wonderful child, that wonderful child, wonderful God, wonderful man! Though the making it good awaited the cross, yet there was the whole thing presented in His own blessed Person who was to give it accomplishment in the fulness of time, so much so, that it could be said, “Glory to God in the highest” -- on earth, poor earth, the scene of carnage and war and bloodshed -- “on earth peace, good pleasure in man.” Christ perfectly met every thought of the heart of God.

But there is another thing. He Himself, the source of all the blessing, was tested and tried. I think it is an immense comfort to be able to say to people, Do you know that the Savior who came from heaven, who came as the sent One of God, as the expression of the Father’s heart for poor, wretched, perishing sinners in this world, was tried here by everything. Tell me one single thing that Jesus was not tried by. You remember how in that beautiful prophecy of Isaiah, God says to Israel, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone.” He was tried by men, tried by His disciples, tried by the circumstances of the world; Satan tried Him, He was tested in every conceivable way. Now just think of these things, and I will show you the preciousness of that when we come to look at the completeness of the work. The One who did the work was the One that met the heart of God. And the One that met the heart of God was tested Himself in every conceivable shape and form, to bring out the perfection that was found in Him. Just as when Adam was tested it brought out his ruin; when Jesus was tested it brought out His perfectness. He was the second Man, because He was to displace the first. He was both the second Man and the last Adam. Looking back, He was the second Man, for He was about to displace the history of the first. Looking forward, He was the last Adam, for there was to be no other form of man but that Man in His blessed, victorious, glorious character. That is the new pattern of man and the new place of man when Jesus rose from the dead, and in that sense He is the last Adam. He was the second Man in order to sweep out in judgment (and through bearing it Himself), and to remove from the holy eye of God, the first man, the author of ruin and misery. And mark, beloved brethren, in order to show you the completeness of His work, He was about to remove that offending thing from that holy eye. Think of the holy eye of God! Think of the completeness of the work that met the holy eye of God. He was about to remove in righteousness that offending thing that had been tested and brought out in all its ruin, He was about to remove that completely from God’s holy eye in righteousness, through bearing the judgment.

There was another thing. In the glory of His Person, He had divine rights. Did not everything belong to Him here? have
you ever thought of that little word they said when He was born? It is wonderful how the preciousness of the words of scripture escape our thoughts “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” What is the meaning of that? That that glory pertained to Him in right of His Person. I quite admit it was an earthly glory, pertaining to Israel as an earthly people. It was the very title that was put upon His cross in the three great languages of the then known world, Greek, Hebrew and Latin. But when the inquiry was made about Him at His birth, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” why everything belonged to Him in virtue of His divine rights, and Person, and glories; it was all His, He was the true Messiah.

But mark, when He came here, He was entirely dependent upon God for everything, and entirely subject to God in everything, He trusted God in everything; and more than that, He surrendered everything; it was all His, and He gave it all up. Look at these precious characteristics of Him who came to be the Savior. See what was displayed in His Person before you come to the work at all. Because that work, precious and full as it is, blessed and substantial ground and foundation for our souls before God, that work I say has all the permanence, and all the blessedness and all the preciousness, and all the value of the Person that did it. I cannot separate His work from the Person that did it; I cannot separate that Person from His work. He was competent to meet the heart of God; He was tested here before men, and His perfectness came out; He owned everything, and He gave it all up; in the world that His own hands had made He was the dependent Man; cast upon God in everything, perfect in subjection, perfect in trust, and perfect in surrender; but not a single creature did He bring by that life of perfectness to stand in that position before God, not one. On the contrary, the whole state and condition of man’s heart was only brought out in all its native distance, and alienation, and darkness before God. The very goodness of Jesus displayed, and manifested, and exposed the vileness of man.

And then, when we come to the cross (for I pass over the intervening part of that precious life), and when we look at this utterance in John 19, which declares the history of the finished work, just think of all that is summed up in that. You get the sufferings of Jesus brought out in the other gospels: His sufferings as man in Luke, His sufferings as the victim in Matthew, and all the enmity and hatred of the Jewish people towards Him right on to His death. But John does not throw into prominence the sufferings of the Man, nor the hatred of His own people and all their opposition to Him, but what John delights to show us is how the One that was his beloved, carried Himself in all the terrible moments of pressure through which He passed. Truly it is a divine Person who is presented all through the gospel, yet also John lingers in affection as he presents to faith the conduct, the mind, the character of that blessed One who was dear to his heart. And look at it here. He took the vinegar, and when He had taken the vinegar, everything being accomplished, the whole thing gone through, the cup of wrath having been drained to its dregs, He said, “It is finished.” Now allow me to ask you, Have you ever sat down before God in the quietness of your own room and put the question to your own heart, What is the meaning of that, “It is finished.” It is a word we frequently hear; people speak of the finished work of Jesus, the finished work of the cross, what does it mean? Let us look simply at those words. What is the meaning of “it”? “It” -- what?

First of all, God’s glory is secured. Oh, what a thing for your heart as a poor sinner! Because, when the iron of conviction gets into your soul, you know you have to do with God, and there is a moment coming when every man (mark the word) shall give an account of himself to God. Whom did you sin against? Whose laws have you trampled on? Whose word have you cast behind your back? Whose name have you refused, and perhaps blasphemed and despised? Whom have you offended? Men? No; God. O sinner, unforgiven sinner, you that are not ready to meet God, it is God you have to meet. It is not death; no, nor even is it judgment. I believe the heart of man is of that stuff that the devil can even steel it in its blindness and darkness against death and judgment. A story is told of one who was notorious in the annals of crime, and who was a perfect terror in his day, a fearless man himself, but dreaded and feared by every one else; this man was tried and condemned for murder, and as he lay in his condemned cell awaiting the moment of execution, there was no apparent sense of the condition he was in till the night previous to his execution. But that night he walked his cell with a restless step, up and down, as the hours flew by as it were with lightning wings, and for the first time in his life that man seemed to be awaked to something like the sense of fear. And when the warders said to him, “You afraid? Why, we thought you feared nothing, neither man, nor devil, nor hell, nor judgment, nor eternity, nor anything, that you were steeled against it all; what are you afraid of now?” He replied, “It is not death I am afraid of; do not think that; but at eight o’clock to-morrow morning I have to meet God.” Oh, beloved hearers, it is that God you have to meet; it is to God you will have to give an account of yourself; it is God you will have to stand before; it is to God you will have to bow your knee? “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then,” says the Holy Ghost in the New Testament, “every one of us all give account of himself to God.”

And oh! beloved, think how blessed it is that just as that is the responsibility of the sinner, just as that is the thing that presses upon the sinner, so here, when I look upon this precious finished work of Jesus, there is what I get in that little word “it” -- simple word, but oh how comprehensive, how full, how perfect! -- I get the claims of a holy God met, the One that was outraged by man’s sin glorified, God glorified, and so glorified as He never could have been, even if the whole race of mankind were consigned to the depths of an undying hell, which was the rightful due of men -- God glorified on that cross, glorified by the sinless One, glorified by His bearing the judgment, even that man who never did anything wrong, glorified by the spotless man there. As that poor thief said, he who was so vile, he who was so bad that the world was getting rid of him, a malefactor, even he turns to Jesus and says, There is perfection, you have done nothing amiss, despised by men, but you are a king, mocked now with a crown of thorns and a purple robe, nailed to a gibbet like a malefactor in the place of shame and scorn, but you have a kingdom, and you have a
crown, and the moment is coming when you will be king; Lord, let me wrap myself in the eternal perfections of the spotless Man hanging upon that cross. And, beloved friends, there is what God’s salvation is -- a poor thief in the very moment of death, at the very extremity of human life, turns to that spotless One who was bearing the judgment of a holy God due to sin, and says, as it were, of Jesus, There is perfection, let me wrap myself in the folds of that eternal perfection. And mark the answer of Jesus to that. What did He say to that poor, Wretched creature? unintelligent as he was, not the faintest ray of human hope shining on that poor, wretched man’s soul, but Christ was everything to him; he did not know much about Christ, but he clung to Christ, he trusted Christ, he leaned on Christ; he could say nothing good of himself, nay, rather he condemned himself, but he was all right in confidence and trust; his soul clings to that mighty Savior. And how does Jesus answer him? “Verily I say unto thee, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” That is the meaning of the cross; that is the meaning of those words, “It is finished”; that is what “It is finished” can do for a poor, wretched, vile sinner. “This day,” says the blessed Lord, not the future thing, not the day that is coming when I shall have the crown, but “this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” On what ground? how? Because Jesus finished that work for him, Jesus glorified God about that poor, wretched man’s sin, gave to God in righteousness a full equivalent for all the sins, all the transgressions of that poor thief down here, for the wileness and misery of that man, and He could take that man into paradise that very day, because He bore his sins there in His own body on the tree.

And mark, more than this. He says not only “it” as involving the glory of God, and the bearing of sins, and the meeting of God’s holy, righteous claims, but He says more, “It is” -- not that it will be, He does not look on to the future, He brings it into one great eternal now, “It is finished,” once and for all, there and then, the whole work, the whole ground of God’s glory and the sinner’s everlasting salvation.

I shall never forget, for they left a deep impression on my heart never to be effaced while life lasts, the words of the one whom God used many years ago to awaken me to a sense of my need of Christ as a Savior, a distinguished, earnest, beloved servant of God, a devoted minister of Christ, who preached Christ faithfully for many years as the sinner’s Savior; when my beloved friend and father came to die, I shall never forget the words that passed from his lips. He said, “When I saw how this illness of mine would turn, I put my foot down on the platform that God had graciously set me upon through the finished work of Christ, years and years ago, and I found that platform was perfectly safe.” Oh, beloved brethren, think of that! When he came to die, he did not begin to think about himself; it was not himself, it was not his life. Another who was present said to him, “Just think of your devoted life; think of how you have preached Christ.” The dying man lifted up his hand, and said, “Hush; not a word now but Christ, nothing now but Christ and His blood.”

Now, beloved friends, there is what it is to trust in Jesus; that work is a platform, a divine superstructure God puts under your feet, that is as immovable as Christ’s cross could make it, as eternal in its stability as the blood of Jesus could make it. I often hear people say, “I wonder very much whether it will be all right with me; I wonder whether the root of the matter is in me.” Well, I tell you for your comfort it is not but thank God it is in Christ; the root of the matter is there, the perfection and completeness of the work is there. Never mind about yourself; but mark this: Your best, your only qualification for the salvation that the Christ has accomplished is just this, wileness, good-for-nothingness, hell deservingness, emptiness, not a single reason, neither root nor branch, in you, a poor, wretched, vile, miserable sinner, but everything perfect and blessed in Jesus. And that is what God brings together, emptiness in the sinner and completeness in the salvation, fulness in the work and complete undeservingness in the person that wants it. Wonderful combination! barrenness and misery in me, fulness and completeness in the work that was accomplished on the cross 1,800 years ago, and has never lost its power, and never will lose it. We have often sung those sweet words,

“Dear dying Lamb Thy precious blood Shall never lose its power, Till all the ransom’d church of God Be saved to sin no more.”

There it is, perfect, permanent and complete. But there is another thing in these words, not merely God’s glory, and the perfection of that which can wash our souls from every spot and stain of sin, but Satan’s head was there bruised. And may I speak a word for a moment to God’s own dear people, because I know there are many here tonight, and it is a cheer to see those who have tasted the preciousness of Christ, and to know that the same Savior is dear to them who is dear to one’s self. Beloved, what an immense comfort this is for the soul of a poor, timid, trembling child of God, the devil is a beaten foe, the devil’s head has been bruised; the death of Jesus bruised that head, according to the promise that was made, not to Adam, but to the seed of the woman, “It shall bruise thy head.” That is the announcement God made in Satan’s ears, the woman’s seed who should come to do this work, shall bruise thy head; and thou shalt bruise his heel; that is, the Lord should go into death, really the power that Satan had acquired through man’s sin, he was to bruise the Savior’s heel. The Lord Jesus became subject to death, but by death He bruised Satan’s head; or as it is expressed in that hymn -- He was

“Death of death, and hell’s destruction.”

Through death He annulled him that had the power of death; He submitted to go down in His grace under the waves of death, that through death He might annul him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and now mark these words, “and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Are you afraid of death? I remember the time that I would not look at a corpse for worlds, a terror passed through my heart at the sight; and it was not that I was afraid of hell, I knew the blood of Jesus secured my soul against the flames of hell, but I trembled at death. Why? My soul was not in the full victory of Christ’s triumph, in the full effects of the completeness of those precious words I am speaking about, I did not see the magnificent extent of “It is finished.” I did not take into my soul the area of blessing which such words cover; God’s glory
secured, sin purged, Satan’s head bruised in death, so that the devil is now a beaten foe. And that is the reason why he works in wiles now; he did not always. When did he resort to that mode of warfare, when did he begin his wiles? After the victory of Jesus. Look at the beautiful type of it in that wonderful fifth chapter of Joshua. When the Jordan was passed, and God had brought the people over, and dried up the waters of the river, which is a picture of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for His people, and the drying up of the power of death, it is said that when the Canaanites, the people of the land, “heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more.

Thank God, it is the victory of the cross that has taken the spirit out of the foe, and brought in fear into the enemy. Why should you have fear? It is the enemies of the cross that ought to have the fear, and not those that are trusting in that blessed One. What becomes us in the presence of “It is finished”? Trust and confidence; I can trust when I see that it is done, I know the way people talk; they say, “I wonder whether it is all done for me.” Well, if it is not, it will never be done at all. Did Jesus say that part of it had been done, and part of it has to be done? No; He said it is done, all finished, perfected, settled for ever. When? Eighteen hundred years ago. On that cross, where He was alone, forsaken, He completed that work, bowed His blessed head in death, and dismissed His spirit as a divine Person who had a right over it, finished the whole work, made peace, glorified God and His Father, completed His work, bruised Satan’s head, and did it for every sinner here who will simply come and trust that blessed One, and trust that finished work. Have you come? That is the question. If you were called upon tonight to pass through death (you may be, God only knows), are you ready? you may be the tree of the forest that is marked for death, just as you may see a woodman pass through a forest and mark a certain tree with an axe, it may be a towering tree, beautiful leaves and branches and blossoms, but the axe ‘will be at the root of that tree soon, the mark is there; and you may be that tree tonight; even though you are saying to yourself, “I am not going to die, there is no faintness in my heart, no quivering in my frame, I have a long life before me yet”; ah! but you may be marked for death, and the question I put to you tonight is, Are you ready? If the word were to come to you now, as it came to Hezekiah, “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live,” are you ready? Are you ready to meet God? And remember, if you do not die, sinner, Christ is coming. He came and finished that work, and yet there you are, still unconverted and unhappy; do. not tell me you are not unhappy, you have not got a real bit of true happiness in your bosom could you with that dread uncertainty before you, that leap in the dark? You are not happy. There is many a miserable and broken, heart under a gay and smiling face. Most deceitful are the looks of people; oh, how many hearts there are with the gnawings of hell there, uncertainty, doubt, misgiving, and blackness over the future! And you, dear unconverted people, that is where you are tonight. But I preach to you the peace that Jesus made by the blood of His cross; He made peace; mark that, it does not say that He is making peace in the heavens, but He made it by the blood of His cross. He Himself in heaven is the evidence that He made it, He is our peace; and when He came back after death into this world He preached it. He is the peace, He made the peace, and He preached the peace. And will you tell me, if that is the case, that I am not to have it, that I cannot have it? What was the sense of His making it if a poor, wretched sinner like myself could not have it? What did He make it for? He made it for me to have it, and thank God I have it, and because I know what it is I preach it to you. “We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.

I was called once, many years ago, to visit in the fever sheds of one of the large hospitals of a city, a poor girl that had been brought in there in the very last stage of malignant typhus, with but very little of her senses left. Thank God, she was saved, she was washed from her sins in the precious blood of Christ, and she allayed all my anxiety about her state by what were very nearly her last words on earth, and precious words they are in my memory: she just repeated into my ear in broken sentences with her life as it were ebbing away, these two passages, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to. be the Savior”; “We have known and believed the love that God hath unto us.” O friends, what a precious testimony to leave the world with, just to go out of it in the confidence of the love of which Christ was the expression, and, in confidence of heart in that Savior that was entitled to that confidence.

May the Lord grant that you may rest in that work for yourselves; the Lord grant you may take that stand as poor sinners to receive it simply from Him. And do not be troubling yourselves, as people often do, “I do not know whether I have got the right sort of faith, the right kind of belief.” Never mind about that.

It reminds me of what I read lately about a poor man in the street who was dying of hunger, and some one met him and put into his hands a great deal more than could supply his needs at that moment. Some one saw him afterwards, and said, “What has made the change with you? You seem quite different. “Oh!” he said, “I met a gentleman in the street, and he has put into my hand a great deal more than could supply his needs at that moment. Some one saw him afterwards, and said, “What has made the change with you? You seem quite different. “Oh!” he said, “I met a gentleman in the street, and he has put into my hand the very thing that meets all my need.” “How do you know?” He replied, “He put it into my hand.” “But how do you know that you have the right kind of hand? He replied, “I don’t care what kind of hand I have, but I have the right kind of money.”

You talk about the right faith or the wrong faith, but faith is faith. Now remember as to peace -- Jesus made it, Jesus is it, Jesus preached it; and now you may have it.

The Lord grant you may put out the empty hand of faith tonight, and take the fullness of that salvation and that peace through Jesus Christ.
The Fruits of Christ's Victory
Matthew 27:45-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 15

It is impossible, beloved friends, really to disconnect this closing scene from that which gives all its foundation, that on which it rests, that which gives title to all that will be in that transcendent moment, as we believe so near at hand, the moment of Christ's own joy. For just as surely His crown rests upon His cross, so His joy rests upon His sorrow. Put the two together for a moment: that cry, that marvelous cry, that cry of conscious abandonment that the souls that have trusted Him know but very little of, even blessedness of those wonderful words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” You could never answer that question, beloved friends. No heart could conceive the answer, and no tongue could convey it, it is unanswerable; and there it remains unanswerable to this moment, excepting that, that it is, blessed be His name, the alone ground of the peace, the joy, the rest, the satisfaction, the present salvation of all who simply believe. Thank God, that is, in some sense, a wonderful answer; that is, shall I say? for poor sinners, a divine answer; that is the answer that meets the heart of God, who gave that blessed One for us, and that is the answer that meets the heart of Him who, though once the Man of sorrows, is now the Man of patience, and will be the Man of joy in that day when He has all His own, not one absent, not a solitary one missing in that great roll-call which is described so blessedly and consolingly in 1 Thess. 4, when the shout will reach all who have trusted in the blood of the cross. I always, in my own heart, connect the two things together; that cry, with “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout,” an utterance of relationship it is, the expression of it between the One that calls and those that will rise to answer to it. All who have trusted and rested in Him, and found their salvation in His death, shall, in that morning so near, answer to that shout.

Now what I desire to set before you briefly and simply this evening, are some of the results, some of the consequences of the victory of Jesus. I mean the victory of the cross. We have been looking at His resurrection on week-night evenings, but I want you to look at two or three of the effects of His victory, the victory of the cross, as they are set forth in this chapter in Matthew.

And the first is, after those three hours of darkness had been passed through and were over, and the Lord had cried with a loud voice, showing that it was not that He was exhausted, as man has been vile enough to say, in order to degrade Him, and to tarnish His glory; it was not that worn-out nature sought its repose in death; it was the cry of a Conqueror, it was not a feeble weak man who had given up the Ghost, vanquished by death, like any other man, it proved He had laid down His life. He gave up the ghost, but He had given it up in full vigor, so that it could not be said for a moment that it was the simple result of nature having run its course, of the terrible death He had suffered, that awful crucifixion, for there never was, I suppose, a death of such frightful torture and agony of body, yet it could not be said that it was that.

There man’s wicked hands set Him, but that was all man could do. Man could nail Him to that cross, but they could not take away His life from Him. What a comfort for you and me that is. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” There is a great difference between a person laying down his life and his life being taken from him. When man nailed Jesus to the cross, that was the extent of his power and wickedness, though it was not the extent of his will. He had will enough to have gone to any amount of wickedness, but he could do no more. All that he could do he did do. But when it was all passed and over, when the Lord had gone through that dreadful moment, and borne the judgment, and met God about the question of sin, and borne His people’s sins, and He, in very truth had (in His grace) done both; sin as an offence against God had received its full equivalent in righteousness in the death of Jesus, wonderful thing for our souls to know that! It is not a question of His people’s sins now for a moment, because if we speak of our sins, one speaks of believers, but I speak now in the widest sense of the word -- the whole question of sin as a question between God and Christ, and as that which shut God in in His holiness, and barred man out in misery, because that is what it was; that question was settled in the death of Jesus. God was glorified: I do not object to say that the debt was paid, but I object very much to limiting it to the debt being paid, because that is man’s side of it; God was glorified, “I have glorified thee on the earth,” where every other man had come short of God’s glory, and where, as far as man was concerned, God had been outraged.

Now look at the answer to this for a moment, because it synchronized with His death; observe, I say, how it occurred at the same moment as His death. As soon as ever the Lord had borne the judgment, passed through those hours of anguish, had known what it was in His own perfection and spotlessness, to be forsaken of God, absolutely and perfectly forsaken too, when it was all closed and gone through, and He had cried in all the vigor and power of His strength, undiminished in any way, and when He yielded up the ghost, at that moment the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. There is the first great fruit of the death of Jesus. And what, beloved friends, did that mean? If you read Ex. 26, you will find a description of that veil, and such a description as connects it at once in type with the body of the Lord Jesus Christ; it was a picture, in that sense of it, of His body, and hence the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, says, “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.” In Ex. 26 and the Epistle to the Hebrews put together, you have the true meaning of it.

Now this veil was a symbol of two things. It set forth in figure the precious body of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it also set forth, that whilst that literal veil of the temple was still hanging between the holy and most holy place, God’s
relations with men were such that God could not come out because of His holiness, out from God, and it shut God in from man. The veil signified the whole order of that dispensation, no man could come to God, there was no way to God; a sinner could not come to God, the way was not open. How foolish people are when they speak of persons coming to God before the death of Christ! why, there was no way. God in wonderful mercy passed over the sins of those who believed in former times -- not that they looked on to the sacrifice, there was no such thing, but God looked on; there is a great difference. Forbearance, observe, was the principle of God's dealing in those days; there was no way to God, God had not been vindicated as to His righteousness in passing over those sins; there never had been one whose sins God had passed over in olden times; that God, so to speak, had not to wait for the declaration of His righteousness in having done so. But now, it is not forbearance, it is accomplished righteousness; God is glorified, and hence He is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. But it is not that Old Testament saints looked on to the sacrifices, it is all a mistake; God looked on, that is the point, and God looking on to that which was yet to be, passed over the sins of those who believed. He did so on the principle of forbearance. We are not standing on the principle of forbearance now; thank God, we are not. It is wonderfully blessed to see that God had a way in those days before the death of Christ, on the ground of which He could act in consistency with His own character; but the public declaration and manifestation that God was just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. But it is not that Old Testament saints looked on to the sacrifices, it is all a mistake; God looked on, that is the point, and God looking on to that which was yet to be, passed over the sins of those who believed. He did so on the principle of forbearance. We are not standing on the principle of forbearance now; thank God, we are not. It is wonderfully blessed to see that God had a way in those days before the death of Christ, on the ground of which He could act in consistency with His own character; but the public declaration and manifestation that God was just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, awaited the death of Jesus. You must have the cross and redemption accomplished before you get the whole thing brought out in manifestation.

Now mark how significant this is. Synchronizing with His death, occurring at the same moment as the death of the spotless One, God as it were says, all that order and principle of things is over now; it is no longer a veil between God and all the spotless One, God as it were says, all that order and principle of things is over now; it is no longer a veil between God and the veil being rent. It was not removed. From man's side up to God, not from the bottom to the top, but from the top to the bottom, from the side that set forth how it was from God down to our side. And it was not removed. There is a great difference between the veil being removed and the veil being rent. If it had been removed it would indicate that it was simply a temporary respite of the distance it set forth, and that the barrier might yet be set up again. But it was rent, as much as to say, That order of things is at an end; those relationships are closed. Oh, what a wonderful mercy to think there is now a way to God for sinners. Suppose I were speaking tonight (God alone knows it may be so) to the very worst character in London, even if there were in this company the vilest character that could be found in this great city, I can go to that man or that woman and say to each, There is a way to God for you; will you come? You say, What do you mean? I mean this, that Jesus has presented His blood to God, and, God has accepted that blood as a complete and full discharge, and equivalent in righteousness for all His holy claim, a vindication of all His character and a sustainment of all His glory, so that now, in virtue of that, He can receive and accept the vilest sinner. And it is not only that He can receive the vilest sinner in love, but He can receive him in perfect righteousness.

I remember how long that passage tried my heart, for I never could understand it, because I did not understand the fulness of redemption, I mean the scripture where the apostle says, speaking to Christians, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Now I never could understand how faithfulness and justice were connected with forgiveness. I could understand how love and mercy, or kindness and long-suffering, were connected with it, but I never could understand how His being faithful and just were connected with it. God faithful to forgive me? God just to forgive me? I could not understand it. And why? Because I did not see that in the cross every attribute of God was harmonized. As Psa. 85 says, that beautiful and precious psalm which ought to be and which is a familiar psalm to many a heart here tonight,

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

That did not refer to the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem; incarnation never witnessed to that. Wonderful and blessed as it is to see Jesus coming down here to become a man, and do all this work for God’s glory, I do not see mercy and truth meeting together, nor righteousness and peace kissing each other in the manger at Bethlehem. No; but at Calvary I do; on the cross I do. Was there ever such love, was there ever such righteousness, was there ever such mercy, was there ever such truth? I see it all witnessed to. I see the most intense righteousness with reference to sin; I see the most unbounded love of God to sinners. I see all the hatred of men; I see the full flow of the affection of God there. And therefore now, thank God, I can connect His justice with forgiveness, and I can say, He is just to forgive the believing sinner. And why? Because Christ gave to God in righteousness a full equivalent for all His holy claims. And there I can stand and rest, because that was for me, a poor sinner. Now look what a wonderful thing that is, that you can go to a poor, wretched, vile sinner, and say to him, Christ has presented His blood to God, and there is a way through the rent veil, the flesh of Jesus, through His death, there is a way to God for you as a sinner; will you come?

And another thing I would say affectionately to you. People have their “isms,” and that is what is so destructive to souls as well as of the truth of God; but scripture puts the responsibility where God will have the responsibility, even on man. It is not a question of faith, as to whether it is strong enough or not, this is only the devil seeking to deceive and blind; be assured no man in hell shall ever be able to open his mouth and say to God, There was no salvation for me. No; Christ has glorified God about sin, presented His blood to God, and God has accepted that blood, and there is a way to God for sinners, for all who will come. It is for you if you come. Will you come? Thus you can see how the
responsibility is not connected with power, but with will; the devil will persuade you if he can to the contrary. The devil comes and says to a poor sinner, You know you cannot come, you have not the power to come. And why does he do that? Because by it he is concealing the truth, that the will of the man is so opposed that he will not come. Behind it all, the will of the man is not to come, and that is what Satan is keeping in the background, and hence he raises the question of the power. There is no question of power at all, it is a question of will. Will you come, that is the point? There is the way, there is the road open to God for sinners -- will you come?

But there is another side in it as well, and this ought to be a comfort to any poor trembling heart here, and it is also one of the fruits of His cross; not only was the veil rent, showing that there was a way to God through the death of Jesus, and that God could come out now in all the love of His heart righteously to sinners, and accept sinners, but all His people’s sins, every one of them, were there borne by Him. There was a perfect transfer of all the sins and all the guilt of all His own to that blessed One on the cross. Now look at this a moment -- it matters not how feeble and weak a person may be in their faith -- it is sad to think that faith is preached as if it was the meritorious cause of our salvation, and until there is scarcely any faith left in people, what is the preaching which meets souls? No doubt it is Christ, that ministers to faith, here is something that will feed faith, otherwise they do not know what to believe.

But now, take a person that is ever so trembling (and I suppose that there are not many here that are strangers to what that is, yes, even to tremble) -- I know it is what it has to trembled, and had fears many a day, and yet it was not a question of my sins being forgiven; I knew they were, but I was not in the full complete victory of the cross. And it was not that my faith was weak; no, but I had not the fulness of that victory before my eyes. People always like to refer the thing to something in them. What gives you the strength is the thing to something that will feed faith, otherwise they do not know what to believe.

Now I love those passages, and I will tell you why. There is no need, beloved friends, to put at the top of the Bible what the beloved old translators of this precious scripture that our hearts love have put there; this dear old Book that so many of God’s beloved people have lived and died upon; there is no need I say to put upon the top of it “the blessings and promises of the church,” it is not true; but I will tell you what is true, the divine principles of God’s nature remain the same in changing times and dispensations -- that is true. Souls may be in different relationships, as no doubt they are, totally different, but God’s nature is the same, God’s heart is the same, God’s affections are the same, though expressed in different ways. And so it is now, just as it was to Israel in that day. Now if there is one whose sins were laid on Jesus, a poor, trembling, feeble, weak believer (and God knows how many there are in this world, and that there is a kind of for it is God who laid them on Him. And, beloved friends, God did not leave one; God’s memory did not fail with regard to those sins, and with regard to their imputation, and that memory is cleared, He will remember them no more. He remembered them to Jesus on the cross, but He will never remember them any more. “Their sins,” says God, in virtue of this, “and iniquities will I remember no more.” Think of that beloved friends, you that have fears and misgivings, and it is not sure about the sins you have committed since you were converted, and are harassed, because the devil plagues you about them, God says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”; just put the two things together which are so precious for our hearts, there is the no more remembrance of our sins, but there is the eternal remembrance of ourselves. Think of that. And hence He says, “Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the babe of her womb?” There is no love like a mother’s love; none. I have often said to people, You never can lose a mother but once. No love in nature, no love in this poor, wretched, selfish world like a mother’s love; and therefore the blessed God, in signifying His affection for Israel, takes up the strongest known affection amongst men, and says, “Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the babe of her womb? Yea, think of that. And hence He says, “Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the babe of her womb?” There is no love like a mother’s love; none. I have often said to people, You never can lose a mother but once. No love in nature, no love in this poor, wretched, selfish world like a mother’s love; and therefore the blessed God, in signifying His affection for Israel, takes up the strongest known affection amongst men, and says, “Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the babe of her womb?” There is no love like a mother’s love; none. 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confederacy between the world and the devil to keep them in darkness, and ignorant of the true extent of the cross of Christ), now I say, if there be such a poor, worried, tried and tormented heart like that, what a comfort to be able to come and to say to such an one, Every one of your sins were all laid on Jesus, “God who knew them laid them on him”; and they were all borne, and they are all gone, and they are in God’s forgetfulness, and God cannot remember them any more; they will never come up again; no trumpet blast of resurrection shall ever blow over those sins, they are buried in the everlasting oblivion of His forgetfulness. And why? Because Christ bore them on that cross; He suffered infinitely, as no one else could suffer but Himself, His was infinite suffering there, and all the sins imputed to Him are all gone. What a comfort that is.

Now let us look at one or two more fruits of His death here. I have spoken to you of two: first of all, that God was glorified so that He could come out; before He was hidden behind the veil, now He can come out in all the full righteousness of His nature and love of His heart for sinners, and a way is made to God for sinners; secondly, that all His people’s sins were by one stroke for ever put away. But now there is something more than that. There is a third victory of Jesus in Matt. 27. There was not a sphere that was not made to express -- and visibly too -- how that victory operated on all sides. Hence we read here of a quaking earth, rending rocks, and open graves; earth, heaven, the grave, all felt the touch of victory. Think of that. God as it were in righteousness and to the earth, as people talk about strong faith and weak faith; do not trouble your mind about that. If you have got the victory, that is all. And as I said last Sunday evening, it does not matter whether it is the right hand or the left hand, as people talk about strong faith and weak faith; do not trouble your mind about that. If you have got the victory, do not mind the hand you have got it in. It is the victory you have got, and it is that which takes the fear out of your heart, and enables you to sing that song at an open grave, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin” (Jesus bore it), “and the strength of sin is the law” (I have died to it in the death of Christ); “but thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. “Wherfore,” the apostle says, “Wherfore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable” -- there is nothing to move you or disturb you, you are standing upon a foundation against which the waves of time and the waters of eternity may roar, and beat, and swell, but it is immovable; nothing can affect it; the pillars of God’s temple were made fast in the cross of Jesus, where God was satisfied and salvation was accomplished. Think of those two things, salvation was accomplished where God was satisfied. Would you like to have it in any other connection? I should not. Thank God for it. When grace awoke my conscience to a sense of my position as a sinner, this is what came to me, you have offended God, you have outraged God, it is God that has to be satisfied, it is God that has to be met, it is God that has to be glorified, it is God’s holy, righteous claims that must be discharged. It would be a very easy thing to discharge what I thought was necessary, for I know all our thoughts of sin are very poor, very shallow indeed, compared with the reality of it according to God, but is God satisfied? that is the point, Is He glorified? Thank God He is satisfied. Has He received a full equivalent? Yes, a full equivalent. Now when I see that God has been satisfied, that God has been glorified, I say, That will do for me, there I rest, I can rest where God has received His fullest claims.

There is one thing more here, though I need not dwell upon that, because we had it before us in speaking of resurrection, and that is, that “the bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and appeared unto many”; that is to say, as soon as ever the Lord Jesus was in the circumstances of the firstfruits, for He was “the firstfruits of them that slept,” He must be first in His resurrection of glory, and victory, and triumph, when He arose, then the harvest of which He was the wave-sheaf arose with Him.

But there is one other point I would like to call your attention to here. There was this poor Gentile Roman centurion watching Jesus; he was a heathen, the commander of the guard that watched the scene of the crucifixion. And when he witnessed all those things, heathen and Gentile though he was, how beautiful, how blessed to see that God would give testimony there of the far-reaching desire of His heart for Gentiles as well as Jews now. This poor Gentile says, Well, truly this is the Son of God. And that connects itself exactly with that beautiful scripture in John 12, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” A lifted up Savior, lifted up between the heavens and the earth, became the center of attraction to draw poor hearts to Himself. Here you get this very truth coming out.

O beloved friends, no heart could e’er conceive, or tongue tell the magnificence of these victories of the Lord Jesus. I commend the fruits of it to you tonight; I commend
that blessed work which that blessed One there once and for all accomplished on that cross, I commend it to you. You will find there that which will sustain your soul, that which will uphold your soul, and that not merely in prospect of dissolution, not merely in prospect of the breaking up of everything down here. And mark this, there is not anything on this earth which is not breaking up. Everything is shaking, everything is rocking to its very basis. There is a sort of universal dread, uncertainty hanging about every atmosphere in this world, around the political atmosphere, around the commercial atmosphere, around the domestic atmosphere. Thank God, here is something that never changes, that remains in all its intense immovability. And how blessed to think of this, that though thousands and thousands of sinners have here rested, it will bear the weight of thousands more. I often think of that little hymn that we sing together, that when the Lord shall come,

“Rising millions shall proclaim,
Blessings on the Savior’s name.”

We shall see, beloved, in that scene of glory, thousands and thousands of people whom we never expected to see there, blessed be His name, and the greatest of all wonders, save for His grace, will be that we shall see ourselves there. Whenever the heart gets a sense of its own vileness, and wretchedness, and ruin, and misery, its own complete thorough badness and ruin before God, then we know that nothing but the blood of Jesus could wash away its sin. Thank God, that can, thank God, that does, now and for ever. The moment the blood is applied to my conscience, that blood that has met the claims of a holy God, glorified Him about sin down to the very lowest depths where that blessed One went, and He could not go lower than He went, I say when that blood is applied to the conscience, it is purged from every spot and every stain of sin. And I have it now, and that is what I preach to you tonight -- a present salvation, a personal salvation and a permanent salvation. We preach salvation through this cross of Jesus in these three characters -- a present salvation for any sinner here tonight that will simply trust in that blessed One; a personal salvation for the sinner that will come; and a permanent salvation, for nothing can undo it; all in virtue of the completeness, the fulness, and the perfection of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on that cross 1800 years ago. Will you have it now? Have you got it? That is the question. If you have not got it, what have you got? You might have all the dignities, all the wealth, all the honor, all the glory that this poor wretched world could ever heap upon a poor worm, yet what would it be, beloved friends? Just so much to pile up as a funeral pile; you would have to leave it all then. Just so much to freight your heart with; just so much to sink you down into misery and wretchedness. I never met a man in this world yet that had enough. “Much would have more,” as the saying is; and that is the principle of this world. Increase it, and you increase the desire for more. But oh! thank God, this is what can satisfy, and nothing else can.

it is a miserable thing to me to go about and see the dissatisfied countenances of God’s people. You will bear with me for saying it, but nothing is so grievous I think as to look into the countenance of those that ought to be satisfied and see the elements there of dissatisfaction; it is simply heart-breaking. I am not at all surprised to see a person in the world unsatisfied. I say that person is entitled to have a miserable face, he has no right to be happy. There you are tonight, dear unsaved one, unconverted and unhappy. Do not tell me you are happy; you are unconverted and you are miserable. And your so-called religion is exactly on the principle of insurance; you are paying so many premiums against a certain day -- unhappy, uncertain, miserable, nothing settled, afraid, no peace, no rest, no satisfaction.

O, beloved friends, come tonight and taste the blessedness of this salvation of God. Hearken to the words of the blessed God Himself in His gracious pleadings (I think it is so wonderful to see how He pleads), “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not.” Think of the goodness of God to come down and plead with poor wretched beings like you and me. Your money and your labor are all being expended for what is not bread and what does not satisfy. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 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.” That is what suits a poor bankrupt sinner, that is what suits you, that is what suited me in my spiritual bankruptcy and ruin, and salvation for nothing on my side, but a salvation that was infinite in its cost on God’s side. Taste it tonight, “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Come and taste the positive pleasure of trusting in One that is worthy of being trusted, One that invites your trust, one that invites your confidence. Come; if you have never come before, come tonight. The Lord bless you, the Lord meet you here in this very place as you sit upon those seats. Come and trust that blessed One. I was going to say venture, but I cannot say venture, because there is no venture in it. We used to sing,

“Venture on Him, venture wholly,”

but I cannot sing that now. It is no venture, it is a positive certainty. Come and trust Him, and enjoy that certainty this night, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
“The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from Among the Dead”

“ἐἰ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὰν νεκρῶν”
(Phil. 3:11)

Preface

The little volume in the reader’s hands is made up of Four Addresses delivered at Park Street, Islington, in the early part of this year. May He, who alone can apply His truth by His Spirit, bless it abundantly to the many who heard these addresses, and to all into whose hands they may now come in this printed form, and to His great name shall be all the praise and glory.

W. T. T., Medwyn Villa, Tunbridge Wells, 1886.

The Fact of Christ’s Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-17

It is pressed, beloved brethren, upon my heart to bring before you this evening and on the other evenings that one may be permitted to speak here, the great truth of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in its various aspects, because we may look at it from many sides, and it speaks to us in many ways. This evening I would go no further than to call your attention to the fact of the resurrection itself, the bare, simple, naked fact of it; next time, if the Lord permit, we will speak of the fruits of it, but it is the fact of it I want to bring very simply before you this evening. And in whatever light you may regard it (for I am speaking now for a moment abstractedly of resurrection, because Christ’s was pre-eminently the great divine manifestation of resurrection) but whatever way you look at it, it would be impossible for any heart to conceive or any tongue to give expression to words that could exaggerate the importance of it. There is no subject in scripture more deeply momentous than resurrection, and there is no fact that the world, as such, has more cordially detested than resurrection. It has been to a great extent refused by the world. I am now speaking, remember, of the world in its widest and most general sense. You remember that even with the Corinthians, who were far from being the world, though they were permeated and leavened by worldly principles and by worldly habits and lusts, the enemy had so far succeeded as to lead some of them to deny that there was any resurrection of the dead; so much so that the apostle devotes that magnificent chapter, 1 Cor. 15, to the demonstration of the great fact of resurrection, and asserts the resurrection of the saints from the fact of Christ’s resurrection. Christ’s resurrection established not merely the great principle of resurrection itself, but established and secured the truth of the resurrection of all that are Christ’s. Given His resurrection, and we have secured our resurrection. Take away resurrection in the abstract, Christ is then not raised; and if Christ is not raised, then there is nothing.

Now it will be well, beloved friends, that we should look at that for a moment. Why is it that science and philosophy so called, and education in all the various ages of the world have been skeptical as to this great truth? Observe, it has been called in question; men of science and men of education in the world have universally shrunk from it -- why? I am assured that for the simplest believer here tonight, my calling your attention to this one fact is of the greatest moment. It is for this reason: resurrection cannot be accounted for by any natural law; indeed I might go further, and say that it is directly outside and beyond all natural law; there is no natural law known that can account for resurrection. It is the divine sovereign power of God in His own intervention according to His own will; and mark you, beloved friends, more than that, it is the intervention of the sovereign power of God into that domain which was the fruit of man’s sin and ruin before God. “Man sinned, and death reigned,” is the simple history of man. Put into the simplest language, the whole history of men in this world is summed up in that, “man sinned, and death reigned.” And it was not the nature, the character of the sin. Hence the apostle says, “Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those which had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” that is to say, although there were those that had not sinned by the transgression of a positive known precept, still they had sinned, and it was not a question as I have said of the character or the way in which they had sinned; they had sinned, and so there was death. Death came in as the just judgment of God in consequence of man’s sin. And so resurrection, beloved friends, is the fruit of the power of God, sin having been atoned for. It was witnessed in the
power of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He was down here in this world, for He put forth His power as the quickener of the dead, the Son of God and quickener of the dead; now and again He did so. But when He Himself, as man, went into that place, when He allowed the shroud of death and judgment which belonged to us in virtue of what we were, and where we were, to be wrapped around Himself in grace, when He went into that dark chamber, what came out then was this, the power of God intervened to take the Man who had perfectly glorified Him, and who had bowed to death as the judgment of God due to sin and to man’s sin (carried out too by Satan, who had that power), to take, I say, out of death, the Lord Jesus Christ who as man went down into that death, and lay too in the grave, the power of God was there displayed in His own quickening might, the surpassingness of the power of God towards Christ as man, taking that blessed One out of that place where in grace He descended for God’s glory and our eternal blessing; and further, mark, that power was thus displayed in right, yea, Christ was raised out from among the dead by the glory of the Father, and in wondrous right too, and He is now seated 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.

Now there is no natural law in this, it is divine power, it is God’s power. Who could quicken from the dead but God? And that is why the world dislikes it, and why men of science hate it, and philosophers sneer at it. It does not come within the range of natural law, and the world as such, and men of the world as such, know nothing and will accept nothing beyond natural law. Natural law bounds their ken. That is why resurrection is disliked; it is of God, it is the mighty power of God. Faith accepts it, bows to it, delights and glories in it. It is connected with the very things that are called the prerogatives of God; for God “quickens the dead, and calls the things that be not as though they were.” And the simplest believer here tonight delights in the sovereignty of God and the power of God that is far away beyond all that man by his poor, wretched, puny comprehension seeks to bring within his range.

Now there is another reason why the fact of resurrection is detested by the world, and that is because it was the great public testimony to the truth of Christianity, which was founded in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was God’s great public manifestation in the world of the truth of Christianity, which was to be and which was an entirely new thing in the ways of God down here in this world. You cannot blend Christianity with Judaism, though that is the attempt which has been made in the world. Christianity is a completely new system of God, introduced entirely when the old system was set aside for the time being. The Jewish system was God’s system up to the cross, and what was connected with that system as such will no doubt find its place again in a new way, in connection with the earthly circumstances of God’s earthly people; but Christianity was totally, completely distinct from all that went before. Eternal life was presented perfectly in that blessed Person Himself here; look at that blessed One down here in this world, the blessed Son of God who came down to be a man, and look at the eternal life there in His own Person. Mark what it says in 1 John 1, “That which was from the beginning”; from what beginning? from the moment of His manifestation on earth in time as man; there He was, the eternal life. And mark, beloved friends, when we speak of Christianity, you cannot separate from Christianity the eternal life, the Father and the Son. You get all these connected with it, they are especially and peculiarly belonging to Christianity as such. There I get the Son, here as man, come down in manifestation upon this earth; I have the Father, the Father’s voice greeting Him when He was here; the Holy Ghost descending upon Him as a dependent man when He was here; I find Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I get the eternal life presented in Christ’s own blessed Person, the eternal life that was promised before the world began manifested in His own Person here in time. But observe this, not a single individual could have a place in that Christianity until after His death and resurrection from amongst the dead. Our place in it, our portion in connection with it, our title to it, awaited his death and resurrection, awaited the cross as the great upholder and vindicator of all God’s holy attributes and righteous claims, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ out from amongst the dead, to take a new place as man, mark you, to be set as man in that new place, as the risen man who was to take relations as such with others brought into that place by virtue of His victory and triumphs -- all that is connected with Christianity.

It was as this great public vindication of the victories of redemption and of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that resurrection became the great means of spreading this wonderful new order of things that God was about to introduce. And further observe what makes it of such deep interest is this, that in the chapter we have read, and also in the close of the previous chapter, there you see all the malignity and hatred of the nation combined to thwart His resurrection. See how well they knew, and how well the devil knew what was involved in it. Look at the close of Matt. 28, if you have the smallest doubt of it; “Sir, we remember” -- the disciples might forget, but the Pharisees did not, their memories were quicker than the disciples’ --

Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Observe what resurrection was to the enemies of the truth. It was more -- I may say -- to the enemies of the truth than it really was to the lovers of the truth. It was of more significance and greater importance in the eyes of the haters and opposers of the truth than it was in those who really loved the truth. And so even afterwards; as soon as ever the resurrection is positively vindicated and established, look at this Matt. 28, where in the face of a sepulcher that was empty, and of a victory that was complete, and of a triumph that was unquestionable, so that no doubts could possibly be
raised and thrown upon it, it was so palpable and plain that He had come up and gone out of death; yet in the face of it all, they plot and lie. Think of the value they put on resurrection, think of what resurrection was to them, look at their appraisal of it -- anything to hinder it; and all for this very reason that I am speaking to you about, it was the display, first of all, of God’s sovereign power, the intervention of God in power beyond and outside every known natural law, and it was that which gave the impetus to the spread of this entirely new order of things which was about to be introduced in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one other thing I should like to give utterance to before I look at this chapter. The apostle says, in Rom. 1:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (which he had promised before by his prophets in holy writings) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.

There He is connected with the promises; that is one thing; but mark more -- “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection out from among the dead” {Rom. 1:4}.

Now look at those two things a moment, because they are exceedingly blessed for the establishment of our faith in God. You get promise in connection with His Person. Promise carries you back to what went before. But now you have more than promise, even power, promise was in connection with what God had spoken to David and to David’s house; but you have power, and the power of God, mark you, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, demonstrating this fact -- for that is what it was here -- viz., that His resurrection out from among dead people, by the power of God, was the public manifestation of that power by which He walked down here in unsullied and spotless holiness; a manifestation of His being the Son of God in power. This is what comes out. The resurrection was the great declaration by God to the glory of the Person of Him who was the display, in His own blessed Person, of true Christianity. Because if you have not a Christ that has got all the glory, all the perfections, all the magnificence, around His Person that scripture gives to Him, you have got no system worthy of the name of Christian. He is the display of it, His work is the basis of it, and so you see here in connection with resurrection how it comes out. He was declared to be Son of God with power -- How? By resurrection out from among the dead. The resurrection from amongst the dead was the great manifestation and demonstration on God’s part that He was all that we (thank God!) know He was: it was declared; there was the manifestation. But it was the manifestation of that power by which He walked down here in this world, spotlessly perfect and pure, in the midst of a scene and people that were both corruption and corrupting. There He was, unique in all His spotless, holy walk down here by the Spirit of holiness, and the resurrection demonstrated the power.

Well, now, that is most important, because it attaches itself at once to His Person. I feel almost unable to give expression to it as my heart apprehends it, and as I desire you should apprehend it; but I want to show you what importance God attaches to resurrection. I am not speaking of the fruits of it, that is an easier part of the subject; but I am speaking of the fact of it. And I assure you, beloved friends, increasingly the heart delights more and more every day in the great unalterable facts of Christianity. For the moment you come here, you are outside the region of debate. You may call in question consequences, you may say, I do not exactly see such a conclusion from such a premise, such a result flowing from such a ground; but you cannot debate facts that God records. You may refuse them -- that do at your peril but they are past debate.

We are not debating it at all: here is the fact, attested in the presence of angels, of devils, of heaven, of the enemies of Christ, the naked solemn fact of His resurrection. And here is the great proof, the great demonstration of that fact, that He was all that was witnessed in His Person down here in this world, He was the Son of God. He became a man, perfectly true! and He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness, by that power that took Him out from amongst the dead. And that relates to His Person. And I could not exaggerate the importance of that to our souls.

The resurrection out from among dead people -- I will speak of that again another evening when we come to the character of it, though it is hard to pass by the character of it now, for the character of the resurrection is of deep moment to us now, because it was not merely resurrection abstractedly, it was a certain kind of resurrection, it was a resurrection out from among the dead. And it was that, I may say in passing, that provoked all the hatred and dislike of the leaders amongst the Jews. And I believe it would provoke the hatred and dislike of a great many Christians to-day, who would own resurrection abstractedly, but who would dislike the character of Christ’s resurrection. Why? Because God begins in that resurrection a totally, and completely, and perfectly new order of things altogether. That is why people shrink from it now, and that is connected with the character of it. There is the fact of it, and there is the character of it; the fact of it indisputable, the character of it beyond all expression magnificent, a resurrection out from among the dead, and defining for us, through God’s grace, the character of our resurrection, for we shall be raised and others left in their graves. I need not say, that the saints’ resurrection will be after the pattern and according to the character of Christ’s resurrection.

Now there is another scripture in John 2:18, “Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things?” Now, mark, He had purged the temple, His Father’s house, which they had turned into a scene of merchandise, He had asserted His right to clear that house, His Father’s house, He turned out of it every defiling thing, and He was challenged at once by those money-making, wretched Jews in these terms, What sign do you show us if you do these things? He could not do it in any
other character except as the Son of God. As the Son, His zeal vindicated His right to cleanse that house from all defilement, and they challenged Him at once, What authority have you to do that? Now mark His answer, “He said unto them, Destroy this temple,” that is, His body, “and in three days I will raise it up.” There He is a divine Person. And there is the proof, observe, of the divinity of His Person, that He was the Son of God. Just as the Epistle to the Romans shows that He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from amongst the dead, so in John 2, when He took that place as the Son of God to cleanse His Father’s house of all the defilement that was there, and He is challenged as to His title and right to it, He says, Here is this temple -- His own body -- destroy it, lay your hands upon it, and in three days I will raise it up again. “He spake of the temple of his body.”

His disciples remembered, when He was risen from the dead, they connected that with the resurrection. He Himself gives the fact, that He would rise again from amongst the dead as the great demonstration to it, when challenged as to His title, that He was a divine Person. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Now that will explain to you a little fact that you may have often been struck with, in reading the scriptures about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find constantly in scripture that it is said that He rose; and, indeed, the testimony after He rose went out, “The Lord is risen,” that is to say, the fact is connected with His own Person, which is perfectly true, beloved friends, and very blessed. And I will tell you why. Whenever the word of God sets Him before us in His divine glory, though He had become a man, His resurrection is His own act of power. His divinity is the great starting-point of the Holy Ghost in testimony (for though He became Man, He never ceased to be God; He became man because He was not that before; He was God, distinct in His Person, He was with the Father, equal with God because He was God) well, when the Spirit of God points to His divinity, His Godhead, even though He is speaking of His death, and what He underwent as man, He always sets forth His resurrection as by His own power; and hence He says, *He rose*; and hence the testimony was, “he is risen.”

And what divine joy it sends into one’s heart: just by faith to go back to that first morning, the like of which never was seen upon this earth before; for there never was such a day upon this earth as that first resurrection morning; and is it not like the outshining of the sun after a long, dreary night? I can well understand how the hearts of His own, fearing, trembling, clung to Him -- ignorant and weak no doubt, yet they clung to Him, as it was His Person that attracted them -- and they did cling to Him, oftentimes contrary to the poor, wretched, feeble convictions of their own poor hearts. Yes, I can well understand that, when the fact that He was risen was established among the disciples, how they went about to each other that morning, “the Lord is risen indeed” -- What a greeting! What a word to meet each other with on that first morning, after that long, dreary night of winter, so to speak, that had settled down upon this whole world of mankind, with that long and monotonous inscription that is recorded upon every great man in the Old Testament times: “he died.” Not a single star to relieve the blackness of it, “he died.”

You will find in the Old Testament everything is made of death, and burial, and funerals. Look at the patriarchs. Death was more important to them than life; death brought them into Canaan. And it was the belief of the Jews that they should be raised in Canaan, and therefore death was far more important to them than life. Because resurrection had not come out as a manifested reality; resurrection was not brought to light. As the apostle says, Neither life nor incorruptibility, had *come to light* before the glad tidings. It was not that they were not in existence, but God had not brought them out. But now we can understand, and our hearts can enter into the reality of the thing, that they should go about to one another and say, “The Lord is risen indeed.” And what always is a delight to the heart is, that they connect with the fact of His resurrection the grace of His unchangeable heart, for they say, “and hath appeared unto Simon”; poor Peter that denied Him -- even though he had been warned -- the man that trusted his own heart like a fool, in face of the remonstrance of Jesus; still, there was His heart unchangeable, and connected with that blessed new testimony of His resurrection, was the testimony of the unchangeable, unaltered heart of Christ.

Oh, beloved friends, there is nothing more precious than to see that, on the most blessed morning that ever beamed upon this sinful earth, the morning of resurrection, the testimony to the completeness of the glory of His Person, as well as the perfections of His triumph, there should go out that testimony in connection with the risen Christ that He was unchangeable, His heart was the same; Peter might forsake Him and deny Him, but He was the same. Nothing could be more precious and more blessed for our hearts.

Again, have you observed how scripture always keeps two things together; and it is so good to keep in our souls the associations that God places together. And you will find that a risen Christ always in scripture is connected with those that are asleep. Blessed for those of us who have laid the bodies of our loved friends down in the ground to think that the sleeping ones, those who have passed out of their bodies and gone to be with the Lord, are connected with the risen One. That is always so in scripture. It is a risen Christ and those who are asleep. Oh what a comfort for the mourner! What company they are put into! -- a risen Christ and those that are asleep. I do not more than touch upon it now.

There is another testimony concerning resurrection, that will bring us to the chapter I have read, and that is not merely that it established the glory of His Person, but it was the great public manifestation of the completeness of His work. Now, beloved friends, if you think of it in that way for a moment, if you think of the Lord Jesus Christ having undergone death, submitted Himself to the sentence of death, it was in that, peace was made, it was upon the cross that the great work was finished which set our peace upon a basis that never can be disturbed. On that cross, the whole question of the
believer’s peace with God was once and for ever settled. And if it were a question of making it now, beloved friends, there would be and could be no hope. If it is not made, it never can be made, because Christ is never coming to die again. “He made peace by the blood of his cross,” and when the scripture speaks of the blood of His cross, that is the expression of His own death. The fulness of that work, the completeness of it, the perfect satisfaction of God, in all that He accomplished, the perfect satisfaction of the nature of God in all that was rendered to Him, and the perfect expression of the completeness of what He gave to God, were all proclaimed in resurrection; His resurrection out from among the dead was the proof of it all! That is why you find all this opposition, both of Jews and of Satan; all that were opposed to the truth were amalgamated and confederated together against it.

Now that will bring us to our chapter, and in it you can see the first verse is not connected at all with the second; they are not consecutive at all. It is so blessed and comforting for our hearts to mark this. In Matt. 28:1 we read, “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.” The fact is, it was the dusk of the Jewish Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath was running, so to speak, the last sands out of its hour-glass. It was not the first day of the week, it was the end of the Sabbath, the twilight of the Sabbath. You will find in the chapter before, these women were found looking at the sepulcher. Joseph took the body down by the permission of Pilate, and he placed it in his own sepulcher that had never covered man’s corruption, a blessed testimony to the perfection of that blessed One whose body was laid in the grave. That sepulcher never had entombed man’s corruption; and that was the spot that was prepared for the spotless body of Jesus; there it was laid. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, that is, the wife of Cleopas, were sitting over against the sepulcher, they saw it, the affections of their heart to Jesus detained them there, their eyes, their hearts, all their interest and powers, were riveted where they saw that blessed one.

In Matt. 28:1 they visit the sepulcher again. The Sabbath had hardly run its course out; it was on the twilight of that Saturday, it was not yet the early morning of the first day of the week; it was not the day dawn of the eighth day, the resurrection day, but it was the twilight of the Sabbath. They come -- and it is blessedly interesting and most precious for our hearts, because it shows the love and devotedness of their hearts to Jesus -- they come again in the dusk; they see the precious remains put in; they could not stay away: it is hard for the heart to stay away from the spot where the heart’s object is. The heart was there, and therefore the feet were found there, for the feet follow the heart. They came, but they did no more. The next verse is not connected with it at all. That is the interference of God to call attention to a fact that had taken place; but the women did not see it, the disciples did not see it, no one saw it except the soldiers and the watch. Some time -- God does not say when -- some time after Jesus had risen, not to open that sepulcher to let the Lord of glory out, not such a thought! Jesus had risen, He had come up by His own power as well as by God’s power; when He had risen, “Behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it.” Jesus was out of the tomb; He had risen, and to call attention to this great fact of His resurrection, to the great fact that God had intervened in power and taken Him out, and He had risen by His own power as well, for there was both, the angel comes.

How blessed to think that that sealed stone and that set watch could not keep Him! The seal of that stone had an inscription, I suppose, of Caesar’s upon it; the king’s head, I suppose, was upon the seal, as much as to say, That cannot be reversed; with that signet, who dare touch that stone? No man could, but at the cost of his life. But oh! beloved friends, the Lord triumphed over the grave; God who sits in heaven laughs to scorn all such puerile, puny attempts on man’s part. The angel comes down, and, in the dignity of triumph, sits upon the stone which was rolled back, and brought the sentence of death upon the keepers of that sepulcher. The keepers trembled, “his countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow,” the keepers shook, and were as dead men.

But when you come to Matt. 28:5, you come to another visit of these dear women. They come again now, and when they come look how different! and these words are most precious in connection with resurrection. The angel says, “Fear not ye”; it is just the very thing that God connects with resurrection; fear is gone, banished, disposed of -- “Fear not ye”; it is just the very testimony that the Spirit of God brings out to dry up the fears of the heart, banish all misgivings from your heart; “I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.” I know where your hearts’ affections are, I know the one you are looking after, you have no cause to be afraid, “Ye seek Jesus, which was crucified; He is not here, for He is risen, as He said; come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Oh what a testimony! Think of the consolation that is connected with that, think of the drying up of their fears, think of the assurance of their hearts, think how that declared that everything was done, that the ransom was paid, that justice was satisfied, that the believer was free. Every fear, every misgiving, every question that Satan could agitate and disturb the poor heart with, was all silenced and settled for ever now.

“He is risen,” that was the testimony; you are seeking Jesus, who was crucified—they do not speak of Him now as crucified -- He “was crucified.” And, beloved friends, is it not strange to think that there are so many who positively prefer to wear what I consider to be a denial of the truth of the gospel, than to have thoughts of the resurrection of Christ beaming on their hearts? Why, if I see, as alas, I do see, many wearing a crucifix, what is it but a denial of the great truth of the gospel? Do you inquire how? Because it is presenting what is not true now. “Christ is risen.” This is the truth: He “was crucified.” More than that, it is presenting the instrument of shame and torture which the world that hated Him had nailed Him upon. The cross is the testimony to the world’s hatred of God’s Christ, and it was the Roman instrument of torture upon which that precious One was nailed.
What is the truth that should fill our hearts? Resurrection: the risen One who was crucified. Thank God, He is neither on the cross nor in the tomb; thank God, He was on the cross and was in the tomb. Thank God, He is not down there, but He is risen, He is on the Father’s throne. And that is why I read Matthew’s Gospel, because it does not go beyond resurrection; I purposely abstained from the Gospels which speak of ascension. It is the Gospel which presents Him risen and on earth again with the poor of the flock, that sets forth resurrection simply and purely. We know He is exalted and glorified at God’s right hand, but here is the testimony to His resurrection.

I now recapitulate, for a moment, all the testimonies that are connected with it. First of all, it establishes the intervention of God in divine power. Secondly, it gave the start to the proclamation of the wonderful new order of things that was to come out in connection with Christianity. And thirdly, it was a great testimony of God to the glory of the Person of His Son to take that blessed, glorious Man out of death, and to give Him as Man a new place which He was surely entitled to in virtue of the glory of His Person, but which He took as man, who had finished the work which God gave Him to do. How well I remember when I first read a blessed old tract which some of my brethren here tonight will recollect, “The Resurrection the Fundamental Truth of the Gospel,” how well I remember the comfort my soul got in its relationships to God. Oh, beloved friends, time would fail to set forth the magnificence of all the truths that are allied with that marvelous intervention of God. It is the establishment of the great fundamental truth of the resurrection, which is closely connected with Christ’s death; in this His Person is proclaimed as well as the perfection of His work.

Am I speaking to a soul here who has doubts, or fears, or misgiving? Have you a doubt? I know very well that people say, I am thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. My beloved brother or sister, let me tell you this, if you talk about looking to the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, you are looking at Him where He is not. There is no such thing as the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross; how can you see Him where He is not? If you say to me, I look back by faith, I understand that, that is plain enough, I look back by faith and remember that He was on the cross, but you could not look back by faith and see Him on the cross, though you can look back by faith to see what He bore, and what He was and endured on the cross. Do you want to see Him? You must look up to see Him alive. He was dead, He is alive, He is risen. I see Him in His new place as man, victorious, triumphant man, the whole power of death and of Satan broken, the whole power of the enemy dashed in pieces by that magnificent victory of His; every hostile power put down, every enemy that had triumphed, triumphed over by Him in His death and in His resurrection. What fear can you have now? What are you afraid of? I am speaking perhaps to a trembling believer tonight, to some one who is not established in the truth of the gospel, who says, I am afraid of death. Oh, beloved friends, look here. He was the death of death, “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.” Death has been vanquished; death has lost its sting; death has been spoiled of its victory, its power is broken, you need not be afraid of death. Sin? He came to bear away His people’s sins; He bore them. Thank God, however feeble you may be, you belong to Christ, and I can tell you every one of your sins were laid by God on that blessed One on the cross. Perhaps you have sung the hymn,

“I lay my sins on Jesus.”

Ah, no, you could not lay your sins on Jesus, God laid them on Him, God who knew them, the God against whom you had sinned, the God upon whose holy, righteous character those sins were an outrage, God laid all your sins, my dear trembling brother or sister, on that blessed One, and He rose again triumphant without them. God as God forsook Him as man on the cross when He bore them, but He is triumphant without your sins. What a comfort! Thank God, my sins are all gone; death is passed. I remember when I was afraid of death myself. I knew I should not go to hell, I knew my sins were forgiven, but I was afraid of death. I did not like to look at a corpse; I could not bear to come into the presence of death; death made me tremble; I was afraid of it, though I was not afraid of hell. Why? Because I had not seen the magnificent triumph of Christ over death. Now, thank God, you can see it, and you can rejoice in it. You can take up the song of victory. You can put your foot down on this unalterable platform that has been secured through His death and by His resurrection, and you can say, under the shadow of Christ’s victory, that victory won by Himself alone, but for us, you can lift your voice and say, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” That is what I read in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord grant that every heart here who has never read these magnificent precious realities may by faith in the simplest way look at that resurrection as a fact, and find the comfort and sustenance of it for their souls this night and for ever, through Jesus Christ.

**The Fruits of Christ’s Resurrection**

*John 12:20-24; Hebrews 2:6-15*

We were considering together last week the great fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead, simply and almost exclusively as fact, without touching much, if at all, on the consequences and fruits which flow from His resurrection. We were occupied mainly in looking at it as the great basis and foundation not only of the manifestation of the glory of His Person, declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from amongst the dead, but as the public testimony which God was pleased to give through it to the full efficacy of all that Christ undertook to do.

And now this evening I propose that we should look, not at all (for it would be impossible in the course of an evening
to look at all the mighty consequences of His resurrection),
but at some of the consequences or fruits of it, both as regards
God’s glory and the blessing of all that are His own.

And, first, mark this, that up to the moment of His
resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ, both in that beautiful,
wonderful life of fragrance and frankincense before God
which His life as a man down here upon earth was, and in His
precious death on that cross, and all that was involved in it,
was alone, even up to the moment of His taking His place
publicly as the risen Man upon earth, God calling attention
to the fact of His resurrection and to all that was connected with
it; He was the solitary Man; His life was entirely a lonely life,
beautiful, unique, and there were none with Him. True, He
chose and called His disciples that they should be with Him,
but they never accompanied Him really. He was solitary
beyond all thought. He brought none to His own stand-point.
He walked alone through this world. That is what peculiarly
marked the path of the blessed One. He was unique in the
testimony of that beautiful life; but there was no other to be
found on earth but Himself. It was not that He did not feel for
miserly and distress, and that He did not enter into everything
in His path as He met it. He did as none else could; but still
there He was alone. And I need not say that in His death He
was still more alone. There He entered into a solitude deeper
than any heart could conceive. I speak now specially of that
one transcendent moment when He was forsaken of God on
that cross; never was there a solitude like that solitude. All
through His blessed life, He was here, as far as men were
concerned, apart from all; still, there was the companionship
and sustenance of His Father. You remember those words,
they are touching words, too, coming from His lips:

The hour is coming, and now is, when ye shall be
scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone,
and yet I am not alone, but the Father is with me.

But, beloved, on that cross where He undertook to meet the
judgment of a holy God due to sin, where He exposed
Himself to all the full consequences of the divine judgment
because of sin, where He drank that dreadful cup, taking it
from His Father’s hand, where He met the whole of God’s
righteous, holy claims, and where He allowed the sword of
divine justice to be sheathed in His own heart, so to speak,
there He entered into a solitude indescribable by human lips:
He was alone as no one ever was alone, He drank that
dreadful cup, He went down there under death alone. And
when that blessed body was placed in the tomb, when it was
enshrined in a sepulcher that never covered man’s corruption
(for God reserved for the body of Jesus that special, peculiar
honor), there He was alone.

And, in the very earliest moments of His resurrection, He
is so in the moments, for instance, that are set forth in type
and figure in that magnificent twenty-third chapter of
Leviticus which speaks of the wave-sheaf, that sheaf of
firstfruits which was waved before Jehovah in its own
magnificent perfections, no offering for sin accompanying it,
but the full complement of all sweet savor offerings with it;
there was the burnt-offering and the meat-offering -- the
offering that spoke of perfection in life, and the offering that
spoke of perfection in life given up -- but no sin-offering.

Why? Because Christ could be presented in His own Person
in all the spotlessness and holiness and perfection of it before
God, and He was. But when you look at Lev. 23, and see that
sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest of Canaan, that which
grew in that land and belonged to that land, when that was
reaped by Israel, they were to take that on the morrow after
the Sabbath, on the eighth day, on the first day of the week,
and they were to wave that, in its own beauteous perfection,
before Jehovah; there, beloved brethren, was solitariness as
well.

In the first moments, so to speak, of His resurrection as
the firstfruits, He was there in all His solitary blessedness, in
all the perfection of that which belonged to Himself
peculiarly. And that it is which gives such sweetness and
preciousness to the soul when read as the type of the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be under any
misunderstanding as to this, for it involved all that was to
follow, it was the pledge, the security, the pattern, the
sample, of what was to follow; but there was a blessedness
about that sheaf that belonged to itself, there was no offering
needed there, but the burnt-offering and the meat-offering
with their fragrance -- life and life given up in their two-fold
perfection, all waved before Jehovah.

But that ended the solitariness of Jesus; He is alone no
more. And that is why I refer you to that beautiful chapter,
John 12, where He gives utterance to it in very touching
words. Everything was ready for the glory of the kingdom, as
it were. Israel for the moment received Him, the Gentiles
come up and want to see Him, just what will come out at the
coming day. The Spirit of God gives you a beautiful picture
of the coming glory in all this: Israel and the Gentiles, and
Christ the Center. Whether it was but for the time being a
feeble acceptation by His own people, as it was historically,
or whether it was the curiosity of the Greeks that came up to
worship at the feast that wanted to see this wonderful One, the
kingdom in its glories and all its constituent parts passed
before the eyes of the blessed Lord there. Mark the words:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall
into the ground and die, it abides alone {John 12:24}.

Now that is just what we have been looking at, He was alone
-- He remained alone, alone His perfection, alone in His
blessedness, alone all the preciousness of what He was in His
own Person to God in all His life; but now, mark, “if it die,
it bringeth forth much fruit.”

And there, beloved, is the first thing that itself is with the
fruit of His resurrection. And it is a wonderful truth for our
hearts to be occupied with, that the Lord gives utterance in
those words to that which in grace He has made us to be, as
part of the effects of His precious death -- we are the fruit of
it, we are part of that fruit, we have sprung, so to speak, as
to our new history, our new origin from Christ risen, as to the
new start that God in His wonderful grace has given us, it
sprang out of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is
a completely new thing that is begun in that risen Man, as
such, we have sprung from that death. That death closed the door upon everything that went before. That death wound up and finished the history of all that had passed, there before, whether under trial, whether tested by God, whatever it was, death judicially closed the history of that thing before God. But here, now, we are in company with a fresh thing, new thing. And what an amazing reality for our souls to take in! Think of the dignity of the place God in His wonderful grace, and in virtue of redemption, has set us in; that you and I, beloved brethren, in virtue of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ associated with Him in His death, associated with Him in all the marvelous blessedness of that death, should be now united to Him -- we are one with Him. For if I speak of our being quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, as we see it in Eph. 2, it brings in both union and new creation. It is an entirely new thing, a new history; but it is fruit of His death, and that is what, through grace, we who believe in His blessed name are, even fruit of His death. We have sprung from that one only corn of wheat -- I say it with reverence -- that one grain as it were in God’s granary, that alone could produce this new wonderful harvest to God’s glory.

Well, now, in keeping precisely with that are the words prophetically applied to Him in Heb. 2:11. The Spirit of God says,

Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.

-- how? There is one company before God; if you like to express it in that way, there is one lump, as it were, before God. How? that is the point. By Christ coming down and taking part with us in the old order of existence?

Never! That would be to degrade Christ. And that is exactly what that doctrine, union in incarnation does; it degrades Christ, because it associates Christ with sinful men, it associates Christ, in all His perfections, with men in all their sins and wickedness, and distance from God. No; Christ by His precious death ends for ever, judicially before God, the history of that man that Moses in the school-house could not subjugate, the man that the law could not curb, for that restriction only brought him out into open light in all his lawlessness; the cross ends judicially that history for ever before God. I care not what men may say to the contrary, for faith the cross for ever has ended judicially before God the history of the first man. The Lord Jesus Christ was the second Man and the last Adam, and there are deep and blessed truths connected with both these expressions, for they do not express the same thing, they are part of the glories of that blessed One. He was the second Man, because He displaces for ever the first man; and He was the last Adam because there never will be another order of man after Himself. He is the second Man because He displaces for ever the history of the first, and He is the last Adam because, in that new, risen order of being, He is the only order of man before God; there is now but one order of man before God, and that is the last Adam; He is both the second Man and He is the last Adam.

Observe this, the Lord Jesus Christ brought them into His own new risen place before God, and thus He can own them, hence it is said of them in Heb. 2:11, “They are all of one.” He has brought them there, He has brought them to stand in this new place. Blessed it is, beloved brethren, to dwell upon it; hold it fast in your souls, mark it well, it is not by His coming down to where they were, but He, through His death, bringing them into His own new, risen, wonderful, blessed place before God. And mark what He says, just what came out prophetically in Psa. 22, historically in John 20: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” You have the prophetetic utterance of the Spirit of Christ in Psa. 22, the announcement that as soon as ever the suffering of death was over and the cross became a great reality, as soon as ever the whole thing was gone through by Himself, alone treading that path of death, alone enduring that judgment, but when it was all passed -- mark the precious, beautiful words that our hearts have often dwelt on -- “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Yes, He never had brethren before. Thank God, He has got them now.

Think of what that moment was to the heart of that blessed One. In those earliest moments, when heard from the place where He was transfixed by death, “heard from the horns of the unicorns,” an expression that conveys the most intense suffering of death, transfixied by death, He was heard -- of course it goes on to resurrection -- “I will declare,” He says, “thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I praise thee”; and going on then into the full, final issue, “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.”

Now these are all magnificent and precious fruits of the triumphs and victories of our Lord Jesus Christ, the risen One. But I allude to it now to show you what supervened, as soon as the solitariness of the Lord Jesus Christ was over. He is no longer solitary, no longer alone; He was, blessed be His name, as we have seen, both in life and in death; but now He has a company associated with Him, a new company entirely, those whom He calls fruit of His death, those whom He has a company associated with Him, a new company entirely, those whom He calls fruit of His death, those whom He has associated with Him in His death judicially, that history for ever before God. And mark what He says, just what came out prophetically in Psa. 22, historically in John 20, where He says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Yes, He never had brethren before. Thank God, He has got them now.

Now these are all magnificent and precious fruits of the triumphs and victories of our Lord Jesus Christ, the risen One. But I allude to it now to show you what supervened, as soon as the solitariness of the Lord Jesus Christ was over. He is no longer solitary, no longer alone; He was, blessed be His name, as we have seen, both in life and in death; but now He has a company associated with Him, a new company entirely, those whom He calls fruit of His death, those whom He has associated with Him, a new company entirely, those whom He calls “brethren.” So you will remember how that which was prophetically spoken of by David in Psa. 22 came out historically in John 20, when the Lord spake to Mary Magdalene -- to her, moreover, to whom this world was intolerable without Him: it is blessed to know there was one who could not do without Him, whose heart was a desolation without Jesus. What was all in the world to her? Peter and John had their homes, and all the rest; but to Mary this scene was an empty place without Jesus. It shows you what He values -- that He Himself should be everything to us, that is what He appreciates; not merely necessary to us for our souls’ eternal salvation, and for our escape from coming judgment; but everything to us.

Is He everything to us, not merely in a little way, not merely as our Saviour, but is He everything? That is what He was to Mary, and He comes and shows Himself to her. He appears first to the one to whom He was everything. Think of the value He thus puts on devotedness. It was not doing great
things for Him. That is not the meaning of devotedness. There are many persons who do great things for the Lord, and they are not after all devoted; true, they may be most earnest. God forbid one should depreciate anything. So little is there of anything really and truly done to the Lord, that I dread depreciating anything done, only we must call things by their proper names; and devotedness is a heart that values beyond anything in this world Christ Himself; a heart that has Himself as its object; and He delights thus to show Himself to it.

And now, mark, her testimony gathers the disciples. A poor, feeble woman, it is true; no preacher was she, and yet look at her ministry; it was her testimony which brought the disciples together. And when they are found together by the word which she announces of His resurrection, as He appeared to her first Himself, He stands in their midst to historically make good His promise prophetically expressed in Psa. 22, to declare all these wonderful things, announces peace, saying, “Peace unto you,” as the fruit of His death, peace as proclaimed in His resurrection, that is the first thing.

But, mark, again, He says to them (and do not for a moment think that I am attempting to be critical, I have neither the right nor would I presume to do so), “Receive,” -- not “the Holy Ghost,” but “Receive Holy Ghost,” “Receive Holy Spirit,” that is to say, He communicates to them His own risen life. And I believe the reason why the Lord used the expression “Receive Holy Ghost,” is just this, that the Spirit of God is the power of everything that Christ communicates to us, and therefore the breath of risen life is here connected by name with that which was to be its power. But that which He really communicated to them there as the risen One, as the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit, fulfilling the words of 1 Cor. 15, was His own life in the power of resurrection.

And then (for we must speak what we believe to be true, and what I believe I have scripture for asserting) the disciples were now for the first time put in possession of eternal life; they had not as yet the Holy Ghost, but they were now put in possession of eternal life, and this in virtue of His redemption work, and of the communication of this new wonderful life that was breathed from His own lips as the risen One from the dead.  

1. (They had life; but now it was what John speaks of as life in abundance.)

Now all that is connected with resurrection, we are fruit of His death, we are of that new company He has brought to stand in that new position before His God; there in the relationship of children, so that He can own us as His brethren; He says of us, They are my brethren, as He says to Mary Magdalene, “Go to my brethren,” I have now, others associated with me, “and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”

But there are other fruits of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which are collective. What I have spoken of up to the present moment are more individual, they are fruits that pertain to us individually, because as children of God being able to say to God, Abba, Father, and to use the language of Christ, that of course is an individual relationship. As the fruit of Christ’s death, we are that. If you take it as put in the Epistle to the Colossians, it is individual there; risen life in Colossians is individual; it does not go into the corporate relationships. I do not mean to say that when we are quickened together with Christ in Ephesians, it is that; there we get another thing entirely, even that which is corporate. There are corporate fruits, and in order to bring out what these corporate fruits are, there is one scripture that I intended to allude to last Wednesday evening, but time would not permit, which is really the foundation of these corporate relationships, and that is at the end of Eph. 1. I remarked last time that Christ is looked at and spoken of as rising from the dead in His own power, and also spoken of in scripture as being raised from the dead. Thank God, both are true; He was raised and He rose. He was the Son of God before all time and worlds, though He came down to be a man, and He did not cease to be God because He became a man, and therefore, looking at Him as a divine Person here, He could say to the Jews, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” There is the display of His own power as the mighty God, the Son of God, a divine Person who could rise; He was the quickener of the dead as such too, but He rose, and so it is said in scripture, “The Lord is risen from the dead”; “The Lord is risen indeed.” That was the testimony with which they greeted each other on that first morning of the resurrection. But if you look at Him also as scripture presents Him you will find Him as man, and there we come to our passage in Ephesians — in Eph. 1 He is looked at as the glorious man who accomplished everything for God’s glory. He was the only man that could undertake perfectly to vindicate the whole of God’s holy, righteous character, and secure His glory. And, thank God, He found in that Man one on whom He could stake all His glory, and He did stake all His glory on Him.

1. (They had life; but now it was what John speaks of as life in abundance.)
Thus then, in Eph. 1, He is the glorious man, and the power of God comes down to the grave where that blessed One lay, and raised Him up and claimed Him as His own. The apostle prays that the eyes of the hearts of the Ephesian saints might be opened to know the surpassingness of His 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, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.” When you and I think of might and dominion and principality and power, we cannot get beyond that; they are termini, as it were, with us, but they were the platform of departure for Him. Our poor thoughts even fail to reach to it, but see the blessedness, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” And what a comfort for our hearts who have tasted and know His love to look at this blessed One, who went down beneath everything, exalted up above everything. When I read Eph. 1, oh the ministry of it to the heart and affections; how great too the delight of thinking of that One who was trodden under foot as it were by man, who went down underneath everything, yes, Him for whom there was no shelter, in whose bosom the sword of justice was sheathed, who drank the dreadful cup, and who exposed Himself to death and all that was connected with it as the just judgment of God due to sin. It is blessed to think of God coming down when everything had been finished, and Himself raising Jesus up 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, and everything put under His feet. What delight to the soul that has known and tasted His love! everything under the feet of that once down-trodden Man, that Man that went down into death; and He given in resurrection, and more than resurrection, in ascension and exaltation too, to be head over everything, and that as man. Let me press that upon you. I quite admit the worth and glory of His Person as Son of God, and delight to think of Him in His glories as Son of God, but do not let us lose any part of His glory; and remember it was not the question here of the worthiness of His Person, He is entitled to this glory as man, and it is as man He made a claim upon God to exalt and glorify Him in the very highest place in heaven. And that is what our hearts ought to cling to, because Christianity, for our entrance into it, and our connection with it, depends upon this new risen exalted place that Christ is entitled to, and that God was delighted to accord to Him in wondrous righteousness. And if you fail to grasp in your souls this new place that Christ got as man, entitled to it in virtue of what He accomplished as the glorious man, you will fail in your conceptions of what Christianity properly is. It is connected with that, it is a new place entirely, and Christ in it as man, head over everything to the church, His body.

Now I come to what is corporate, though I do not propose to go into the doctrine of it; but you could not have a body, until you have the head of the body. And here I get the power of God coming into death to take out of death the only man that ever did or ever could glorify Him, and to set Him there at His right hand in exaltation and ascension glory, head to the church, His body. And now mark what follows. In the second chapter you get the very same power quickening the members of the body of Christ; we are quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Here you have some of the consequences. I do not say the consequences only of resurrection, but consequences that could not come out till resurrection was a fact, that awaited His resurrection from the dead to give them effect. And mark this, that the church (and there we speak of the great corporate relationship) is not founded on resurrection, but on ascension. Of course to have ascension you must have resurrection. But why is it founded on ascension? Because it awaited His presence in the scene of exaltation and glory for the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to be sent down from the glorified man. And it is the Holy Ghost that forms the church, it is He baptizes believers into one body; and therefore you must have Christ in heaven before you have the Holy Ghost on earth. “The Holy Ghost was not yet,” as the scripture expresses it, “because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Now this is one of the first great corporate fruits, pertaining to us in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, going on, you may say, to ascension, which is a step further, but still, in which resurrection was absolutely a necessity; because, if He died, to lay the foundation of God’s glory in the cross, He must be raised to ascend, and be exalted; therefore it is you get Him in Eph. 1 “raised and exalted far above all principality and power.” And in the second chapter you find the same power accomplishing the resurrection of the members of the body, along with the Head, co-quickened with Christ, co-raised, and co-seated in the heavenlies, not as yet seated with Him, because they are not with Him yet as to fact, but in Him.

Now let me name another of the consequences, the fruits and effects of Christ’s resurrection -- and it is a very blessed one to think of -- and that is the assurance, the security, the certainty of the resurrection of all that are Christ’s. I referred last time to an association that is spoken of in scripture which is exceedingly blessed, and that is a risen Christ and those that have slept. A mistaken thought with some I would desire to remove, namely, that it was said that this was the “only” association. It is not the only association, for of course we are raised together with Christ and seated together in heavenly places in Him, and in that sense we are in association; but to me there is nothing more precious, when I think of the saints who have slept in Christ, than to see how they are spoken of in scripture; take for instance such a scripture as 1 Cor. 15, “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” A risen Christ and those that have slept -- is not that a blessed association? When we stand by the graves of those whom we loved in this world, when we consign all that is mortal of them, not to the gloomy tomb, but to God’s keeping, to Christ’s keeping, He who has the keys of death and of hades, and has the keys of His people’s graves, and will open the graves of His sleeping saints in that day when He comes; when we put the body of a beloved saint of God into His keeping, sow it in the ground to be awakened by the
Lord Jesus Christ in the morning of His glory when He comes, what a blessed thing to know that there is an association between that sleeping one and the risen Christ. “He is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

And again, when the apostle is reasoning as to the resurrection, and bringing out the fact, he says, If there is no resurrection of the dead (because you know, the Corinthians were so bad that some of them denied it), then Christ is not raised, and if Christ is not raised your faith is vain. What is the good of faith in a Christ that died and did not rise again? You are yet in your sins; there is no proof that the work is accomplished or that God is glorified; and they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. See how he loves to keep up the association of a risen Christ and the sleeping saints. To me, the more I think of it, the more precious it is. And I will tell you what is so comforting about it. Oftentimes, when you go away from a grave, from a scene of death, the poor heart gets the sense that you have left something behind; but this, you see, is far from that, it is really carrying it on to that wonderful, that glorious moment, that moment for which we wait, when He will put forth His power as the quickener of the dead, and when all His own that have slept in Him, from every graveyard and every cemetery shall be quickened, shall wake up in resurrection life and glory. It is an association of uncommon comfort, a risen Christ and those that are asleep. And not only that, but they are the very ones who shall rise first. Is it thought that they have lost anything by passing off the scene, by not being here to witness in their bodies His returning glory? Well, beloved, if so, they shall be first in the day of His power; “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” How like Him to put forth His power on the weakest, so to speak, day of His power; “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” How does it occur to you that they have left something behind; but this, you see, is far from that, it is really carrying it on to that wonderful, that glorious moment, that moment for which we wait, when He will put forth His power as the quickener of the dead, and when all His own that have slept in Him, from every graveyard and every cemetery shall be quickened, shall wake up in resurrection life and glory. It is an association of uncommon comfort, a risen Christ and those that are asleep. And not only that, but they are the very ones who shall rise first. Is it thought that they have lost anything by passing off the scene, by not being here to witness in their bodies His returning glory? Well, beloved, if so, they shall be first in the day of His power; “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” How like Him to put forth His power on the weakest, so to speak, so that where death, that which was the fruit of man’s sin, had come in, and asserted its claims, Christ puts forth His resurrection victory in the day of His power. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together" -- “together," think of that, no more separations, no more partings then -- “caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, not to meet one another, but “to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Now His resurrection assures that; and let me give you a little and lovely instance of it. The very first moment that the blessed God could divulge this great and glorious fact, it was divulged. In the Gospel of Matthew, after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, you get first of all the veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom; “the earth did quake, the rocks rent,” every sphere felt the touch of the victor. He made His touch felt in heaven and on earth. “And the graves were opened,” as if it was said to death, Hitherto you have had a right to hold, but no more. “The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and went into the holy city after his resurrection, and appeared to many.” Think how the blessed God, in the earliest moments of the victory of Jesus, gave expression to one of the effects of that victory, that the grave was no longer to hold, and that resurrection was secured. There were all the visible tokens of the power of His death and the power of His resurrection. Now that is a very blessed fact, that in the first moments of the victory of Jesus, we should have the resurrection of those that are Christ’s brought forth in figure.

But now there is one other consequence and fruit of Christ’s resurrection which is deeply solemn, and it might be thought perhaps that this is not the company in which to bring it forth. But, beloved friends, we have no right to pick and choose in the things of God; and if God connects with any one fact of His blessed book certain consequences, whether they are comforting or of deep momentous solemnity for our souls, we have no right to accept one and leave the other. There may be some one here tonight for whom God has a special voice in this consequence, and therefore God forbid I should keep it back.

In Acts 17:30 the apostle, amongst the cultivated and polished Athenians, speaking of the former times, and how God dealt with them, says: "And the times of this ignorance" -- that was not paying much compliment to their polish, or learning, or philosophy, or wisdom, or education, whether sage or savage, they are all put in one lump there -- “the times of this ignorance" -- Oh the dignity of divine truth amongst men -- “God hath winked at”; that is, He did not take account of such, “but now commandeth all men everywhere” -- mark those words -- to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Now there is a passage of deep and solemn moment for every one of us here.

We have been looking at the privilege side, the side that pertains to the children of God; but there is another side, as to this resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ -- a terrible side of it for the world. There may be some in this company who are not the children of God, who are still in their sins, away from God, guilty, and lost. Now mark this, resurrection is the assurance of judgment, it is the precursor of judgment, it is the certainty of judgment. Could anything drop upon the conscience or heart with greater solemnity than this, that God has appointed the day and ordained the judge? Oh! if there is a sinner here tonight, think of that fact, God has appointed the day, and ordained the judge. Do you say, how do I know? He has raised Jesus from the dead, there is the proof of it. That resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead is surrounded by proofs, not merely from His own people, but the devil was made and the enemies of God were made to contribute to the proof of it; Satan and the Jews were made the instruments of the clear evidence of the truth of the resurrection. God has hedged round the resurrection of His Son with the most undeniable proofs, and, in connection with that, He tells us that “He has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world.” Do not think it is a question of the great white throne; it is not a question of the dead here at all, it is a question of the habitable world, the scene of man’s habitation. He will judge this world in righteousness. Thank God, He is dealing with it in grace now; but in grace for the
last time. He will judge it in righteousness.

There is not a single cloud of judgment in the present grace, and there will not be one single ray of grace in the future judgment. He will judge it by the Man whom the world spat upon and trampled under its feet, by that Man whom He has ordained -- and He has given the most undeniable proof of it in raising Him from the dead.

Oh, beloved friends, when I think of that, the blessed fruits of His resurrection, the association that we are brought into in His resurrection, the wonderful things that pertain to us as children of God, so that we can call God our Father, announced to us by the risen Lord through Mary Magdalene:

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

When I remember that through resurrection is preached to us the forgiveness of sins, through this Man, this risen Jesus, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," when I reflect that from that risen, glorified Man the Holy Ghost has come down, when I reflect that all that are Christ’s will rise in virtue of Christ’s having been raised, when I dwell in silent meditation on it, I am lost in wonder; but oh! I cannot leave this out, the day appointed and the judge ordained, I beseech those that are not Christ’s here tonight to let that word rest upon their hearts,

He has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men -- there is not a man in this world that is not without excuse as to it, there is the assurance before his eyes, “in that he has raised him from the dead.” You may be like the Athenians, and you may mock as they did when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, just as that poor heathen, Festus, afterwards said, They have some question “of their own superstition” -- it was not the things I thought were exercising their minds -- they have some question “of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” That was all he cared about it, and that is all you may care about it, sinner; but it is true, for all that. The sword of unmitigated judgment in righteousness hangs over this world where man is, and the day for the execution of that vengeance is appointed and the judge is ordained.

Oh may God, by His grace, give those that are not saved to think of that! Lay it to heart, I beseech of you! Think of what the resurrection testifies to you. And, my beloved brethren, may our hearts rejoice in what it brings to us, all the glories and blessings that it has secured for God’s glory and for us, too, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Character and Power of Christ’s Resurrection
Acts 3:13-16; 4:1, 2; Philippians 3:7-11

These passages, beloved brethren, contain the subject that is to occupy us this evening, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in its character and in its power; or, to put it in another way, the character of Christ’s resurrection and the power of His resurrection; indeed, you have both in the Philippians. The resurrection out from among the dead was resurrection in a certain character. Now we were looking at the facts of the resurrection, and last week at the fruits of the resurrection, and very blessed it is to look at it thus in its various aspects; there are various glories connecting themselves with it; we have already had before us the simple facts clustered around it, as well as the various fruits of His resurrection. But tonight we have to consider the character and the power of Christ’s resurrection. Now it had a peculiar character, which, thank God, connects itself with our resurrection too; because, as we have already seen, given the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in fact and in character, and you have got the resurrection of His people in fact and in character. His resurrection, in both these blessed aspects, determines ours. You cannot separate them. Christ’s place determines ours. Everything that relates to Him determines what relates to us. It is most blessed to keep that fast in the affections of our hearts. His place determines our place, His resurrection determines our resurrection both in fact and character, and we are moreover the fruit of it, blessed be His name.

But there is one point on the threshold of our consideration tonight, which I very earnestly desire to bring before you, and that is, that in this character of Christ’s resurrection out from among the dead, is clearly set forth the great fact, that God was about to establish and set up in the risen Christ, man in a new place and position altogether according to the counsels of God. God was about to begin an entirely new thing historically and in fact. And that is an immense thing to keep before our minds, because it was from that (and I will try to point out why presently) all the testing of Christ’s own beloved disciples here, and also the opposition of His enemies, sprang. It was the power and character of His resurrection as inaugurating a new thing altogether in God’s ways, that which was distinct from all that went before, the commencement of a totally new thing; the cross was the termination morally of all that was old and ready to vanish away, but in resurrection we have a new start. Now that is very important, and that is what provoked the opposition of the enemies, as well as disappointed the hopes of His friends. You know very well how the hearts of His own disciples lingered about things down here, and I suppose any of us that are exercised before the Lord know very well how our hearts linger about things down here, and how difficult it is to have the link snapped that connects us with the visible and what is around us, the terrible attractiveness of earth; I do not mean in wrong ways, I am not speaking of things that are unlawful, but things that are good and right. The native attractiveness of things below that binds us and ties us down here is so strong. And of course, with the disciples, who were educated in Jewish hopes and prospects, and who were looking for things on earth, it was doubly strong with them from what it ought to be with us, who never had earthly prospects held out to us, and who are not the earthly people. The disciples had to be taken out of all that; and to look at the death of Christ not merely as terminating all that, but as the death of earthly hopes, that was where the bitterness was. To the disciples, the death of Christ was the death of all that linked them with God’s promises in relation to His kingdom on this earth; the heir was
gone, the one in whom the whole thing was to be made good was gone. You may say they ought to have known differently, verily they ought. So ought we for that matter, but then, that does not dispose of the matter. There was where their hearts were, and therefore where there was not faith and where there was all this tie and bond linking them to things down here, it was difficult to accept the fact in the first instance, that God was going to begin a new thing altogether, which was to be as heavenly in its character as the other thing was earthly in its character. You may say, “I see all that.” It may be quite true; but one often says to oneself, “I see that,” but what we find out is that there is oftentimes a very long distance between seeing a thing and that thing being made good in one’s soul. You may see it very clearly, but when it begins to operate, and to cut, and to work, then you find how very little you were prepared for it to come in its own power and work its own way with you.

That is the first thing I want to leave on your thoughts, that the character of His resurrection sets forth the importance of this new order of things altogether which God was about to set up and display, in Christ the risen man in a new place according to the counsels of God.

Now let me show that the assertions I have made are true according to scripture. Look at Mark 9:9, 10,

And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of man were risen from among the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves questioning one with another what the rising from among the dead should mean.

It was not, remember, the bare fact of resurrection, because resurrection in itself was believed in by the Pharisees, though rejected by the Sadducees. But resurrection from among the dead was another thing altogether, and that is what the Lord was presenting here. Keep, He says, these things amongst yourselves until the Son of man be risen from among the dead. They did not understand that at all. That is what gives its character at once to it in the very beginning, it was a character of resurrection that was unknown to them, a kind of resurrection they were totally ignorant of.

Take another scripture, Matt. 17:22, 23,

And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Why? It slew all their earthly hopes; it was an end to all their earthly prospects. Now there is the scripture that substantiates what I have already said, that the death of Christ was to Jewish hopes the death of the heir, the death of the One who was their link to all the earthly prospects and promises that God had given to them as a people down here on the earth, and therefore their grief and sorrow.

To give you an illustration of it, it was exactly to them what it must have been to Abraham’s heart, when, after he had got the heir, God told him to offer him up. First of all, God gave him the promise of the land as an inheritance, and then God gave him the heir, as Abraham had no child; and then, when he had got the heir, and the heir was almost grown up to an age that gave vitality to the prospects of the man’s heart, God said to him, now take that son, “thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest,” and offer him up. Snap with your own hand the link, and that a divine link as well, cut the link in all the chain of promise; go and blast all your hopes that are centered in that Isaac. That is what the death of Jesus was to the disciples. He was the true heir to all the earthly promises that God had given to the fathers, He was the link with them, and the disciples recognized Him (because their faith went very little if at all beyond that) as the One who connected them with the promises that God had made to His earthly people. For Him to die, was death indeed; no wonder they were exceeding sorry; it blasted all their hopes, and all their prospects, and left them resourceless, so to speak, here in this world.

Now turn to Luke 24:17, and you will find it even stronger there. The two disciples are going to Emmaus, and talking of the things which had happened, and Jesus Himself drew near and went with them, though they knew Him not.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

Their hearts were heavy; they had left Jerusalem, they were going home, it was all over on earth. I think that Luke 24 is one of the most touching of scriptures, if you put yourselves in the position of the disciples for a moment. Their backs were upon Jerusalem, they had satisfied themselves that His body was not in the tomb, their faces were to Emmaus, it was the third day, and it was all over. No wonder their hearts were sad. “What manner of communications,” says the blessed risen One to them, “are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him,

Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

Suppose you had been only a few hours in Jerusalem, is it possible that you could be ignorant of the crushing sorrow that has fallen upon us in consequence of all that has happened there? He replies (how skillful His love is in drawing out their hearts), “What things?” Well He knew, but there is nothing so skillful in this world as love, nothing.

And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people;

now you get the sense of how much they knew, and what their hearts were connected with as to His Person. He was Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him; but we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

Now is there anything more interesting and instructive for our hearts? It is wonderful to think of it. This day that is spoken of in Luke 24 was the brightest day that had ever dawned upon
this poor sinful world. And yet, notwithstanding that (and I will show you the comfort of it in a moment, the exceeding comfort too), notwithstanding that it was the brightest moment that this world had ever witnessed, their hearts were in perfect contrast with it all. They were bowed down, they were broken in heart, they were disappointed, chafed, everything gone, all their hopes had been slain on His cross and buried in His grave. And why, what was the secret of it? I would like to point out to you two things that were the secret of that condition, that state, and to press them affectionately on my own heart and on yours. In the eighth verse it says, “And they remembered his words.” Now mark that. Do you wonder and say, What is the force of it? This; their hearts had been leaky vessels as to those words; His words had dropped through those poor leaky vessels and were gone; they had forgotten them. Because the Lord had often spoken of it. The testimony was abundant as to the fact of His being killed by men, and by. His own people, and raised up again the third day; but they had forgotten it all. And how often it is so with you and me; we have forgotten His words.

But now mark another thing, and this I would earnestly press upon you -- memory is not faith; there is a great difference between them. Here you get memory resuscitated, revived; the memory of these forgotten sentences of Jesus all comes back, but it is no good, because, although they remembered His words, they turned their backs on Jerusalem, and they go to Emmaus as heart-broken, and disappointed, and vexed, and blighted in prospect as ever they had been before. Memory is not faith. I will give you a remarkable scripture in proof of that in Psa. 78:19. “Yea,” says the Psalmist, speaking of Israel, “Yea, they spake against God: they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the waters gushed out and the streams overflowed” -- there is memory; but look at the next sentence, “Can he give bread also?” there is the absence of faith. There was the memory, the recollection of what He had done previously, but there was no present faith as to what He could do now.

And, beloved friends, it comes out in this history of the disciples as to the Lord’s resurrection, and the divine moral of it is of the deepest importance and blessedness to our souls. Because what we want is not only the remembrance of former things, but that we can go on in present faith in a living Christ. You may remember well how the Lord helped you last year, or six months ago, or three months ago, but if you are not in present living faith in God and Christ to-day, the memory of the past will not be any help to your soul. It is present living faith in the word of Jesus, and not merely the recollection that those words were once spoken, and that all the pith, and substance, and power of them have gone from our souls, but it is living faith in those words. Now what I have noticed in my own poor wretched heart, and I have no doubt if you are exercised before the Lord you will find it in yours, is this, that there are a great many truths, things that people know are true, but they have no faith in them. What is the good of it? I will give you an instance. There is a truth beyond all price and preciousness to our souls expressed in those words of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Where two or three are gathered to my name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

Now there is not a single person who has ever been taught the truth of that who does not know it to be true. But I feel in my own heart, beloved friends, and I have seen it in others (and I desire to condemn it a great deal more in myself), but I see there are people who know that to be true, but they have not any faith in it. It is not enough for you to say, “Oh yes, there it is, that is the ground, that is the position”; be assured there must be faith in it. And I do not mean credence; credence is not faith, but I mean such faith in it that I give myself to it, and go on with it, just as much faith in that, as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for my soul’s salvation; it is just the same principle. If there is not that, it is mere credence of certain truths that have no living vitality and power in our souls. And that is exactly what their memory of Christ’s words here was; they remembered His words; they had forgotten them; they were resuscitated in their memory by the women who gave the account of the resurrection, but there was no faith in the utterances themselves, and they were all adrift.

Now there is another cause in Luke 24 for the state they were in, and that is, that their eyes were down here on earth. And there is nothing that so perverts and distracts, and turns a soul out of the reality of what God in His wonderful grace would have our hearts in the full enjoyment of, and in the good of, as having our eyes bound by things of earth. You may say, “But it was the kingdom with them.” Oh! but it might be something else with us. And what is the difference? If it be anything on earth, it matters not what it is, the results are alike. It was the kingdom with them, but it was a kingdom on earth; the locality, observe, is to the point here, and that perverted the disciples, their eyes were in the wrong direction. How many of our eyes are in the wrong locality. Alas, how often we are looking where the object is not to be found. If we were only looking up to heaven, to behold the church according to the thoughts of God in its true heavenly character, what a different thing it would be. What is the reason that so many of us are so perplexed disturbed and distressed? Because our minds are over occupied with the administrative side of church truth, it is here there is always failure; but if we would only dwell more on the divine side, on the conception of the thing in the mind of God, it would be all so different. The administration side brings man in, and there is bound to be failure there. How could you be anything but perplexed, and disturbed, and distressed, if you are engrossed with how man carries the thing out; whereas if your thoughts were governed more by the divine conception of it, the heavenly thing before God, you would get power to meet the crash in the administration side of it. Let us seek to rise to the divine side of things, for that is always the side of power, and that is the power to be manifested down here in the human side, where failure alas, comes in.

But the disciples (and that comes before the heart with exceeding clearness now) were looking for a kingdom here. “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” There was the egotism of Judaism filling their hearts. What they needed was to get into the largeness of God’s thoughts as manifested in a risen Christ. The Lord keep us from a like principle. There are a great many other kinds of egotism besides Judaism.

Now we have looked at the effect of the resurrection in
testing the disciples. Let us for a little look at the effect of it in testing the enemies of Christ, and that will bring us to those passages in the Acts. Note the words in ch. 4, and observe this -- that ecclesiastical authority and hatred of the truth always go together. An awful picture when you think of it, ecclesiastical authority combined with hatred of the truth. That is one side of it; on the other side, the power of God in a risen Christ, witnessed in all the needs of men. This it was that aroused all the hatred and suspicion of those in authority in Acts 4, “Being grieved that they preached through Jesus” -- through this risen Man, through this blessed One who had come up from amongst the dead, raised out of death by the power of God -- “preached through Jesus” a character of resurrection, namely, resurrection out from among the dead, not purely and merely resurrection. And they could do it now in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is beautiful to see how fully they now had been led into the truth, how different from Mark 9, where they did not understand what He meant when He spoke of resurrection out from among the dead. Now they not only understand it, but they can preach it. They preach it through this blessed man, this Jesus, resurrection out from among dead people, and they brought hatred and opposition on themselves because of that.

Now why did men hate and dislike that truth? What was there in it that so excited their animosity and violence, which the bare fact of resurrection itself would not have done with the Pharisees or Jews? I will tell you. They had killed the Prince of life; that is what the apostle brings home to them in the third chapter, there was that holy One, that just One, you murdered Him: God has raised Him out from among the dead. Now you Jews and God are at issue. The Man that you murdered God has put honor upon; the Man whom you spat upon and nailed to that gibbet, God has raised Him out from among dead people. There was the issue. And mark this, there was the complacency of God expressed in Christ’s resurrection, there was the satisfaction of God expressed in it; further, it was an elective power, it was not only that He was raised, but others were left behind in their graves; that is the point. Therefore there was pleasure in it, there was complacency expressed and satisfaction as well. Every attribute of God, and all the satisfaction of His nature (I say it with reverence), combined to take that blessed, glorious Man out from among dead people. That is what they could not endure. They had crucified Him, hated Him, got rid of Him, nailed Him to the cross; God had exalted Him, glorified Him, expressed His satisfaction in Him. There is how it tested all these people. It brought out that they stood at variance with God as to Christ, the dealings of the Jewish people and rulers, with that blessed Lord Jesus Christ, made it all clear. And you will find everywhere that Christ is the test, wherever you go, amongst the saints or into the world. Christ is the test; bring in Christ, a crucified Christ, a risen Christ, a glorified Christ, and you have the test. All stand out in their true character in relation to Christ. The Lord give our hearts to bear these things clearly in mind, beloved friends.

Let me for a moment more state the three things I have before me –

(1) that the character of Christ’s resurrection gave the manifestation of the new order of things that God was about to set up in that risen Man according to His counsels;

(2) that the disciples were tested because their hopes were all bounded by earth and the things of earth; and

(3) that the enemies of the truth were tested because by it was manifested that God and the nation were at variance with reference to their conduct towards Him.

And now let us look at Phil. 3, where we have the two subjects brought together in the case of a man of flesh and blood like ourselves, and where we see the beauty and power of them in relation to the apostle Paul, once Saul of Tarsus. He says, The longing of my heart is that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection out from among dead people.

Now there are these two things, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,” that is the character of the resurrection; and the other is that he might know the power of it.

Let us look at this, for it is a blessed point in the history. What was it that left such an impress, as it were, on the soul of that man? He was as distinctively stamped by that which comes out in this, as he had been stamped in his former life. He was as distinct and ardent in his pursuit of these wonderful things as he was malignant in his pursuit of the saints of God and a glorified Jesus previously. What did it? Look at Acts 26:8, a scripture you are familiar with, but I desire to refer you to the old things, this is not the day to be looking after new things, it is the old things that are so precious. This is Paul’s defense of himself before Agrippa.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?

Mark how he starts with this. He was speaking to people who denied this, whose hearts were at variance with God.

I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth [the risen One], which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

It was no half-and-half measures with him; he did not deal out persecution by driblets, not a bit of it, it was a whole-hearted, thorough, real desire to obliterate every trace of Christ and Christ’s from off the scene.

Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth -- it is wonderful the way God brings us down to listen to His voice, as though He said, I am going to have a hearing; they are too busy, too occupied, the will is working too strong, the mind is too much at work, I must have a hearing. “When we
were all fallen to the earth,” ah! beloved brethren, there is no
place so blessed as to be down low before the Lord; do you
know the point that is nearest to heaven? down low on earth
before God.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice
speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul,
Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick
against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And
he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise.

Oh, think of that; look at the two things that come together
there; “fallen to the earth,” “rise.” It is the man that is down
that God can take up; down on the earth, down in the dust in
very truth, that is the man God can take up. It is what we want,
beloved brethren, I am convinced in my soul, to be low enough
down for God to take us up; according to the words of Hannah
in another day.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the
beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and
to make them inherit the throne of glory.

He says,

Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for 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,

and so on. Do you know what gives these words immense
interest? Not merely the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, but
those were the last words Jesus ever spoke from heaven to
earth. Acts 1 are His last words on earth; Acts 26 are His last
words from heaven to man on earth. And there is something
very precious about last words; our hearts like to remember
them.

Now what happened? Christ, a glorified Christ, the risen
Man, imprinted His own blessed Person on the heart of that
poor persecutor, and that blessed risen glorified Christ being
revealed in him, the heart and affections of the man who was
once Saul of Tarsus, the man whom all dreaded for his
persecution and hatred, there was not a thing that was before
that man’s heart and thoughts afterwards but Christ. Christ had
imprinted Himself upon his soul, upon his spiritual affections,
God’s Son was revealed in him. And what the apostle says here
is this, as it were, That blessed One so fills my gaze, so fills
my soul, that everything is gone; it is not bad things in
Philippians, but good things. Numbers of people would be glad
to get rid of bad things, but how many would like to be free
from all things? You would like to drop the bad things, but are
you prepared to drop everything, that is the question? He does
not say, I count the bad things loss for the excellency of the
knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, but “I count all.” The
things that were gain to him were not the bad things, they were
good things. And what is the thing before him? One desire, “If
by any means,” that is, I will go through anything, I will go
through death, I will accept martyrdom, anything if only I may
become assimilated to that blessed One, in that wonderful new
character of resurrection which He inaugurated in His own
Person, “If by any means I may attain to resurrection out from
among the dead.” There was how Christ’s glory fastened itself
in its own blessedness on the soul of the apostle.

And then he says, What I desire now is to know Him;
there is the person, “that I may know him.” I never saw a
person yet, beloved friends, who knew anything of Christ who
were not impressed with how little they knew of Him; and I
never saw a person yet who thought they knew Him that knew
a single thing about Him. One that knows Him feels, oh how
little it seems; and why? Because in that case there is
something to measure by. It is like a man going up a mountain,
the nearer he gets to the top, the greater it seems to him, and
the farther away it seems; and when he is down at the bottom
he thinks he is very near; that is exactly how it is. “That I may
know him,” it is the longing of his soul; he has tasted, as it
were, of the peace of being in that blessed One, so he says,
“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”

Now what is the meaning of “the power of his
resurrection”? I do not think it means the power by which He
was raised, I used to think it was, “that I may know the power
by which he was raised.” No; I believe that you and I through
grace are morally, in our souls, exemplifications of the same
power, because we are co-quickened and co-raised with Him,
and by-and-by we shall be literally and historically the
exemplifications of it, for we shall be raised up in our bodies.
But the power of His resurrection is a moral thing. In Acts,
I look at the risen Lord alive on earth forty days after His
resurrection before He went up into heaven. Now, beloved
brethren, what had He to do with earth? What was earth to
Him? He had left everything behind, He was a risen man down
here on earth, and the whole thing was gone to Him. Of course
things on earth were never anything in that sense to the Lord
Jesus Christ, but I take the fact to illustrate what I mean; there
He was on earth, His dealings with Israel all over, His
presentation of Jewish hopes and prospects all over, His
dealing with that nation all over; for the Jewish system was
God’s system up to the cross, but the cross was the end of that
system and the end as well of man morally. But here He was
on earth forty days, and He talked to His disciples about the
kingdom of God, He kept their prospects for the time being on
earth, because although the system was morally given up, God
was lingering in patient grace over them. But if we belong to
Christ we are risen with Christ; that is, if we are Christians at
all, and the power of His resurrection is this, that it cuts for us
the link with present things, with the world, with everything
down here -- what have you and I to do with it? What real
interest have we, if we have the power of His resurrection in
our souls, with things that belong to the earth? Take politics,
for instance; what interest have we, if we have the power of His
resurrection in our souls, with things that belong to the earth? Take politics,
for instance; what interest has a risen man in politics? He is not
bounded by things down here, he does not belong to the world,
he has no vested interests in it; where are they? The apostle
tells you himself. He says, Our polity, the state to which we
belong, has its definite existence in the heavens, and from
thence we look for the Lord Jesus as Savior; there all our
hopes are, there is our country, there is our home.

How blessed, how glorious that redemption, in the power
of which all who believe have been brought to God, extricated
from all the misery and ruin introduced by the first man; we
are through grace now in Christ the second Man and last
Adam, and we have as much, thank God, a new position. And
this new position in the risen Christ was manifested in the first
instance by Himself when He rose from the dead, now in
glory, a Man in a new position according to the counsels of God. That is our position, or, as it is commonly expressed, that is our standing before God. The power of it is the Holy Ghost which came down on the day of Pentecost, but do not confound the position and the power; they are not the same thing. There is a new life, and a new position, and there is a new power, and the Holy Ghost is the power of the new position, as also of the new life. The character of His resurrection sets forth that complete victory which God had manifested in His own Son, the risen Man; and when the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, there was the power for the enjoyment of it.

Now the apostle says, “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection”; this alone can take us out of things here. And, beloved friends, it is only in the power of this, That we can be preserved from the snares that await us on every hand. We often say, The danger is in having any other object but Christ. That is true; but there is another danger, and I believe there are those who have not any other object but Christ, but they have distractions, and distractions are as disastrous as other objects. Let us challenge our hearts, Have we any other object, beloved brethren? Have we distractions? I do not know anything that will eat out the vigor of the soul like distractions, I do not know anything that will sap and mine the vitality and power of a living Christ in the soul like distractions. You know what it is in earthly things. A man that is distracted can do nothing at all, driven hither and thither on every side. Be assured nothing can keep us, through God’s grace, free from other objects and from distractions, but a fixed, steady gaze on Christ in glory, and a jealousy over our own hearts, to set the Lord always before us. The Lord create and keep alive such holy jealousy in all our souls. It is the only kind of jealousy we ought to cultivate, that we ought to allow. I suppose there is nothing more hateful and detestable in this world than jealousy, but there is a right kind of jealousy, even over the heart within, that only Christ and the things of Christ should be there, engaging and occupying to the full our affections and powers.

The Lord give each of us to understand better, through His grace, the character of His resurrection and the power of His resurrection, for His name’s sake.

The Ascension and Exaltation of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Ephesians 4:7-18

These scriptures, beloved friends, set before us the great truth of the Lord’s exaltation into the heavens, having ascended up on high as the exalted Man; there are here set forth one or two aspects of it which I wish to bring before you simply this evening. We might travel over a large field, but it is well to keep our minds on certain definite points for profit.

His ascension into the heavens, His exaltation, connects itself in the first instance with the competency of which it was witness, which was in Him and in Him alone, to bear testimony: that is simply, His own going up into the heavens was the distinct witness to His competency to bear testimony either to earthly things or heavenly things. And that is what is set before us in John 3.

In John 6 He brings forward His ascension to show how completely outside all the vision of man, as man, was either the cross or the glory; they did not come within the range of man’s vision at all. Man understood as little about the cross as he understood about the glory. Both were equally outside man, as man. Because it was when they murmured about Him setting Himself forward as the source of life and the sustenance of life -- the One who died and shed His blood was to be the source of life to perishing sinners, and also the sustenance of life -- He says, Does that offend you? If you stumble over that; what will you say to my exaltation into the heavens? “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before”; That is the second.

And then Ephesians is simple enough, and that is, that as exalted, and having ascended into the heavens, He received in His human character, for that is the meaning of He gave gifts unto men”; He thus received, as the exalted Man, these dowries, these gifts, which were the affectionate expression of the deep eternal love which was in the heart of Christ for His church. And is it not wonderfully comforting to read it in that way? I do not know any scripture that clothes ministry according to God with more divine sanction than the fact that all true ministry, that is to say, gifts, persons, remember, not qualifications, flow from Him the Head in heaven; observe, it is persons that are spoken of in Eph. 4, “He gave, some apostles”; and an apostle is a person, a pastor is a person, an evangelist is a person -- it is not here a question of the qualification at all, it is a fact that He gave the persons; the gifts came from the exalted, glorified Head over all things to the church His body, and they were for the work of the ministry down here upon earth, and the edification of the body of Christ. We may well ask what human sanction for ministry -- what authority could be equal to that? What endowment could man provide which would be equal to that? A ministry that does not emanate from any human source down here, it does not come from the most exalted of men, however great and noble he may be, but from the ascended Christ in glory. Think of the dignity it attaches to ministry according to God. And it is important to bear that in mind, and it is well too we should be clear, that though we refuse human authority as to ministry, we do not at all disown or make little of ministry according to God, a divinely ordered ministry. It is one thing to refuse a counterfeit, it is another thing to recognize with the deepest affection the true genuine thing. And that is what ministry according to God is, persons given direct from the ascended Christ in glory, no doubt provided with all the suited and fitted qualifications which He Himself must bestow for the carrying on of His work on earth.

Now I invite your attention this evening to those three points. First, in John 3, mark how the Lord claims -- and there is a point of exceeding blessedness in it for our souls -- He claims, I say, that His ascension into the heavens is the great proof and demonstration that He was the One who had both right and competency to reveal earthly things or heavenly things. Bear in mind that there are the two, earthly things and heavenly things. The Lord was speaking to Nicodemus about
the new birth. We do not go into that subject now more than to say this, that for man to have to do with God in any relationship, whether it be earthly or heavenly, he must be born again. There can be no connection and no relationship between God and man in the state man is in by nature; there must be a new birth. And it must be a new birth of this nature -- not merely born from above, but a totally new thing altogether.

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Of course, I need not say it is from above, but that is not the force of it; it is not the source from whence this new birth comes, but it is the character of it, the nature of it, it is an entirely new birth. The Lord said that to Nicodemus, and that was connected with the earthly part of His glory; He was speaking of that which was necessary for the kingdom which Nicodemus ought to have known. He should have known that in order to enter the kingdom, to have a part in the kingdom, man could not boast of his descent from Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob; he must be born again.

But, beloved friends, and I wish to emphasize this fact, that though new birth is beyond all question needed for man in the state he is in, new birth does not set forth the distinctive and special privileges and glories that attach to Christianity. Quite true he must be born again, quite true new birth is indispensable, it was necessary even for the earthly part of the kingdom. But when He comes to speak of heavenly things, what does he say? What does He set forth specially and peculiarly as connected with heavenly things? That which follows. And what is that? Eternal life. And hence, when the Lord speaks of this, mark what He brings out in connection with it. He speaks of Himself being lifted up on the cross; He speaks of Himself as the antitype of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," not lifted up upon the earth, but lifted up on the cross, between the heavens and the earth, the great manifestation that there was no link between man as man and God; so that blessed One was lifted up between the heavens and the earth, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Observe how it is in connection with that, and with the Father's giving the Son according to all the blessed, precious thoughts of His own heart, that the Lord says to Nicodemus, If I have spoken to you about earthly things, if I have pressed upon you the fact of having to be born again to have to do with God's kingdom down here, and you refuse to believe that, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things. And what was His competency to bear witness to either? This; "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." There, observe, His exaltation comes in, and verily beyond all question it is precious. It is blessed too that He brings forward His exaltation as the ascended man, before it became a fact historically, as that which was to be, the proof of this great certainty, that He was the alone Person that was competent to bear witness to either heavenly or earthly things. Now why? It is not that there had not been communications from God through men down here on earth; God had spoken in previous times, as He Himself tells us.

Let us turn to Heb. 1, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." God had previously given communications, and the prophets uttered those divine communications as coming direct from God; they gave the message they had from God. But that was not Christ. A prophet could only speak what he had got. But Jesus, a man and yet God, as much God as man, truly God and truly man, in communion with the Godhead, spoke what He knew himself. There is the preciousness of the testimony of Christ. It was not that He received it. There is a point of exceeding beauty in Heb. 1 as to the question of testimony and communication of the mind of God. The apostle says, in verse 1, that God spoke through the instrumentality of chosen vessels, to whom He communicated His mind; "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But now mark, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," not spoken by His Son just as He spoke by the prophets, that is not the force of this scripture at all, it neither means nor says that, what it means and what it says is this, that God had spoken "in the Person of the Son," that the Person of the Son down here was God's own voice speaking; if one might use such an expression, it was God speaking to us "Son-wise"; it was not through a medium like a prophet -- a prophet was only a medium, albeit a divine medium, but Christ spoke of things which He Himself knew as God, being God. Look at the difference. He was a divine Person down here in this world, though a man. He was here communicating the things which He knew Himself, "We speak that we do know." Whereas, when you think of a servant, or an ordinary vessel that God may be communicating His mind through, take Paul for instance, look at his utterance, "We believe, and therefore speak." He does not say, "We speak that we do know," but, "We believe, and therefore speak." But Christ could say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness."

There was the most distinct competency in that blessed One to communicate those things in communion with the Godhead, because He was God. And the stress that is laid upon that is to guard the thought that His becoming a man detracted in the least from the fact that He was ever and always God. His divine Person, and the dignities and glories attached to His divine Person, lost nothing by His becoming a man. He was as truly God as He was truly man. But He was down here in this world veiled in flesh, and it was the veil of His humanity, and His being a man whom men could set aside, and spit upon, and cast out, and reject; it was the reality of the lowliness that characterized Him that made, as it were, the veil too thick for human eyes, and that concealed Him from the unbelieving heart, even where there was not faith to pierce through that veil, and see the divine glory that was there. How blessed then to dwell upon His competency! He could tell, in virtue of what He was Himself, of these earthly things, and of these heavenly things.

Now let us look again at the two parts of these earthly and heavenly things. As to the earthly things, here was the new birth. And what did that new birth declare? What was the meaning of it? This; that there was nothing to be got out of man as he was. What a solemn commentary upon everything
connected with humanity, that is. The meaning of new birth is that man as man is not fit for God, that you cannot educate him, or change him, or re-cast him, or re-model him. He must be born again, he is not fit for God, even in the very lowest part of His glory, he is not fit for the earthly part of His kingdom. Now Jesus testified of that; He spoke of earthly things. And you may remember (and it is a solemn scripture in connection with this) how, in the close of John 2, there were people attracted when they saw the miracles; and there are people now that are attracted when they see some wonderful thing, something that appeals to sight; because there is in the heart of man an admiration of power, a man may not possess it himself, but he admires it, he is attracted by it when he sees it in another. “When they saw the miracles they believed.” What was that? Mere credence; it was not faith. Miracles are never the real ground of true faith. Whenever a person stands upon miracles or wonders as the ground of their faith, you will find that when miracles and wonders are not there, faith is not there. But Jesus did not commit Himself to the people that believed in His name when they saw the miracles. Why? Now mark the solemn words, “He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.” How did He know? He was God. It was a divine Person searching the depths of the depravity of the heart of man. “He knew what was in man”; He needed no one to testify to Him. And it was not merely that He knew about man, but He knew man.

Now that connects itself in a very simple way with the earthly part of His testimony. He was competent to bear testimony with regard to earthly things, because, being a divine Person, though a man, He knew what was in man, He knew what man was made of, He knew everything about him, and He knew it intuitively, because He was God, and in virtue of the glory of His Person. And I need not say He could tell of heavenly things, for who knew what God was but Christ, and what could you and I know about God if it had not been for Christ? He knew what was in heaven, He could speak of God. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,” not who was, but “who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”; there He was a man on earth speaking, and yet He is in the bosom of the Father, “the only-begotten Son, who is in the Father’s bosom, he hath declared him.” Could anything be more precious to our souls than to be committed to such testimony as that? That is the testimony, whether in relation to ourselves, or whether in relation to God, and to heaven, and to the things above, and to the Father, all emanating from Jesus. He is the Revealer, He is the One who manifests God, who reveals the Father, who could speak of things as He knew them. How blessed to think of the Son in the bosom of the Father, and the deep eternal love set forth in those words. And, beloved friends, may not we say together with all affection, that in all the heat and warmth of that bosom, the declaration of the testimony came from Him the Son, that all the deep affection and love of the Father’s heart was revealed in and by that blessed One, as no one else could reveal it but Himself?

I trust you see now how, in this passage in John 3, His ascension is brought forward by Himself, as proof of the competency to speak of heavenly or earthly things. “No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven.” A man may be taken up into heaven, you know that. Enoch and Elijah were taken up into heaven, and angels came down from heaven, but no man hath ascended up into heaven; no man ever went up there in the way the Lord was speaking here; no one ever went up there in wondrous right. For whilst His incarnation was the witness to how God came down in lowly grace to man, His ascension was the witness to how man had gone up in divine right and righteousness to God. You have there the two realities. In that wonderful child in the manger at Bethlehem, you have the witness to all the lowly grace that was in God, who came down, and stooped, and emptied Himself to become a man. It was not that He laid aside His glory. I do not think that expression is quite correct. He veiled it, if you please; He never laid it aside; faith, I believe, may have pierced the veil, and seen it. I grant you there was very little faith; but wherever there was the smallest exercise of faith, it pierced the veil, and gazed upon His glory. The expression is borrowed from an old hymn, but I do not believe it to be correct. It was God come down here in lowly grace that was witnessed in the incarnation. But when the cross had become a reality, and the Lord Jesus Christ was risen from among the dead, and was ascended into the heavens and exalted to the right hand of God, there we find man gone up to God in right and righteousness. And that is a wonderful thing for ourselves; for, as I tried to press upon you here before, it was not that the Lord Jesus Christ was not perfectly entitled in virtue of the glory of His Person to every expression of divine complacency, for assuredly He was, but it is an immense thing for our souls in connection with Christianity to know that He won it, He got it in virtue of the completeness and perfection of His work, and that according to the counsels of God.

There is this difference, that when John speaks of Christ, whatever subject he touches, he always speaks of the glory of His Person; if he speaks of His ascension, it is in connection with the glory of His Person. When Paul speaks of it, he speaks of it in connection with the counsels of God and the work of Christ. With John, it is always the nature of that blessed One, the only-begotten Son in the Father’s bosom, the eternal Son before all time and worlds, the One who ever was with the Father. With Paul it is the counsels of God in relation to that blessed, glorious Man, and the perfection of that work which gave effect to those counsels. You will see this very clearly in Ephesians; brethren, it is well to know these things, and moreover it is an immense help in reading the scriptures. We should not read them as though there was no distinction and no difference. God means us to profit by what is given in different parts of His word, and to see how He sets forth the various points of the glory of His Son. So in John; no one ever ascended up to heaven but the One that came down. “No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.”

Now let us turn to John 6, and there is a second aspect of the ascension there. Observe what the Lord was unfolding there. The three subjects in John 6 are His incarnation, His death, and His ascension; Christ incarnate, Christ lifted upon the cross, and Christ ascended up into heaven. I do not go into them now, the subject is so full and large. But the ascension is
brought out in John 6, just as I said at the commencement, in this way -- that man stumbled at His humiliation and equally would stumbled at His glory; that His ascension into the heavens and the exaltation that was connected with it was as much outside his field of view as the glories of His humiliation and His cross; he believed neither the one nor the other. And so the Lord says, If I have spoken to you about being lifted up on the cross, about giving my flesh and my blood, about eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things; and mark it well, beloved friends, there was no life for any one that did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, and neither is there now; “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” There is no way by which a poor sinner can have life, except he appropriates to himself by faith the Christ who gave His flesh and shed His precious blood. And the Lord says, Just as you eat and drink, that is, as you appropriate what you feed upon, so you appropriate Christ who died and shed His precious blood upon the cross. And, observe, it is a definite thing, once for all, it is never repeated. Once for all, as a poor, wretched sinner you appropriate by faith to the needs of your soul a Christ who gave His body and shed His blood, you feed on Him in death. He is the only source of life; thus we get life in its source, coming from the Savior who died upon the cross.

But there is another thing that the Lord brought before them in John 6, and the two things together stumbled them, and that is, that there was no sustainment for that life if they did not continually feed on Him. It is not appropriating Him now to their needs as poor perishing sinners to get life through Him, but in communion with Himself, feeding upon Him, who was the source of their life, eating Him for the sustainment of that life which they had from Him definitely when they appropriated Him to their needs at the beginning. And there comes a solemn question for all our souls -- is not that the secret of the feebleness of the lives of many Christians? You often say, I think that person has got life. But how sickly it is; there does not seem to be any vigor in it. I do not know anything more wretched than to see a person dragging out an existence, as it were, whether it be in body or in soul. A bare existence is to me the most melancholy thing in this world. Look at it in Christians. You judge before the Lord yourselves, and let me judge before the Lord myself tonight as to whether this little point here is not the secret of the feebleness and sickly character of our lives as Christians -- we do not feed continually on Christ. What do we feed on? What is the sustainment of the life within us? What is it nourishes us? That is the question. Alas! far be it from me to go into the details of it, but I know too well, I am sorry to say, how hundreds of things become the food of one’s life instead of the only thing that really can nourish us. Nothing can nourish the life we have from Christ but Christ, and if Christ is the sustainment of our life just as He is the source of it, the blessed One Himself is the only One that can keep that life going in energy, power, freshness and distinctness; what a blessed reality then feeding on Him is.

The ministry of Christ, I admit, is by the Holy Ghost and the scriptures. There is the preciousness of the word of God, the Spirit of God ministering out of the scriptures to our souls that blessed One, so as to sustain our life. How much time do we spend over it? How much do we meditate in it? The Lord knows I often think it over in my own heart in real sorrow and grief. I hear people talking about reading meetings, and I am afraid a great many reading meetings are little more than debating meetings; and what a miserable kind of thing that is! What we want is (I trust I may be forgiven for using a word that has the appearance of cant, which I cordially detest), but what we want is feeding on Christ in our souls, food for our souls, sitting down to the word of God as a hungry man sits down to his meal, to find through the ministry of the Spirit of God, that living, blessed, precious Christ to feed and sustain us, and to rise from the word in the sense of the nourishment that Christ has supplied to the soul, and Christ Himself precious to us as that food. It must be gathered and eaten, and there must be purpose of heart to search for it.

What did the children of Israel go out into the wilderness to look for? The manna; that was their definite object; they searched for the manna. And when you and I go to the scriptures, do we search for Christ in them? And when they had found the manna, what did they do with it? They dressed it; they subjected it to a process that set forth the sufferings of Christ; they did not eat it as they found it in the field. And we could not feed on an incarnate Christ, it is a dead Christ that is the food of our souls. Therefore the manna was dressed; it was, we read, ground in mills, or beaten in a mortar and baked in pans; all this sets forth His sufferings. And thus they ate it. And it was of this Moses said, you shall be filled; and mark this, “And ye shall know that Jehovah is your God.” And exactly the same thing is said in John 6, where the Lord is the great antitype of it. In the beginning of the chapter He fed the people, I believe, as a picture of it; and what is said about that multitude is that the Lord took the loaves, and distributed them, “and they were filled.” And there is another word to show that no amount of need could be any adequate measure of the supply -- there were fragments to a large extent taken up. And so our need may be great, it may be varied, but it never can measure the fullness of the Christ of God, never. And therefore on every occasion when the Lord fed the multitude in the gospels, there were fragments -- twelve baskets you get in Luke 9. Why? To show, as I have said, that God’s supply could never be measured by man’s need. How could finite need measure infinite fullness? Impossible. But I press this earnestly, that herein lies the secret of our life not being in vigor, but that it is sickly and feeble, and not rising up to its source to delight itself in its object; even that Christ is not fed upon in the scriptures through the ministry of the Spirit.

And observe how, in connection with this very thing here, they murmured; and the Lord says, as it were, Do you murmur, and do you complain, and do you stumble? And many even of His own disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. And why should we be surprised at any one turning away from the truth of God to-day, when there were people that turned away from the Christ of God? And yet how we wonder, and say, What a strange thing! But they turned away from Christ. Who? His disciples. “Many of them went back, and walked no more with him”; and He replies in the most
touching tenderness, “Will ye also go away?”

Now mark what comes in here in connection with this too as to His exaltation, and that is, the Spirit; and that will bring us to John 16. The coming down of the Comforter was connected with the exalted Christ. It was as exalted that He sent down the Holy Ghost. He speaks of His going away, which was His exaltation, and the necessity for them that He should go away, and that if He did not go away, the Comforter would not come, but that if He departed, He would send Him. And the Lord forecasts it in John 16. And observe these three things about the Comforter, for they are very precious. When the Comforter is come, He shall be a convicting Spirit in the world. It is not, mark, the operation of the Spirit here, it is the fact of His presence. His presence would be the conviction of the world. The world is convicted, and the saint is comforted.

As to the world, He was to be a convicting Spirit; as to the saints, they were to be comforted and guided into all truth; and as to Jesus, the Holy Ghost would glorify Him. Those three things are most beautiful. “He shall glorify me”; He will comfort you and guide you into all truth; and as to the world, His presence here will bring home the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He shall convict the world “of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness” -- there is none in the world, they cast Christ out -- “because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”; for it was in that character he led the whole world on to crucify Christ. But it is all forecast there; it is the forecast of the coming Comforter when Christ should be exalted.

We have the thing in fact in Acts 2, when the Comforter came. But look at the way the Holy Ghost came down there. When the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all brought together; God so arranged that they should be together in one place; and there came the sound of a mighty rushing wind, filling all the house, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire -- keep those two things before your mind -- and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. You will see the contrast in a moment. When Jesus was down here as a man upon earth, He was sealed by the Father, “the Holy Ghost descended upon him in a bodily shape like a dove.” “Him hath God the Father sealed,” that is to say, by the Holy Ghost coming down upon Him, He was marked off in that peculiar way. It was not that there was anything added to His Person or glory, that could not be; but He was set forth as the One whom God specially and peculiarly marked out in that way. But I think it is most precious that the form which the Holy Ghost took when He came down upon Christ was in a bodily shape like a dove. How suitable if you think of Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, that precious, gracious, gentle, blessed Savior! The very form of the seal, because that is what the Spirit of God was, is very blessed, it was the Holy Ghost came down upon Christ without blood, God putting His seal upon Him, beyond and outside all others, none like Him -- but the form of the seal set forth His own precious Person, He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” and therefore it was the dove; and then there were the opened heavens and the Father’s voice.

But that is not what you have in Acts 2. That blessed Person passed through His baptism of death, having gone down to the very depths of judgment on the cross, and ascended into the heavens, and the Holy Ghost came as sent down from Him, for He received the Holy Ghost as the promise of the Father, and shed that Spirit down Himself as the exalted man from glory. But what form does the Spirit take? He takes the form of that which sets forth testimony, that is to say, the tongue; because now there was to be testimony all the whole world over to this blessed One, and therefore it was parted tongues or cloven tongues, that is to say, it was to be a far-reaching testimony, it was not to go to one nation or one people, it was to take in Jews and Gentiles everywhere. Hence they were parted tongues, cloven tongues. And then, “like as of fire,” because they set forth the divine, holiness and judgment as against sin, of which the cross was the great witness in this world. The Holy Ghost that came down from the Man that was on the cross but is now on the throne, takes this shape of parted tongues in testimony of the fact, that the whole earth now is to receive the tidings; and it was as a fire in connection with the fact of the intolerance of God’s holy, righteous nature of all evil, of which the cross was the great witness in this world.

Now if you turn to Acts 2:29-36, there you will see how it is explained. It was forecast in John, it came out as a fact in the beginning of Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, and now it is divinely explained by Peter through the ministry of the Spirit, because he is speaking by the Holy Ghost. And there is one point in Acts 2 which is exceedingly precious. When the Holy Ghost did come down, and when He was here upon earth, dwelling in the whole house of God, as we know He does, yet He sat upon each of them particularly, for each of them had these cloven tongues particularly, and the whole house was filled. But look at the difference in the testimony now, see the power of this testimony, and the force that was given to this testimony; it is perfectly exquisite. There is nothing that delights the heart that loves Christ more than to see how, wherever they turned, they found Christ. They found Him in the prophets, they found Him in the Psalms, they found Him everywhere. When Peter, who is the vessel for the communication of the mind of God here, opens his mouth in company with the Holy Ghost, wherever he goes through the scriptures, he finds Christ; Christ in the Old Testament, it is not David, “David is not ascended into the heavens.” He can interpret everything now; he has got the key? What is the key? Christ. He is the key to unlock all the treasures of God. And the Holy Ghost is the one who can and who delights to minister that blessed Christ to our souls. He says, “He shall take of mine,” “He shall glorify me”; “He shall not speak of himself,” that is, as an independent witness; He will become a servant for the Son’s glories, as the Son became a servant for the Father’s glories. The Spirit of God delights to take of Christ’s things in the scriptures, and show them to us.

Now look at that scripture in Eph. 4, which is the third aspect of Christ’s ascension. There it is in connection with ministry, it is what Christ received for the church as the exalted man, head over all things to the church His body. I am only giving utterance to what is old truth, not new. What is new is generally false; and what is old is true. You find three
precious things in that Eph. 4. You get a Man ascended, a victorious Man, Man gone up in divine righteousness as Victor, Conqueror of death, exalted “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.” That is one thing. But you get more -- that exalted Man leading in captivity him who held men in captivity, “He led captivity captive”; the very one who led men in captivity is in captivity himself now; He ascended up on high, and “led captivity captive.” The ascension of Christ is the proof of it. And here it is that ministry comes in. He takes poor wretched creatures who were once the slaves of that one whom he leads in captivity, once the slaves of Satan, and He uses them as the vessels of His power against the very power that once held them. That is what ministry is, according to God. It is not the tongue of an angel or archangel. No angel or archangel could be a suitable and competent witness to His glories who has glorified God in such marvelous ways as Jesus has, but poor creatures like you and me, if it please God in His sovereignty so to elect that it shall be the case, once poor slaves of Satan, once in bondage and in captivity themselves, delivered now through grace from the captivity of Satan, and from under the hand and dominion and power of the enemy, and then used in divine grace against the power that they once had to succumb to, themselves. And therefore, as has been often said, no angel or archangel could speak as a poor creature like you and I could speak.

How blessed to think that when He would give these gifts as dowries for His church, proofs of His love, for the edification and sustenance and refreshment of His church in this world, He goes into Satan’s domains, having first of all led him into captivity, and then takes from under the power of that enemy, now broken and subdued, poor things like ourselves, and makes them vessels of His grace. Because the gifts, as we have seen, are persons; they are not qualities; they are quite distinct from the manifestations of power such as you find them in 1 Corinthians, displays of power down here on earth, but those gifts in Eph. 4 always go on. We have got them “till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” It is not restoration of an apostolate, but it is the perpetuation of these gifts from the ascended Man in glory “till we all come.” Perpetuation of ministry and restoration of ministry are not the same things. The thought of a revived apostolate for ministry is false; the perpetuation of gift as emanating from that blessed One in heaven, is true, “till we all come.” And therefore, as long as ever that has not come about, there will be down here upon this earth, as emanating from that exalted head over all things to the church His body, the proofs of His love for His assembly, gifts to edify, and for the gospel, till what God has in His purpose and mind is accomplished.

I commend this to you. If the study of it gives to you the delight it has given to me, as I think it over and dwell upon it in all its blessedness, you will be well repaid for pondering and meditating over it yourselves, and seeing what comes from the exaltation of Christ. And above and beyond all, when you think of that blessed One who went down underneath the waves of death and judgment, who was here for God’s glory -- the trodden-down man -- what a thing for the heart that has been won by His humiliation to see Him exalted, to look at that Savior that came down here to win our poor worthless hearts for Himself, He who went down into the lowest depths, to think of Him exalted. What a comfort for the heart that knows the love of Christ, and has that love as a constraining power there, what a comfort to see that Savior in the highest place now, exalted, glorified, and soon coming too to take us to Himself!

The Lord grant that each one of our hearts may drink in all the deep eternal preciousness and blessedness that comes from it, and through His grace become better acquainted with Christ and His glories, for His blessed name’s sake.
The Salvation of Jehovah;
Being Addresses on The Book of Exodus

Chapter 1:
Exodus 3:7-10

All the books of the OT that follow Genesis differ from it in a very distinct and marked way in this, that whereas it (Genesis) presents certain great principles of God, and ways of acting of Himself such as it was at the time, and dealings with individuals, that which marks the other books is the specific subject to which each is devoted. Genesis is almost general in what it presents, but each of the others, Exodus for instance, has specially and peculiarly one subject that appears, as it were, at the very beginning and end; and in Exodus that is the subject of redemption. The great theme of Exodus is redemption -- the circumstances, the place, the surroundings, all shedding light on it; then God’s interest in that people and how He extricated them, and afterwards (which is a very solemn part of it) even when they were the subject of redemption, and in the freedom and blessedness of it, how they elected of their own free will to go back and place themselves under a position of legal restraint, rather than to enjoy freely the blessings God had given them. So that we not only have the results of redemption stated, but the consequences of the human mind, wishing to have the blessings secured to it on some legal basis of its own choice rather than to enjoy it under the free sovereign grace of God.

However, I am not now going into so wide a theme, but only desire to state what the subjects of the book are. This evening I want to bring before you the commencement of it, as we have it in this passage, and to apply it, if God enable us, to the circumstances in which grace has placed ourselves. Only this, of course, was but a temporal redemption, whereas the redemption the Lord Jesus Christ has effected for His people is an eternal redemption.

And first, what we find here is that everything that surrounded the nation at this time, all that connected itself with Israel, the people of Jehovah’s special election, was designedly to make what happened to them, types for us. As is said in 1 Cor. 10, the things that happened to them were written as types for us. It does not say the people were, but the things that happened to them. I suppose the nation could not be, in a certain sense, types for us, because they were an earthly people, with earthly hopes, earthly promises, earthly blessings, in fact, everything they had was down here in this world, whereas we belong to entirely another order of things; our blessings, our prospects, our hopes are heavenly, our home is in the heavens, our commonwealth is there, from whence we expect the Savior. We are the contrast rather of Israel. Whether individually or as members of a corporation, we are contrasted with Israel. Our blessings, our prospect, our hopes, our future, everything is contrast. And that is one secret of the right understanding of the epistle to the Hebrews. If you read that epistle with the thought of comparison, you will surely get astray; whereas, if you read it with the thought of contrast, you will be steered by grace through it. Everything is in the sharpest contrast in Hebrews; the lines of contrast are drawn in the most precise way by the Holy Ghost all through the epistle.

Now we are going to look at the things that happened, and the circumstances that pertained to this people as types for us; and first, with regard to the place. It is not without reason that this chosen people are found in Egypt. I need not refer to the history of how they got there; there were a number of circumstances, like chains, in God’s providential ways, that brought them there; but there they were. And this land, of all others in scripture, is the one that would depict, in consequence of its own condition, the moral Egypt, and the moral condition of darkness, out of which God, in His infinite grace, has given us, as recipients of redemption, to be emancipated. For remember, redemption always supposes change of place. The word “salvation,” in scripture, always means a change of position, though, perhaps, we limit it in our minds to the thought of some favor or blessing that would extenuate our circumstances spiritually. I do not mean in what concerns us in this world, but spiritually. And so the Passover, by itself, was not redemption, no doubt it goes along with the Red Sea in the history of redemption, and, in a certain sense, the Passover had a deeper aspect in it than the Red Sea. But still, the Passover was the shelter which God provided for that people whilst they were in Egypt, and God was only known in the character of an appeased judge in the Passover. He “passed over” the people when He judged Egypt, but they were not removed out of the place of bondage, their position was not changed; they were sheltered by the blood, but they were in bondage still. The Red Sea took them clean out of everything they were in as to bondage, the Passover met the deeper claims of God when He passed through the land as a judge, I say this to make it clear to you
that when scripture speaks of redemption, it means not merely that God’s righteous, holy claims have been met, as they were by the blood of the Passover Lamb, but that the people themselves, who were sheltered by that blood, have been entirely extricated from the place where they were in bondage, and completely brought to God. That is redemption. They left Egypt behind for ever; they had done with it. And the place they were in, is typical of the position we are in, until we know redemption. Now it is a pertinent question to ask, Have you got in your souls the knowledge of the place they were in, is typical of the position we are in, bondage, and completely brought to God. That is redemption. An Israelite was sheltered in Egypt, but he was in Egypt still. And shelter, wonderful and blessed as it is -- do not think I want to make little of it -- is short of what has been truly called “extrication”; redemption is extrication, by it we are clean out altogether by the mighty power of God, through blood and power. The blood has met His own righteous, holy claims; and the power has completely submerged every hostile foe that could raise up its head. Through blood and power we have been brought out of the house of bondage, and brought to God -- that is redemption. Liberty, and freedom, and blessedness are all connected with it, but it is not a matter of experience. There is experience, but this is fact, and it is fact for faith to possess. Here is the wonderful thing that must underlie all experience, in order to have it upon its true and proper basis. I am speaking of a great reality that has been accomplished, whether I accept and enjoy it or not; and whether I possess it or not, at any rate it is there for me to take, possess, and know. And if I enjoyed it a thousand times more, it would not make it one single whit more true; and if I never enjoyed it at all, it would not take away from the truth of it. I am speaking of a thing that exists, and did in this day when God effected His own purpose -- He did redeem the people. And that is what faith always delights to rest in. It cannot take pleasure in the use it has made of it, but it always goes back to what God did; and there is no failure, nor flaw, nor imperfection, nor drawback in what He has done. And that is the estimate on which God looks at His people. Take that wonderful verse in Numbers, which is the book of Israel’s wilderness journeys, walking with through the desert as a redeemed people. You remember how God confronted the adversary when he would move heaven and earth to have that people, the subject of God’s redemption, accursed. The adversary sought to profit by the practical breakup of Israel, to call attention to them in their practical ways as a reason why they should not be blessed. And that is what the devil is always at. He knows, right well, that there is a point here that he can press. There is the failure, the feebleness, the darkness, the imperfection, the shortcoming, and all the use that is made even of the very greatest favor of God, and what does God say with regard to it? “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?” That is what silences every sound and meets every question that is raised; and in that very chapter God goes back to what we are beginning with tonight, “The Lord brought him out of Egypt.” He brought him out, and brought him in too; his place was changed, his position was changed; there was a complete extrication of the people out of the land of Egypt. And it was God who did it. They would have stayed there to this day if they had been left, but God brought them out. And that is what faith always goes back to, because it travels in company with God.

But let me return for a moment. Egypt is a wonderful place even now. The circumstances connected with it were eminently calculated to depict the condition in which all are who have not as yet tasted redemption. What marked it, beloved friends? If one thing more than another, this, it was the land of death. It is not that ancient Egypt is not celebrated, and indeed modern Egypt too, borrowing its greatness from ancient Egypt, but the mightiest and most eloquent record that Egypt presents, or ever presented, was the record of death, for the monuments are the great record of death. It was marked by bondage, death, darkness, barrenness in itself, sterility, except for the Nile, for no rain ever fell there. As some one has said, they looked down for everything, not looked up. The fertility of the country did not come from above; the river was everything to it, and they worshiped their river. And there was the constant conflict between life and death there too. Because Egypt is a little tract of territory, with the desert each side, blowing all the sterility and barrenness of its arid burning sands upon it on the one hand, and the Nile continually overflowing to fructify and fertilize it on other: life and death continually contending, and I might say death getting the upper hand. What a picture that is of the moral condition of things in which we were as sinners once. One would not dwell upon it, but still it is an immense thing in connection with God’s salvation, and to see what God’s salvation has saved us out of, that if we have, through grace, been participators of this salvation, we see death and barrenness behind, and we have left bondage and taskmasters for ever. Because these were their circumstances. Look at the first chapter of Exodus and see how they were oppressed and beaten by Pharaoh, and the severity with which they were handled; see how the taskmasters ground them down; nothing could exceed the cruelty to the and the devastating circumstances they were in, in the land of bondage, so that the place and the circumstances that surrounded them there were of the very bitterest conceivable kind. And that is what morally marked us. Have we left that behind? Do you remember how God Himself has described the contrast between Canaan and Egypt in Deut. 11:10, “The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out” -- you see they had come out, there was a change of place. And, beloved friends, I dwell upon that, and would reiterate it, over and over again, they were out of it. Are you out of it, in your soul, in your spirit, in your conscience before God, have you left it behind? “The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out” -- you see they had come out, there was a change of place. And, beloved friends, I dwell upon that, and would reiterate it, over and over again, they were out of it. Are you out of it, in your soul, in your spirit, in your conscience before God, have you left it behind? “The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowest thy seed, and waterest it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven.” You see the contrast is very striking between the two countries. What is meant is
simply this, that in Egypt everything was from the river, the river was everything to them, but it was endless toil; when the Nile overflowed its banks, which was the one source of fertility to the country, the people had, by hard work, to make channels for the overflow to reach the fields and the crops; and that is the meaning of watering it with thy foot; all the produce was secured by labor. That was the character of Egypt and is the character of this world. For this world, in a certain sense, is a desert through which we go with God -- that is, the book of Numbers. But in another sense, it is an Egypt out of which, by God’s infinite mercy, if we have tasted redemption, we have been delivered. This present world has two moral aspects to us. It is the place where we were dead in trespasses and sins, or alive in them, if you like, before God, both being true -- in one sense, we were dead there, and in another, alive; as far as God is concerned, we were dead; as far as lusts, and vanities, and follies, and passions were concerned, we were alive. Now delivered out of it, having been extricated by God’s redemption from it, it becomes a desert world, and we walk with God through it. It was once the scene of our lusts, and vanities, and folly, where we found everything to gratify us as natural men. Now we find there is not a single thing in it, not a drop of water, not a single shower of rain, not a bit of fertility, and we go through it as a desert with God. And that is the contrast in these verses. One received water from the rain of heaven, Canaan; Egypt had its resources in itself, it was a place of independence. Just as man is independent of God in his natural condition, so with everything about it, place, circumstances, country, surroundings, all that was connected with it was purposely designed of God to make it a picture of the moral condition of darkness, and alienation, and death, and distance, and bondage in which we were all by nature before God.

That is the first thing you get in the opening chapters of Exodus, the oppression of Pharaoh and the bondage of the people. I only refer to one more point in it, and that is in Ex. 2: 23,

And it came to pass, in process of time, that the king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Now if you notice, there is not a word about their crying to God. It was selfish moaning; they felt the smart of the bondage, but they never looked to God at all; they did not think of Him as their deliverer. They smarted under the pressure of their circumstances; but there was a heart up there, there were ears and eyes up there that looked down, and saw, and felt, and heard -- “God heard” -- nothing is more blessed and beautiful to me than that, “God heard.”

Would to God we had more of the sense of it, the interest of God in His people, even when He is not before their thoughts, when they do not refer things to Him, and look to Him to interfere for them.

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them, consideration, pity, was in Him. What a beautiful contrast that is! And you will find increasingly, beloved friends, that we have to get back to that, the motions, and movements, and motives, and principles of God’s grace towards His people always begin and end with Himself. The sovereignty of His grace, and the accomplishment of His own purposes, and the affections of His own heart, spring up, as it were, in His own blessed nature. That is the secret of God’s blessed actions towards all His people. As has been beautifully said, “When you come to Christianity, God works by what He brings, not by what He finds,” that is to say, He brings in that which effects the thoughts and purposes of His own heart. The legal principle is, that He is looking for something, and that I am the person to render it to Him. Whereas the very genius and principle of Christianity is, that God is a giver, and I am a receiver. The contrary principle is, that God is a claimer, and that I am ready to meet His claims. Instead of that, He gives everything that was in His own heart to me, effecting it by the thing He brings in. And that is the only principle that will produce a change in anybody, and that can set the wheels of practice in your soul going, and keep them going too. You must have a motive and object outside of yourself; if you have not, you will come to spiritual bankruptcy and ruin before long.

But mark well how blessed it is! God looked down, He heard, though there was no cry actively directed to Him. And I like that word “cry.” “I cried unto God with my voice,” says the Psalmist. Many a one cries that does not cry to God. They did not cry to God, but for all that He heard in the blessed goodness of His own heart, and had respect, had consideration for the circumstances in which the people were. That is the first point in connection with redemption.

The second is that, corresponding with the purposes and mind of God to take this people out of Egypt, God finds a deliverer suitable to His hand, and raises him up. That is the word used afterwards, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you” -- it does not mean resurrection from the dead -- “from among your brethren, like unto me.” The expression, “raise up,” may be used in two senses. The Lord Jesus Christ was raised up from amongst the dead after He had undergone the sentence of death for God’s glory; but He was the One that was raised up to be the Deliverer of His people; as the little hymn celebrates it in the gospel of Luke, “hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,” the Lord Jesus Christ. “God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away from among your brethren, like unto me.” The expression, “raise up,” may be used in two senses. The Lord Jesus Christ was raised up from amongst the dead after He had undergone the sentence of death for God’s glory; but He was the One that was raised up to be the Deliverer of His people; as the little hymn celebrates it in the gospel of Luke, “hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,” the Lord Jesus Christ. “God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Christ was raised up in a double sense. He was God’s provided Savior, and He was the One whom God raised from the dead when He had
accomplished the great work of redemption. That is what you find in the second chapter. Moses was the type in certain ways, as far as he could be, of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not go into the details of it, but only put the leading points before you. Moses is found in the circumstances in which the people are. They are under pressure and difficulty in the land of Egypt. Moses, who was, by his genealogy, one of them, is found suffering exactly the circumstances that his people are suffering. The attempt was to exterminate them. What happens in the second chapter of Exodus is very like what happens when the Lord Jesus Christ was born into this world. The king seeks to exterminate all that could increase the seed of God’s people on the earth, and Moses is born at this time. And there is a very exquisite point in the NT with regard to it. Moses’ parents, in faith, hid him. I do not know what the revelation was that reached them, but I feel assured of this, that some communication or intimation from God reached them upon which their faith acted; because I cannot conceive it should be so apart from some communication or manifestation of God to the person. Faith is like the ivy vine that lays hold of something, but there must be something to lay hold of. God must have given some intimation -- though I do not know what -- to the parents, because it says, “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.” Faith triumphed over fear, and over all the natural feelings of their heart, and when they could not conceal him any longer, then they put him into an ark of bulrushes and let him float on the river. And mark what is said, “because they saw he was a proper child” -- it was not nature flattering itself with the beauty of its child -- “fair to God” is the word in Acts, and that is faith. God must have made some communication to them, just as He must have made some communication upon which Abel’s faith acted, when he put the blood and fat of a victim between himself and God. And that is always the principle faith acts upon -- God’s revelation, or intimation, or communication, call it by what name you please; but something from God is the initiative, for God always takes the initiative, God always begins. Faith does not lead, it follows; it is a subject, dependent, obedient principle. So Moses’ parents acted in faith on God's intimation of His will; saw this child beautiful to God, “and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”

And then notice all the providential circumstances connected with his birth. For speaking now of him as the deliverer, by birth he was endowed with every single thing that would make nature and the mind of man say, That is the very man to effect God’s purpose in bringing His people out of Egypt. He was brought up as the reputed son of the daughter of the monarch, he was educated in all the learning of Egypt, he was mighty in words and deeds. There was not a single natural qualification that Moses did not possess -- high in birth, and trained and educated in the very best that could be accorded to him in that day. But when the time came for him to be used as God’s own weapon to effect this deliverance, he gave it all up; he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, he renounced all the qualifications that nature surrounded him with, and that Providence had placed him in the midst of, in simple faith he turned his back on every one of them, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

That is the Holy Ghost’s commentary in Heb. 11 upon Moses’ action.

And then it is exceedingly interesting to see in the second chapter of Exodus how God acts in fitting an instrument for His hands; and to effect His purposes. We find that before God makes known His mind to Moses, he suffers rejection from his own people, just as Christ did; they refused him. Now in the third chapter, when we come more directly to God’s making known His mind to the one who was to carry out the purposes of His heart for this people, and to accomplish His redemption, the first thing shown to Moses is a picture of the exact condition in which the people were before God. For that is the meaning of the burning bush -- to present to Moses an exact picture of the state of the nation, suffering every conceivable kind of vicissitude and pressure, but sustained through it. The bush burned with fire -- judgment, pressure, difficulty, devastation continually resting upon them, but not consumed, because supported and maintained by God. And God intended that to act upon Moses as the servant of God’s deliverance. When Moses sees this wonderful sight, he says to himself, I will draw near and look at this sight, why it is the bush is not consumed, and he drew near to behold.

Now the first dealing of God directly with him -- and a very important thing it is -- is that God now reveals Himself by name, mark that, and says to him, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” It is the revelation of the name of God to His servant in connection with the mission Moses was about to carry out. And that is a very important thing to bear in mind, that the revelation of the name of God, whatever it may be at any given time, gives its definiteness and its character to what God is about to do at that time. I need not say that the way God revealed Himself to Moses or to Israel was very different from the way God has revealed Himself to us. And the way God revealed Himself to the patriarchs was different from the way He revealed Himself to Israel. Jehovah was the revelation of God’s name to Israel. He says to them that He was known to the patriarchs as El-Shaddai, but by His name Jehovah He was not known. God Almighty is the revelation God was pleased to make of Himself to Abraham, and Abraham never went beyond that.

“I am the Almighty God,” He said, “walk before me, and be thou perfect” -- a wonderful revelation and beautiful for its time, but that was the extent and fulness of it. But to Israel, a people who were brought into covenant relationship with God, He makes known His covenant name, which is Jehovah.

But here, in the first instance, He goes back to this, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Now that is very interesting, because these are heads of families, it is not yet a nation; and therefore He does not yet say, “I am Jehovah,” but I am the God of these
families. When Moses drew near to look upon the burning bush, God as it were says to him, You cannot come near me; I pity that people, and I may speak to you, I may use you as the instrument of my delivering grace, I may send you on a mission of redemption, but I cannot have you near me; “Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

Now, beloved friends, that is very important. God is making known His mind about redemption, but redemption has not been accomplished. They are not brought to God yet, and therefore Moses cannot come near to God. God keeps His distance, I may say with reverence; He keeps Moses at a distance; faithful servant though he is, and about to be the deliverer of that people, God cannot have him near Him, “Draw not nigh hither.”

Then God says, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.” O, the blessedness of it! I think, beloved friends, the very fact of the distance that was inevitable, because of His own holy, moral nature, and which God maintained between even Moses and Himself, because redemption had not as yet been accomplished, throws into the most beautiful relief, and emphasizes in the most wonderful way the unfoldings of His heart. Though I cannot have you near me, I will tell you what is in my heart. The ground for having you near me is not accomplished yet, and you must not come nigh, but I will tell you I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt.

The first revelation is the revelation of the name of God; the second is the revelation of the grace of God, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows”; and now you have the revelation of His purpose, “And I am come down to deliver them.” O beloved friends, how blessed it is! God was about to work through Moses, yet He had come down Himself, “I am come down”; I am going to do it. I may use you as the spade or the pitchfork, the hammer or the axe, or whatever else it may be, but I am the One who is going to do it. So we have first, the revelation of His name; and secondly, the revelation of His grace; thirdly, the revelation of His purpose; and now fourthly, the revelation of the mission, “Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh.” How wonderful, how blessed it is! How it brings our minds around God as the One who is about to accomplish this wonderful extrication of His people, how it all arose in His own divine mind! Who made a claim on Him? Who besought Him? Who put a motive there that He should do it? And so when you come to what has been accomplished for you and me through grace, it is exactly the same as it was with Israel, the sovereignty of His grace; and not only that, but it is God that has accomplished it. And of our redemption we may say, God planned it, Christ accomplished it, and the Holy Ghost bears witness to it. For that is what is said in the epistle to the Hebrews, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness” -- the will of God, the work of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Ghost. The whole thing is divine. It originated in the mind of God, was accomplished by the Second Person of the adorable Trinity, and is borne witness to by God the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Just as clearly, and distinctly, and positively as this redemption here was the work of God, so is the redemption effected for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. There is not anything that is more touching to the heart, or anything that brings God more before us in all the fulness and blessedness of His own nature than this, that even prior to the accomplishment of these purposes, prior to the fact that God had His own holy, righteous claims met, He had purposely in His heart to bring that people out from the land of bondage. So that He says afterwards,

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.

You have seen what I did to the power that oppressed you, and kept you in bondage, how I bare you in the mighty strength of my own love, and brought you to Myself. For in Ex. 15 you find that in the very earliest moments of their victory, these were the notes of their song, “Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation,” that is to say, they were brought to God. That is the meaning of it. Though they had not trod an inch of desert land, had not as yet got into Canaan, yet that is celebrated too, “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance.” No sooner do the opened waters of the Red Sea roll between the people and the hosts of Pharaoh, no sooner does God strike the keynote of that song on the resurrection shores of the Red Sea, than they celebrate the whole thing, not part of it, but the whole.

“Oh! but,” people say, “was it not Jordan that brought them into Canaan?” It was not, let me tell you. That is a very important subject, which I will treat in its place. They crossed the Jordan, it is true; but what brought them into Canaan in the accomplishment of God’s purposes was redemption, and it was accomplished at the Red Sea. How could they sing otherwise, “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance,” if the consummation of the purpose of God had not taken place? It was because the whole thing was done that they could sing; there was no redemption in the Jordan. If you doubt it, I will make it very simple. Surely you do not mean to say you desire to mix up our experience with redemption? If you do, then it has not been done only and simply by God Himself. That is experience to say, “We have died with Christ,” and that is what Jordan means. I cherish it in my soul that I have died with Christ, and risen with Christ, but that is not redemption. Redemption is, that Christ has died for me, that the precious death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ have taken me out of Egypt, out of the land of bondage, and brought me into Canaan. And through God’s grace I can rejoice in it, and bear testimony to that, because I know it to be true. I perfectly admit the experience part of it, and that until what answers to the Jordan is known experimentally in our souls, the joys and the knowledge of the thing are not there. But then, that is
experience, and we must not confound experience with redemption. It has its own important place in the ways of God, and we cannot be without it. If you take it away, you take away one most important thing, but I am jealous of keeping redemption in its place, of keeping to redemption only the glories that belong to it. There it was a question of God and Christ alone, and nothing connected with us except wretched, miserable self and sin, that gave the occasion for the display of that grace. Christ died and rose again, that is Ex. 14, 15, in figure; and the whole thing was there and then made good, the purpose of God was there and then accomplished, and it was on that basis and in virtue of it that they went into God’s own land.

The Lord, in His grace, give our hearts to appreciate the wonderful making known of His purposes here. Nothing more beautiful than this -- He says, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” He is not the God of dead people, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were poor failing men, but He is the God of them for all that. Is not that a great comfort? Moses trembled and was afraid to look upon God, and now God says, Here is the revelation of my grace, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters: for I know their sorrows”; my heart is touched with it, I am all eye, and all ear, and all heart, where the interests, and needs, and sorrows of my poor people are concerned. And next observe the revelation of His purposes, “I am come down to deliver them”; I am going to do it; do not think you are going to be the deliverer, the deliverance, the extrication to be mine; I will use you in this work but I am the active agent and power in the whole thing, not only to bring them out, but to bring them in. Now for the revelation of his mission. Now come, I will send you -- what an honor to be made the bearer of the tidings of this!

May the Lord, in His grace, give our souls to lay hold of these points tonight, and give our hearts to enter into them, and get our minds concentrated through grace upon these unfoldings of God’s purposes in view of this wonderful redemption He was about to accomplish for this people.

Chapter 2: Exodus 3:9-22

I want, beloved friends, this evening, as the Lord may help one, to set before you the exercises, and the instructions along with those exercises, which God brings His servant into in connection with this mission. It was the most wonderful mission that could be conceived, for it was the mission of redemption. God was to be the Accomplisher of the redemption, but He was pleased to make use of Moses as the one who was to carry the tidings of it to the people, and to be His instrument for effectuating it. But whilst that is true, Jehovah always keeps Himself prominent and foremost in connection with it to the people. And that is a striking contrast to what you find in the present moment, for if anything characterizes the present day, it is, as some one has said, an idolatry of instrumentality, making everything of the instrument, and very little of God. Whereas, what you find here is that God has got not so much His instrument, but He has His vessel, and it is God Himself that is prominent. He says, I have seen it, and I have visited you, and I am come down to do it; and, therefore, afterwards, when it had been accomplished, He says, “You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to myself.” It is all God. But then -- and that is a very important thing for us -- God works in His grace in the conscience, and affections, and soul of His servant Moses, so as to make him a fitting vessel for the accomplishment of all this wonderful thought and purpose of His heart.

I was calling attention last week to the fourfold revelation in this chapter -- first, the revelation of God Himself, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”; secondly, the revelation of His grace, “I have seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt”; thirdly, the revelation of His purpose of deliverance, “I am come down to deliver them”; and fourthly, the revelation of the fact that Moses was to be the deliverer, “Come, now, I will send thee.” And where we begin this evening is, that as soon as ever these intimations fall on Moses’ ears, he says at once, “Who am I?”

Now, beloved friends, God never said a word to Moses about himself. He had heard the revelation of His great name, the revelation of His grace, the revelation of His purpose, and the marvelous revelation that He was about to send him, but not a syllable about Moses himself, directly or indirectly; and the instant this falls upon his ears, he says, “Who am I?”

That was very different from what had taken place before. In the earliest moments of his history, after his birth and marvelous deliverance, when, with all the affection and feeling that his heart had for his own people, the enthusiasm that swelled in his bosom toward his nation, he presents himself to them as their savior, their deliverer; then he asserts himself as the one who will do it by slaying the Egyptian and hiding him in the sand, and trying to reconcile those who were at variance, saying, “Why do ye wrong?” What makes this great difference now? The people, Moses himself, the circumstances, the difficulties were just the same then as now. Why was he so ready to go before, and so slow to go now? God had not said a word about his qualifications for his mission, or his appreciation, or understanding, or experience of it. What is it turns Moses’ eye in, and reads out his incompetency to him at once, and makes him reflect on himself as he does here, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” What was it made the difference? It is a very interesting study, and most practical for our souls. There is one word at the beginning of this chapter that lets a flood of light in on it. It was the position he was in, that made all the difference. I need not ask you where he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand, when he looked upon the burdens of his brethren, and his heart swelled with compassion for them, and he showed himself to them, and allied himself in affection and heart with them. But where was he now? Ah! there is the
secret. There is one word which typifies this position, "Horeb"; he was in the presence of God, he was at the mount of God, he was shut up with God. And that is what makes the difference with us. There is no greater truth than this -- that the great interest for us, with regard to our looking at, or apprehension of any subject or our taking in the gravity of anything, depends altogether upon where we are standing as regards it. Two persons will take the most different view that could be conceived of the same thing, simply for this reason, that they are standing at totally different positions with regard to it. The moment Moses gets to Horeb, the mount of God, the greatness of everything comes before him. And it is in proportion as the greatness of God comes before our souls that the sense of the littleness of ourselves is there. It is not that there was any flaw, or imperfection, or poverty in the man; what makes him think of himself is, that he is in the presence of God; and when he thinks of himself, it is to depreciate himself, "Who am I" to do such a thing as this?

That is a very important matter. Here, of course, it was Moses as a servant, and being fitted for his mission; but I have no doubt it is the same in principle now with the way the Lord fits His servants, and sends them out, and the exercises He passes them through. We are not all called to such a mission as Moses was, but we are called to be servants of Christ in some way, and have all some service for Him to do. And you will find we are passed through things of this kind, and what brings us to book as they say, and makes us think little of ourselves, is not our failure, but the perfections of God. When I get into the divine presence, it is really getting into the light. Horeb answers to what we call the light. That is where every Christian is now. If I am not actually in the light, I am not a Christian at all. It is not a question of my comporting myself according to it; but that is where I am brought as a Christian, I am set down in this light before God. And when my soul enters into the fact that I really am there, and my soul bears testimony to it, that light makes everything manifest just as it was with Moses. That is the way God works in our souls at the present moment. It is not any deficiency that is in ourselves, it is His own holy presence that challenges everything. It is the light of that presence which detects, and exposes, and brings everything to the front; things that you would never think of or detect at all, come up the moment that light shines upon them.

Now, when Moses judges himself with regard to his incompetency for this wonderful mission -- for it was a great thing to go out in the interests of such a wonderful redemption, to bring the people of God out of Egypt -- then mark how God meets it. The moment he says, "Who am I?" God meets that with His "I"; "Certainly I will be with thee." What a wonderful thing that is, and how gracious too! "I," says God; and that puts out every other "I," whether in self-judgment or self-complacency, whether in elation or despondency. That is what meets it, "Certainly I will be with thee." And that is more than ministering strength, or grace, or help. He does not say, "I will support you with the needed assistance," but He says, "You shall have my presence with you." It is very like what happened on another occasion, when the people had failed after redemption, and it was a question of their being led through the desert as a failing people. You remember how God pledged to Moses His presence in exactly the same way when the whole failure was rampant and plain there before them. God says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." "My presence; what a wonderful thing that is! "Certainly I will be with thee."

You get two things there -- "I will send you," there is the mission; "I will be with you," there is its endowment. When they send out missionaries now-a-days, they generally provide very considerable human endowment, but God provides the whole thing, "Come, I will send you," "I will be with you." And you may rest assured that if God has sent you to do anything, He will be with you. Of course this relates to a servant sent on a special work, but it applies in the moral of it. There is no such thing as God sending a person to do a thing, and not being with the person to do it -- it is a falsity. You may find people sent on an errand or mission in this world without the necessary endowment and capabilities to carry it out, but never with God. If He sends me to do anything, or places me in any position, however menial or trifling, there is the pledge and promise of His own presence, "Certainly I will be with thee"; and there is where our competency is.

But there is another thing which brings out God's grace here. He does not only say, "I will be with you," but He actually gives him a sign. Now I do think that is great grace, because it was in condescension to the weaknesses of His servant, He says, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee" -- God gives him a sign whereby his faith might be strengthened in these wonderful communications -- "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt" -- there is no contingency, no perhaps, no if, no peradventure; He speaks of it all as an accomplished thing. When you have performed the functions I have sent you to carry out, "you shall serve God in this mount." I will give you not merely the pledge and promise of My presence, but a sign whereby you may know I have sent you -- when you are free from the bondage of Egypt, you shall be My slaves, and shall serve Me on this mount.

Well, any of us would have thought, unless we know our own hearts, that that would have been enough for Moses; but if we know our own hearts, we know right well how slow we are to drop every thought about ourselves, and just simply go on the line with God. So it was with Moses. For now he tries to find another difficulty. It is not now a question of himself, "Who am I?" but now he says, I see a difficulty in the people, and I come and announce to them that the God of their fathers hath sent me,
they will say, What is His name? There is an immensity in that. Have not our souls entered into the blessedness of the name? Everything is in the name. It was a very natural question for Israel to raise, What is the name of the One who is going to effect this? Because they knew right well what the shackles of Egypt were, and the power of Pharaoh, and the hard bondage of the country, and it could not be a small power that would ease their shoulder from the burden, and their hands from making the pots, which is the way the Psalm speaks of redemption, and set them free from all this slavery and tyranny in Egypt. And therefore Moses asks the question, “What is his name?” A simple question, and a very wonderful and blessed answer, “I am that I am” -- a simple unfolding of what God is in His own nature, the great self-existent Jehovah, “I am that I am.” And I need not say that it is very blessed for us now, for Jesus is that very One, the blessedness of whose name I trust we have proved.

And it ought to be a watchword with us, and a familiar word to our souls, that His name is everything. We are gathered to His name {Matt. 18:20}; our sufficiency, our competency, our power is in His name, our resources are in His name, there is not a single thing that is not bound up and comprehended in that one little word, His name. And mark you, the Lord Himself says so, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.” Would you not like to be where He is? He does not say, “There I will be”; no, He is stating a great fact, a great abstract reality for faith to lay hold of. The name there, implies everything connected with the person, all that surrounds the person in His own being, everything that comes from Him; you could not have a more comprehensive expression than “my name.”

You remember when the Holy Ghost came down after redemption was finished, as we have it in the Acts (the acts of the apostles so-called, but really the acts of the Holy Ghost), you have there the power of that name. Peter says, “Silver and gold have I none,” none of the world’s resources, neither wealth, nor greatness, nor power, nor ability, nor anything else; but he says, I have got this, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” He knew what was in that name would to God we knew it. Very often, alas! people fall back on what they think some great ability, or wonderful cleverness, but that is not our power at all, though, I am sorry to say, it is very often our weakness. In Christ is where the power is; it is the sufficiency, the competency, the blessedness, the preciousness of that name, so that everything we could conceive of fulness or blessing is centered around and bound up in that one name. You may say I am taking it out of the OT and bringing it into the New; but you see how the moral lines of truth run in that way, though this was in a very different order of things. They will want to know, says Moses, who has sent me; they will ask me, What is His name? what shall I say? And therefore God gives it, “I am that I am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.”

Now let me refer you to the NT, to make it a little more distinct with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. You know well, that He is that. The Lord Himself alludes to it in John 8, and takes this name when He says to the Jews, “If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.” “He” there, is in italics, and really destroys the force and meaning of it. And then these carping Jews say, “Who art thou?” just as Moses says Israel would want to know who God is. Do you take in the blessedness of His reply to that? One does not like to say one word about our beautiful translation, our dear blessed old Bible, but it really does spoil the meaning here, in saying, “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.” That does not convey at all the force and strength of the Savior’s words. What He does answer is this, “absolutely what I say”; that is, there was not the smallest divergence, but there was the most full divine accord between His words and Himself. In His words and in His works too, the great “I am” stood before them. And this is the most complete manifestation of “I am.” You could not say, there is a little bit of excess there, and a little bit of defect here; no, there was the most complete accord, the fullest and most perfect divine harmony between what He said and what He was; they were identical. That is very blessed for us, because that is the One whose name, through grace, He has taught us to cherish in our souls as our competency in these last days.

In John 18 it comes out even more strongly. There, when the Lord Jesus Christ is willingly surrendering Himself, and they came out with lanterns and torches, and weapons, to take Him, “Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said, Whom seek ye?” They said, “Jesus of Nazareth”; and He simply utters this word, “I am” (it is not “he”); and the moment He uttered that word, “they went backward and fell to the ground.” There was a revelation, mark you, in that word, of whom He was as a divine Person; they felt that they were in the presence of One who, although His Godhead glory was veiled in flesh, still was God, that God was there manifest in that lowly Man that was surrendering Himself into their hands, so that the divine presence drives them back and they all fall to the ground; otherwise they could have taken Him at once. But there you get the “I am” again. And so I connect these scriptures in Exodus with the NT, because Jesus is Jehovah.

But there is another thing that is very blessed as setting forth God’s grace. There is not merely the revelation of His own Person as the self-existent One, the great “I am,” the Jehovah, but He adds this: “And God said, moreover,” or besides, apart altogether from telling him the name,

Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Now what is the meaning of that? Because God had spoken this before, but now He connects it with the revelation of His own person as the “I am”; this “I am” is the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and this is His name for ever.

I think there are two things in it. First of all, God’s relationship with His own people Israel is an everlasting relationship. I will say a little about it when we look at it from
the Christian standpoint. But I feel it is an immense thing to bring out of scripture what is in scripture. I believe there is where our blessing is, whether in reading it, or ministering it. And do not think for a moment that to get blessing from it, it must necessarily concern you. That is a great mistake; that is making yourself too prominent altogether. There is blessing in it whether it concerns you or not. Because “all scripture,” mark, “is given by inspiration of God.” It often seems as if people thought that was a mistake, and that it ought to be “certain parts of scripture,” favorite bits of scripture, but the apostle says, “Every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect,” or full-grown, “thoroughly furnished unto every good work.” And though it may not concern me at all, still it concerns Christ and God, and my blessing is there.

Here we are dealing with the manifestation and revelation that God was pleased to give of Himself in these times to Israel, His earthly people; and He says, My relationship with My people is an everlasting relationship, “This is my name for ever, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Now people might say, I can understand God calling Himself the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, but I cannot understand God calling Himself the God of Jacob, of that crooked, perverse, scheming, planning man. Abraham was the father of the faithful, the friend of God, to whom He made known His mind; and Isaac was the heir of promise, type of God’s blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true seed, Abraham’s seed. But Jacob was a man, as his brother said, rightly called Jacob, “he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing”, by nature he was what you call a nasty character. Beloved friends, the marvelous grace of God shines out there, that He could connect His blessed name with one like Jacob: Jacob, the fruit of His grace; Jacob, the one whom God dealt with in all the tenderness of His love, and made Himself known to him in solitude, and wretchedness, and loneliness, and never left him till He had fulfilled all His purposes about him. Jacob was the great instance of the sovereign grace of God on the one hand, and the most wonderful instance of the forbearing and kindness of that grace on the other. And therefore, God is not merely God of Abraham and of Isaac, but He is also the God of Jacob.

And in the prophecies of Isaiah, God says, “Fear not, Jacob” -- the very name which was indicative of what was unlovely upon the natural side of the character, but brought out all the more upon God’s side the sovereign grace of God.

Some one has said (I do not know whether it is true or not) as an explanation of “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” that it is a representation in figure of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; Abraham, in his dealings with Isaac, being a representation of God giving up His only-begotten Son, and Isaac being a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jacob the great fruit of God’s grace, which, of course, is carried out by the power of the Holy Ghost. Of course there was not that revelation then, God had only revealed Himself in unity then, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” The person of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not brought out at all till you come to Christianity.

But here He is connecting His name with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the everlasting memorial of the relationship which subsists between God and that people. And that is a comfort for our hearts. Look at Israel, the poor Jewish people scattered and peeled, no one able to tell what has become of the ten tribes, and the whole of the land that God had designed for that people in the possession of the Turk or the Mohammedan, everything all upside down. Yet God is still the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and God will make good to that people everything that was in His own heart and purpose for them, for He has got that people in His own mind for that land and He has got that land for that people. And the peoples of the earth may plot and plan all kinds of things with regard to that narrow little strip of land, which seems to be a great object of ambition to different nations; but God has that land in purpose for that people, and that people for that land, and God will have that land inhabited by that people, and that people in that land. Now that is very blessed. It does not concern us, but it does concern the character of God. And it shows another thing, that when God is pleased to put Himself in relationship with a certain people upon the earth, that relationship, though earthly, is an everlasting relationship of its kind.

And now let us look at Christianity for a moment. When you come to that, you do not find God revealing Himself under the name of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. I suppose it required a great many men to bring out the revelation of God’s character. Abraham brought out one part of it, Isaac another, and Jacob another. But when we come to Christianity, one person and one name is competent for the full revelation of God, and therefore He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ -- and there you get the word Father coming in, which you never got before. These contrasts between what is old and what is new are very blessed. Now it is all standing in one blessed Person, God, in all the fulness of His nature as God, and in all the blessedness of His relationship as Father, revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I should like to ask you this question, because I think people need it -- how is God your Father? Thank God, He is our Father, and we can say, “Abba, Father," we have got the Spirit of His Son, we have got the adoption of sons, and we can use the language of children; but how is God our Father? Because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is it. Not by creation -- that is the horrid idea that people are trying to spread abroad, and they call it the fatherhood of God in that general way, but it is all false, because it is in reality denying redemption. But the Lord Jesus Christ has brought me to stand in that relationship before His God and Father -- that is my status. People may say, “I do not experience it, or enjoy it”; but there is something for you to experience and enjoy.

You remember how the Lord gave the earliest intimations of it in John 20, when He was risen from the dead and the whole work was accomplished. See the contrast with the first garden; in the first garden there was a fallen man and a fallen
woman, and both of them turned out, and the cherubim, the administration of divine justice, and the flaming sword that turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. But in the second garden there is a risen Man, and a redeemed woman, and the unfolding of the most wonderful relationship. He says to her, I am no longer on Jewish terms, and you may not detain Me, “Touch me not, I am not yet ascended to my Father,” but, He says, go to my brethren, and say unto them that I have put them now in My own place, before My Father and God. She gets the communication and the revelation of it. The whole work was done, redemption completely accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ having gone through everything. We hear much now about a mission, or service. This was the most wonderful mission, or message that was ever communicated for human lips to carry to another, “Go to my brethren” -- He never had said “brethren” till now -- “and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” There you have the contrast to all this in Exodus, because you never get “Father” here, you get “Jehovah”; but “Father” is the specific and distinct name of God in relationship now with Christians as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The blessedness of the OT is, that it helps us to bring out the NT in contrast, to show the distinctness of the wonderful thing that has come out, now that we have Christianity as a revealed fact, and the great work of redemption finished, so that we can be brought into it. It was revealed before we were brought into it, but redemption now brings us into every single thing that has been revealed.

Now in the close of this third chapter, when God has revealed not only His own self-existent Person to Moses, but His name in connection with this everlasting relationship to His people, He goes into details as He sends Moses. And look what wonderful competency Moses had placed as it were around him to carry this out. Think of all the wonderful things God had heaped upon him. He did not send him empty, or with sparse, scarce means, but fully equipped to carry out the work, “Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey.” And then God says to Moses, in order to assure him and certify his heart, “And they shall hearken to thy voice.”

But there is one thing more. God does not keep anything back. He says, “They shall hearken to thy voice”; but He also says, You must know beforehand, distinctly what you will have to incur; you will have a hard time with Pharaoh. But then, says God, “I will stretch out my hand”; and I will accomplish everything. O how blessed all these things are for our souls! It reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ in John 16. When He was going away, He says to His disciples, I will tell you everything; you will be excommunicated out of decent society, you will not be tolerated, “they shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service; and these things will they do unto you because they know not the Father, nor me.” He says, I will not keep it back from you, I will tell you the whole thing now; while I was with you I did not tell you, but now I am going away I will tell you. And God says in Ex. 3, “Pharaoh will not let you go; but I will stretch out my hand.” He says, “They shall hearken to thy voice.”

May the Lord, by His grace, fortify our hearts with these grand principles, because they are grand principles, and show, not only how God plans, and purposes, and works Himself for the accomplishment of His purposes, and bears with the slowness of a Moses and of ourselves, but also the wonderful way in which God sustains, and how the grace of His heart goes on until He makes good everything. Well might Balaam say, though it was acompelled prophecy from his lips, “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he
spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob -- Jacob again, look; even though he be Jacob, still he is the beloved of God -- “neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time” -- after all the wilderness trials and difficulties are over, and Israel proved to be a failing people in them -- “according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!”

The Lord, in His grace, give our hearts to take in the wonders of such communications as these, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 3:
Exodus 5:1, 2, 22, 23; 6:1-9

We were looking last week at the way in which God was pleased to fit His instrument of deliverance, Moses, who was the savior of that people whom God had raised up to carry out His own purposes with respect to them, how God took him in hand and dealt with him in long-suffering goodness, bore in great patience with his slowness, and backwardness, and self-will, and want of faith and confidence in God. But now there is a further step. After God had passed ‘His servant through the necessary qualification for the work that He had for him to do, He sends him directly into Pharaoh’s presence, as we have read to-night. Moses and Aaron, Aaron being given to Moses as a kind of spokesman, to share the burden with him, go directly into the presence of the monarch with this claim of God on their lips, “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

But before that, in the last verse of Ex. 4, there is one of the most striking and touching scriptures in the whole of this history. When Moses and Aaron go to the people, and tell them what God’s thoughts about them were, announce to them the purpose of the deliverance of God, the whole heart of the nation is touched, as it were, bowed under the prospect of deliverance. Under the sense of the delivering grace of God, “they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

And this was a direct contradiction to the want of faith in Moses, because what he had said was, “They will not hear me; they will not listen to me.” But would they listen to God? would they hear what God said? These servants of God announce to the nation that God had visited them. And I called your attention last week to the way God; as it were, takes up the faith of His servant Joseph as he passed off this scene. For these were Joseph’s dying words, “Behold, I die, but God will surely visit you.” His faith went on and grasped in prospect the promise of God. And now God takes up this word and puts it into the mouth of Moses so long afterwards, and sends him with, as it were, this echo from the death-bed of Joseph, for God was visiting His people; and the moment the people heard it, they bowed their heads and worshiped. It was not a question of believing man, but they believed God, their ears were opened to God.

And this is a thing of the greatest moment for us. For a servant of God may be a little too prominent in his own eyes. They will not listen to me, says Moses. But will they listen to God? that is the point. What a blessed thing it is to forget oneself, and to be behind Christ, as it were, to be behind God. And it is this retirement we ought to seek, that God may be prominent.

I was greatly struck in reading in the Acts, lately, the account of the dealing of God with the Gentiles, when they were taken up and God’s mercy reached them. Paul and Barnabas were specially the servants of God in that wonderful bringing in of the Gentiles into blessing; and when they are challenged by the Judaizers of that day with regard to it, they come and announce to the assembled council at Jerusalem what had taken place; and it is very striking that they do not say what they had done. Now, I say, affectionately, that there is a great deal too much of that. But they say what God had done; they do not talk about their preaching or ministry; that is not what is uppermost in their thoughts; but they do announce what God had done. If they bring themselves in, it is always what God had wrought through them, not what they had wrought by the power of God; because, I suppose, there is no servant of Christ but would say whatever he did, he did by the power of God -- but still, if people talk like that, it is you that did it; but if God does it, what a different thing that is! And you will find that order carefully preserved in this book of the Acts of the Holy Ghost, as it really is, giving it a specific character -- they declare what God had wrought. No doubt He was pleased to do it through them, but still, He was the doer of it. And what is prominent there, is the arm and the power that was effectsing His own purpose, and not the instrument through which He did it. Now I have no doubt at all, that poor Moses here was prominent in His own mind. “They will not believe me,” he says to God. But when he comes to them and announces the fact that God had thought of them, and had visited them, and had come down to deliver them, and that it was about to be effectuated, the people accept the testimony of God, and bowed their heads. And I think it is a most affecting thing to see a whole nation touched with the sense of the sovereign favor that thought of them in the bitterness of their bondage, and had come down in wondrous goodness to take them out of it.

Then, as soon as ever the servants have delivered the message to the Lord’s people, they announce it to the one who was the means of keeping the people in the bondage of Egypt. And I believe Pharaoh, here, is really, in figure, Satan, that keeps in bondage and distance from God His chosen. Just as I believe, afterwards, Amalek is Satan to interrupt the progress of the people of God through the wilderness. But here it is the power of bondage, and you know what Satan’s power is in that way. So Pharaoh held them fast in his grip. And Moses comes in now as the vessel of God’s power with the announcement of the purpose and claim of God, “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that
they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.” Now, beloved friends, that is very blessed; because you get not only the fact of the announcement here, but also the scope of God’s purpose. And that is a great point. The purpose of God with regard to His people is to take them absolutely and positively out from Egypt to Himself. Let them go, He says; they must be entirely and completely out from Egypt to hold a feast to me. As long as ever they were in the bondage of Egypt, they were bound to think of themselves. The very shackles that were upon them, the very pressure that was upon their spirits, the very taskmaster’s lash that was over them, of necessity, kept the people occupied with themselves. They could not think of God in Egypt; nobody thinks of God in Egypt. You must “be out of Egypt to think of God; and therefore He says, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.” You could not hold a feast to God in Egypt. People think they can. But you never could make God an object in Egypt, because you are not free. Remember, I am not speaking of experience at all. It matters not what experience you have, however wonderful, or deep, or blessed, you must have objectively in your soul, by faith, the knowledge of redemption, before you can have anything of real true experience. And there is a danger of the whole thing being reversed, and instead of the freedom and power of redemption known in people’s souls, which is the great spring of everything, the attempt is to begin the other way, and it is ruinous to the soul. I say, you cannot be occupied with God, you cannot make an object of God, you cannot hold a feast to God, you cannot have Him simply before your soul until you are out from Egypt. Are you out from Egypt? I do not ask you what feelings you have, but do you know redemption? People think that is a very curious question to ask. I do not ask, Do you know forgiveness? though forgiveness is part of redemption. Many a person knows forgiveness who does not know redemption. If you know redemption, you know this, not merely that you have got forgiveness of the sins that pressed upon your conscience, but that you are clean out from the whole power that held you, and brought to God. Now, that is not a question of experience at all, but a question of faith. You will pardon me now for going a little into what is called the fundamental, for I believe it is the fundamental that is wanting. It is faith in a fact, not in a theory, or in a sentiment or in an experience, but faith in a fact, and a fact too, that does not receive any addition by your believing it, and nothing is detracted from it by your not believing it. This redemption is a thing wrought between God and Christ, and we had no part nor share in it at all, except the miserable wretched selves and sins that were all disposed of then.

Now you have the scope of the purposes of God insisted upon here in the beginning of Ex. 5. “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.” I want to have them out, and I must have the three days’ journey between My people and Egypt. Why? Because that is exactly death and resurrection. There must, as it were, be death and resurrection between My people and the house of bondage, before they can be free to hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

Now there are two things I would like to call your attention to in connection with this. You will find the greatest possible weakness on the part of God’s people, even in the presence of the manifestation of His grace; and weakness in the servant too; and you will find solemn wickedness in Pharaoh, typical, no doubt, of the wickedness of the power of Satan. Pharaoh says, “I know not Jehovah, neither will I let the people go.” And when you look at the people, the announcement of the purpose of God stirred up all the power of the enemy, and Pharaoh puts harder pressure upon them. Just as Satan does now. If he sees that there is the probability of a person being rescued from his power, then he increases the bondage, and makes it more difficult and more hard. If a person is entirely and willingly the dupe of Satan, he gives him an easy time, “When a strong man, armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.” He does not torment the world, he makes it easy for them. But when it is a question of the delivering power of God going forth to a person, then you find all the power of the enemy put forth. Here Pharaoh says, “I will not let them go,” I do not know the Lord; why do you announce that word to me? I mean to keep them, and I will make it harder for them now, as you have caused this interruption; they are idle, and I will increase the task, and make the burdens heavier. And then you see the weakness of the people; they do not listen to Moses for cruel bondage. And Moses gets restive under it, and goes to God, and says, Why have you afflicted this people? and why have you sent me? Ever since I came in to speak to this people, evil has happened to them, and you have not delivered them at all.

Beloved friends, there is not one of us that would endure that for half-an-hour. But O the wonderful patience of our God! See how longsuffering He is with His servant in the opening of Ex. 6, how He bears with the weakness of His poor vessel; there is no chiding, not a word of rebuke. Such a speech as that from Moses to God might well call forth the bitterest rebuke from God; but there is not a word of that. He does not say, You have forgotten yourself; you have forgotten whose presence you are in, whom you have spoken to, and what is becoming the dignity of the mighty God. But what He says is this, “Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand I will bring them out.” And then there is again the most magnificent unfolding of His mighty name. I was not known, He says, to the patriarchs, by My name Jehovah, I was known to them as God Almighty. Their knowledge of God never went beyond that revelation, because the revelation of God’s name defines the position of the persons to whom the revelation was made, and the knowledge they have of Him for the time being. Thus Abraham, blessed man as he was, his knowledge of God never went beyond God Almighty. He was known by the name of El-Shaddai; now there is another name. By my name Jehovah, which is the name of covenant relationship, I reveal myself now to you and to Israel my people; I am Jehovah, and I have taken that people into relationship with myself; I have made a covenant with them, and that name implies the covenant. I am Jehovah,
and I will take you out from the bondage of Pharaoh, and I will take you to me, and I will bring you into the land, and I will remember my covenant, He says. O, beloved friends! it is wonderful to see how God stills the risings of the storm in the heart of Moses by opening out all these wonderful things that are connected with Himself -- I will bring you out, I will emancipate you, I will extricate you, and I will bring you to myself, I will bring you into the land I promised you. There is the wonderful way that He meets the unbelief of a Moses, and the unbecoming nature of his address to God in the end of chapter 5 by the most exquisite manifestation of sovereign goodness and divine grace.

Now there is another thing to which I will call your attention, which will finish this part of our subject, before we come to what is really the first part of redemption, viz., the passover in Ex. 12. Before Pharaoh felt the power of God dealing with him, he refused to let the people go. I do not go into the detail of it, but we have the dealings of God with Pharaoh, and with his land in the various plagues that were sent upon them. And directly

Pharaoh began to feel the power of God touching him, the open opposition, and the avowed refusal to let the people go, is given up, and stratagem takes the place of opposition. Now, that is always the way with Satan. First it is refusal; then, when God’s power is felt, wiles. There are four distinct wiles of the devil, whom Pharaoh represents here, by which he seeks to frustrate the purposes of God, and accomplish his own purposes. The first is in Ex. 8. First of all it is, You shall not go. Now he says, You must hold a feast in Egypt, go and sacrifice to God in the land. It is very important to see how all these things work. I will put no restriction upon you, he says, with regard to your offering sacrifices or holding this feast; you may go and do that, but you must do it in my territory, you must do it in Egypt. And, beloved friends, that is what Christendom is doing at the present moment. The attempt of Christendom is to make an object of God in Egypt. The whole principle of Christendom is short of death and resurrection. And therefore they fall under this first wile of Pharaoh.

I think it is a terribly solemn thing to see how many people there are who profess the name of Christ, who take His name upon them, and who positively are citizens of this world on principle -- I do not mean by failure now, but on principle. That is to say, their avowed principle is to remain in the world, connected with the world, to receive honor from the world, and take status in the world, in the hope of so doing good. That is the common principle of the day. And one of the favorite figures is, that just as the leaven was put into the meal and wrought until the whole was leavened, so people are to be in this world, which is Egypt in that sense, and to be the leaven in the world, to assimilate the world to themselves. That is in principle the first wile of Satan. He says, You may go and worship God, and have your religion, but you must have it in Egypt.

Now the answer of Moses to this is very distinct, and that servant of God rises, for the first time, to the thoughts and purposes of God, and meets it by a distinct and positive refusal. He says. I absolutely refuse to have anything to do with holding a feast to God as long as we are within the territory of Pharaoh’s power; we must be outside. And he adds very aptly and very properly, “we should sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians.”

The second wile is also in Ex. 8, and it is this. When Pharaoh was made to give up that opposition by the pressure of the hand of God upon him, then he says, “I will let you go . . . only ye shall not go very far away.” Now what a wonderful principle that is! The break must not be absolute. That suits a time-serving age, a half-and-half sort of thing, a little bit of God and a great piece of the world. You must not go very far away, he says. You must be sufficiently near to keep you in touch with Egypt. And yielding to that sort of compromise, giving in to that half-and-half sort of thing, has been the moral destruction of the saints of God. That is not a clean break; it is going, but still there is a sort of hold that keeps you; you are within sight of the territory, you are still within the region of the bondage, you are not far away, you are near. Still, the faith of Moses rises up to refuse that too. Moses insists on it that there must be a clean break. Then Pharaoh refuses again, and the hand of God touches him again.

Now we come to the third wile in Ex. 10. Compelled to yield again under the power of God, Pharaoh says, “Go now, ye that are men, but,” he says, as it were, “you must not have your little ones, you must leave your children behind.” That was a very deep, dark, designing plot of Pharaoh. He knew right well that if he could retain the children in Egypt, he would keep the people’s hearts there. You see the deep design of it, the children, the little ones, in Egypt, and the people in the desert. You may well say that was a terrible thing, God, in His infinite mercy, grant that we may not do that on principle, because that is very often done on principle. You say, “Oh! but you know I cannot alter the heart of my child, I can only leave my child there, I can only wait until God in His infinite mercy, comes in and acts for my child.” Well, that is simply playing into the hands of the devil. I do not deny or question for an instant, that you cannot alter or touch the heart of your child, I perfectly admit that; but you need not leave your child in Egypt, at any rate. Because I cannot touch the heart or move the affections of my child, am I to leave my child in Egypt? Never, through God’s grace; never for a moment.

And as that was the design of Pharaoh in those days, so you will find the same thing in after years in Num. 32, when it was a question of the land. There the two tribes and a half come to Moses, and say, “We have got cattle, and the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead is a land for cattle; the pasturage is rich, the locality is inviting, we are herdsmen with abundance of cattle, and there is the very place for us; do let us have our possession here, do not let us cross Jordan, do not let us get the other side of death and resurrection.” That
was the awful sin of the two tribes and a half, that they wanted a resting-place short of the place that was the purpose of God. Well, says Moses to them, if you choose to take your place there, you cannot sever yourselves from the conflicts of your brethren, and you must at any rate cross the Jordan. If you want to have this place for your resting-place, leave your wives and your little ones. And they are all left in this region, which really was not the true side of Jordan for them, while the men had to go over and fight the battles and join in the conflicts of their brethren. But mark, they left their hearts behind them, in the region that was not God's territory, and there was where the link was. They were linked with the region that was not the country in the purpose of God for Israel; they simply went over to take their part in conflict with their brethren; and when the conflict was over, they came back to possess the territory that was not in the purposes of God at all. It is the same thing exactly there. And oh! what a terrible thing, what a snare it is when one's mind goes over it; and that is how God has spoken to us in scripture with regard to this kind of thing. You cannot read of a David's lamentation over an Absalom, or of the stricken heart of an Aaron over the death of his two sons, stricken down before the Lord, nor the lamentation of a Jacob over Simeon and Levi, without feeling the solemnity of all this. And there is the thing that speaks to us, that the children are positively left, on principle, in Egypt, brought up for Egypt, educated for the thing that speaks to us, that the children are positively left, place there, you cannot sever yourselves from the interests of God. Well, says Moses to them, if you choose to take your resting-place short of the place that was the purpose of God at all. It is the same thing exactly there. And oh! what a terrible thing, what a snare it is when one's mind goes over it; and that is how God has spoken to us in scripture with regard to this kind of thing. You cannot read of a David's lamentation over an Absalom, or of the stricken heart of an Aaron over the death of his two sons, stricken down before the Lord, nor the lamentation of a Jacob over Simeon and Levi, without feeling the solemnity of all this. And there is the thing that speaks to us, that the children are positively left, on principle, in Egypt, brought up for Egypt, educated for Egypt, every thing of Egyptian ways, manner, habit, custom, all cultivated about them, and the parents, forsooth, professedly taking the place of being pilgrims and strangers in the desert. And there is nothing I know, that has such a solemn effect at the present moment as this vile of Satan. I do not know any sadder sight than to see this vile accepted and taken up on principle by heads of households. I speak affectionately to fathers and mothers, who deliberately, on principle, dissociate the interests of their children from themselves. That is what I am speaking of now, not of failure and want of confidence in God. That is a trying thing enough, and we are all liable to it, even suppose our principles are the best, because we have to carry the principles out in faith in God and dependence on His Spirit; and I quite admit that right principles of themselves are not sufficient. But what I earnestly seek to press upon you is, that there should be true principles, and I say, No, through God's grace, I will not content myself by saying, My children are there in Egypt, and I will leave them there, because I cannot move them or touch them -- never!

I think it is a wonderful word that God said of Abraham, and a wonderful word that was said to Rahab, and you get the principle in both. God said,

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing that I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation?
For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.

I know that Abraham will not dissever the interests of his children from himself in principle --

I trust that man, that on principle he will maintain for his children what he maintains for himself. Remember results are not yours and mine at all. I am, through God's mercy and grace, a preacher of His gospel -- do you think I am responsible for results? I am responsible to preach Christ, but not for what follows, not for the number of people that are converted or saved -- that is God's power. So I say to parents, You are responsible not to sever the interests of your children from your own, and you are responsible to maintain the headship of your family.

I have often thought of the wonderful words said to Rahab. You know she acted in faith towards the men that were spying out the land, and they say to her, We will be clear of this our oath; you take the scarlet thread and bind it in the window, and they said, "Thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee"; that is to say, she is taken as an illustration of headship -- you bring them there, you ally their interests with yours, and it is all well. Oh, may God, by His grace, give you to see the weighty principle that is in that. The very snare exposed here shows the importance of the subject; the very wile that Pharaoh uses in order to detain the people in bondage, to keep them in the land of Egypt, by having power over their little ones, shows you what it is.

Well, the last snare is in Ex. 10 too. Again feeling the pressure of God's hand, Pharaoh says, I will let you go, and your children shall go too; but, he says, your flocks and herds must not go. Now what do you think is the meaning of that? There is a great deal in it. We say, God would not have them go resourceless, or empty-handed, or shorn of what they possessed. I am sure that is true, but I think there is more than that in it. There was a deep design of Satan, which Pharaoh really is, in saying the flocks and herds were to be left behind. And I have no doubt at all that what really lies at the root of it was, that they were to go out into the desert, without the means, when they were there, of sacrificing to God. When they were out there, in the enjoyment of the liberty that God had brought them into, they were to be shorn and destitute of the very means by which God was approached in those days; that is to say, it is a death-thrust at the great truth of sacrifice as the means of drawing near to God. I have no doubt that is one reason why he said, You must leave your cattle, your flocks, and your herds. It is exactly what we find to-day; and though I greatly dislike bringing a subject of this kind before Christians, still one has to remember that we are part and parcel of the professing church of God, and it is well to know exactly what we have to meet, and it is all round about us. I often feel that, perhaps, we live too far away from all that goes on, and it is a great loss to us. You cannot dissociate yourself from the responsibility of the church as a whole; there is surely loss in your soul if you do. often think, when people speak of the failure and ruin, that they are not
thinking of the ruin of the church of God, of that beautiful thing that was set up at the first here in this world; they are thinking of something less. Now I feel increasingly what a solemn thing is the failure and departure of the church as a whole from the truth of God. And the very thing that is creeping in rapidly at this present moment is just this, you may have Christ’s life down here in this world, blessed, precious life as it was, and all His blessed beautiful example, and manipulate it into every kind of thing you please, but the devil will rob you of a Christ that underwent the judgment of God due to sin if he possibly can. That is what is pointed out by the flocks and the herds. In other words, they were to go out into the wilderness without Christ, because the flocks and the herds for sacrifice were the appointed means of drawing near to God in those days. We have been brought to God through sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and only on that ground could any be brought to God. God forbid one should say a word that would leave even a passing impression upon any mind that one did not adoringly value the blessed life of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth. Never was there such a wonderful path, such wonderful grace, such wondrous love as was displayed by Him all those years, but that, blessed as it is, could never bring us to God. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (John 12:24). He was alone, alone in His blessedness, alone in His perfection, alone in His beauty, alone in His path here; and He might have remained alone, for not one could be brought to God save by the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the judgment of a holy God met in that death, and the bearing of sin. And that is the very thing that is attempted to be set aside at the present moment. And in this is the blessedness of God’s word, we see how the principles of God’s word come out here, what a wonderful book the Bible is, how things in it all through, from the very commencement, bear upon the present moment. Here is a book that was written hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and yet the same design of the devil, the same contrivances by which he is working at the present moment to destroy the unity and integrity of the truth, are all presented in picture in the Old Testament, and the whole thing depicted for us in the NT.

Once more Moses meets this with a positive refusal. Our flocks and our herds, as well as our little ones, must go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; we will not leave one single thing that belongs to us in Egypt; so far from leaving our children there, we will not leave our cattle there -- not a hoof.

And then there is one other principle of the deepest importance here. He says, We do not know what we shall have to sacrifice to God before we can tell what God will require from us on that ground. Because all responsibility flows from relationship, from the position we are set in before God. And that is what makes it so important to maintain and press position. There is great danger in constantly pressing responsibility apart from this. I do not want to make little of it, but I always feel, when I am pressing position, that I am increasing responsibility, I am putting the very soul and marrow, as it were, into it. If I say, You are brought to God Himself in the full redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, brought clean out of Egypt, and brought to Him, and here set down before Him in all the fulness and efficacy of that redemption, if your soul gets the sense of that in faith, you will say, oh! how responsible I am. And you do not begin to think of it in a legal way. Whereas, if responsibility of itself is pressed, people become legalists, and seek to fulfil their responsibility as in law, and they never get a proper sense of their responsibility on that ground; because it is the position, the place, I am brought into, and the relationship I am set in before God, that defines, and increases, and quickens, and energizes my responsibility.

Take an illustration of it. Suppose you were to take a poor, little, wretched, desolate Arab boy off the streets of London, and say to him, My boy, I want you to live like a prince. Prince, indeed! a poor, destitute, miserable beggar a prince! There would be no sense in it. You want him to live like what he is not. Your conceptions may be very grand; the idea in your thoughts may be very wonderful; you may have a marvelous scope before your mind; but you have got no leverage power to reach that poor little waif. But suppose you take him, and say, “The Queen of this realm has been pleased, in the exercise of her own gracious sovereignty, to put you into a position of the most wonderful nearness to herself, and to her throne”; you put the ground under his feet at once, you have given him the emolument, the dignity, the place, the power, and there at once you define the responsibility that belongs to him.

Now that is a very feeble illustration, but it is an illustration, of the manner in which God has acted towards us in His grace. And I am certain of it, and I am responsible to God for saying it to you, that the true way to increase responsibility is to press privilege. Nothing else will ever give us a sense of the importance of the claims of God upon us -- claims, not in law, but in grace -- (I hope you will understand how I use the word) save knowing in our very souls from the scripture the marvelous, blessed way that God has abounded toward us. He has brought us to Himself, done it by the sacrifice of His own Son, and by the complete overthrow of every hostile power, as you get in Ex. 6, “I will take you to me for a people.” O beloved brethren, just get the sense of that, “I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God.” It is the very thing the apostle says in 2 Cor. 6, when he combines in that chapter all the names by which God was pleased to reveal Himself in former times, and says, “Wherefore, come out from among them,” that is, the worldly, “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.” Father, now is the name expressive of the revelation of God in Christianity, and you get in that chapter
El-Shaddai, and Jehovah; “I will be to you a Father” -- He puts that first “and ye shall be my sons and daughters. saith the Lord Almighty “; Father, El-Shaddai, Jehovah. Now, beloved friends, that is a wonderful reality, and you may depend upon it, it will not land you in spiritual bankruptcy, which must be the result of getting my mind full of doing this, or that, or the other, and of the claim of this or that upon me -- that, I say, will land us in the bankrupt court spiritually -- and that is where numbers of people have a tendency to drift. Whereas, if you think of the blessedness of the grace of God that has abounded towards us, and brought us to Himself, and set us down in the fulness of it -- (the Lord, in His grace, give our hearts a better sense of it) -- instead of lessening the practice, it will, through His grace, increase it, and give it power and force.

May God apply His word (for He alone can do it). and make our hearts sensible of the grace of God that makes these communications to us, for His blessed name’ sake!

Chapter 4:
Exodus 12:2

There is a striking analogy, beloved friends, between the announcement that God has given in His word of coming judgment, and the message which Moses was directed to convey from God to the children of Israel with relation to the scene that is described in this chapter. I have only read one verse of it, because I have no doubt that we are familiar with the details of the history. In the previous chapter, there are three great solemn marks of the event that was coming. For God says to Moses, “one plague more, then another word defines the time of the stroke, “midnight”; and then you will find another expression (though I only just indicate it, so that you may be induced to read it for yourselves) which is the great foundation of the whole thing, “The Lord doth put a difference between you and the Egyptians.”

Now those three things in Ex. 11 give a very distinct character, and put a very plain and evident mark upon what was coming. God announced them to His servants, and when we come to chapter 12, where the detail is given with regard to the announcement of judgment and the provision of God’s grace to meet it, there is a dignity and a quietness in the whole thing which is very remarkable; there is no sensation or stir of any sort. No one can read Ex. 12 without being struck with the quiet, dignified manner in which the announcement of the most awful blow that ever fell upon a nation and a country is given by God. And, beloved friends, there is this about it too, that makes it so striking, that it is exactly what we are told with regard to this world -- that the midnight of judgment is approaching, and that the evening before the midnight is the time to prepare for the blow, that is the time to avail ourselves of the provision which God has made, and which God has revealed in His grace too, with regard to the impending stroke. When the midnight comes, the time of preparation is over -- it is the time before that is of all importance. And that is the word that receives such distinctness all through -- “At midnight I will pass through the land of Egypt.”

And it is equally solemn whether you take the midnight to refer to judgment itself, or to that which, to all intents and purposes, will leave this world exposed to judgment. For the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in the NT of His coming as at the midnight hour, that is to say, that the time when men are least looking out for the approach of the dreaded invasion is the time it comes. And the Lord has threatened the responsible church in its failing history with the judgment of the world. You remember how He says to Sardis in the book of Revelation, “I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Now all that is brought into this history here. God was about to strike a blow. God is a judge all through these chapters, and it is important to lay hold of that. Their knowledge of Him does not get beyond the fact that He is a judge -- appealed, I admit, but a judge for all that; sheltered they were, I fully own, but sheltered from the judge. He is not yet a deliverer. The deliverance is connected with what we have here to make up one redemption; that is to say, there are two parts in redemption -- what we have in Ex. 12, and what we have in Ex. 14, and both these go together to make up one redemption. There is the blood that sheltered the people in the land of Egypt, when God passed through the land as a judge. Then, connected with that afterwards, there is the outstretched hand of God as a deliverer, who now intervenes in power to emancipate His people out of the house of bondage, and from the thraldom of Egypt for ever. But both these must go together; and, therefore, when we come to speak about the Red Sea (though I must not anticipate it now) and what God effected there, and the manifestation and display of His mighty power in it, there is combined with that, in order to make up the picture of redemption, the blood of the Passover lamb upon the lintel and two side posts of the houses. And this, in a certain sense, has a deeper aspect and a more solemn side even than the open waters of the Red Sea. We shall see that presently.

It is a very large subject, and one desires to condense it as far as possible, so that you may carry away the great salient points with you. But there are three great things that come before us in connection with this history. First of all, the people enter upon a new phase altogether of their history. There is a totally new period entered upon here; and that is the reason why God says to them in chapter 12, that this month was to be to them the beginning of months, it was to be the first month of the year. I need not say that, historically and literally, there was nothing new about it; but there is a moral newness in it. They began their moral history with God now; it was a new start, as we call it. They date anew, not their old historical dates, not their old years, so to speak, but now they begin positively to date in God’s reckoning. From this moment “this month shall be to you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you.” Why
was this? What was it, beloved friends, which really gave this new character to the people in their relationship with God? Why it is exactly what you find unfolded immediately afterwards. Almost in the very next sentence God begins to say, “You shall take a lamb.” Now everything was round that lamb, as far as God’s thoughts were concerned. The taking of this lamb was God’s own appointed and revealed provision. So that you have not merely the revelation of judgment, that occupies Ex. 11, which is the revelation of the stroke that was about to fall, the revelation of the crash that was about to come, the revelation of the judge, the revelation that God was about to pass through the land, and that God would raise that question with regard to every soul, whether it was an Israelite or whether it was an Egyptian; for if the judge goes through the land, the question is raised with everyone as to the meeting with that judge. No doubt Israel were God’s chosen, elect people, and God had looked upon them, and thought of them in His love; but still, if God goes through the land in judgment, the question is raised with regard to every soul. Now, beloved friends, that is a very important thing, because it gives your soul at once, through grace, if you lay hold of it, meeting with that judge. No doubt Israel were God’s chosen, elect people, and God had looked upon them, and thought of them in His love; but still, if God goes through the land in judgment, the question is raised with regard to every soul.

Now you have two things that ought to be simple to every soul here. You may, perhaps, wonder why they are pressed; but one increasingly finds it is the things at the bottom that are unstable in people’s souls, that people are a great deal better versed, somehow or other, in the things that come after the foundation, than they are in the things that are in the foundation; and the consequence is, that they break down in those things that are excellent, because there is not a proper basis on which they rest. There is the revelation of judgment -- but mark, there is the revelation of the answer to it. And that is the reason why everything was now new; in Ex. 12, their history begins anew. As far as I am acquainted with it, there never had been a sacrifice like this ordered of God before. I am perfectly aware that Abel brought a lamb, but I am not aware of any place where God told him to bring a lamb; and he brought the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, and offered it in faith too. But here it was an appointed lamb. God specifically directed that the lamb should be taken; and the kind of lamb, and everything about it, was new. In every sense of the word, it was a new sacrifice; the concomitants of it were all new, the place in which it was to be offered was new too; it was a new idea that there should be such a thing as a lamb taken in Egypt. They were in Egypt; God spoke in Egypt; this thing was to be done in Egypt, the lamb was to be selected in Egypt, slain in Egypt, the blood caught in Egypt, and sprinkled upon the lintel and two side posts in Egypt. And they were to eat it after a new fashion; and there were not only new concomitants about the eating of it, but the very attitude they were in was all new, the whole thing new. That is the first thing I press upon you to-night, the whole thing new. This is the new start in their national history, and that is the reason why this month gets the dignity of being the first month. And if you were to ask, What was it? in one word it was this, they are beginning with God now, and God is beginning with them; that is what gives it this character. He thought of them before, He pitied then before, He looked upon their burdens before, He sent His servants before, He announced the promise of redemption before, and told them what He was about to do before; now He is positively beginning Himself. It was the intimation of good things to come before, now the time had arrived.

Well, now, that is very blessed if we take it out of type for a moment, because it exactly sets before us what is true of ourselves now. That is where we begin our history -- I do not say it is where we end it -- but that is where we begin our history in connection with God’s Lamb. That is where every soul begins its history. If there is a person in this room to-night, who has not begun with Christ, God’s Lamb, you have not begun your history yet, you have not made a start yet. The lamb, of course, was the type of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hence everything about it was designed to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the first great point that comes before us in this chapter, in this aspect of redemption.

Now look at the second for a moment. Not only was there the revelation of the lamb as that which alone could meet the claims of God in holiness and truth, and meet Him in His character as Judge, but you find another thing, that this lamb was be slain. Now, I quite admit that people speak about Christ, and there is a kind of sentiment with regard to Christ, and they talk about “no one but Christ”; at the present moment there is an immensity of that kind of thing; but it is an entirely different thing when you have to do with a Christ who was sacrificed, whose death was an absolute necessity, a crucified and dying Christ on whom the judgment of God fell because of our sin. And one has to insist upon that in these days. It is a very humbling, solemn thing when you think of it, that this is the truth the devil is trying to destroy now in Christendom. I was saying to you last week, that this was really at the root of Satan’s wile, to keep the cattle from going out with the people. When Pharaoh was beaten off every point, he says at the last, “You may go, but you must not take your cattle.” And I do not believe that it was merely that they should go out resourceless -- I have no doubt it was partly that -- but they were to go out without the divinely appointed means of having to do with God by sacrifice. It was a thrust at sacrifice, it was an attempt to destroy the only righteous way by which a sinner could approach God. That is reason why he wanted to keep the cattle back. And to-day, people say, Oh! may approach God, you may go to God. God
is merciful, God is kind, God is good, and Christ was so tender, so gracious. And the life of Christ is spoken of -- His blessed wonderful life down here in this world, how kind, and gentle, and patient, and gracious He was. I admit it, beloved friends, but I say, with all reverence to-night, and with the whole strength of my soul, not all the spotlessness of His life, not all the marvelous, wonderful thirty-three years that He passed in this world, and there was none -- none like Him -- not all of it, could meet the claims of God in holiness. Nothing but His blood, nothing but the sacrificial death and atonement of One who was God, but became man that He might do this, could satisfy the righteous and holy claims of God. And that is the reason why you have the blood brought in here, the death; it was not merely the lamb, but the death of the lamb. And that is the great central figure in the whole of God's revelation; it is as the little hymn says, the Center of two eternities, it is around that everything revolves; that is the pivot upon which everything turns, both as to God's glory, and as to the eternal blessing and eternal emancipation of every soul that has to do with God. And outside of that, there is nothing.

Hence, you see, the very same revelation that unfolds the provision, insists upon every condition with regard to that provision. You shall kill the lamb, and more than that, you shall take of the blood that is in the bason. Now, I never read of the blood being caught and put apart for a purpose like this before. The blood was always spilled upon the ground, because it was the emblem of the life reverting to God, but I never read of it being reserved and put to a certain purpose like this.

There is another thing that was new about it, "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and two side posts." I do not want to be fanciful, but why "the lintel and two side posts," why is it not the two side posts and then the lintel, why the lintel first? I believe it was because the judgment was coming from above, it was judgment from God. "Ye shall strike the lintel and two side posts with the blood that is in the bason, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning, for the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians." There is the wonderful provision of God, and God's own pledge of security in connection with that provision.

Now it may appear very simple, but I am laboring to be simple. for I have a very intense pressure in my heart that it is the downright simple, earnest things people want. But I should like to bring one point before you to-night, in connection with this, because I know exactly what passes through people's minds concerning it.

I take two cases in this way. Here are two persons, Israelites, who have heard God's revealed way of shelter, who have heard the revelation of judgment and the announcement of what would meet it, and they have accepted it, and believed it, and have selected the lamb according to the divine arrangement; the lamb has been slain, and the blood has been taken and sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. And one of the Israelites, who has placed himself under the shelter of that blood, divinely, according to God's arrangement, goes into his house and sits down to feast upon the flesh of the lamb in quietness and at rest, so far as quietness and rest could be conceived in connection with the revelation of this truth, or as far as it can be so said. But here is another. He equally sprinkles the blood, he equally selects the lamb according to God's arrangement, strikes the lintel and two side posts, goes into his house, sits down in trepidation, dismay, terror, fear of every possible description. Which of these two is safer? I asked a person that question not very long ago, and a person who would be very angry if you did not give him the place of a Christian, and he said to me at once, without the smallest hesitation, of "course, the first." Beloved friends, do you not see what is involved in that? They were positively bringing into the shelter the feeling of the sheltered. I quite admit this is only shelter, I do not want to put into it more than God puts into it. It is not salvation, salvation is when they have changed the place altogether; but this is shelter, and shelter is a very essential part of salvation -- not the whole, nor the most blessed part of it, but the beginning, the first part of it, and everyone of us must have this shelter. But if you say that the person who is at rest in the shelter, whose mind is, so far, removed from any disturbance in the shelter, who can sit down and feed and feast upon the flesh of the lamb, whose blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts, that person is more safe than the person who is equally sheltered by the blood, and sits down to feed upon the flesh of the lamb in trepidation, do not you see that you are importing into the safety the sense of the security or shelter? And that is what a great many people are doing, and a great many more than we think. The real truth of the matter is, one is just as safe as the other; they are not both equally happy, I admit, but they are both equally safe, because what sheltered them both alike is what has met the claims of God, and that is the blood.

Now I will redeem my pledge which I made to you at the beginning. This is the reason why, in a certain sense, the Passover has a deeper aspect than even the Red Sea. The judgment of God was executed at the Red Sea, I perfectly admit, and a very fierce and solemn judgment of God too, and judgment overtook all the enemies of Israel and of God, no doubt of it. But in the Passover, it was a question of God's moral claims, and that is why it has a deeper aspect. May God, by His Spirit, give us to appreciate that side of it, because that is a wonderful side. In the Red Sea, God was acting in power for His people; and it was a blessed deliverance and wonderful overthrow of their enemies and extrication of Israel. But on the night of the Passover it was a deeper thing, it was a question of the moral claims of God, of what would meet God, of the vindication in righteousness of God's holy nature. He is a holy and righteous judge, and there must be complete and full satisfaction rendered; that is what is in the Passover. And what could do that? Nothing but the blood of Him who was a lamb without blemish and
without spot, His own Son who became a Man, and who willingly gave Himself to exhaust the judgment of a holy God, so that that judgment is as much, through grace, removed from us who deserved it as it is removed from Him now who in His grace undertook to bear it.

I was reading not very long ago, that very beautiful passage of scripture in ch. 9 of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle says, “But now once, in the consummation of the ages,” which is really, I believe, the meaning of it, that is, after all the ages had run their course, “hath He,” that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, “appeared for the putting away of sin,” by the sacrifice of Himself; 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 it is a very remarkable and interesting thing that in the Douay version of the scriptures, which is the Roman Catholic version, the word is translated “exhaust,” “Christ was once offered to exhaust the sins of many.” And the note which is given in the Douay version to explain this word “exhaust” is a very fine word, “that is,” says the writer of the note, “to empty, or draw out to the very bottom, by a plentiful and perfect redemption.” Now that is exactly what it is. The Lord Jesus Christ, by a full and plentiful satisfaction, exhausted the whole of God’s judgment, and God is perfectly vindicated, and further, is perfectly glorified. Thank God, we can say that now, because, of course, the fulness of the thing is but feebly presented in the type -- but that is what God has found in the cross -- a complete satisfaction for all His holy, righteous claims, and He has been as well perfectly glorified. O the blessedness of it! There is nothing in heaven or earth like it. It would be impossible to exaggerate the magnificence of it. See what an important thing it is to look at this great transaction as between God and Christ in all its objective blessedness, without importing into it any subjective state of ourselves at all. It was God who appointed the lamb, and directed the lamb to be slain; it was God who told them to sprinkle the blood on the lintel and the two side posts, and God said, not, “When you see the blood,” for they could not -- they were to go in and shut their doors, it would be positively contrary to the divine order to go out to see whether it was there or not -- He says, as it were, Close your door, and do not go out till the morning; it is not for you at all, it is for me, “When I see the blood.”

Some one has said, and it is perfectly true, that the great subject of Ex. 12 is, that death was everywhere, that there was not a house where there was not one dead; but there was this mighty difference, in the houses of the Israelites it was the death of God’s lamb, in the houses of the Egypt it was the death of the first-born. Death everywhere, judgment in the one, freedom from it and shelter in the other, for the blood was there.

Now there is one other thing, and it is very interesting too, that the blood was to be sprinkled with hyssop. What does that mean? I have been wondering, because I think one ought to avoid everything like sensationalism or sentimentality with regard to it, or driving things beyond their legitimate exposition; but surely there must be a meaning in it. Why was hyssop the plant that was selected by God, and that they should dip this hyssop in the blood and sprinkle it? What is hyssop? Well, there is another instance of it, and a very remarkable one too, in Num. 19. Hyssop there, is to be dipped in the water of purification, which was made out of the burning of the heifer. That chapter is the ordinance of the red heifer, as it is commonly called, and out of that ordinance there was made a purification for defilement or sin. Running water was mingled with the ashes of the heifer that had been burnt, the hyssop was dipped in that, and the person was sprinkled to be cleansed from his defilement. Here the Israelite, taking the hyssop, sprinkled the lintel and the two side posts. What is the meaning of hyssop then? I think there is a clue to it in Psa. 51, when David says, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” How could hyssop cleanse him? Well, I think that the cleansing there is moral cleansing, and that hyssop really is the symbol of humiliation; because, in the case of David, it was the departure from God of one who was in a certain relationship to Him, and when he was really humbled and broken in his soul about the thing, he was, in that sense, purified. It was through humiliation, and brokenness, and humbling, that God brought him into that moral condition before Himself. I think that is the reason why hyssop is employed in the other two instances; that it sets forth the broken and humiliated state of soul that is in consonance with this marvelous revelation of God’s shelter for poor wretched creatures like us; because it was the smallest and most insignificant thing, “the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” That is only in passing, but I think every word has its importance, and that one ought to seek to find out the meaning of each word as God conveys it to us.

That is the second point. The first was the new start with God, in the fact of their having to do with the lamb. The second thing we have been speaking of, is the judgment of God met by the lamb’s blood sprinkled.

And now we come to the third thing, and that is, that they have to feed and feast inside on the flesh of the lamb, whose blood had secured their shelter outside. The blood outside for God, the flesh of the lamb inside for Israel, that is to say, in figure, it conveyed the fact of communion with God. I do not mean to say that they had communion, but, in the interpretation of it, we have communion with God about Him whose blood has sheltered us from God’s judgment. The flesh of the victim was, as it were, partaken of by them, symbolical of common thoughts between the soul and God. As we have come into Christianity, we can understand what the meaning of things in the OT is which they did not understand; but we understand now what communion is.

But more important than that even, in connection with this third point, is what I want really to fix your mind upon, that is, the adjuncts, the accompaniments of this feast, and the manner of it, because that sets forth exactly what becomes us now. He says, You shall eat the flesh that night roast with
fire. What is the meaning of that? Well, fire is always in scripture emblematical of the judgment of God; that is to say, the flesh of the lamb which they partook of inside the house, was the lamb on which judgment fell. Judgment had overtaken the lamb; it had met the judgment, the fire had done its work, and they were to feed upon the flesh of a victim on which fire had fully and completely played. You shall eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire. Beloved friends, that is a very important thing for our souls: the One that we feed on is the One that has gone through death. You remember how the Lord Jesus Christ Himself sets before us the fact in John 6,

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;

unless you appropriate to the need of your soul a Christ that has died, you have no life, because eating His flesh and drinking His blood is appropriating His death to the needs of your soul; it is the symbol of His death, it is not the Lord’s supper. Do not be deceived about it. People think, when they read John 6, it is the Lord’s supper. I will give you a very simple reason why it cannot be. If that were the Lord’s supper, every one that ate the Lord’s supper would have eternal life, because the Lord Jesus Christ says, “Every one that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” So it cannot be that. But it is appropriating to the needs of my soul a Savior that has passed through death, and I have life through His death: that is the meaning of it.

Then there is another thing of the deepest moment in connection with it. It is not only that my needs are thus met in that way, but there is the constant supply of my soul in feeding upon Him. And hence it goes on to say, “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him” -- that is communion, this is the way that the life we have from and in Him is supported, and fed, and sustained. It is the constant feeding for the support of life, it is the constant eating. Further, whosoever has done it, has appropriated to the needs of his soul a Christ who has died, has eternal life once for all. But then the life needs support, and Christ, who is my life, and through whose death I have life, is the food of my soul. And unless I am feeding upon Christ, and taking Him in for the needs of the life I have in Him must be sickly and feeble. And there is the real secret of the state many a child of God is in, the life is not fed, there is no feeding upon Christ, there is no sustenance, no vigor, he is sickly. I cannot say life is not there, but the man is not in vigor. It is like a person who is alive, but who is feeble and sickly, and poor, and unable to perform his duty, because he is not sustained. It is this sustainment I press upon you, for it is a very important subject. We need this sustainment and support. There is no such thing as power without it; one cannot conceive it. The very principle of our life is to be fed and supported, and Christ is the sustainment of it. The feeding upon Him in that continuous way in which it is presented in this scripture, is the means by which we are invigorated, and strengthened, sustained, and supported, and enabled to perform the functions of life.

Now the lamb’s flesh, upon which they fed in Egypt, on the night of the shelter, was roast with fire. But mark, there is a distinct communication put to something else, “Eat not of it raw.” What is that? It simply means this -- that it must have undergone the action of fire, that there must have been what fire signifies; death must have taken place, it must be Christ’s death, the death of the lamb, the fire must have done its work -- in scripture, fire is always the judgment of God -- the lamb’s flesh must have been subjected to the action of the judgment of God, and that was the only way in which they could it. “Eat not of it raw.” Now Popery answers to “raw,” the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, so called, that is a raw thing. “Eat not of it raw.” Eat not of it until it has been subjected to the action of fire.

But there is more than that, “Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water.” What is the thing that is sodden? I have no doubt it is that sort of sickly sentimentalism that people have when they talk about Christ in a natural kind of way. People speak of Christ in a sort of humanizing way. “Roast with fire” is what God says, in contradistinction to what is raw and to what is sodden with water.

Then mark again. “his head with his legs and with the purtenance thereof.” I have no doubt the different parts set forth the intelligence and the walk: the head, which is the seat of intelligence, and the legs, which are that by which one is conveyed about. O the blessedness of it, that the One whose blood has secured us God’s divinely appointed shelter, His flesh becomes food inside the sheltered house, upon which the heart can feed in safety.

And then there were certain things that were to go along with it. There was unleavened bread, that is to say, there was to be the open avowed refusal in principle of sin for which the blood was necessary, the unleavened bread always sets that forth. The bread was to be compressed bread, bread that was not separated by the particles of leaven. The principle of leaven is, that it separates the particles of bread. Leaven is never used in scripture, except as the type of what is evil. And there is to be the absence of that. You must not talk about feeding upon Christ, if you allow sin. You cannot put sin and Christ together. Christ was made sin by God on the cross that you and I, through grace, not only might be delivered from the judgment due to our sins, but that we might have a holy, everlasting detestation of sin. And that is what unleavened bread is; it is the acknowledgment of our positive abnegation of the whole of that, on account of which the judgment of God fell upon God’s Lamb.

Then there are the bitter herbs, which express the sense that the soul would have, and must have, of what it cost that blessed One to undergo all this, “and they shall eat the flesh that night roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs, they shall eat it.”

And then there is one thing more, that is, that there was to be a certain attitude about themselves -- “Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand,” that is to say, you are to be ready to leave Egypt. You see, they had not left Egypt yet; they were
sheltered in Egypt, they were secured against the judgment of God in Egypt, but they were still in Egypt, though in heart, in spirit, in affection, they were to have left it. They were to have all in preparedness and readiness, “Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girt,” nothing that will connect you, even as to your clothes, with Egypt. May God, by His Spirit, give to our souls to understand how that it is to be thus with us in this world -- that we are to have left this world in principle and heart, and to be on the height of expectation that He who said He would come for us, might come at any moment, and that we are ready to go when He comes, that our loins are girt, the seat of our affections are not flowing about over the things of this wretched world! Your loins girt, your shoes upon your feet ready for the journey, ready to start when He gives the word, and your staff in your hand, pilgrims; “and ye shall eat it in haste,” he says, it is the Lord’s Passover.

O beloved friends, how blessed it is to think of it! how entirely in keeping the whole thing is! For you have shelter, you have the food they fed on in that shelter, you have the manner in which they were to partake of it, the demeanor that was to become them, the appearance they were to present, and they were to be there, ready to go, and waiting for the particular moment that God would intervene. Now I ask you, Does that describe you and me? I quite admit we have not got, so far as I have brought before you to-night, to anything like the fulness of redemption, but how does this suit us now? Thank God we are out of Egypt, that is to say, we have been delivered from it through grace, we have been made partakers of the victories won in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Red Sea. But, beloved friends, are we really in the moral picture that this presents to us here? That is the question for us. Are we sitting in this world with our loins girt, our shoes upon our feet, and our staff in our hand? Are we really ready to go, and are we expecting to go? -- that is the question. Or is it only that wretched, miserable thing that you hear people sometimes say, that they are resigned to go? Resigned to go, is that it? Are you glad to go, are you waiting to go, expecting to go, looking out to go? Resigned to stay, if you like; but longing to go, to leave this world behind; to be removed entirely outside of it. O beloved friends, what a wonderful thing it is!

The Lord, by His grace, give our hearts to take in the wonders of that much at least of redemption -- it is the blood, it is the lamb, it is the holy, righteous claims of God, a deeper aspect of it even, as I said, than the Red Sea, because it is the claims of God being met, and so perfectly and fully met by His own wonderful provision, that the shelter is an absolutely safe and certain one, so that when God passed over as He went through the land of Egypt that night, there was not a single house where there was that mysterious red mark of the blood sprinkled upon it. but they were as safe as God’s shelter and God’s provision could make them. It was not a question of what they were, but of what God provided and found in the blood of the lamb. May we by grace be helped to take it in a little more fully, and use His word to-night, to suggest to our souls something deeper in it than we have seen before, for His blessed Name’s sake.

Chapter 5: Exodus 14

There are two words, beloved brethren, that give a distinct character to the subject that is to occupy us for a little this evening, and those words are “Pihahiroth” and “the sea.” Those are the two leading words of this chapter, and they do very distinctly mark the truths that are unfolded here. Now the meaning of the word “Pihahiroth” (for no doubt the position was selected by God for certain reasons which I will seek to put before you) was exactly suited to the unfolding of what was about at this moment to be wrought. The meaning is “the opening of liberty.” That is really what it signifies. The place was selected by God distinctly because the very name of it would convey the great reality that was about to be enacted there. And it is the more remarkable if you put along with it what was in the mind of the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, the pursuer and enemy of God’s people, and what was the great inducement to him to gain, as he thought, a very easy conquest and a full victory over them. For what he said to himself before he began his march after them was this. The wilderness hath shut them in. That was the result of their being in this position. And the first great thing that comes before us in the narrative is this very position. It was a chosen position, which God Himself was pleased to place them in. No other place or locality would have been suited to what was in His mind or what he was about to accomplish, than this very spot Pihahiroth.

First of all it was the spot that brought home to them this fact, that they were utterly resourceless. And not only that but God does not arm them, He does not put them into the trim of fighting men to set them against Pharaoh and his hosts. He does not put weapons in their hands. He does not equip them, so to speak, for war. He sends them out, as we should say, totally unprotected, as far as they themselves were concerned; they carry nothing of any consequence that would in any wise enable them to make headway against such a powerful antagonist as Pharaoh and his hosts. The whole circumstances, the position and plight they themselves were in, were all designed with a view to what God was about to do. They were hemmed in, Pharaoh behind them, the sea before them; the sea, the wilderness, and Pharaoh; they are shut in, says Pharaoh, they are my prey now. The sceptic would say it was one of the grandest blunders strategically to place them there. A person looking at it in a rationalistic human way would say, What a position to put a whole nation into! What a grand mistake! Now if you just think for an instant where they were, you will find in the 20th verse of the 13th chapter that they were on the very verge of the desert, they were at Etham. They had finished the three days, for remember, God’s word was, let my people go for three days into the desert to hold a feast to me. That was what Moses said to Pharaoh. There must be three days, which was really in figure, death and resurrection. Now they had finished the three days journey, they had got to Etham, they were on the very confines of the desert, and the question now was, were they to hold the feast there and go back, or were they to hold the feast there and take another march on, and then
the desert would have fought for them against Pharaoh. The chariots of Egypt could have made no way in the giving, sinking sand of the desert, they would not have been able to pursue them, they could very easily have got out of their way had they marched on. But instead of continuing their eastward march, God says to them, No, you are to turn round and go southward. Now going to the south was positively lingering on the confines of Egypt, and turning their backs on the land of promise which they were about to possess. They turned their backs on it and they lingered still on the confines of the territory of the pursuer, so that the whole thing (it is very striking when you look at it) was contrary to what a person would say would be wise and sagacious, and ordered with such skill as to give them a clear and open way out of the hands of their pursuers. In fact it was what would be called really playing into the enemy’s hands, that was their position.

But there is another thing in it. There was a needs-be in it as far as they themselves were concerned. And this was just the very place where God could display His resources in their resourcelessness, because that is what came out. In their resourcelessness, in their distress, in the absence of all help for them, God could show His hand according to His own power there. There was that necessity in His blessed ways and the love of His heart towards His people, and there was a needs-be in them. Because what they are here to learn was this, even to wade through all the sorrows of the exercise that is set forth; not conflict; do not ever put in the word “conflict,” there is no such thing as conflict in this condition. People constantly speak of this as conflict, but there is no conflict in it. There is bondage, servility, fear, dread, remorse, a heart that is turning back to put itself voluntarily under the power of the oppressor; but that is not conflict. Exercise is not the same as conflict. Conflict, properly speaking, begins when exercise is over; and the exercises are all in connection with the finding out what sort of creatures we are. Do you know what adds to the strength of exercise, what calls it into being, what promotes it? People continually speak of exercise, and of course we cannot do without it from the very nature of what we are. But do you know what the power of the exercise is? The strength of your will, that is the secret of it. According to the strength of your will is the severity of the exercise. The necessity of the exercise is, because there is will there, and a will that is independent of God. Because a will in the creature, a will independent of God, is sin. You and I have no right to have a will. I constantly read now in religious books that all a Christian has to do is to put his will on God’s side, that is to say, to put his sin on God’s side, because a will in the creature, independently of the Creator, is the real essence of sin. It is a grand mistake to talk about putting your will on God’s side. Your will is sin, and you cannot put that on God’s side. All that you can do with regard to that is, in faith practically to relegate that will to where God has judicially terminated its existence before Himself, that is, in the cross, which is a very different thing from putting it on God’s side. That is the disallowance, the abnegation, the refusal of it, that is the non-toleration of it in every shape and form. But if you talk of putting it on God’s side, you are allowing it. Now this is a very specious kind of thing, though I am quite sure it is not meant. I am only speaking now of things as they really are. I have at the bottom of my heart the deepest tenderness for the people of God, and I admire and love the desire of their hearts to be true to Him in these things; but I am speaking merely of the doctrine, of the principle of it, what it is in reality, not of the people that hold it. Surely I know it is not meant by many of the beloved saints of God who take it up and say these things, but I am speaking of what it really is intrinsically -- it is consecrated flesh. Shall I talk about putting my will over on God’s side? No, I disallow it. What a wonderful difference when I get God’s mind about it. That which is evil is contrary to God, that is the root principle of rebellion in me as a creature, that is what came in at the fall. What was the principle of the fall? That the creature set up a will and acted on a will against the Creator and independent of the Creator. That is the very principle of sin. That is how it came in. You see there is great deal of license now about it, because people talk of sin as if sin was simply limited to certain acts. There must be some principle there that produces these; there must be some root there from which they grow; there must be something that gives vitality to them, something that strengthens the arm, so to speak. It is very superficial to say, there is an evil act. I quite admit that, but where did it come from? An evil act cannot subsist by itself, it must grow from some stock. It is like a fruit tree, there are not only the boughs and the blossoms and the fruit, but there must be a root somewhere.

Now these are the things that people say, and the consequence is that the root principle is never reached. There is the reason of this exercise. They have got to find out by exercise, by being placed in circumstances that minister to the exercise, they have got to discover what sort of creatures they are, and what a God God is; and not only what a God God is, but what He can be to them when they have found out what they are. When they have found out their utter vileness, and resourcelessness, and inability, and powerlessness, and when they have discovered what God can be as a Savior-God to them as such, there is where the exercise comes. So that there is a double need; there is the need of the searching, and sifting, and probing, and moving, and exposing, and turning upside down of their own hearts, and there is a need for the display of God’s wonderful grace to them such as they are. And the external position of this people -- at Pihahiroth, before Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon, shut in, as Pharaoh says when he looked at it in a military way as a great conqueror, with his horses and chariots, they are shut in, I will get an easy victory now -- was allowed by God for this purpose, in order to prove the weakness and resourcelessness to their hearts of their position, and that Pharaoh might have an inducement to come out and show his hand with the whole flower and glory of Egypt’s arms. That is what this position was chosen for. This is the first great thing.

Now there is another thing. We have looked at their position, and you will fill up details in God’s mercy for yourselves -- but look now at their condition, and when I use the word I mean the practical state that they were in. Look at
what it was. The moment Pharaoh pursues them, which he
does with the whole power of Egypt, his horses and chariots
(Egypt was a great place for all that kind of thing, it was the
place of resource then) the children of Israel cry out to the
Lord. Superficially, you might read that and say, “Cry out to
the Lord,” how beautiful! But here it is despair; there is no
faith at all in it. They had not any confidence in Him to act for
them, they had no knowledge of Him in that character at all.
They did not know Him in the least as a God that would
intervene for them, they had not the smallest sense of the
power of His love, and grace, and goodness; it was a
despairing cry. Did you ever hear the cry of despair? It is an
awful cry. Of all the sounds that ever passed from human lips
the cry of despair is the most awful. That is what it was. There
was no confidence, no faith, no expectation, it was the sheer
cry of despair, that is all. And what follows proves it. They
turned round upon Moses -- he had to bear this continually
from them -- he was their savior instrumentally, and therefore
upon his head continually came back reproach and the effects
of remorse from their lips; if there was trial and anyone was to
be blamed for it, it was poor Moses -- and they turned upon
him, and said, Was it because there were no graves in Egypt?
-- Their hearts were full of death, they can never rise in
thought beyond a grave, they never get beyond six feet down,
as we say -- is it because there are no graves in Egypt, no place
of sepulture there, that you brought us out here that we should
die in the wilderness? Is not this the word that we said to you
in Egypt, Let us alone that we may serve, that is, let us alone
that we may be the bondslaves of this hateful, odious,
tyrannical Egypt -- it is better for us to be bondslaves there,
than to die here in the wilderness. This is their practical
condition, no faith, no confidence in God, no expectancy of
His outstretched hand, no hope that he would intervene or
interfere; disappointment, remorse, dread, fear, dislike, hatred,
no remembrance even of past mercies and past favors of God,
of the kind ness, and goodness, and mercy of God, there is not
even a remembrance of the shelter, though God had put up a
blood-sprinkled lintel for them in Egypt, no remembrance even
of that -- but in their condition here they stood without any
knowledge of God or of themselves. How solemn it is to think
of it! How the book of God points out our history to ourselves!
How it reads to us exactly what we are! How it shows us where
we are, and who we are, and what kind we are! And do
remember this, I beseech of you, because it is a very important
point on this branch of the subject. It shows you the extent to
which such a knowledge of God as they had and as a person
might have now, will carry your soul. As long as God is only
known in the character of a judge, even though he may be
appeased, a judge whose claims have been met, whose holy
demands have all been answered, but still a judge, satisfied,
but yet a judge, as long as God is only known in this character, this
must be the order of things. Beloved brethren, do you know
God beyond this? Does your knowledge of Him go beyond the
fact that the judge, righteous and holy though He is, has been
perfectly appeased, perfectly satisfied, all His demands
perfectly discharged and met? Can you say really, Well, thank
God, I know more of Him than that! Very blessed is it to know
that, I do not desire to make little of it, but I long that our souls
should have the full knowledge of Him. Very blessed it is so
far as it goes, but thank God, I know more of Him than that.
What is that? That is what I have set forth here -- I know Him
as my Savior God, that is to say, not only as one who has been
kept out by the blood, but one who comes in now in the grace
and love of His own heart to be my deliverer -- a different
thing altogether. For that was exactly the truth as to the blood
-- the blood kept God out, it was intended to keep Him out. He
says, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and
against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment, I am
Jehovah.” The blood shall be to you for a token; when I see the
blood I will pass over, I will not come in, the blood will bar
my entrance into your houses as judge, and that is your safety
in that night; the blood shall be your shelter when I pass
through the land in judgment. Blessed to know this, yea most
precious! We must have that, because Gods claims must be met
and satisfied. But then there is more than that. The One whose
claims and righteous demands have all received their fullest
satisfaction comes in Himself to show His heart and to show
His hand to extricate me out of the house of bondage, and to
bring me right to His own bosom and His own heart, so that I
may know Him now, not as a judge who is outside, but as a
Savior who is come in to deliver me. That is what you get
here, and that is what they did not know at all. They blamed
Moses and positively wanted to go back into Egypt. We know
they did that afterwards in heart. Would not it be better for us?
We had rather be in the bondage and tyranny and slavery of
Egypt, and serve the Egyptians, than come here and die in this
desert.

Now you see the two points I trust. They are very simple,
and you may fill them up with detail, I am not concerned with
detail now, but I want to show you the points on which all the
details hang. There is the position, and the practical condition
of the people that were in that position.

Now just look at another point for a moment, before we
come to the third. See how Moses meets this. There is nothing
that is so precious to the heart as to see the way that God meets
that kind of thing in His poor people. I say it with reverence,
there is no harshness in the blessed God, there is no revenge
in His heart, He does not require us for our slowness of heart, and
for our unbelieving terror; there is not even a rebuke here.
Moses says to them a wonderful word. He talks to hearts that
are in a perfect storm, a perfect hurricane of terror. Look at
what He says to them. He says, “Fear not, stand still and see
the salvation of God.” Look at those three things. If you and I
were there (I speak of one’s nature) we should rebuke, we
should abuse, we should feel indignant, anger would be moved
to its very depths in us, to think a people should be so basely
abused, we should feel indignant, anger would be moved
there to its very depths in us, to think a people should be so basely
ungrateful and unbelieving as that; but Moses is really the
voice of God, he is in touch with God’s heart, the current from
the heart of God pours uninterruptedly into the heart of Moses
-- you get the very words that come from God’s heart to that
poor people, “Fear not.” You know how the Lord Jesus Christ
used those words continually when He was down here in this
world, they were the words which came from His blessed lips
ever and anon here, “Fear not.” How strange to say to a
people that were swallowed up with fear, “Fear not.” It would look to them as if it were mocking them to say such a thing as that to them.

There is another word, “Stand still.” That is the very attitude which is contrary to every feeling in nature, and it is the very position to come in along with what follows, “Stand still and see,” not “Stand still and feel,” not “Stand still and work,” not “Stand still and toil,” not “Stand still and co-operate,” “Stand still and see what a thing that is!” -- “Stand still and see the salvation of God,” something completely and entirely outside of you, that you gaze at, a transaction that is there before your eyes; with which you have neither part nor lot, though you have in all its effects and blessedness. You do not add anything to it, you do not contribute to that transaction, it is completely and absolutely for you, but it is outside of you -- look at it, stand still and see it. You are no actor, you are a spectator, behold it. What a wonderful thing that is! And how beautifully the type brings before us what we shall see by-and-by in the antitype -- how strongly the features and lines of the antitype come before us in that, “Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will show you to-day.” The Lord shall fight for you,” not with you, not by you, not through you, not in you. It is quite true He works in us, but that is not here; you would spoil the picture if you brought that in here. “The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Do not say a word, not even a sound, not only not a stroke but not a sound, “Hold your peace.”

Well, beloved friends, that is wonderful grace of God; but Moses’ heart practically reflects the love, and kindness, and goodness, and sovereign grace of the Savior God. That is the first message, and thus it is the troubled sea of their hearts is stilled. God stilled it by His own sweet voice through His servant Moses to their hearts, “Stand still and see God’s salvation which He will show, you to-day”; the Egyptians that you now look at in their force and fury, in the rolling tide of their fancied acquisition of you, you will see them no more for ever, “The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” What a blessed picture it is of God’s salvation.

But there is another little word before we come to the third point, which would appear a contradiction, but it is no contradiction at all to faith. He says to the children of Israel through Moses, “Go forward.” Now, beloved friends, you will never understand “go forward” until you understand “stand still.” The explanation of “go forward” is “stand still.” And though there appears to be a contradiction, there is a most marvelous and blessed combination. That which gives all its force and character to “go forward,” that which is the pith and power of it is, “stand still,” “stand still and see God’s salvation which He will show you today”; the Lord shall fight for you, you shall see the Egyptians and the whole glory of Pharaoh no more for ever, “The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace”; now go forward, go forward in the strength of that. Why? Because this is the way. If God does this, and that, and the other, and God does it that way, you can go now, you can move on those lines. There is a line now laid down for you to move on. Now go forward.

And now we come to the third point, which is the revelation in detail of the salvation itself. For before God declares, as He does here plainly, what this salvation is, He gives one precious mark to His poor people of His heart’s interest in them. And do you know what that is? Compare two scriptures, and you will find exceeding beauty in the comparison. In Ex. 13: 20, after they left Egypt for the three days’ journey, it says,

And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night; He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Now in the 18th verse, when they started on that journey it was said, “God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.” But now the name is changed, and there is always a significance in the changing of God’s name, it is not done without a meaning, “God led the people,” but now you get His relationship name, “Jehovah went before them,” “the Lord” means Jehovah. God was the leader and guide of His people, but now you get an additional truth. He is pleased to make known His name of covenant relationship to that people, the name which He was not known by, to the patriarchs, and it says, “Jehovah went before them.” There was the manifestation of the Divine presence in a double way, before and behind, the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and through that pillar of cloud and fire shone the blessed presence of their covenant Jehovah. I refer you to it in order to show you the blessedness of what we find in Ex. 14:9. Look at what happens there. “And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them,” that was where the danger was. The pressing hosts of Pharaoh were coming on behind, -- says God, as it were, I will put all my protection there, I will assure your hearts by putting all my protection there; whatever is the strength, and cheer, and comfort, and sustainment, and food of my presence, it shall be all there for you, between you and the pursuers.” What a cheer that must have been to their souls, if they entered into it at all! “The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and through that pillar of cloud and fire shone the blessed presence of their covenant Jehovah. I refer you to it in order to show you the blessedness of what we find in Ex. 14:9. Look at what happens there. “And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them,” that was where the danger was. The pressing hosts of Pharaoh were coming on behind, -- says God, as it were, I will put all my protection there, I will assure your hearts by putting all my protection there; whatever is the strength, and cheer, and comfort, and sustainment, and food of my presence, it shall be all there for you, between you and the pursuers.” What a cheer that must have been to their souls, if they entered into it at all! The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.” What a wonderful thing! And that was before God began to reveal the manner of His salvation at all. He assured their hearts; now I am going to act for you, you shall see how I will work, you shall see what I will bring about, but I want to give your heart the sense first, before I stretch out my hand at all, that I am thinking of you, but I will be between you and your enemies; my angel shall be behind you instead of going before, and the pillar of cloud and fire shall also be there.

Now I ask, have our hearts taken that in, the character of God, the grace of His heart, the goodness of His love, how He
works, how He speaks to our hearts, how He would assure us of the deep interest of His heart in us?

Now you have two things that go to make up His salvation unfolded here. The first is Moses’ rod, which is judgment, not the rod of Aaron, which is priestly, but the rod of Moses, which is judgment, the rod that he smote the river with, the rod that brought death upon the Egyptians. Take thy rod, the rod wherewith thou smitest the river, take it in thy hand and stretch out thy rod over the sea. He does so, and that rod, together with a strong east wind which God caused to blow all that night, opened up the sea, and the waters were piled on the right hand and on the left, and the people walked on dry land through the midst of the sea. It was God that opened that watery way, it was God planned it, it was God accomplished it, it was God’s own doing from beginning to end; they had all the good of it, and they walked there in the midst of the sea without a single drop of water; and that was going on all that night.

Then there was another thing. God looked through the pillar of cloud, and troubled the hosts of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them heavily, and they got the sense, that it is God they are fighting against now, God is for Israel, the Lord fighteth for them against us. See what an awful moment it is for the Egyptians when they get the sense that instead of Israel being a poor impoverished nation not having the means of self defense, but a ready booty for their plunder, they had the mighty Jehovah God to cope with. And they got the sense of this in the moment of their destruction, when it was perfectly plain that the odds were now against them, mighty conquerors though they were. And then mark what happens. They pursued in after the people to the sea, or as the epistle to the Hebrews puts it so blessedly, “By faith they passed the Red Sea as by dry land, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.” They followed them in, and they were in as the gray dawn of the morning broke upon the shores on the opposite side, for all this night was passed through with this kind of thing. Moses’ rod, and the east wind, and the pile of waters, and Israel going on, and Egypt pursuing behind with all its strength. And when the morning comes, then God says to Moses, stretch out your rod over the sea again, and the sea will return to its strength. And God brought it back by a strong wind, “and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared,” and the same tide that opened the way for Israel came back in all its rolling power over the whole glory of Egypt and whole power of Pharaoh, and submerged them in the mighty waters, and there was not one of them left. “Thus God saved Israel.” It was God’s salvation, God’s extrication, God’s deliverance. And then you find four things said about them -- they saw, they believed, they feared, and they sang. They never sang a note before; they complained in abundance afterwards, but they never sang before. Now they sing; and God has so ordered it that song must go with redemption. You cannot sing until you are redeemed; when you are redeemed you can sing. Now they can sing, and the song, beloved friends, is all about God, not a single word about themselves. That is the peculiarity of that note when it is struck, the theme, the note, is all divine:

The Lord hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Now let us take it out of pattern. You know the meaning of taking things out of pattern, I am sure. Here it is in pattern or type, what do you find when you take it out? Why, that is the meaning it is that the precious death and the glorious and triumphant resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for us, accomplished everything that was in the mind and heart of God, is the complete overthrow of the whole power of Satan, the overthrow of all the power of death, “that through death he might annul, destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil,” the complete putting away and judgment of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, the whole destruction of Satan’s power. That is to say, every enemy that was against us, sin, death, Satan, the grave, were allowed to rise to their highest, and when they were at their highest, were swept away for ever: that is what it means. You have the figure of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ so beautifully there! I do not know anything more touching to the heart than to read of that rod and that strong east wind. O the spotless distress of His precious soul when the east wind of judgment beat upon His head, and that was the night, it was the night of deepest woe to Him when He underwent all that judgment, and endured it all; there was the night of judgment, and then there was the morning of His resurrection. That is what you have got here in type. Thank God if we understand through grace what that is.

In His spotless soul’s distress, the judgment was borne alone by Him, all the waves and billows flowed over Him, all the east wind of judgment blew upon His blessed head when He stood there alone for us; and then He rose triumphant, and there comes the morning, so that you have the night and the morning, the night of the cross, the morning of the resurrection. And in that resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have got two things; resurrection out from among the dead begins the new thing, it is the new beginning. But there is more than that in it. It is the testimony, the evidence to the Christian of the completeness, of the fulness of Jehovah’s triumph, of God’s salvation, so that I can see in that empty tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ the vindication in testimony and evidence to me that God has been perfectly glorified and perfectly satisfied with regard to all my sins. I look at that resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from amongst the dead, and I say, God has taken the one who went into the depths of death and judgment for me out of the tomb. They say it is the glory of man to fill a tomb, it is the glory of God to empty a tomb, and to take out of the tomb, to raise out from amongst the dead, His own beloved Son who underwent the judgment of God due to my sins, and to set Him in that wonderful place in glory where He is entitled to be in righteousness. There is no righteousness in this world, for they thrust Him out of it, righteousness now is in Christ at God’s right hand in glory. I say, “Thank God, that settles everything for me”; my Savior is in glory, that is enough.

But then there is another testimony, and an awful testimony to the world. Exactly as that pillar of cloud and fire was a comfort to Israel and a terror to Egypt, so the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a comfort to us, though
it is a solemn testimony to the world.

Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead (see Acts 17:31).

Think of that. It is the solemn testimony to the world that the day is appointed and the judge is ordained. With regard to what is coming on this world, the empty tomb is that. Thank God, there are brighter things for us. But if there is a person here to-night (God alone knows) who still belongs to the world, that is what is before you, “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.” He came down to save in mercy and goodness, and love, but He will judge in righteousness, and He will judge by the very Man in whose blessed face the world, as it were spat, whose blessed head they mocked with a crown of thorns, that rejected Jesus, that earth-despised, earth-refused Nazarene, that Man whom the world would not have, and whom it will not have now any more than then. God will judge this world in righteousness by that Man, and He has given the testimony of it, because He has raised Him from the tomb in which He lay.

O beloved friends, may God in His infinite grace give our hearts to enter into the blessedness and preciousness of God’s salvation, wrought outside of us but for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 6:
Joshua 3:9-17; 4:1-10

There are two things, beloved friends, that we have to look at to-night. First of all, there is the passage of the Jordan itself, and what lies around it in the way of instruction for us. And secondly there is this beautiful memorial of it that we find in the Ex. 4. Those are the two points I should like to concentrate your thoughts upon this evening.

But before doing so, we will look back for a moment in order to get the connection of the passage of the Jordan with what we have already had before us. Without going too much into detail, we have had the Passover, and we have had the Red Sea: that is to say, we have dwelt upon God’s judgment of sin according to His own holy nature -- that is the Passover. And in a certain sense, as we were seeing, that has a deeper aspect even than the teaching of the Red Sea, although there was the judgment of God there in power upon the enemies of His people for their deliverance; still His own nature and holy claims were more in question, so to speak, at the Passover than at the Red Sea. In the first it was a question of what would suit God, and therefore the blood of the paschal lamb put upon the lintel and the two side posts was the expression of God’s own intrinsic holiness. Nothing else could meet the claims of His holy nature, but the blood of a victim that (speaking of it now in type) was spotless in itself, and besides that, with the excellency pertaining to it -- that is the Passover. It was the judgment of sin according to the claims of a holy God.

Now at the Red Sea there was judgment too, but there it was God putting Himself, as He could now do consistently with His own character, between Israel’s enemies and Israel, so that God could now come in as their Redeemer-God. He passed over them in judgment because the lamb met His claims; He came in for them in deliverance and redemption at the Red Sea; it was God interfering to free them by redemption, to bring them out and to bring them in. Whereas in the Passover it was God judging Egypt and passing over Israel when He judged Egypt; it was God meeting His claims as judge in the Passover, it was God expressing Himself in all the delivering power of redemption at the Red Sea.

After that passage of the Red Sea, what is called the wilderness journey of the people began. And it is an important thing to bear in mind (sometimes I do not think it is enough disconnected in that way) that that journey had two parts. God never journeyed with them until they were in the circumstances of a redeemed people. Neither does He with us. God never walks with us till we are redeemed. He visited us in grace, but He never walks with us, and we never can walk with Him until we are a redeemed people. Of course the redemption of Israel was merely an external redemption, and therefore typical of the spiritual and real redemption God has given now. But it is on the basis that God has brought us to Himself, in suitability. His own character, that He not only walks with us but dwells with us. You never get dwelling at all until after redemption. God never dwelt in Eden, God walked in Eden, He visited Eden, but He never dwelt. He never even dwelt with the patriarchs, blessed men though they were. He talked with Abraham, took him into intimacy and friendship with Himself, but never dwelt with him, or with Isaac or Jacob. And it is very interesting as showing the community of thought that existed between God and His people that, as soon as ever they are in the circumstances of a redeemed people, “habitation” was the very thought of their minds; as you find in Ex. 15, “I will prepare him an habitation,” a wonderful thought: now God can come and have His dwelling-place amongst us. now we are in the circumstances in which He can dwell. That is a wonderful thing beloved friends, God in His infinite grace give our hearts to enter a little more into it! I do beseech of you to take it in and think of it. I have been only speaking of the type; but the real grand antitype of it is that God has now a dwelling-place; He has those on earth amongst whom He can dwell -- what is called “the habitation of God through the Spirit. God has His house here, and He dwells in His house. That is a wonderful thing, because the effect of it is that it prevents us from running off into mere individuality. Not that I would in the least forget that individuality has its place, but we should lose an immense deal of the truth of God, we should lose sight of some of the most precious things that God has been pleased to reveal in His word, if we were to limit everything to individuality. You will find in this typical history that God’s ways and dealings with men and people upon the earth are what characterize the book of Genesis throughout. But when you come to Exodus, which is the book of redemption, the grand feature of it is, that when redemption is accomplished, God can come and dwell; He can find a dwelling-place suitable to Himself on this earth, in the midst of a people whom He has brought by redemption into suitability to Himself. That runs all through the song of Ex. 15, it is one of the keynotes of that song. There are two words that
give their character to the song in Ex. 15, “salvation” and “habitation,” and I put the two together.

I may add in passing that there is no word that is more commonly used and so little understood as that word “salvation.” It is a blessed word.

“Salvation, O the joyful sound”; but it is an immense thing to enter into it according to the thoughts of God. Salvation does not mean merely that God has reached me where I am in my misery and distress, and relieved me from the pressure that was upon me there -- that is in it certainly -- but there is a great deal more in it than that. He has met the needs of my conscience, but He has also taken me out of the condition in which I was, as in those needs, and brought me to Himself -- that is salvation. And I think you will find that “salvation” is ever used in scripture with that meaning attached to it. -- It always means change of position. You have not got the true thought of salvation if you have not the thought in your soul that God has by blood and power interfered in consistency with Himself to bring you into a totally new place to Himself -- that is salvation. Would to God that all the Lord’s beloved people in this world had only the thought of salvation in its fulness in their hearts, what a different thing it would be! They would then find they could not go on with the things of the world, because if it is only a question of relief, you relieve me, but you leave me where I wanted the relief. You say, “I do want relief,” and I do not deny it or want to minimize it; but I want something more than relief, I want emancipation, or, as some one has called it, and I think it is a very good word, extrication. I need to be extricated, and redemption does that for me, redemption has extricated me not merely out of the effects of my sins, and set me free from the impending judgment which my sins exposed me to, but it has extricated me out of the place where I was exposed to the judgment. So I change my ground altogether, and therefore I am not only sheltered, but I am saved. The 12th of Exodus is shelter, the 15th of Exodus is salvation; and when you put them both together, you have got the thing complete. You are sheltered from judgment, but you are also saved out of the place to which the judgment applied, and where you were exposed to judgment. That is what introduces us into what we call our pilgrimage. The moment I am a participator of God’s redemption, “guided by Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation,” the moment I am brought to God, and brought to God, remember, while we are down here in this world -- then I begin to walk with God, and God begins to walk with me; and I never walk with God until this is true of me. He interfered for me and visited me in grace, now He walks with me, and I walk with Him.

Now that journey is made up of two parts. The first part of it is from the 15th of Exodus up to the 20th of Exodus, that is to say, up to the time when they came to Mount Sinai. And the first part of that wilderness journey is all grace, there is no testing at all, it is all pure grace. They hungered and He fed them; they thirsted and He gave them drink; He looked after them, cared for them, watched over them, and they stood on the ground of pure sovereign grace with God. They got their blessing upon that ground, there was no question of law or demand at all, God brought them to Himself; God was acting towards them in suitability to that blessed character which He displayed towards them in salvation, and they walked with God.

Then in Ex. 19 they come to Mount Sinai; and there the second part of the journey begins. Now God tests them, and the test was this. Here is a people who had been redeemed out of the house of bondage and brought to God whom He had walked with, and acted towards on the ground of grace; now He tests them -- will they take their blessing still on the ground of grace, or on the ground of what they can give to Him? That is how the law came. The meaning of the law was to test a redeemed people, as to whether they sufficiently knew their own hearts as to say, as it were, No, if we are to be on the ground of law with God, the ground of exaction, the claim of God upon us, we shall thoroughly break down, even though redeemed, even though brought to God. And remember, law is a very much larger and wider thing than the mere ten words. Suppose a man says he is bound to love Christ, I say that man is under law in principle. “Bound to love Christ!” how could we talk like that? The moment you bring in exactation, you bring in law in principle; and that is exactly what came in at Mount Sinai. God proposed the law as a test; the people did not know themselves, though in the ways of God this was brought about that they should know themselves, and know it through exercise; yet they elected to take their blessing on the ground of law instead of on the ground of grace, and God accepted them on that ground. It is a mistake the way people speak about it. They say God put the people under law. No; they put themselves under it, and what God did was, He tested them under law. And that is the meaning of an expression you may have read, that the law came in by- the-by. It was the test of a people who had been redeemed and brought to God as to whether they would continue to stand with God on the ground of the pure grace that had been manifested towards them up to that moment, or whether now they would take the blessing upon their own answer to the claims of God as expressed in law. Israel elected to take their blessing under law, and God accepted them on that ground, and tested them by it. This is the second part of the journey. And then it is the real character of the wilderness comes out.

Now perhaps I am lingering rather over first principles, but I really find that many of God’s saints do not know these things; and I think we take for granted that people know a great deal more than they do. But if you think of how little you know, then you know how little other people know. We talk about the wilderness and the desert, and think it is very fine to use certain expressions, but people really do not understand their meaning. The meaning of it is this, that the wilderness is the place where under law I am tested as to what is at the bottom of my heart, what is in me. Redemption was that in which God is displayed; the wilderness proper is where what is in man’s heart comes out under law. And you will find that while the same offences were committed by Israel before the 20th of Exodus as were committed afterwards, yet that whereas in the beginning of the history God passed over these offences with all the blessed exercise of the grace that marked Him, afterwards the same offences were punished with the greatest severity. Why? Because the people were on a different ground.
As long as ever they were on the ground of grace, then God acted toward them in grace. As soon as ever they stood on the ground of law, God acted toward them on the ground of law. In the wilderness of Shur, which was the beginning of their history after redemption, they walked with God, and suffered the trials, and difficulties, and exigencies of the wilderness, and God dealt with them in the greatest grace, and kindness, and forbearance. Afterwards, when they walked through the wilderness of Sinai, they committed the very same offences, and God punished and scourged them with the greatest severity. They were under law, and that accounts for it.

Now that will bring us to our subject to-night. All through that second part of their journey, they were tried and tested as to what they were. And what came out? Every kind of departure from God, and that they were not in the smallest degree altered. That is an immense thing for our souls to learn, even that the state of our flesh, the vileness of our nature, the wickedness of our heart within, the hidden depths of that sink of iniquity that is inside -- redemption does not change in the least -- though I fear there are some of God’s people who think it does; but it is the same after redemption that it was before. My position is changed, my standing before God is altered, redemption effects that, but as to all the evil principle that works within me, I am just the same. What comes out is this, that I learn practically that, after redemption and under law, that it is not a question now of my sins, but of myself. Before, it was a question of my sins; my conscience on fire, so to speak, as to my sins and as to the judgment of God because of my sins; but when all that is settled and for ever disposed of, and I know the blood on the lintel has completely met His claims, and the Red Sea has completely disposed of all the enemies, and that God has brought me to Himself, and I am now redeemed to God, and walking with God and God with me, now I find out what I did not know before, “that in me, that ms in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Have you made that discovery, beloved friends? Have you learnt this practically in your soul, down deep at the bottom of your heart (I am speaking of Christians, of people who are redeemed, not of unconverted people), that in you, that is, in your flesh, there does not dwell any good thing, that “from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot, there is no soundness in you, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores,” that you cannot alter it, or mitigate it, or mollify it, that if you put restrictions upon it, it comes out all the worse, that the strength of that evil principle is law, for “the strength of sin is the law.” Do you remember how the apostle puts it himself? He says, “I was alive without the law once”; that is to say, he thought that he stood in that position, he thought he was a living man all right, so to speak. He had no hard feelings against himself then, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived.” He does not say “sin came” -- it is wonderfully blessed the distinctness and accuracy of scripture about all these things. Sin was there already, but it revived, just like a viper that had been there slumbering and which the heat would bring out:

when the commandment came sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. The strength of sin is the law,

and the law is the rule of death, not the rule of life, for the very exactions and claims of the law bring out the vileness of my heart that will not and cannot answer to it.

Now that is what came out in the second part of the journey, and you will see how blessedly our subject tonight comes in to meet that. When Israel had finished their wilderness journey, there they were with Jordan between them and the land of promise, a good-for-nothing, worthless generation, a people that set not their heart aright, that always turned aside like a broken bow; as Moses said, “Ye have been rebellious against the Lord since the day I knew you.” Every kind of thing that was contrary to God had come out, so much so that the enemy comes and says to God, as it were, Are you going to bring such in? That is the great point there, after the wilderness journey, when it was all over, and they are found committing whoredom with the people of Moab, and mixed up with every kind of iniquity -- are you going to bring that people in? Then when God meets the enemy, God goes back to His own redemption, and love, and purpose, and says, as it were, I will bring them in, not on the ground of what they are, but on the ground of what I have done for them. He meets the enemy by pointing to the Red Sea, “God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn; He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel.” According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought? -- not, What hath Israel wrought? but, “What hath God wrought?” When it was a question of the enemy dispute the right of God to bring a people from wilderness circumstances into the goodly land, the land of promise, God reverts to His own love that was set forth at the Red Sea, when He accomplished redemption. He says, as it were, “I have redeemed them, I have brought them out in consistency with my own nature, my own holiness has been vindicated, I have wrought for them, and I will bring them in on the ground of what I have wrought.” The question of their title was raised, and if title is raised you must always go to what God has wrought. When it is a question of your own conduct, that is another matter, but your conduct and your title are not the same thing; do not mix them up, they are totally distinct. If my title is called in question, I must go back to my own redemption, and love, and purpose, and says, to Israel down there in the valley, and say, as it were, what God has wrought. The enemy could point to Israel down there in the valley, and say, as it were, “Look at them, look at their character and their ways, what they are doing!” Quite true, that is not denied, but God says, There is what I have done, there is my outstretched arm, there is my purpose, there is redemption, there is salvation.

And when it comes to a question of ourselves and our own conduct, what you find is this, the more you struggle the worse it is. I believe there are numbers of truly anxious souls who have learnt their nature is bad and vile, and they are trying to keep it down -- and God forbid I should say a single word that seems indifferent to any really
earnest movement abroad amongst God’s people. But I see the solemn mistake of the whole thing. I see that all these exactions and claims are put on a nature that only shows itself the worse because of them, and that there is no deliverance or power in it, there is no liberation in it; on the contrary the people are kept miserable and wretched. It is exactly like a man down at the bottom of a deep ditch or quagmire, and he is now awakened up to the fact that he is down there; and not only that, but that there is a kindredness between him in his nature and the miserable quagmire he has got into; and he says, as it were, “I will get out of this,” and the more he tries to get out, the deeper down he gets. That is exactly where numbers of souls are.

Now see how wonderfully our subject tonight comes in to meet that. In Josh. 3 we come to the end of the wilderness journey, the manifestation of the people to be as bad and vile in their own condition and nature as could possibly be; and what is to be done? Here is the Jordan rolling between them and the land of promise. Now you have the simple history. God commands that the ark of the Lord is to be taken up by the priests; there was to be a sufficient space between the ark and the people; but the people were to follow, because there was association. That is the very thing you do not find at the Red Sea. There it was, “Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah which He will show you to-day.” But at the Jordan there was association; there was a space between them and the ark to set forth the dignity of the antitype of the ark -- the Lord Jesus Christ -- there was a space, but they followed. And as soon as ever the feet of the priests that bare the ark touched the brim of the water (and mark you, it was the time of the year when the river was at its height, when it overflowed its banks, the putting forth of the whole of its power), the river rose and went up, and a dry footway was made for the people. What is the meaning of that? It does not mean Christ’s death and resurrection for the justification of a poor sinner; and I will tell you a very simple reason why it cannot mean that -- because the people were associated in the passage of the Jordan. If it is a question of the justification of a sinner, it is done by Jesus Christ alone for us, not by our association with Him. But here there is association; the people followed the ark borne by the priests; there was a space, but still there was close association between the two. But what does it mean? It means this -- the ending by God of that which the enemy could touch, which is human life, that in which the enemy had power, by which he could prevail, is ended, so to speak, here; that is to say, they died and rose again in figure with Christ; it is Christ’s death and resurrection, and our death and resurrection along with Him, so as to leave behind completely in death, to faith before God, all the old thing, and to take a new place the other side altogether with God.

Now if you apply that for a moment to the state I have been speaking of, you see a person struggling and finding what is in this terrible heart within, with all its terrible motions and movements; and he tries to get free, and says, I will keep this down. Like Jonah when he was in the belly of the fish, he says, “I will pay my vows.” But he is not let out for that. “I will look toward thy holy temple.” “I will cry to God.” Neither does he get out for that. But the moment he says, “Salvation is of the Lord,” the fish vomits him out on dry ground. And thus it is Jordan comes in for our comfort -- that we learn that we have died with Christ -- not only that Christ has died and risen again for us, and accomplished redemption for us, so that we have been brought to God, but that as to the nature we had from Adam, that evil vile principle that is in us that could not be corrected or changed, that came out all the worse because of the exactions put upon it, because itself in all its native blackness the more it was put under law, all that has come to an end judicially in Christ’s death, we have died with Christ.

Now it is quite true that that is experience, but it is the experience of a fact; because when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon Calvary’s cross 1800 years ago, the Passover lamb, the Red Sea, the Jordan side of the truth, was there in the one antitype. We see different sides of it, and quite right too, but the whole thing there took place in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only was God’s holy, righteous nature completely met by that precious blood, that entirely answered His claims, but redemption was accomplished, by which we have been entirely delivered out of the house of bondage and brought to God. But besides that, all His people there died with Him 1800 years ago in the cross; and therefore our souls now, in their agony of distress when we find out the nature that is in us, learn this and experience it. Because you never could know what sort of a being you are except by experience. You have to go through the depths of agony to find out the vileness of your own heart, and you never could learn that objectively, it is here subjective exercise comes in. As a beloved brother used to say, he found himself always at home. Then we find out practically what sort of being we are: “I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” I give it up as all bad, I cannot alter it or check it or make it better, I cannot make an Ishmael into an Isaac. Then what do I find? I learn that I died with Christ, and that is the river Jordan -- not only that Christ died and rose again for me at the Red Sea, but that I died with Christ, not to be justified, but to be set free by His death from all that I could not alter or make better, so that now I have got a new place entirely. I have come in His resurrection into a totally new position before God, because I have not only died with Him, but risen with Him. And that is what is set forth in the Jordan.

And see how blessed it is. There was a power in that ark that accomplished victory, and associated the people with all the blessed results and triumphs of that victory; there was not a single drop of water there -- they passed right over, when they came to the river it was perfectly dry. That is the passage of the Jordan, and that is what it really means. It means Christ’s death and resurrection, and our association with His death and resurrection to set us entirely free from all that was proved in the wilderness to be perfectly good for nothing, so that we now are brought into an entirely new position before God on resurrection ground, and take new ground entirely with God.

Now look for a moment at the beautiful memorial of this. The first was that on the other side, at Gilgal, where the people came when they passed through Jordan, twelve stones were taken up to show the association between what was done and the people for whom it was done (twelve being the number of
the tribes of the children of Israel). Twelve stones, as emblematic of the twelve tribes, were taken up by Joshua's orders where the feet of the priests stood firm, and put on the Gilgal side of Jordan. Now see what a blessed thing that is -- the blessed witness of Christ's death and resurrection and victory, with which we are associated, was carried to the place of communion, for that is what Gilgal was; they always returned to Gilgal after their victories and journeys, and to that spot of communion, the standing witness of Christ's victory and triumph, with which they were associated, was carried and set up. And these stones at Gilgal spoke to conscience, and said to conscience, you are a dead and risen people. carry that out, walk in the truth of that; that is the meaning of it. It is not trying to be a dead and risen people, but it is carrying out what you are. And thus every time an Israelite stood at Gilgal and saw those twelve stones, his conscience was at once addressed by the fact that he had passed the Jordan; and all that was connected with the Jordan, the triumph and victory, was to be made good practically in him. To us now it is -- we have died and risen with Christ, let us walk now as those who have died.

But then there is more than that. Joshua himself alone sets up twelve stones in the bed of the river, in the place where the priests' feet stood firm, and then when the river returned, of course it flowed over those stones. Now that speaks to our hearts. I think these two heaps address conscience and heart. The first speaks to my conscience, and tells me I have died and risen with Christ. And, beloved friends, be assured of this, the more you allow your hearts to get exercised, and the more you seek to let the truth work upon your consciences and souls, the more you find the grand secret is -- insisting to your own heart upon what is true, not what you want to reach to, but what is true. As a beloved brother has so blessedly said, Christianity works by what it brings, not by what it finds. There is the secret of it. That is to say, I am put into this position -- not only has Christ died and risen again for me, but I have died and risen again with Him. In the one case I am emancipated from the house of bondage, in the other case I am brought into an entirely new resurrection status before God; and now I have got to hold that as true. But suppose I walk ever so faithfully and diligently in the truth of it, it would not make it one bit more true than it is; and suppose I walk ever so unfaithfully, suppose I am deficient or break down, it will not alter the truth one jot. You cannot add to the truth of it by devotedness. and you cannot take from the truth of it by carelessness. The thing is true, but of course if there is no faith in your soul to carry the thing out that is true, and to walk in the truth of the place that God in His wonderful grace has set us in, you lose the communion and joy that goes with it. It does not touch the question of your title, but it does touch the question of your communion; you have not then communion with God. And there is the mistake people make -- they confound title and communion. Communion has its place in connection with title, but the grand ground of everything is title. See what a wonderful fact that is -- I have died and risen with Christ.

I remember hearing not very long ago of a simple soul, who was reached by the truth of our death and resurrection with Christ. She was continually, prior to it, finding the vileness and the feebleness of her nature, that she could not control it; but when the great fact got hold of her conscience in the power of God's Spirit that she was dead and risen with Christ, in her own simple way she used it thus -- when she was vexed, and harassed, and troubled, she would say, "But you are dead"; "but you are dead." She insisted in faith upon the fact, and she got victory in it. And that is where victory is. I like to put victory in its right place; it is not victory by faith, but victory by the fact which faith accepts. I have died with Christ. Very good; now if that is true, let us go and carry it out. There are various ways in which the flesh seeks to assert itself, and what we have to do is, to have the recollectedness in faith of these facts in our souls. They are true, and if I fail to walk in the truth of them, they are true for all that still. Do not tell me it is a question of experience. I am insisting upon the great fact of our having died and risen again with Christ; we have parted company in His death and resurrection with everything that was uncontrollable and vile before God, and there is the measure of God's thought about it, it is all left behind in death.

I have often heard people say that you have to put your will on God's side. Your will is sin, Lord help us to remember that. Do not talk about putting your will on God's side -- your having a will is sin. You ought to have God's will, not your will. Christ could say, because He was perfect intrinsically in His own nature, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," not His own will, though He was perfect; the will of God was the spring and motive of everything in His own soul. What I say is this -- I ought not to have a will; if I have a will, and allow it, it proves that I am not in faith taking up the fact that I have died with Christ. A dead man has not got a will, or lust, or temper. There is the way you have to work it; I say I have died with Christ, and you cannot charge lust, or temper, or will, or inconsistency on a dead man.

But one word further as to this second memorial. It is not the witness to our conscience, like the first; but these stones put down in the midst of Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood firm, are very touching to the heart. It is the memorial of Christ's death -- not the memorial of your having died and risen with Him, that is Gilgal, but the memorial of His death, that you can sit on the heavenly or resurrection bank of the river in blessed fellowship, that you look there, but you can see nothing, save by faith. Jordan waters have rolled over those stones, but your heart is in fellowship with Him in His death. It is really the Lord's supper. It is one of the most beautiful illustrations of these twelve stones in the bed of the river. It is the memorial of His love in death, of what His soul passed through, it is not the memory of my victory. And there is where people mistake the Lord's table. They constantly make the Lord's table the place where they remember the Lord's victory and triumph for them; but the Lord's table is where I remember Christ in the sorrows and sufferings of His soul, and I forget myself altogether. I think of the One that traveled down into death for me. And that is what these stones are. And it says, "They are there to this day," that is spiritually, there is always the memorial of the cross; it is an abiding reality, never to be obliterated, it will never be forgotten, there in stands.

May the Lord in His grace give our hearts to praise Him
for this great deliverance. As I look at the cross, I not only see Christ’s death and resurrection for me, but I see equally my death and resurrection with Him -- I have parted company now through grace, with the old thing; I am not trying now to regulate this wretched flesh, for nothing could cure that.

That was a wonderful thing -- I have often thought it over in my own mind -- when Naaman, who was a leper, with all his grand position, a great man, mighty and honorable, who had won victories, but had this horrible disease, when he wanted to be cleansed, the message of God was, as it were, Nothing can cleanse defiled flesh but death -- death is the Red Sea, the very thing we are looking at, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” Naaman replies, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.” Afterwards, when he went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child. Nothing can end flesh but death. Law will not cure it; restrictions or demands on it, or holy good resolutions will not cure it; it will break out through them all; death has judicially ended it, and through grace a Christian can take that fact up to-day, and say, “Jesus died, and I died with Him, buried in His grave I lay.”

I have died with Christ, the whole thing has gone to faith in His death, and now I am risen with Him. The Lord grant we may enter into it in all the blessed reality of it, for His Name’s sake.

Chapter 7:

Joshua 5

Before we look at this chapter, there is a little point that I desire to say a word about Josh. 4:23, where Joshua explains how it was that they had crossed over the Jordan. Of course it was a divine explanation, still, it is an explanation:

For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over.

Now that is a very interesting point, because you will find in Ex. 15 that Moses, in his song after they had passed through the Red Sea, in faith goes on to the Jordan, just as Joshua in this explanation goes back to the Red Sea. Moses does not rest merely in the fact of their having passed through the sea, but he brings in everything; indeed, he goes on into the millennium in that song, “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.” His faith reaches out into the fulness of redemption. Not only does he say, “Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation” -- that was the present effect of their having crossed the sea -- but he says, “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance,” that is going across Jordan; so that everything is accomplished in redemption. The whole purposes of God, both with regard to their being brought out and to their being brought in (because those are the two things) were made good in redemption -- no experience at all, remember. That is a great point. Experience has its place, of course; realization has its place, as we shall see presently, and very important too; but the accomplishment of God’s sovereign purpose and grace, through the singlehanded victory of our Lord Jesus Christ for us, laid the foundation for everything in the purpose of God. So that where there was faith to take it up, as there was in Moses in his song, he celebrates everything that properly speaking comes into that redemption -- the passage of the Jordan, the being brought into the inheritance, and not only that, but positively the millennium, “the Lord shall reign for ever and ever.” It is a great help to our souls, to see the whole thing done there in redemption; and therefore redemption, of which the Red Sea is the figure, contemplates the entire completion of the purposes of God.

Joshua then, in this 4th chapter in his explanation to the people of how it was they had crossed over Jordan, goes back to redemption; he connects it with the Red Sea. And it is a very important thing to see where they are separated and where they are connected, because they are connected for redemption, but they are separated for experience. Where it is a question of our experience of the thing, that is Jordan alone. Where it is a question of the redemption being accomplished, Jordan and the Red Sea go together. That is the reason why it is linked in here, and that makes the thing complete. Moses looks on in faith, Joshua goes back in faith and puts them both together. Just as the Lord dried up the one, so He dried up the other. But it was God that did it, it was God that brought them out through the sea, it was God that brought them in through the Jordan. The same power that opened the sea opened the river. They passed through the sea upon dry land, and they passed through the river upon dry land. But when it was a question of their souls’ experience, then the things are separated. And that is very important, and I will tell you why. If you put them together for experience, as some people do, you would have your experience coming into redemption. But it is entirely outside experience. Christ’s redemption is a thing, assuredly for us, but we had no part in it at all, He did it all alone. It was done for us most fully and perfectly, so much so that when we come to Jordan and it is a question of our souls entering experimentally into the blessed fact of our having died and risen with Christ in order to enjoy our life beyond, there it is all experience; but no experience in the other.

Another point that makes that even more simple and clear is, there was no association in the Red Sea, and there was in the Jordan. The people stood still and saw the salvation of God, but in the Jordan the people followed the ark. There was separation between them and the ark, so as to give the ark its place of pre-eminence, but still they went down after it, they followed it through the river; whereas in the Red Sea they looked and saw God’s salvation accomplished.

Now we have to look this evening at some of the great effects in this 5th chapter. And the first great effect is this, that the whole power of the enemy, and the whole spirit that was in the enemy, is entirely taken from him in connection with the victory which was accomplished at Jordan. As soon as ever all these enemies that were on the other side heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan, which was in figure Christ’s death and resurrection, and our death and resurrection with Him, the whole spirit of the enemy was broken. That is a very blessed thing, because the spirit being out of an enemy is a
wonderful comfort to our souls, it is a beaten enemy we have got to do with, there is no more spirit left in him. It was the passage of the Jordan, the wonderful victory which was achieved there by the ark, their being identified, no doubt, with it, but it was the drying up, so to speak, of the last source where the enemy had his power. And if a Christian has died and risen with Christ, and in one sense every Christian has, he is out of the reach of the enemy. You cannot charge a dead man with lust or with sin. It is not that he has got anything in him that is different, but he has died with Christ, there is where the secret is; the secret of the emancipation is in death, we have died with Christ. That is a wonderful thing, if faith enters into it, that is what we find in the Jordan, we have died with Christ. It was the end of human life, and of the power of the enemy where the enemy had power, because it is in human life, our life down here, that the enemy has power. But we have died with Christ, and therefore his power is gone. A dead man is out of his reach, it is a living man he can touch, not a dead man; a dead man has as well left the sphere where the whole power of the enemy was displayed. That is what makes the figure so blessed and wonderful for us, and that is what really affected the enemies on the other side. When the kings of the Amorites and the Canaanites heard that the waters of Jordan were dried up from before the children of Israel, there was no more spirit left in them because of the children of Israel. It is Christ’s victory that breaks the spirit of the foe, it is not our victory. Of course we were associated, thank God, with it, but it was Christ’s victory. And that is the reason of the distance between the ark and the people, they were identified with it, but still there was a space between them, so that the whole victory should be entirely that of the ark. And that is a great comfort, because we have to foot the way with the enemy, we meet the foe on the other side. It is not that the devil does not harass us as we go through the wilderness, because of course he does, but it is a very different kind of thing. He harasses us through circumstances, through various things that happen to us as we pass along, the ups and downs of the way, harasses us too through acting upon our flesh, no question of it. But now the tactics were all changed, and here we have that which led to the tactics being changed. You know the devil’s tactics since the death of Jesus are quite different from what they were before. It is not like an open and above-board enemy we have to foot the way with; now the character of the thing is (and you will find it more particularly in the epistle to the Ephesians) wiles, pitfalls, snares, hidden deceits, delusions of different kinds, that is how he works now. He does not come like an open devil, but concealing himself, he comes under various wiles and snares, comes with baits, which, as I was saying last week, cover a hook. And if you consult the book of Joshua, you will find that was the character of the warfare, and that is the character of Satan’s warfare with us now.

Now that gives rise to what immediately follows this. I suppose you could hardly find an injunction in scripture placed in a more remarkable position than what follows this verse.

When the kings of the Amorites and of the Canaanites heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over,

that their heart melted, neither was there any spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel. At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives.

If you and I were speaking of it, we should say that was the very time they did not want them. Yet that is the very time the Lord says that the sharp knife comes in. “Make you sharp knives,” not blunt, not insufficient for the work, but sharp, keen-edged, knives that will cut. “Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise the children of Israel again the second time.” Now what is the meaning of that?

It is very important for us to get clear with regard to the two aspects of circumcision in scripture. We must turn to the New Testament scripture to bring that clearly out -- (Col. 2:11) “In whom,” that is, in Christ, “in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh” -- it is well known that “sins” here ought to be left out, it is not a question of sins at all, it is a question of the flesh as a whole, that is the meaning of the body of the flesh, the whole principle of the thing, you have put that off in the circumcision of Christ (the circumcision of Christ of course means the death of Christ), “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” Now that is what took place in Jordan, and of that Gilgal was the witness; because there were stones taken up out of Jordan and placed at Gilgal, and those stones were the great evidence and token of this New Testament truth, that there in the death of Christ the whole principle of the flesh came to an end before God, that all that we were as children of Adam came to an end judicially in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ before God, of which Jordan was the figure.

Now that is the first great thing, as a Christian I have been circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, the fleshly principle is put off -- that is my position before God. I have got practically to put it off -- that is another thing; that is to say, in my practical ways I have got to be up to my position. But my position is the thing that defines my practical ways, not my practical ways my position. My position is in Christ risen in whose death God has got rid of the flesh. Now God says to me, as it were, I do not want to see one bit of that about you, because I have got rid of it. But it was in death God got rid of it; it was not patching it up, or making it better, or turning Ishmael into Isaac. You cannot do anything that will repair one thing about yourself. Reparation and all that sort of thing is short of Christianity. The whole principle of Christianity is this, that God has ended judicially in the death of Christ the old man, there the old man as a child of Adam is gone from His sight, and there is entirely a new thing; it is not part new but altogether new, a new man entirely in the risen Christ, the old is gone.

Jesus died and I died with Him,
Buried in His grave I lay.

There is an end of it. God says, as it were, I have got rid of that. That is the first meaning of circumcision, that is circumcision, as set forth in Col. 2.

What we are looking at in this 5th of Joshua is the second
aspect of circumcision, which you find in Col. 3; this is practical circumcision. There is where the sharp knife comes in. He says, “Take thee sharp knives, and circumcise the children of Israel again the second time.” And the reason why this was done was that the males which came out of Egypt died because of their disobedience, the whole generation passed away, and the children that were born to them after they came out were not circumcised in the wilderness, because the wilderness was not the place for circumcision. The wilderness was the place where flesh was tested, looking at the second aspect of it, not the whole of it, but that second part from Ex. 20 onwards, from Mount Sinai until they came to Jordan, the whole principle of flesh came out there, and was tested under law. When you think of flesh you must always in your mind let in the idea of law; law and flesh always, I believe, go together. And I will tell you why. The law had to do with flesh, it had reference to flesh in the position in which man in the flesh placed himself, he put himself under restriction. And permit me to say this to you, the whole principle of restriction is the principle of law; there is not a vestige of Christianity in it; “touch not, taste not, handle not,” that is the legal principle, and the strength of it is in that, “the strength of sin is the law.” Oh, if we could only get people to believe that. Yet you can test it with your children. You say to your child, “Do not touch that,” -- that is the very thing he will go and touch, the very restriction calls out the desire. If I put myself under a restriction, the whole power of my nature and flesh goes in the direction to break through that bond, because “it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” -- that is the principle. There is only one cure for that, and that is death, the obliteration of it entirely, judicially before God in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ -- there is no other cure for it. But now God says, I want you to be up to what I have done, I want you to take away all the hindrances you have put in the way of your being in Christ, I want you to rid yourselves of every single thing that escapes, the knife is blunt, it does not cut clean or deep; it does not remove all these excrescences; the edge of it wants to be turned practically and really against every single thing, so that there may not be a loophole for the enemy to get an advantage.

Now the next thing that follows, which really puts a stamp upon Gilgal, is this, and very blessed it is too they kept the Passover. First of all they were circumcised, to this Col. 3 answers, where it says,

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.

That is very interesting, because there the apostle does not allow you a life at all; he says, “Mortify your members,” members are not life, they are the moral members of the old man, not the members of your body -- that would make you ascetics -- but he defines the members, fornication, uncleanness, and so on. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,” because, he says, you are dead, you have got a life in connection with Christ risen, but you have got no life here, but you have the moral members of your old man. Put to death practically your members, that is, “deadify” practically what is dead. Col. 3. answers to Josh. 5, and Col. 2 answers to Josh. 4. The circumcision of Christ in Col. 2. answers to Jordan in Josh. 4; and the sharp knives and the circumcision in Josh. 5 answer to Col. 3.

Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.

He does not allow that you have a life down here at all, so completely does he look at the old thing as being ended.

Now that opens the way for what follows this. We read that “the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal” -- the spot which got all its characteristic and definiteness from this -- “and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.” Now that is beautiful. When they were in the full results of redemption, in God’s own land, the territory that God had purposed in His own heart for them -- He had brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea and brought them into Canaan through the open waters of the Jordan -- and when they were there, circumcised, they sit down to celebrate the Passover. See what a wonderful thing this is. They kept the Passover on the fourteenth day at even in the plains of Jericho. They celebrated redemption when they were in God’s own land. I know nothing more touching than that. What a different sort of celebration that was from the night of the Passover in Egypt, and from the time when they kept it in the wilderness. On the night of the Passover itself, in Ex. 12, there was the terror, and fear, and anguish that connected itself
with Egypt attaching to them. When they kept it in the desert, as we know they did, there were the circumstances of the wilderness attaching to them. But when they kept it in Canaan, in the plains of Jericho, I believe it answers exactly to God’s normal thought to us in the Lord’s supper. It is a heavenly remembrance of the once crucified Jesus, whose blood has settled everything for God and for us. That is what that keeping of the Passover here answered to, not the Passover in Egypt, not the Passover in the desert, very blessed, though they were in their place, but the Passover now, when they were in the full results of the redemption which God had accomplished, by His own power, and were brought into the land which His own heart had designed and purposed for them. Circumcision first, the celebration of the Passover next.

Then there is one thing more, and that is, that now God feeds them, the circumcision knife is most important, but it is not food. The knife will remove the excrescences and the practical manifestations of all that God has really got rid of before Himself, and I believe in my soul what Christians want is this knife. That is to say, it is this practical abnegation to death of all that judicially has been condemned. It is a grand thing to keep that clear in our souls, that God has got rid of it, and does not see one bit of it before Himself. But then, on that ground God says, I will not permit you to allow a bit of it. And therefore the apostle says, “Our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin,” that is, the principle of sin, “might be annulled, that henceforth we should not be the servants of sin.” We were sin’s slaves before, we are not to be sin’s slaves now, we are free. “Free” in scripture never means that the thing is not there, but that we are not under its dominion. There is the great mistake that many beloved people have made with regard to it; when they talk of being free from sin, they think that sin is not there. No; the meaning of it is I am no longer under its dominion: I have got the flesh in me, and always shall until I drop this poor vile body, but God has got rid of the whole principle of that as standing before Himself. He has judicially condemned and put it in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ out of His sight; and He says to me, as it were, “The flesh is in you, but I do not want you to allow one motion of it; on the contrary I insist on your practically accepting what is true really of you.” And this is where the sharp knife comes in. There would be no force in circumcision if the flesh was not there. If God says to me, “You must take a sharp knife and circumcise,” it is as much as to say the flesh is there. And if people say they have got rid of it they are denying the word of God. You do not want a sharp knife if it is not there or if it is changed; it is there unaltered, and therefore you want the sharp knife to reduce it practically to silence as God has judicially condemned it. Now that is most important, and I believe in this lies the secret of the weakness in Christians, that they are not using the circumcision knife. Thank God, every Christian is in a sense circumcised, but they do not practically circumcise; the knife has got blunt somehow or other, they do not use the sharp knife in faith and liberty. There are those who try to bring the law in, but instead of the law it should be the knife. Beloved brother or sister, if you are trying the law, try the knife instead. Never forget this -- the law allows the flesh; it is the flesh it puts under restriction. I suppose no one here to-night would say you would put the new life under restriction. You would not say to the new life, -- Do not touch this, or that, or the other thing. But then, if you say that to the flesh, you are giving the flesh a position, allowing it as a living thing, giving it a status. You see restriction is quite a different thing from the knife; the knife is that which disallows the thing, the law is that which allows it. The law allows it, but says, “I will not let you move”; but still there it is. I will tell you what it is -- handcuffs; I will allow you, but I will handcuff you. But the knife says, I disallow you, I abnegate you to death, I totally and completely refuse you; I do not put you under any restriction, but I totally disallow you. “Mortify your members”; putting them under restriction is the very opposite to “mortify,” it is really giving them a life.

Now I want you to look at this a little further. That is the negative side of the truth -- the getting rid of practically all that God in His infinite wonderful grace has got rid of judicially. But now we come to what is positive. God says, as it were, “To fight you must be fed, and I have got food for you.” And therefore we read,

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.

Now that was the food that was suited to the new position God had brought them into. It has been said, and I have no doubt truly, that the meaning of the old corn of the land was -- it was the food that grew there -- Christ in the new heavenly blessed place and circumstances He has gone into, a heavenly, victorious, triumphant Christ, who passed through everything and has gone into heaven; that is the old corn of the land, food suited to Canaan. It is very beautiful to see all these little points in the types of scripture with regard to the different ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ is set before us.

And now mark this -- the manna ceased. But then it is interesting to see that they had manna into Canaan, at any rate. I suppose that is the reason why some people think we do not want manna now, because it says here the manna ceased; indeed, that passage was brought up to me as supporting that objection. But it is a very stupid objection, because you know very well the people of Israel were not in the wilderness and in Canaan at the same period of their life as we are. They were in the wilderness one part of their life, and they were in Canaan another part of their life; whereas we Christians are passing through the desert and yet at the same time seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus during the same term of our natural life down here though the experiences of the two are distinct, and do not go on at the same moment. Our position is that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ, and yet we are down here in this world, and if we are according to God’s mind it is a desert to us, and therefore we want manna. But the children of Israel did eat manna after they went into Canaan; no doubt it ceased, but still they had it in the land. And you will find, as a matter of fact, if it is a question of our heavenly joys, or conflict, or place, if it is a question of what we have to meet in heaven, we want the heavenly food for that; nothing will nourish our souls but that; we want the heavenly Christ to
and they ate the old corn of the land before ever they fought a battle. And mark what follows,

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

Now there is a very important principle. It is perfectly evident that the form which this mysterious person assumed, with his drawn sword in his hand, told now that it was conflict. They are going to fight now -- not a fight to get possession but to keep possession, and to enjoy possession. God gave them possession, He brought them across Jordan and placed them in Canaan. It was God who opened the river for them, and says, I have given you every spot that the sole of your feet shall tread upon. They were to put the sole of their foot on the territory, and thus they were to take possession. I quite admit they did not take possession of all, but still that was their title. God says, I will put you there, and the enemy will try to thrust you out, but you must hold your own. That shows the character of the thing.

And then there is another thing that is very important, and that is, it is such an intensely direct warfare there is no neutrality in it, you must be either on one side or the other, you cannot find a halfway house as it were in this warfare, you cannot be a little bit here and a little bit there; heavenly warfare allows of no neutrality, “Art thou for us or for our adversaries?” That is Joshua’s own word; he saw this man with drawn sword, and he clearly understood the meaning of it -- there is nothing before us but fighting. Now the question is, whose side are you on? See how clearly he apprehended that. He answers, No, but I am come as captain of the Lord’s host. Joshua did not know who the wonderful person was that he spoke to; he says, I am the leader, “as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” And Joshua says, “What saith my Lord?” And now I want to point out to you a very important thing, and exceedingly beautiful too. Here is evidently the picture of our Lord Jesus Christ placing Himself at the head of His people, to conduct them as the leader in all their victories; as captain of the Lord’s host He has come to take command. Joshua must have felt very small indeed. It is not an ordinary common soldier that Joshua challenges with regard to neutrality -- and all right enough too -- but he says, I am the leader, I am placing myself at the head of My people whom I have redeemed, brought through the open waters of the Jordan and brought into this territory, “as captain of the Lord’s host am I now come.” And then Joshua’s eyes got opened at once as to who this wonderful person was, and he says, “What saith my lord unto his servant?” He recognizes now the dignity of the person.

And the captain of the Lord’s host said to Joshua, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Now that was the very same word that was spoken when Moses drew near to look at the burning bush before redemption was accomplished, when God made known His purposes to him, and told him what was in His heart, that He had seen the affliction of His people, and heard their cry, and knew their sorrows, and said, “I am come down myself to do it, you might think you do a great deal, but I am come to deliver them, they are dear to me; I will send you, but I am the doer.” O would to God the Lord’s servants only remembered that a little more: we make ourselves so much agents and actors, and I do
not know what, instead of vessels. It is God that does the work, “the work that is done on the earth He doeth it Himself” -- “I am come down, I am going to effect this extrication, I am going to bring out and I am going to bring in,” and He says to Moses, “Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet” -- the very same thing he says to Joshua. And what does that say to us? Where it is a question of God’s accomplishing redemption, God insists on the holiness that is due to His person, and where it is a question of fighting the Lord’s battles, He insists on the holiness due to Himself. The holiness that was needed in order to listen to the communications of His heart with regard to redemption is the holiness that is needed in order to listen to the communications of His heart with regard to the conflicts in Canaan. You have got to do with God, and it is the very presentation the Lord Jesus Christ makes of Himself in Philadelphia. You remember what He says when He addresses the church there. These things saith the One in whom everything is summed up, the Amen -- you never get the Amen in anybody else -- you will get breakdown, and failure, and departure, and inconsistency, in everybody else -- these things saith the One that ratifies everything in His own person, “He that is holy, he that is true.” Now think of that. You and I have got to do with our Lord Jesus Christ, with God, with one who is holy and true, of whom holiness and truth are the characteristics. And may I say this other little word -- personal holiness of course, but, if you please, corporate holiness too. I thank God with all my heart and soul where there is the desire for holiness amongst God’s own beloved people; the Lord in His infinite grace impel our hearts more strongly on the Divine lines with regard to it! But, beloved friends, the holiness (which means the separation to God) that He must have with us personally must characterize us collectively, else you will have, I say it without irreverence, an unequal Christ. Do you think that Christ insists upon practical personal holiness in you and me, and that He will not have that in our collective associations? It is most dreadful to think of it. Insist upon it personally, but the more you do you must insist upon it collectively. I say we must have it corporately as well as personally, in the collective as in the individual. Whatever is affirmed of the individual is equally affirmed of the collective. And there is the terrible danger of the present moment. People will put up with any sort of corporate association. Now if there is anything important, it is what is due to His name. This was the thought of Jehovah when He had a people upon earth, He says, “I am going to dwell amongst you”; and the moment you get that thought before your soul you get the right thought of separation. Do you remember how Jacob got it? Jacob was wandering in Laban’s country, and I do not know what kind of things got attached to him, but at last God said to him, I want you to turn your face toward the house of God, “Arise and go to Bethel.” And the moment Jacob got to the house of God before Him, he says, We have got idols here, dirty garments here -- he never thought of it before, not even when he was putting up that beautiful altar that he called El-elehe-Israel -- very sentimental and very selfish. But the moment he got the house of God before his thoughts, he says, as it were, “We must be clean, put away the filthy garments and idols, we are going to the house of God, and we must be suitable to it.” Do not forget those words the captain of the Lord’s host said to Joshua, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And Joshua did so.”

The Lord in His grace give our hearts to enter in to it, and take in the blessedness of those things that characterize Gilgal; that which really puts us in practical possession is circumcision, then we keep the Passover, the remembrance of redemption, in God’s country, we feed upon the old corn of the land, and we listen to this claim of absolute holiness.
“Waiting”

There is a great difference in the way the above subject is looked at by the blessed Lord in Luke 12 and John 16. Both these conditions of heart and soul, namely, the one enjoined in Luke and that enjoined in John, ought to be found in the saints at this present time. Luke regards us as going through a hostile scene, even this poor ruined world, and therefore there is the moral condition of heart looked for (as Luke’s gospel always takes up the moral side of things) in view of the Lord’s coming. He is absent, and while we are waiting for Him to come, we have that word, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That is a blessed word, “It is your Father’s good pleasure.” Here in this world is the very scene of the Father’s interest and care, watchfulness and love. We are in the wilderness, where we want it; by-and-by we shall be in a place where we shall not want it; this is one thing that makes the wilderness so blessed; it is the only spot where God can show us how He cares for us. We shall not want His care in heaven, because we shall have exchanged all the circumstances where we needed it for His presence, where is fulness of joy; there no care can come. This wilderness world, on the contrary, is the place of care; and I do not know anything that sits heavier upon us than care. The Lord puts care along with a number of other things that we would never think of classing with it -- “The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.” Any one would say riches are deceitful things; but cares are as choking as riches; I do not mean cares about wrong things, but cares about right things. It is, in truth, a slight upon our Father’s interest that we wait for their lord, “is a very practical word, and one which should touch our hearts; and let me say that anything which contravenes it in connection with our circumstances in this world ought not to be allowed, because it is not only that I am waiting for Christ, but the moral impress of that is to display itself in my actions and circumstances. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching”; and then most remarkable words follow: “Verily I say unto you, he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and shall come forth and serve them.” Think of the grace of His heart, who, whilst He keeps alive by His Spirit the sense of watchfulness, rewards us for what is the fruit of His own love. If we do watch, what is it? It is the fruit of a love whose watching is unfailing. We are not to sit down now, we are to be on the watch; but when He does release us, He will say, “Now you can sit down, now I am coming forth to serve.” Christ never gives up the servant’s place -- He is a servant for ever. What a wonderful thing! the Son of God came down into

Practical Truths

you get, “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning.” Now, there are two things that become us while passing through this present world; we want the girdle and the lamp. We shall not want the girdle and the light in heaven -- we shall be in a place where no girdle will be needed, and where it is all brightness -- but we want the girdle here. What a moment it will be when we are in the consciousness of having been introduced into a place where a girdle will not be needed. You cannot let your affections out now, you will smart for it if you do; but there we can let them out without let or hindrance, because everything will suit the presence of God, and we shall have dropped the thing that constantly seeks a place of prominence in us now, and we shall not need the lamp which we do want here. There is something very beautiful in that little word, “Let your loins be girded about.” Does it not challenge us in many ways? Are we circumspect? Are the affections and spiritual judgment braced up? Does the world see in me the bearing, the likeness of a person that is waiting for Christ? Are we like unto men that wait for their lord? I grant you it may be said, “We do wait for Him”; but does that produce a moral effect upon us? Think of what a man waiting for his lord would exhibit in all his ways; everything in readiness, everything prepared, nothing unsettled, the eye free, the heart free, and the affections going out towards that one spot from whence His well-known presence will come forth. We are to be the expression of it; our very appearance, as it were, is to testify of this to the world -- everything packed up and sent on before, and we ourselves waiting only for Christ. "Like unto men that wait for their lord,” is a very practical word, and one which should touch our hearts; and let me say that anything which contravenes it in connection with our circumstances in this world ought not to be allowed, because it is not only that I am to be waiting for Christ, but the moral impress of that is to display itself in my actions and circumstances. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching”; and then most remarkable words follow: “Verily I say unto you, he shall gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and shall come forth and serve them.” Think of the grace of His heart, who, whilst He keeps alive by His Spirit the sense of watchfulness, rewards us for what is the fruit of His own love. If we do watch, what is it? It is the fruit of a love whose watching is unfailing. We are not to sit down now, we are to be on the watch; but when He does release us, He will say, “Now you can sit down, now I am coming forth to serve.” Christ never gives up the servant’s place -- He is a servant for ever. What a wonderful thing! the Son of God came down into
this world, and became a servant, and will never give it up.

Are you and I walking like the heirs of such things as these? “He shall gird himself; and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” That is the way Luke speaks of the coming of the Lord. Now let us turn for a moment to John; there we get it in another way. We do not find a moral condition looked for as in Luke, but we are in the presence of a higher thing; both ought to be found together in us. In John it is not so much the Lord speaking of His coming to us here, but, on the contrary, it is His going away. In Luke it is as if He said, “I am coming back”; in John, “I am going away; I am about to transfer your hopes and expectations to another place.” Then in John 14, He speaks of the Father’s house. Now we know but in part what kind of a place the Father’s house will be: it is the best that His love could give, and will in all respects answer to that love; but we do know the Father’s heart, we know Himself: it is by this love all is measured, but there is no measure to the love itself; it passes knowledge. All the Father’s heart has been manifested in the Son of His love; and we know the house will be commensurate with who from the first is looked at as rejected and refused, departs out of this world, goes on high, thus transferring our hearts and hopes into that bright and blessed place where He Himself is; and tells us if He goes away He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also. He goes away, that we may no longer be detained as to our affections where He is not; oh, how little are we thus sanctified by His absence! (See John 16:19.) How little do we mourn His absence here! not only reminded of Him by His Spirit, but longing for His return, who won our hearts in humiliation, and satisfied them in glory.

This twofold condition of soul, beloved, ought, I judge, to be found in us at this present moment; that, looked at as passing through the wilderness, we are to walk it girded and with the expectancy and bright the thought of His coming in our hearts, watching and ready. There is something blessed in the thought of a vigil-keeper, awake and alert; when all around is asleep and buried in rest, he is watching, he has the light, and his heart is expecting his Lord. Is that the next thing that is before us, the dearest and brightest vision filling our sight? What an effect it would have on us! I feel it would separate us from a thousand things, it would carry our interests out of earth. And is that too much? Is it too much to say that the blessed One who came down here, has gone up to heaven, and has translated my affections into that bright and blessed place where He my Lord is?

The Lord by His Spirit, beloved, give us to know what these things mean, to walk with girded loins; and burning lamps, and expecting hearts, through this world, and to be able to do so all the easier because our treasure, even the Lord Jesus Christ, has gone into heaven, in all the perfection of that glory of which He Himself is the brightness, for His own name’s sake.

“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.

“A little while” -- He’ll come again, Let us the precious hours redeem; Our only grief to give Him pain, Our joy to serve and follow Him. Watching and ready may we be, As those that wait their Lord to see.

“A little while -- twill soon be past, Why should we shun the promised cross? O let us in His footsteps haste, Counting for Him all else but loss: For how will recompense His smile, The sufferings of this “little while.”

“A little while” -- come, Savior, come! For Thee Thy bride has tarried long; Take Thy poor waiting pilgrims home, To sing the new eternal song: To see Thy glory, and to be In everything conformed to Thee.

J. G. Deck

Devotedness
2 Samuel 23:13-17

The present condition of things around us is bewildering and embarrassing in the extreme. It is a day of poverty and weakness. Boasting or assumption ill becomes those who have but “a little strength.” One has said, “If I look within I am miserable; if I look around, I am confounded; but if I look up, all is bright and beautiful”; is it then not worse than useless to waste the moments that are passing in looking whence nothing can come but disappointment and vexation?

But some one may say: That is a beautiful theory, but have we no responsibilities in the directions expressed in the words “within” and “around”? and is it a matter of no importance that these should be answered? The reply is, yes. And they are best sustained and met by setting the “mind on things above, not on things on the earth”; that is, occupation with Christ, where He is, is the way to the possession of that which nothing can cloud, dim, or take away; and when it is so, these responsibilities I have spoken of are fulfilled according to the thoughts and mind of Christ -- a matter of primary importance to a true heart.

He that has Christ before him, as the One to be pleased, as the One whose interests are to be consulted, is the very one who will do the best for all under Christ, according to His mind and His thoughts; and this, let it be observed, is not each one, according to his own thoughts or judgment, doing what he thinks will suit Christ, but first learning from nearness to, and intimacy with the Lord, what He would desire, and then going forth, undaunted by either difficulties or dangers, to accomplish that desire.

It is clear that before the desires of a person can command
The desires of one whom I neither know nor value, I should not care to make myself acquainted with; not so of one I valued and loved; how much more of One has eclipsed and superseded everything else in my heart, and has no rival there! And this, I should say in starting, characterizes devotedness. The one who is devoted is abstracted from all else by an object which has so completely engrossed and occupied the heart, that all thought of self-interest, or any other interest, is buried in the One who is my object. For example, look at Mary, in John 20. What does she care for all else but Christ? Nothing. The early dawn, while it was yet dark, found her on her way to the only spot on earth that had now an interest for her -- the tomb of Jesus. And when she comes to find Him not there, how inconsolably does she tell her tale of sorrow to Peter and John! “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher; and I know not where they have laid Him.” And what a contrast their ways to hers! each satisfies himself of the accuracy of her report, and then they return to the circle of their interests on earth -- “their own home.” Oh, what a picture! Not so Mary: she return home? without Him she has no home, nothing. She has a true heart -- very ignorant, no doubt; ignorant too, where she ought not -- yet, for all that, she is devoted; see how she lingers about that empty tomb! Is she not here, like another Ruth, saying, “Where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried”? But there is even more than this, for, if she is inconsolable without Him, and weeps as if her heart would break, see how she never calculates or measures for a moment; poor, weak feeble woman as she is in body, such is her love, that if she only knew where He is she is prepared to come and take Him away. Him, Him, Him! is the sum-total of her thoughts; difficulties or hindrances she thinks not of. What a picture! Prudence ever calculates; devotedness never! But there is even more, and a striking characteristic too, of one who is devoted; for when she finds Him -- alive, too, as He was, and not dead -- the love that was inconsolable without Him, is prepared now that she has seen Him, to do whatever He desires, though she never see Him again (vv. 16-18). Beautiful picture of its kind it is; presenting these two marked features of a devoted heart; first, and above all, the object Himself, and all else as nothing compared with Him. Second, and next to Himself, His wishes -- His desires.

Let us look at another instance; is not John (John 1) a man devoted to an object? “Sent to bear witness of that light”; in himself what was he? Not (what many would be now-a-days) something because of Christ. John is nothing. What is a voice crying in the wilderness? They come out from Jerusalem, Judea, and the region round about Jordan, to one who has himself found an object in Christ that has abstracted him from all else, and made him a stranger and a lonely man in the midst of a crowd; and not only this, but whose own soul so dwells in delight and satisfaction in this One Himself; that, looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

But perfect and admirable as all this is in its way, it is not the brightest scene in the devotedness of John; for we find in ch. 3 that he takes occasion by the question which had arisen between some of his disciples and the Jews, to let out what the governing object of his heart was. What was he? He was but a voice, but he was the friend of the Bridegroom; it was the Bridegroom he wanted to hear; it was His voice delighted John; yet not this only, but so satisfying was this blessed Bridegroom, Him who is not only above all, but Him who has all things given Him by the Father who loved Him, that self fades away, is dead; and that which announces it, proclaims most blessedly the superiority of Christ. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John seems to me here like another Queen of Sheba. Such tidings of the fame of Solomon reached her in her own land, that she determined to see it for herself; great as was the report which created longings and yearnings in her heart, it was as nothing to the reality, namely, Solomon’s wisdom, the house that he had built, the meat of his table, the attendance of his ministers, his ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, which when she had seen with her eyes, there was no more spirit in her; the magnificence of this sight paled all else before her. Yet great as was the effect thus produced in her, it is, a glory of a higher order that commands John here; he stands, as it were, on another mount of transfiguration, and sees no man save “Jesus only”; and as that one object abstracts him away from all besides, do you not in those words, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” hear old Simeon joyfully say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

So far we have looked only at the power of an object which possesses and occupies; and we have looked at it, too, in illustrations, which, however remarkable and striking in themselves, are feeble to give any idea of true reality of Christ as an object; even the incident related in this history of David. With what power does that Blessed One in glory occupy my heart, when I am in the consciousness of being with Himself, where He is, as well as in the consciousness of how completely He was for me here. Just think, He gave Himself; allowed the shroud of judgment which encircled me to be wrapped around Himself; in His death closed volume 1 of my history, and in Himself risen from the dead and in glory, opened volume 2. How the greatness and magnificence of it passes all conception! He, that blessed One, who is in the bosom of the Father, came down here on earth to tell out the secrets of that bosom. He it was who became the Deliverer in the hour of our extremity and hopelessness, in the day of our dismay and despair, when we were absolutely intolerable to ourselves, when we had lost all self-respect, because we could not do what was right, and the dark garment of helplessness envelopes us in its folds, like Jonah in the depths of the sea; when the floods compassed us about; the weeds were wrapped about our head; we went down about us for ever; our night was setting in, and we were rapidly settling down in the darkness of death. Such was our condition when He entered the scene. He, the perfect, spotless Lamb of God, is born into the world He had made; is refused His own place among His own people (Israel), and in his own creation; glorifies His Father, where He had been dishonored and despised; and, finally, bears the judgment which rested on all; vindicates and establishes the righteousness of God, by closing for ever in His death the history of the man that offended against God, and at the same time yielded up His own life, in all its
personal excellency; is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and in Himself; so risen and in glory, becomes the Head of the new creation: and not only this, but by the Holy Ghost sent down, in answer to the glory of His person and work, we who believe are now united to Him where He is.

The second characteristic of a devoted heart is, that it makes itself acquainted with the desires of its object, and then unflinchingly sets itself to accomplish them. If Christ be my object, I seek to know His mind, His desires, and learning them, I allow nothing to stand in the way of my fulfilling them; and this is a solemn subject at this present moment, when it is remembered that there are multitudes of saints who act as if there were no expressed mind or desire of Christ, and multitudes besides, from whom better things might be expected, who defiantly ask for a command which indicates, to say the very least of it, a distance from the heart of Christ, and an absence of that waiting on Him, as well as of that intimacy with Him, that tarries not for a command, but seeks earnestly His mind, and makes haste to accomplish His desire at all cost. It is not by this meant that there are no New Testament precepts, but we mean to point out that low, wretched condition which satisfies itself with an indifference to the heart-yearnings or desires of Christ, by pleading the absence of a command.

The history in our passage furnishes abundant illustrations of what I seek to convey: -- David was in the cave of Adullam, rejected and disowned at this time, the conqueror of Goliath and deliverer of Israel though he be. There are a few, and only a few, who care so much for David that they will link their destiny with his, and that at a moment when, to sight at least, all is as dark as dark can be. How do they expect this? Why, where he is, there will they be. “And three of the thirty chiefs went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam.” David is the one they are thinking of; they want to be near him. Near him, did I say? -- they want to be with him: they refuse all else but that which connects them with him. If they are to be sharers with him in his triumphs and honors by-and-by, they will be partakers of his reproach and shame now. That which links them to it is the joy of their hearts, they will be with him; and while all around outside is dark, they within will company with him, and pass the hours of their vigil in waiting on the desires of his heart. They are in the place to know his wishes. Had they not been in the cave with David, they never would have heard his longing for water from the well of Bethlehem, and they never would have been in Adullam, if David had not himself eclipsed all else in their affections.

Then, see how they set themselves to meet the desires of David, how they were undaunted by the dangers and difficulties in the way, how they were carried by their devotedness to David over all the hindrances, and allowed nothing to stand in the way of their carrying out his desires; and so we read -- “And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.” They did not calculate or hesitate. David’s desire once known, the only thing thought of is meeting it. There might have been objectors; there might have been some who would say, “Wherefore is this waste?” It matters not to them; to fulfil David’s desire is their only thought. I feel as if the application of all this were self-evident; and yet when one looks around and asks, “Where do I see it?” one is confounded; and more so, as too many, if not most saints, are mere benefactors of men; the desires of Christ they neither know, nor seek to know: they are not where they could know them; they are thinking of man and his good, not of Christ and His glory. Do you reply, “But can you separate them?” I answer, “No,” provided you seek what suits Christ. He who consults what is due to Christ is the only one who really benefits man according to God’s mind: to human eyes it may be otherwise; but in the thoughts of God, the one who is true, faithful, and devoted to Christ, is the one who is most used to help, as well as most helpful to man.

To sum up, then: true devotedness consists in knowing Christ as the object that eclipses all others; in finding that it is Himself that alone satisfies my heart, so that the circle of His interests and desires becomes the circle of mine: where He is, there I must be, and being where He is -- that is, near enough to Him to know His desires and mind -- I set myself to accomplish them, and in so doing I take no account of difficulties, dangers, hindrances; even as David’s mighty men, who undismayed, broke through the hosts of the Philistines, that they might meet the desires of their captain.

The one who is devoted is carried in a love that rises superior to everything in its way, and breaks through every host that stands to hinder or oppose. The Lord give His people in these last days so to know and love His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave up His own precious life to put aside and end before God the history of that which grieved His love, that entire devotedness to Him may be the character of those who know Himself; and have tasted of His love.

Stay; choose not rashly, trembling heart;
For know’st thou not how griev’d thou art
If ever called upon to part,
E’en with one bound for heaven?
And, oh, we all are tried full soon;
How many a morn grows dark at noon;
And Death must rob of every boon
God hath in mercy given.
Be sure if thou hast turn’d thy face
Full heaven-ward as thy destin’d place,
God must, in His deliv’ring grace,
Provide a death scene here!
In on my heart -- on all below --
And with’ring winds around thee blow;
But thou shalt know Him near!
’Twere not enough, could we partake
Thy every thought, or joy, or ache;
E’en could’st thou bring Him down to make
Sweet company with thee;
He must away with all that clings
Of nature dust upon thy wings,
And then the emptied one He brings
Where none can walk but He!
Then He can call thy heart above,
And tell thee all His thoughts and love,
And give to thee -- a heav’n-bound dove --
Blest fellowship with Him!
Whence streams of life within thee flow,
While death close round thee here below --
Then, and then only, shalt thou know
Devotedness to Him!
The Wilderness -- The Land,
The Lessons of Each
Deuteronomy 8:1-9; 11:10-12; 26:1-11

You will find two very different experiences recorded in chs. 8 and 9 of this book. Ch. 8 sets before us the wilderness and its lessons. If I think of it as the place where every Christian is, though it is true also he belongs to heaven (seated in heavenly places in Christ), yet looking at the wilderness as the scene through which we are passing, the object and purport of it are clearly discernible.

In heaven there will be no broken hearts, no trials, no hunger, no thirst; but here the blessed God finds a place such as this is suited to display His heart as equal to it all; that the difficulties, the trials and sorrows, through which His people pass, do but afford Him the occasion for showing how He can care for His own. The blessed God charged Himself with the clothes and feet of His people these forty years! How wonderful! It is the greatness of His love that enables Him to enter into it all -- nothing too great and nothing too small for His care and interest. We on our side need the wilderness; it is a place in which dependence and subjection are put to the test. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, and know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years."

Now this is the wilderness; it is connected with God's ways with His people: and as I have observed, it is here we learn dependence and subjection. It was all a sandy waste before them and behind them, and just the place for them to endure it because you cannot help it; subjection, that you fall cross; and that is just the place to elicit the subjection of the heart.

It is wonderful, surely, how little we are cast on God; no matter how varied our circumstances are, there is one common point to be found in all our histories alike, namely, independence. It was independence in the first Adam in paradise, when he thought he could do better than God had done for him.

There is not one solitary thing in this world that ministers to you as a child of God, as a new creature in Christ Jesus. You are to count on God and none but God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as a man, was perfect in dependence and obedience. The first man in the garden of Eden, surrounded by all the tokens and marks of God's care, displayed his perfect independence: the second Man in the wilderness, without any subsidy, is perfect in dependence. He recommended, morally, the history of the nation. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." (See Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15.) They were in the wilderness; He was in the wilderness: only they broke down and failed everywhere -- He was perfect in it all. Christ recovered everything for God and secured every blessing for His own. Have we learned what it is, day by day, and moment by moment, to live by every word of God? There is nothing but restlessness and unreality in all around us; no quiet, no repose.

What a path that of dependence is! What would straits and difficulties be to a man that walked in that road? What were they to Caleb and Joshua? They were bread for them, and they could not be less than bread for us. What a wonderful display: the blessed God showing me He is above difficulties, and faith feeding upon them! The second lesson of the wilderness is subjection: how few of us know what it is! I do not mean resignation; resignation means that you endure it because you cannot help it; subjection, that you fall in with the will of God as the delight of your heart.

The wilderness is the scene where the will may be constantly crossed; and that is just the place to elicit the subjection of your heart. See its perfection in the second Adam (Matt. 11), "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." And this, observe, was at a moment when all had failed to meet His longing, loving heart. John doubted His being the Messiah; Israel refused Him; and the cities which had witnessed His mightiest works repented not. What a wonderful thing for the heart to find its rest in the fact that God has had His way! It is not that I cannot help it, but my joy and satisfaction when the will of God triumphs at my cost. If not so, when our desires are interrupted, our pathway broken in upon (it may be in good things, that were only the energy of the natural will), how disappointed with ourselves, (and shall I say it?) how almost disappointed with God; heart-broken oneself; and with the dreadful sensation of being disappointed with God! Oh, to be glad that God would have His own way, even if it breaks in upon cherished hopes and prospects; but nothing will impart this to us save implicit obedience and subjection, and a faith that will trust Him in the dark. "As for God, his way is perfect." "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Not a single affection of His heart is kept back or unexpressed; read them in the light of the sorrows of the heart of Jesus, and you will find how it will cheer you passing through the valley of the shadow of death. "Thou ledest thy people like a flock." Who is it that leads His sheep, keeps them in His hand, and watches over them day by day? There is but One, and His name one.

The Lord give us to draw the reason of His ways with us from the knowledge of His heart, then His will shall be our delight.

The end of ch. 8 describes the land as it is in itself; it is a region of plenty and satisfied desire. "A land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land
whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

But in Deut 9, the land is described in its contrast. In Egypt there is trouble connected with the best of things; they had trouble to procure the fertilizing streams of the Nile; Canaan, on the contrary, drank water of the rain of heaven, and the eyes of God were always on it, from the beginning to the end of the year.

The very best thing you possess in this world has trouble connected with it; who can tell when we may lose it? The sweeping desolations of death may come in upon it; and increased happiness does but widen the target at which death shoots his arrows. I may die to them or they may die to me; here we are in the presence of death; there we shall be in the presence of Christ.

The only place that can command or detain the eye of God now, is the spot where that blessed One is, and there I go to remember my sorrow no more; by faith I am now introduced into it, and share His joy. I love to think He cares for me in the wilderness; still I love to think He says, you shall know another place the exact contrast to it. Now what is to engage us in this place of rest and satisfaction? This we have in Deut. 26. "When thou art come in and possessest it, and dwellest therein." Every Christian has come in, but then it is another thing to take practical possession, or make it our own; and to dwell is to make it our home. Are you rather a visitor to earth upon His business, and a dweller in that home? A stranger here -- at home there? In Christendom the effort is to be what they are not. No one can work themselves up to be heavenly. I am to walk here in the sense of what I am in Christ. Do you dwell there? Have you possessed it? Can you say, Thank God, He has brought me in, given me possession, and now I dwell there; and the spot I possess is the very place where the Beloved One of God is crowned?

Thus we have looked at the wilderness and the land, the objects and purports of each. May our hearts largely profit by the lessons of both, while we have deeper and larger apprehensions by the Holy Ghost of our present place on high in Christ before God, as well as one with Him in glory, for His name’s sake. Amen.

"O Lord, how blest our journey,
Thou’ here on earth we roam,
Who find in Abba’s favor,
Our spirits’ present home:
For where Thou now art sitting
By faith we’ve found repose,
Free to look up to heaven,
Since Thou our Head arose.
"In spirit there already,
Soon we ourselves shall be,
In soul and body perfect,
All glorified, with Thee:
Thy Father’s smiles are cheering
The brief, but thorny way,
Thy Father’s house, the dwelling
Made ready for that day.
"The Comforter, now present,
Assures us of Thy love:
He is the blessed earnest
Of glory there above:
The river of Thy pleasure
Is what sustains us now;
Till Thy new name’s imprinted
On every sinless brow.
"Lord, we await Thy glory,
We have no home but there;
Where the adopted family,
With us Thy joy shall share;--
No place can fully please us,
Where Thou, O Lord, art not;
In Thee and with Thee ever,
Is found, by grace, our lot."

**Reality**

*Judges 7:1-8*

It is an immense comfort to meet with reality in this world, where everything is so confused, and there are so many mixed motives at work. God looks for reality. Nothing less suits His mind, or meets His thoughts. In the scripture which heads this page there are deeply solemn lessons on this subject, which we do well to ponder. May the Lord Himself, by His Spirit, teach us, making our hearts willing and subject to His word. In the previous chapter we find the Lord getting His instrument ready for His work. This is a principle of the deepest value. God’s instruments must not only be raised up by God Himself; they must be adapted and fitted by Himself for the work He has for them. Abundant instances and illustrations of this are to be found in the word. We shall only refer to one. God it was who raised up the man Moses to be the deliverer of His people Israel out of their cruel bondage. Of this Moses we read, “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). Nature would say, What a fitted, prepared weapon God has now at His hand! But this is the very thought which is short of the mind of God: for He will not, and does not accredit the qualifications of Egypt, but sends Moses to school (as we would say) for forty years, in order that he may be fitted and prepared and qualified for the work God has for him to do. Oh, what reality there is in all this. How real is the fact that God’s instruments must learn in God’s school. There is no such thing, reader, as purchasing commissions in His army; there all must rise from the ranks.

Now, in the history before us, the same principle is found. God raises up Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite, that through him God might deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. His family is poor in Manasseh, and like David, he is the least in his father’s house. Yet, what of all this? “Have not I sent thee?” withers up all such thoughts, and places a living reality before the soul.

Reader, have we known this? It is an easy thing in these days to put on an appearance before one another, and even to keep up, but do our own souls know the deep reality of
having to do with the living God? And here remark that what is so sweet in the exercises of soul to which the words, “Have not I sent thee?” and “Surely I will be with thee,” were a reply, is that what occupied the mind of Gideon was the relation between God and His people. “If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” Now let us turn and look at the steps -- shall I say the forms? -- of the school of God, in which this mighty man of valor was trained, and see how reality marks it all.

First. -- The relationship of peace must be set up between him and God. He is brought into the presence of God, and hears these words: “Peace unto thee,” fear not. Sweet, precious words! O what reality.

Secondly. -- As it was with himself; so must it be with his own family, namely, the relationship with God must be set up; and hence Gideon is set to work at home before he is sent out abroad. “And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said unto him Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the Lord thy God on the top of this rock, in the ordered place and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down” (Judg. 6:25, 26). Reader, what a searching principle is found here! God’s weapons are set to cut down the evil at home before they are used to cut it down abroad. It is the principle of 2 Tim. 2:21: “If a man therefore purge himself from these (see v. 21), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” There must not be in the Lord’s vessel that which is unsuited to the Lord. It is true that in the sovereignty of God He condescends to use a variety of means to bring about His own purposes. But this is not the thought of being a vessel for God, sanctified and meet for His use. What God looks for in His servants and people is reality. To use the expressive language of another God does not want “a lifeless finger-board to point along a way he neither leads nor follows.” He does want and desire one who is “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” who can endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ who warreth, not entangling himself with the affairs of this life, and who laboreth as an husbandman, having first been partaker the fruits. This is all reality, and this God looks for. He finds it in Gideon, the fruit, too, of His own gracious work with him. And now let us see how God looks for reality in the people who follow Gideon. He cannot trust His honor to the thirty-two thousand, they are too many for Him. What a solemn rebuke to the very thought that rises earliest and is cultivated latest in the natural mind. God will test that crowd. It cannot be that all are true to Him, some will surely go back. And so it is. When the ordinance of Deut. 20 is gone through, which simply set each one to count the cost -- to do, as it were, a sum in profit and loss -- out of the thirty-two thousand, only ten thousand are found ready to stand in the face of danger and loss. But God has not yet finished. He says, “The people are yet too many for me.” Most deeply solemn words these. Reader, He must work in a way which will leave no room for doubt that it is His hand that has wrought. So that the heart that is true to Him can say, “The Lord has done great things for us already.” And why? Because He well knew there was in Israel a haughty uplifted spirit that would credit themselves with victory. And now, mark, there is great force in the Lord’s words a second time to Gideon: “The people are yet too many; bring them down to the water, and I will try them for thee THERE; and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water; and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.” The significance of all this is striking! Out of the ten thousand which the previous testing had left, only three hundred are found to stand before and rise superior to the new test. And mark it attentively, reader, there are a greater number equal to the difficulty and danger than there are equal to what we may call the blessing; or, many who are able to face the danger fall before the blessing. But some one may say, What do you mean by all this? Was it wrong for thirsty people to drink water? Surely not. And that is not the point in the history at all, for the three hundred upon whom God set His seal of approval drank as well as the nine hundred and seven thousand who were sent away; but the point is, they used the water in passing, but were not engaged with it; the water which quenched their thirst and refreshed their body was not that which occupied their minds -- they had not time to halt, their hearts were in the work -- they were real and they exhibited reality. And, reader, has not this a solemn application to us in this day! How many a soul there who rises superior to difficulties that utterly breaks down in the presence of prosperity, or a position where they are well to do. Alas! how true it is that few of us can be trusted in sunshine (that is, when all is smooth around us). When tested by the Lord, those who bowed down were not fit for His use, any more than those who were sent back through fear or loss. And this is just the testing of the present hour, for God is bringing out the three hundred who are occupied with that which occupies Him. It is reality we need, dear reader. There is no lack in our day of head knowledge -- this is readily acquired, easily got up. Not only so, but nature likes it all, and turns it round to selfish purposes. In my mind, nothing is more sad or solemn than to see the way in which not a few, now-a-days, can talk about truth, and argue about it, who are themselves its living contradictions. Reality! reality! is the crying need of the day! Oh, reader, to be one of Christ’s three hundred in this day of His rejection -- to have found in Himself the real secret of superiority, not only to the difficulties and dangers, but as well to the prosperity, ease, and quiet of this day. Oh, to be in earnest -- to be real for Christ. To have, I do not say low thoughts of self; but no
thoughts of self at all, all thoughts fixed on Himself, the alone source and spring and channel of every blessing. Reader, be assured of it, in the history of every Christian, there is a time when he or she is being brought down to the water. When it is so, the Lord give us that occupation with Himself, and His thoughts, which will bear us above and carry us over the trial, and exhibit in that reality which is alone worthy of Him.

Jesus, we our cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,
All things else for Thee forsaken,
Thou from hence our all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All we’ve sought, or hoped, or known!
Yet! how rich is our condition,
While we prove the Lord our own.

Let the world despise and leave us,
They have left the Savior, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive us,
Thou art not, like them, untrue:
And, while Thou dost smile upon us,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends disown us –
Show Thy face, and all is bright.

Man may trouble and distress us,
’Twill but drive us to Thy breast;
Life with trials hard may press us,
Heaven will bring us sweeter rest.
O ’tis not in grief to harm us,
While Thy love is full and free;
O ’twere not in joy to charm us,
Were that joy unmix’d with Thee.

“At His Feet”

We find Mary at the feet of Jesus on three different occasions in her history, each one full of the deepest comfort and instruction. Let us look a little at them in their order.

That which stands first in moral order, is found in Luke 10.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?

Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word.

The next occasion finds her at His feet as a mourner (John 11). The bright day and dark day in her history, if I may so speak, serve to bring out the resource which He is to her. Lazarus, whom Jesus loved as well as Mary, has sickened and died; the desolations of the wilderness, the
sorrows of the way, are to be known. There is but one place where the sun goes not down at noon. A three days’ journey and no water found, and then what is discovered, bitter, taught Israel what sort of a place the wilderness was; and the tree cut down to sweeten the bitter waters, unfolded to them God’s interest and care, if they only would learn it. We know how Israel carried themselves at Marah (Ex. 15). Let us see Mary there in John 11, and first notice how such a Marah does not break her rest: “Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, but Mary sat still in her house.” She who sat at His feet and heard His word, will not move without His word, but as soon as this message reaches her, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee,” then we read, “As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.” She tarry for His word, His call, even in her deep, deep sorrow; but as soon as she has His word, she is as fleet of step to reach Him, as she was slow to move before. O! how blessed this is, dear reader, to wait thus for the Lord and trust in His word. But this is not all, for as soon as she reaches Him, she casts herself down at His feet -- a well-known spot to her -- with the simple confession of the glory of His person on her lips, “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.” Now, mark what a contrast to all this is found in Martha; restless as she was when she heard that Jesus was coming she went to meet Him, with her heart charged with thoughts of the relief which she might get from Him. “I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” There is no time in which the unsubdued restlessness of our heart manifests itself more than the day of sorrow and bereavement. Relief is the highest and best thought we have in such a day, if we are unrestful; and hence you find it marked in Martha. But not so Mary; she finds her solace, comfort, and resource in Him, at whose blessed feet she cast herself: and He who spake to her and finds her solace, comfort, and resource in Him, at whose blessed feet she cast herself: and He who spake to her and whom she might get from Him and before her heart Himself who was the resurrection and the life, but she was not up to this; and hence, I feel sure, when “she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come and calleth for thee,” it was the testimony of her own conscience, that she could not meet Christ, but that Mary could. The Lord was above Martha; in one sense, indeed, He was above and beyond them both, for they both in their turn speak of death, but life is His great theme. He had life in Him and before Him; and as another has blessedly expressed it, “The empty sepulcher displayed and celebrated it (John 20); the risen Christ imparted it” (John 20). But, to return, how blessed it is to see the Lord Jesus, keeping the truth of Himself as a resource before them both in such an hour, and to Mary He does not speak a word about His intention to raise up Lazarus, though He was on the road to do so at that time; and why? He is her resource, and fills the blank in her heart at that moment; and this she has ere relief comes. Is the relief less sweet when it comes, because He, whose service it is to us, is first known as the resource of the heart?

May the Lord give each of us to know this better as we pass through a desert land, the valley of the shadow of death. Let us turn now and look at Mary “at his feet,” on another occasion, for which those we have considered prepared her. In John 12 we find her there again; but how different from the two former or previous occasions. He was the contributor in these, she in this! She expresses Him as she had learned and known Him. It was a peculiar moment; death seems to have been in all their thoughts; the chief priests, in the hatred of their hearts, would seek to put to death the man who, alive among men, was the living exponent of Him who is the resurrection and the life. The Lord Jesus Himself thinks of death, that death by which He was about to glorify God and put away sin; and never did it come more forcibly before Him than when a picture of the kingdom presents itself. Israel for the time owning Him, and the Greeks wanting to see Him: then it was that those blessed words dropped fatness from His lips, “Except a corn of wheat fail into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” But there was one beside whose thoughts were filled with death at that moment, and so we read, “then took Mary,” &c. The action here recorded and commended of the Holy Ghost, was the fruit of acquaintance with the heart of Christ. She made His heart and His desires her study, not her own. This is the great secret of true and approved devotedness. Many are tendering Christ service, which is all very well in itself, but dates its origin no further back than their own wishes and desires. Mary’s thoughts
were formed by communion with Himself; and found their fittting expression at this moment, and how much they met the desires of His heart, these words tell, “She hath wrought a good work on me” (Mark 14:6). There was but One who command Mary’s affections at this moment, and there was but One who understood her; misapprehended and blamed for what was but waste in their eyes, Jesus vindicates her. O! how blessed to hear Him say, “Why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.”

Their greatest, loftiest thought, was to be a benefactor of man -- it was waste to anoint the body of Jesus -- the expression of communion with His thoughts, as well as the Father’s thoughts about Him -- but to bestow it upon the poor, to benefit man, what could be more praiseworthy, or desirable?

Again her action here told her estimate of all, even the very best, when He was going to die. Her world she will bury with Him. If He dies, all that could any longer detain her heart here is dead, too. Alas, how little we who have Christ alive in glory, know what it is to find our all there where Christ is. Not only not having it here, where Christ was, but is not, like Mary, but having it there in glory where Christ is, with whom the Holy Ghost has united us, and given us the consciousness of that union in our souls.

May we learn the blessedness of having to do with Christ, and as we know Him, to be the expression of Him in this poor world, until He come forth to receive us to Himself; that where He is, there we may be also.

**The Peculiarity of Our Calling**

A great principle of God, which runs through all dispensations and times, is the very distinct way in which the eye and hope of the saint is transferred from all here to what is in God Himself as soon as a condition of things presents itself in this world with which God cannot connect Himself. Of course it will be found more distinct and marked in a moment like the present than in any preceding time.

I shall refer to three instances in this principle in the OT, then with one in the New.

The first in the OT is to be found in Gen. 11, 12. Ch. 11 details the history of the building of the tower of Babel, and the consequent scattering of the nations. In the plain of Shinar man set up a would-be independency: God is either refused or unrecognized in His own creation: man’s best and highest thought was to enrich and ennoble man -- “let us make us a

The maintenance of this distinct and new calling is incumbent on one in a scene marked by Babel; and it is important to note how Abraham, when for a moment he surrenders it, as it were, and in a famine seeks help from Egypt, is obliged to retrace his steps to the very place which marked his call, namely, Bethel, where his altar was at the first. He builds no altar in Egypt, but when he retraces his path and reaches Bethel, there Abraham called on the name of the Lord.

There is another truth of the very first moment connected with this; it is as Abraham maintains his call that he is preserved from the entanglements by which Lot is ensnared; and not this only, but it gives him the position of deliverer of Lot himself. And here let me press, that now the surest way to be superior to the entanglements and enticements of a scene like this, is to maintain the distinctness and peculiarity of our position as heavenly men walking through it. It is only as a people who are connected with Christ outside of it, that we are empowered and qualified to walk apart from it, as well as because ourselves delivered, we are able to deliver others.

I turn now to another illustration of the principle I have enunciated, in 2 Kings 2. It was a dark moment in Israel’s history; Baalzebub, the god of Ekron is sought after by Ahaziah, as if there were no God in Israel. Elijah’s rapture is to precede the mission of Elisha, but ere the course of the one is closed, and that of the other is opened, there is to be a distinct break with all that which was associated with the Lord’s name and power in Israel. Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, Jordan, were spots that could not fail to wake up reminiscences of better days in Israel.

Gilgal was the place of separation to God, but long ere this, Bochim had taken its place.

Bethel, the place of Abraham’s altar, of Jacob’s altar, had ere this become the scene of Jeroboam’s calf; the witness of the people’s apostasy from Jehovah.

Jericho, the scene of their first conquest and victory, then destroyed, had been, ere this, re-built.

Jordan, representing resurrection-victory, and crossing which they had passed from the wilderness to the land, is now crossed in a reverse order, putting Elijah and Elisha on the wilderness side of Jordan.

How solemn in connection with all this the words of the prophet: “But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass
not to Beersheba, for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought” (Amos 5:5).

Now it is important to observe, that it is outside this condition of things Elisha is called in his day, ere he is sent back into it as a witness and servant of Jehovah; and therefore it was at the other side of Jordan, when they had crossed over, that Elisha sees Elijah’s rapture, sees him taken away, receives a double portion of his spirit, and Elijah’s mantle. Another order of things has opened upon him, another scene has, as, it were, dawned upon his eyes: he is now empowered, qualified, equipped to return to a people who have forsaken Jehovah for Baalzebub, to a scene where the water is nought, and the ground barren. Let me here ask upon whom first does the effect of his power tell itself? Of course upon himself. He rends his own mantle, and sets his face for Jordan; and then, returning to a blasted, blighted place, he becomes, in the power of the thought of what he has received, a contributor to it, diffusing healing and blessing around. What a picture of what the saint now ought to be, one who is in the resources that are in Christ the triumphant One -- one who has seen Him taken away, as it were; and more than all this, what you do not find in the picture here, one who is united by the Holy Ghost to Christ where He is -- a part of Christ. Wondrous thought! Alas, how little we seem to have any divine sense of what we are in Christ, and the peculiarity and distinctiveness of our path and testimony as such, in a world which has not only refused and rejected, but also crucified and slain our Lord; and because we have such feeble sense at best of what we are, we are correspondingly short in our apprehensions of the wondrous resources and powers which is ours in Christ, to walk through this world for Him.

I turn now to Ex. 33, where we shall find another illustration of the same principle. Then also it was a cloudy and dark day in Israel; the people have made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped a molten image; they have changed their glory for the similitude of an ox that eateth grass, and have forgotten God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt. What a cry that is which is heard now in Horeb, “These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” What will Moses do? The people of God’s election, salvation, preservation, have turned aside from Jehovah. Where can the eye of God rest in a scene like that? and where can Moses turn for solace and repose? Moses will be no exception to God’s principle, of which we speak. If Abraham is called out by the God of glory to be a stranger and witness for God in a day characterized by Babel; if Elisha is the companion and witness of the rapture of Elijah in a day characterized by Baalzebub; so in the day of Israel’s calf and Israel’s captain—for they said at another time, “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt” (Num. 14:4). Moses, in separating from the guilty camp, says to God, “I beseech thee show me thy glory.”

The scene of his hopes and expectations is transferred, and “thy glory” becomes the object and desire of his heart. What else could meet Moses in an hour like this? Where will his eye turn, and where will his heart rest? He says, as it were, I have seen enough of man to turn away from him for ever; “I have seen an end of all perfection,” “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

I turn now to the scripture in the New Testament, Acts 7. What do I find here? the same principle, only intensified and extended to the fullest. Why do I say so? Because now the Son of God has been actually cast out and put to death. It is this two-fold blot, if I may so say, upon the page of man’s history, that determines the saints’ singularity and peculiarity at this present time. Christ has been rejected out of the world, and the Holy Ghost, the witness and evidence of the world’s guilt, is dishonored and denied in the world and by the world. Where will Stephen, the witness and servant, turn his eye in a moment like this, and as soon as he is by the most terrible circumstances? Now, mark it well, for nothing could be more distinct or unique. Previous to this the lingering love of God could thus express itself: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you to heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Directing, it was in fact, pointing the eye down to earth, and finding for them there even yet, faint though it be, a hope; but is it so now? how changed! “But he [Stephen], being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” O, what a sight! It is not now heaven opening on any object here: there was once one, and only one, object upon whom it did open to Stephen; the Holy Ghost directs the eye, and shows the object there; “he saw the glory of God and Jesus.” What a contrast this to the revelation to Moses in Ex. 33. To him God said, Thou canst not see my face; I will cover thee with my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts. But now there is nothing of this; it is the full unveiled glory, and Jesus in it, that meets the eye of Stephen; the first man has been put out in judgment, the second Man has gone up into glory, and nothing is there now to hinder the eye of the saint and servant from gazing with unveiled face on that blessed One where He is; and not this only, but now to find its home and its rest where Christ is. And here let me press what an immense difference it makes in the path and history of saints, as to whether they are looking for heaven to open upon them, or gazing up steadfastly into that heaven which is open to them. Alas! how little fixedness of purpose, how little vigor of soul, as implied in that word steadfastly; and, consequently, so little of what appears so marked in Stephen’s case, and so little of power to persevere. Though surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, suffering at the hands of the very chief of his nation, he can kneel down in all the quietness of his heart, and, consequently, so little of what appears so marked in Stephen’s case, and so little of power to persevere. Though surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, suffering at the hands of the very chief of his nation, he can kneel down in all the quietness of his heart, and, consequently, so little of what appears so marked in Stephen’s case, and so little of power to persevere. Though surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, suffering at the hands of the very chief of his nation, he can kneel down in all the quietness of his heart, and, consequently, so little of what appears so marked in Stephen’s case, and so little of power to persevere. Though surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, suffering at the hands of the very chief of his nation, he can kneel down in all the quietness of his heart, and, consequently, so little of what appears so marked in Stephen’s case, and so little of power to persevere. Though surrounded by the most
1. Being united by the Holy Ghost to Christ in heaven.

2. Being maintained by the Holy Ghost on earth, in such practical association with Christ, that the eye is turned away from earth to heaven.

3. As a consequence of the former, reproducing Christ down here: being like Christ where He is not; a messenger from heaven, walking in the power of divine resources and heavenly springs, above everything and apart from everything; a light amid surrounding darkness, shining all the brighter because of the darkness; able to help everybody, succor everybody, support everybody.

Does anyone allow for a moment that I am propounding impossibilities? To such an one let me say, If in the One who has gone up above every one and everything, all fulness dwells, and if in the saint here, weak and feeble though he be, the Holy Ghost dwells, is there any limit as to capacity and power for enjoyment personally of Christ where He is, or for distinctness, singularity, and boldness of walk and testimony for Him where He is not?

“We all, with unveiled face beholding the Lord in glory, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

“Lukewarm, And Neither Cold Nor Hot”

That we are passing through times full of moment, it were vain to deny; and to assert that this day is not one of sorrow and sadness to any heart that is true to Christ, and enters ever so feebly into that which now interests Him on earth, were insensibility to His sorrow. The key to our present position is His rejection. It is impossible to be in the path with Christ if this be not apprehended; and if it be, there is no truth more practical or solemn. Reader, pause and ponder this one fact -- all eternity will not supply this little moment -- this hour of Christ’s rejection. But let me be no way understood to imply that external causes work together for our grief and perplexity at this juncture: doubtless it may be so to a very great extent, but I apprehend the real grief comes from that external causes work together for our grief and perplexity.

Does anyone allow for a moment that I am propounding impossibilities? To such an one let me say, If in the One who has gone up above every one and everything, all fulness dwells, and if in the saint here, weak and feeble though he be, the Holy Ghost dwells, is there any limit as to capacity and power for enjoyment personally of Christ where He is, or for distinctness, singularity, and boldness of walk and testimony for Him where He is not?

“We all, with unveiled face beholding the Lord in glory, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Nothing is more remarkable in this day than the striking contrast between the phraseology and the practical position and walk of saints. There is much of “in word and in tongue” very little of “in deed and in truth." What a solemn picture is presented before you when you place profession and practice side by side! Doubtless the tendency of the day is to adopt an advanced form of expression of the truth, but to walk as worldly as ever. There never was a time when unknown, and unfelt truth was more traded upon than now; for instance, you will hear such solemn subjects as death and resurrection, discipleship and the coming of the Lord, all maintained, as the saying is, and preached, even by those whose course is unaffected by them. The solemn sin of the day is, that men are not formed by that which comes so smoothly from their tongues; they are therefore eloquent in condemning themselves -- “they say, and do not." Alas, alas! for the want of conscience and reality among the professed followers of a rejected Lord.

There are no doubt saints who, from their earliest infancy, have been fondled in the arms of systems which are nothing but a kind of repairing of the flesh, if not a cultivation of it; the object of all such being the best way to get on in this scene. We can see a melancholy consistency at least between their principles and practice; but the heart sickens to hear men talk of death and resurrection, discipleship and the coming of the Lord, and so forth, who are keenly alive to the interest of earth, who speculate in the great money-grasping projects of the day, who are deepening their interests in the world, enlarging their borders -- in one word, ministering to the first Adam.

I say, reader, the heart is saddened by such sights. One is reminded of the cause of it by that solemn word (2 Tim. 3:8), “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth.” I need not say that it was by imitation the truth was resisted in the day of Moses; and even so is it now. It is Satan’s policy at this time, and he knows
well the power of it. By this means he attempts not only to bring into contempt the truth itself; but to cast a slight on real life testimony to its power; and here it may not be out of place to say that in this consists the real difficulty of souls at the present time. It is their condition that tells on their position. I do not for a moment mean to deny the fact that a soul may be in the right place or position, that is, Christ's place for every soul now on earth, and yet very seriously wanting in condition; but I do assert most decidedly, and observation and experience bear testimony with me, that the difficulties of saints at the present day about their position, arise, for the most part, from the condition or state of soul they are in at the time. For instance, how can we expect a saint who is ministering to self to have any conception of what is due to Christ -- what His present mind is about the members of His body on earth? The more I read my Bible, the more I see this, that there is a state of soul which is capable of entering into God's mind and thoughts, and not only that, but a state or condition to which God will communicate His mind; as well as the contrary, namely, that there is a condition incapable of grasping the mind of God, and to which He does not communicate His thoughts. What means such a solemn word as Lev. 10:8-10: --

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.

Does it not speak a solemn word to us now? and does it not tell us the secret of manifold incapacity to grasp God's mind and discern His path? Most surely it does. The Lord give us to ponder its weighty, solemn, soul-searching exhortation. Has the world nothing to say to the course and difficulties of saints at the present time? As far as my observation goes, I find that, without an exception almost, it is either those who wish to go back again into the world, or else those who have never been out of it and wish to remain in it, that are unable to see what is suited to God and what is not, and lower the standard of divine purity and holiness down to the level of man's miserable condition.

Has self-will nothing to say to the present perplexities of saints? You will hear them talk about their liberty, and the like. It really means liberty for self. If it were liberty of the Holy Ghost, another order of things would manifest it; but it is self-seeking and self-maintenance that is contended for. Now, that I may return from somewhat of a digression, though a needful one, let me say that the truth of God about which I have been writing is not what so many take it to be, namely, a divine creed, claiming subscription; no, what I write about is not a matter of subscription, experience, or attainments, but a solemn reality, a real condition, into which every soul that simply rests on redemption is brought. When the Lord Jesus went down into the judgment, He not only settled the question of my sins, but He terminated the history of man in the flesh before God. It was, in a word, the winding up of the history of the first Adam. Every link, therefore, with the old creation has been broken by His death, and if I have to do with Him, it must be outside this scene. Now again let me repeat, this is a fact; and it is intended to command me to form me. My state or condition determines my path. Is it true that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, was the judgment upon the first man? If so, then the first man is gone in judgment, and I stand in a new order of things, I am linked up in life by the Holy Ghost with the very One who went down and bore the judgment, and is risen out of it. To faith, then, the first Adam is gone in judgment, and a new order of things has taken its place. I again repeat, this is not attainment or feeling, it is fact; apprehended by faith; and the whole course of a Christian ought to be from this, and not towards it -- that is, I am to walk down here in the non-recognition of myself; because I am now contented with Christ in the glory by the Holy Ghost, my old man having been judged and set aside in His cross. The Lord graciously set this so clear before the eye of the soul, that the power and joy of it may fill every heart.

Again, another subject which is traded upon at the present time is the Lord's second coming. It need not be remarked here how much more widespread this truth has been of late, compared with former years. You will find many now who tell you, to show how orthodox they are, they hold the second advent (as they coldly term it), but their condition tells how easy it is merely to profess truth in these times. It is not truth in power, it is not truth learned from God. We lay it down as indisputable, that this hope can never be a present living hope before any heart that does not now feel the absence of Christ.

And oh, reader, how little His absence is felt by Christians; how feebly have His own blessed words seized our affections! “For their sakes I sanctify myself”; that is, as if He said, “I go apart from this scene that I may detach you from it.” It would be impossible to enter into this and be worldly: it would be impossible to be in the truth of Christ's absence from this scene and be worldly. How little, how feebly apprehended, or felt, His absence! Could the heart that felt the absence of Christ be a present living hope before any heart that does not now feel the absence of Christ.

Mark, it is not for a moment questioned that souls have got benefit from Christ: but this makes it all the more sad, that He should be known and used as the servant of necessity merely, and not for what He is in Himself.

I do now feel it more and more each day, that there has been so little presenting of Christ, that souls have lost the sense of the person, in the overwhelming importance which has been attached to the benefit derived from Him: in one word, modern evangelization consists in preaching salvation and not Christ. The necessary consequence is, feebleness in the heart and affections as to the person; low thoughts, if any at all, of what is due to Him; souls have got this -- saved for earth, instead of connected with heaven.
It is yet more grievous to the heart to find how little reciprocated Christ’s affections have been or are. When on the very eve of His departure, He spoke the precious words of John 14, He said one word, the only one, too, that would comfort a heart true in its love to Him -- “I will come again.” He counted on this at least, that nothing short of His presence -- Himself -- could fill in our hearts the blank His absence would create. As has been blessedly remarked by another, there are two “comes” in John 14, “I will come to you,” and “I will come for you.” The presence of the Holy Ghost is the accomplishment of the first, and the coming of the Lord Jesus, as in 1 Thess. 4, will be the accomplishment of the other. And this I will say, the second, that is His coming for me, is feeble before my soul if I am not in the truth of the first, namely, that He has come to me in the person of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I never yet knew a soul in the apprehension and freshness of the first that was not fresh in the hope of the second. But, reader, how many other objects have taken Christ’s place in the hearts of His saved people? Self-aggrandizement, money-making, earthly position, a worldly spirit, have all vied with each other, and succeeded to the exclusion, practically, of Christ Himself. His absence from this scene is not felt, and consequently His coming again is but a poor, cold doctrine, not in the reality of the heart. When you turn to the early history of the church, what a contrast. To the Thessalonians Paul writes, “Ye became followers of us and of the Lord”; “Ye were ensamples to all that believe”; “From you sounded out the word of the Lord”; “Your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything”; “Ye turned to God . . . to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1). What a picture this -- what a contrast with the present! And then, again, we know that so full and present and immediate was the hope of the Lord’s coming for them, before the hearts of these Thessalonian saints, that the apostle writes (ch. 4) to comfort hearts that were cast down because death, rather than the coming of the Lord, took away their loved ones. What a contrast with the present time!

Saints lay their dead in the grave and mourn their absence, not because the Lord has not come, but because ties to earth are broken thereby, which time too often heals; new links with the world are formed, and it becomes as bright before the heart as ever. The absence of Christ is forgotten, and the blank created by His absence is filled up by other objects. O for more of that simplicity and those unworldly ways which bespeak a sense of the absence of Christ, and is suited to those who announce every Lord’s day at the Table that death by which not only sin is put away, but every link with this world is broken. I have written, reader, that which has deeply exercised my own heart; and I would say, in conclusion, that the remedy is simple for all this failure and sorrow. What is wanted in souls is a more whole-hearted surrender of everything to Christ, an appreciation for, and love to Him beyond all else -- not only to strip ourselves for Christ, but to surrender ourselves to Him -- to hold fast His word and not to deny His name.

The Lord preserve His people in these days from Laodiceanism. How blessed when the one object that fills the heart and occupies the soul and commands the affections is Jesus. Like Mephibosheth while David is away, nothing can fill in his heart the blank that David’s absence creates, and therefore he departs himself in a manner that is consistent with real sorrow, and sense of loss; but when David returns, he and he alone fills the blank in Mephibosheth’s heart -- his affections have now an object to go out after. “Thou and Ziba divide the land” take all, for as much as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.” He wants no more, but he can do with no less. As we have said, one object satisfies his heart, and commands his affections.

The Lord give His beloved people, in these last times, to be more whole hearted, uncompromising, and devoted to His blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord -- Amen.

“O patient, spotless One!
Our hearts in meekness train,
To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,
That we may rest obtain.

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.”

The Christian:  
What Is He?  
Heavenly or Earthly?  

His Standing, Power, Pathway, and Testimony;  
His Failure and Restoration

Chapter 1:  
Hebrews 9:24-28;  
10:19-25; 13:11-16

When the Lord allowed this service to be taken up some time ago, we had a subject connected with the truth of God suitable to those who are young, and whose hearts perhaps (as in an infantine state) could not take in or understand the larger, fuller, and more blessed scope of the truth. But I shall seek now, as the Lord may help, both this evening and the other evenings we are together, to treat other branches and other parts of the same truth, starting, as far as we can, without any system, from where we left off, though I am purposing to-night to touch a little more on the foundations than I shall on succeeding evenings. My thought now -- I name it at the outset -- is to put before you simply what the place of a Christian is in heaven and on earth. I see some here who, I think, can hardly be ranked as young Christians; still I take it that if they are not young in that sense, I suppose they do not consider themselves beyond the simplest things that the Lord may give us to think of and meditate over this evening; and I do not desire to go beyond the very simplest truths and in the simplest way.

Now the first thing, and an important question for everyone of us, is, What is the place of a Christian in reference to God -- before Him? It is important in this way, that if I have not a very distinct understanding of my place before God in heaven, I cannot have a distinct understanding of my place for God on earth. Herein consists the solemnity and importance of it.

I appeal to your consciences, beloved friends, and your souls to-night, Have you a distinct understanding and divine apprehension of what your place really is before God? Have your souls known it? That is the question. Be assured it is soul-work alone that can stand the test. You may say to me, “I understand advanced truth.” Well, I have found persons who could say that; but their souls had not in the least been touched by it. What I am speaking of now is the simple fact of the soul’s intelligent understanding by the Holy Ghost of this wonderful place before God. And be assured nothing is more marked or more distinct than when the soul has known the joy of it. It is a different thing altogether from a mere understanding of it in the head. Hence it is a simple one may say, “Yes, my soul knows that well, though I could not perhaps explain it.” One can understand that. Indeed, the deeper anything is fixed in one’s soul, the more difficult it is to explain it. The thing that I understand intellectually -- if I am clear in my own understanding about it -- I can put plainly before another person; but if it is a question of my soul, I do not find it so easy. I do not undervalue the intellectual understanding of the truth. God forbid! I should be very sorry to slight or make little of it; but I do say, beloved friends, in these days nothing will stand except what is known in the soul. Unless our souls are really in these things, we shall not stand; it only requires a blast to dislodge us from the place. A passing pressure will rob us of the whole thing.

Now what we want is something that will wear, and something that will endure amid the confusion and pressure of a moment like this; and that is, a distinct and positive soul-apprehension by God the Holy Ghost of the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. Oh, may God the Spirit give each soul here clearly to grasp it, and individually to taste the joy of possession!

As before God, what then is my place? The first thing I must learn (I see it in Scripture) is, that I am fit for God. I must be made meet as to my conscience for this place before God in heaven, and therefore it is distinct from my natural condition altogether. My conscience must be fitted by being purged. I must have a conscience entirely and completely fit
for this wonderful place and portion before God. And it was to point out this I read those verses in Heb. 9. Note it well. The apostle, in the end of the chapter, speaks of three distinct appearances of Christ. First, of Christ appearing “in the end of the world,” that is, the finishing, the consummation of all the periods of man’s history preceding the work of Christ. He says, “Once” (not often, that is the contrast) “in the consummation of the ages” (or in the end of those periods that went before the cross) “hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” There is the work (I am only speaking of the work now) which gives me, the moment I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, an uncondemning conscience in the presence of the penetrating light of God, the holy God. I say that is the first thing. If I have not that, I have nothing. I must know complete clearance as to my conscience from every single thing that is on it. The first thing that God does in us is to put something on the conscience, and that by the work of the Holy Ghost. What is it? Death and judgment. He brings death and judgment home to the conscience. That is the first work in a man’s soul. What is the purpose of it? In order that He may lead me in repentance and faith to that blessed One who accomplished the work which alone can take death and judgment off my conscience. We get the work here in the ninth chapter: “He appeared once in the consummation of the ages to put away sin” (and He has finished the work by which that will be accomplished) “by the sacrifice of Himself.” How do I get the benefit of this? The moment I believe in Him I am entitled to know that as to my conscience I am as white as snow before God. That is the first great reality, and it is an all-important one for us all. It is the foundation of everything. And, beloved friends, it is, generally speaking, in the foundations that people are shaky; and it is here that Satan seeks to bring in weakness and doubt.

This then is the very beginning -- the foundation. I have dwelt upon it before; I do so again without hesitation. The importance of it demands reiteration. And I beseech you (especially the young) to look to it that this is a distinct and settled matter in your conscience, that you can say before God, without having the smallest sense of presumption, “Thank God, there is not a single stain on my conscience.” Can you say that honestly? Can you look up to God and say, “Thank God, I have no more conscience of sins”? On what ground can such certainty rest? Surely on this, that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that precious work applied to my conscience, gives me “boldness.” It was because of this I read that verse in chap.10, where we have the consequence, the divine conclusion, the divine summing up, as it were, of Christ’s blessed finished work. We have then “boldness.” Is it boldness to hope? Not a word of it. To expect that God will come and give us His blessing? No; but “to enter into the holiest.” What a wonderful thing that is, if in realized power, in a person’s soul! It is not that I crouch into the holiest as if I had no right there;’ it is not that I go, as it were, and apologize for my existence before God, as though I had no title. I enter there with boldness.

I am not speaking now, beloved friends, of anything beyond the blessed basis and foundation upon which everything rests. I have boldness, in consequence of this finished, perfect, infinitely glorious work, to enter into the holiest, and not in the least, as I said before, as if it were any presumption for me to go in, or as if it were derogatory to God that I should go in. There is nothing on God’s side derogatory, or on my side presuming -- mark that. It is righteously in God to accept me, and it is my glory to bow to that righteousness. That is the very foundation upon which the whole thing rests. I can go with boldness into the holiest, and I enter it in the character of a worshiper. That is the great truth that is brought out here. I am privileged to stand there as my place, in one aspect of it; and what am I there for? To ask for the forgiveness of my sins? I could not get there if I had not forgiveness first, blessed be His name! I have the blotting-out of all my sins before I could get there; and then I am there, adoringly to bow in the presence of the One who has cleared me from every stain. I go as a worshiper; I go there delighted to fall down at the feet of the One who has cleared everything out of the way, that He might Himself fill the scene, the place which hitherto had been occupied by the things which had kept me in bondage. That, I say, is the very foundation, the very first principle.

Let me enlarge on this in a practical way a little, and if possible more simply. It is all very well to talk about it, saying, “What a wonderful thing it is to go into the holiest!” and so forth; but now how is it practically with each of us as to it? That is the question. How is it with our consciences? Is there anything on them before God? I am not speaking now of the defilement any of us may have contracted as Christians; I am not speaking to backsliders (I have it laid on my heart to speak to them another evening); but I am speaking now simply as to the question of a perfect conscience. Is there anything on your conscience as to the question of your acceptance? Because if there be ever so little shade or speck of any kind upon the conscience, then be assured there is not clearness before God to understand the fulness of our place in heaven, and of the blessed privilege of our place on earth. May the Lord give anyone here who is not clear as to this to see the perfect, the infinite value of that “once-offered,” perfect sacrifice, which clears the conscience from every spot and every stain, and puts us in divine acceptance in the very presence of God without a single misgiving, so that we are entitled to say, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest.”

Now I pass from this, and for a moment take another and higher aspect of our place before God. Turn with me to another scripture -- the end of the first, and the beginning of the second, chapter of Ephesians. Here is another aspect altogether of what our place before God is. What I have spoken of up to the present has been as to the truth that we are clear before God, and it is a great thing to be thus clear; but here we get something more than that. In this passage, in the end of Eph. 1, we find the Lord Jesus Christ spoken of as the glorious Man whom God raised from the dead -- the mighty power of God wrought so as to give Christ a place at His own right hand in the heavens. Now that is a most blessed thing for us, and I may say that, before ever we can say anything about our own blessing, whether in the aspect presented in
Hebrews or Ephesians, we must see first of all what place Christ occupies; because it is a wonderful thing to know that our blessing is connected with all this wonderful glory of His person, as well as the fulness of His work. Here then in Ephesians we see Him as the glorious Man -- this Blessed One as a Man raised out of death by the power of God. It is divine power working in Christ, who was dead -- where we were dead in sins, but where He was for our sins. He had no need to be there for Himself; we were there because of our condition, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Christ goes into death, takes His place there in grace, for God’s glory and for us, and we get the power of God (v. 19), “the exceeding greatness of His 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, 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: 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”; that is to say, this Blessed One, who took His place in death for God’s glory and for us, is raised up by the power of God -- the “surpassing greatness of His power.” Wonderful word it is! It wrought in Christ, the One who was dead for us. This mighty power of God works in order to give Christ a place at His own right hand in glory.

But you may ask why I dwell upon that. Because, in the second chapter, it is the same power that quickens a believer who was “dead in trespasses and sins,” while he was in that state. The same power that raised up Christ out of the place of death, where He in grace went for us, raises us up out of the state of moral death that we were in, to give us a place in Christ, and by-and-by with Christ. What wonderful blessedness to know that -- that it was no power short of the same surpassing greatness that wrought in that blessed, glorious Man when He traveled into death for God’s glory and for our sins! That same power that raised Him up and set Him in glory works now for this purpose; namely, to give us a place in Christ, in the scene where He is. This is unfolded in Eph. 2, that well-known scripture which I suppose is familiar to every one of us: “Quickened us together with Christ; raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” There can be no difficulty in seeing what a great advance this is upon what I have already spoken about, as set forth in Heb. 10. In that scripture I am shown how I can be cleared as to guilt, how the conscience is purged, and how we are made fit for the presence of God in light, fit for the holiness of God in the holiest of all; but when we come to Ephesians it is a new creation, a change of condition altogether; in Scripture language, “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” -- to faith. I leave behind in death the condition I was in as to my lost estate, to get a new place altogether in a risen, glorified Savior. This we find in Ephesians. In Heb. 9 and 10 we have these three great realities set forth as the result of Christ’s work -- immediate access to God, a purged conscience, an eternal redemption. The doctrine as to these is expounded in ch. 9, and ch. 10 is the application of them. The Holy Ghost first burdens the conscience; that is, He brings the sentence of death and judgment upon it. And it is not a light matter when a person’s conscience is so burdened; no mere singing of a hymn will release one from that. When a person’s conscience is under the sentence of death and judgment, as the result of divine conviction, nothing less than the soul’s understanding the sufficiency and efficacy of the blood of God’s Son can release that conscience from its pressure, and I regard not only as worthless, but as positively injurious and pernicious, any other sort of release save that; all beside is merely a temporary respite, ending in deeper bondage. I say, then, souls must know the infinite, wonderful efficacy of that blood which has met every claim of the throne of God in holiest majesty, and likewise meets all the terrible needs of our consciences.

Now in Ephesians, as I have said, we get to another thing entirely, even a complete lifting out of the condition we were in -- “dead in trespasses and sins,” not a single spark of spiritual life towards God. In Romans, up to ch. 5:12, it is guilt, sins; in Ephesians it is “dead in trespasses and sins”; and nothing less than a total and complete lifting out of this will do for us. What is the power for it? The same power -- what a wonderful thing! -- that quickened Christ when He was dead for us. And when I speak thus I hope no one will misunderstand me; when I speak of Christ as a dead man, I speak with all the reverence that becomes us in the presence of Him who was the mighty God, and who became a man, and as a man went into death for God’s glory and for our sins. It is, then, the same power that quickened Christ, and raised Him out of that place where the grace and the love of His heart led Him, which quickens us, and gives us a new place altogether, a completely new place in Christ, who is risen; taking us out of the condition we were in as in Adam, and putting us into Christ, the risen Man, in the place where He is, as we have seen before. “Quickened together with Him, raised and seated together in heavenly places.” Now is not that an immense thing for one’s soul to get the sense of? Think of being now in Christ in heaven! Think of belonging to heaven now, with a righteousness, too, which is of God! “God’s righteousness,” as we find in that beautiful verse in 2 Cor. 5:21:

He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

He goes into glory in order that His poor saints may have a place with Him, by the Spirit of God, in all the blessedness and glories that belong to Him, not keeping back from them a single thing except His own essential glory and Godhead. He associates us as in living union with Himself in everything except this. Is not that riches? Is not that wealth? This, then, is what God gives, and who but God could give it?

I would now point out to you as simply as I can how that was brought about. Let us trace the course of it, how it was this wonderful position described in Eph. 2 has been won and secured. Just look at two scriptures; first, John 20. In the end of that chapter you will find the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead, and making these two blessed announcements,
standing as it were on the platform of resurrection. Mark them well. The first is: “Peace be unto you.” Wondrous words! Think of the deep, the infinite blessing involved in them. It is as if He said, “I have not left a single enemy standing, not a solitary foe to dispute your title to eternal serenity.” Do you ask, “Where do you find that?” I reply, It is all in that word “peace.” What is the meaning of peace, if not that? “Peace be unto you.” There is no enemy to show, no account unmet; the very youngest can understand that. There is no one and nothing to stand against you. What wonderful grace! And oh, think what it cost Him to blot out that account! Think of what it cost the Son of God to dispose of that account for ever! Think of what He went through! What a night that was ere the morning broke, the morning of resurrection! He had been in the darkness of judgment, had gone down under the suffering of death, and thus He alone had obliterated and nailed to His cross everything that was against His people. Hence He stands, as here, in resurrection glory, and announces the fact, “There is nothing against you”; every claim is disposed of. “Peace unto you.” But there is more than that; and hence what He says on this resurrection morning to Mary Magdalene, who still clung to Him, in death, as in life, her all: “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” I am not only out of death myself, but I have got others out with me. Who were they? “Go to my brethren.” You never get such a word as that until now. Up to this you read of Him alone; solitary on the mountain tops and in the valleys of this poor world, wherever you search the gospels, it is Christ always alone, never having as yet brought anyone to his own standing before God; but now He can say, “Go to my brethren.” And it is not only that, but in virtue of all that He had borne and secured there is identity of relationship; hence, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” Blessed fact, precious reality this How marvelous the way we reach Eph. 2; for I am seeking to conduct you (as the Lord helps me) simply to Eph. 2; and here is the great starting-point. It is a wonderful step, but even this is not everything. Who can adequately describe the blessedness of seeing Christ out of death, and others out with Him, on totally new ground? Yet we want something more than that; for we have not as yet union with Christ. I say it is a wonderful thing to think of -- relationship; to think of His Father our Father, His God our God. But that is not union.

Now if you will turn to another scripture, viz., Acts 2, you will find the next link in the chain. This blessed One not only had proclaimed peace in virtue of the full accomplishment of His victory, not only had announced to Mary Magdalene that He has in virtue of it “fellows”-- His “brethren,” but we find more, even that He goes up into glory, ascends into the heavens. Hitherto I have only spoken of His resurrection, and what He said on earth after His resurrection; for He was forty days on earth after He rose from the dead; and those days must have been wonderful, when the risen Lord was seen of His disciples ere He ascended to glory. But now He has gone up; and as certainly as He goes up, the Holy Ghost comes down. And what heart does not feel the all-importance of the Holy Ghost come down? Those then who were by Christ’s victory and triumph brought into relationship with God, even His God and His Father, are now, by the same Spirit that dwells in Christ, united to Him in heaven. And thus we reach Eph. 2. Let me repeat it: not only have we peace and relationship with God, but we are one with Christ. The Holy Ghost came down and baptized believers into one body, thus uniting them, not only to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head in heaven, but to each other, as members of one body on this earth. So that every believer in whom the Holy Ghost dwells is, by that blessed Spirit, one with Christ in heaven. And oh! what heart can conceive the wonders of that? Let me ask, Is that a light matter to think of or know? If we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us (and may there not be a single soul here that is not in the conscious sense of it), is it not a marvelous reality? What can you conceive equal in importance to the greatness of it? To have the sense that I am one with the risen, glorified Man -- in the place where He is; that He and we are one! Beloved, we hear of it, and we speak of it to one another, but have our souls really grasped the immensity of it? Never can we forget (thank God, never) the blessing our souls received when first we knew it. The moment when it first dawned on our souls that we were one with Christ in heaven can never be forgotten by us. It is a crisis moment in a person’s history. Blessed time when first the soul opens -- like a flower to the sun -- to the truth that Christ and we his own are one, and forever! And though we are here in feebleness and weakness, and He is on high in heavenly glory, yet the day of glory, bearing its brightness far and near, is coming, when He shall to a wondering universe display that He with us is one. This alone can tarnish all below, giving you enough and more than enough in Him. How different this is from tearing yourself, as it were, out of what the heart clings to. I see some casting more than a longing look behind them, showing how little they are possessed with this unspeakable reality -- one with Christ in heaven. When this is tasted, there is nothing in this defiling scene good enough for us; yet we are satisfied, and we lie down in pastures of tender grass. May the Lord give each one to taste somewhat of it. “Faith cometh by hearing”; that is rich comfort to us all. Oh, may the sense of this union, if never before, come to you as you hear of it tonight! and as the word of God sets it before us simply, may the Lord give each heart here to taste it.

Having thus completed that part of our subject, viz., “our place before God,” now let me say a little upon the second part, “our place for God on earth”; and if time does not permit us to pursue it as fully as its importance and solemnity demand, we shall resume it, if the Lord will, another time. If we turn to Heb. 12 and 13, we shall find what our true place on earth is, and I think exactly the contrast truth to our being “seated,” namely, “running with patience the race set before us.” In Ephesians it is “seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”; in Hebrews it is “running.” Running is the converse of being “seated”; “seated in the heavens,” “running” on earth; and we are to run with “endurance,” with “patience,” the race set before us. If we think of our place before God,
we are seated in the heavenlies, not only clear, in perfect acceptance, but in union; but if we think of our place for God on earth, I find it expressed in Heb. 12 as a race, and in Heb. 13 as going forth to Him (Jesus) without the camp. Not settling down and looking for some harbor of refuge here, not expecting to find some comfortable place wherein to pass the rest of our life, but running; so that the path of faith through this world is a race. Everything here, beloved friends, opposes; and we are here simply to express this new motion, as it were, this new action in this world; we are here to leave behind us the whole thing. This is the way of a runner: he leaves everything behind him, good and bad alike; his face is towards the goal and prize, and the course is increasingly behind his back, and every step he takes leaves the course more behind him.

Then in Heb. 13 we find another thing. I refer to the 13th verse. Observe, there is one powerful word there which I earnestly desire to press upon you. Oh, may each heart weigh the solemnity of these two words in that verse so strikingly significant, characteristic, and expressive of our place here; viz., “His reproach”! These are solemn words, “His reproach!” And oh, beloved, how different this from our thoughts! A person to whom is given the opportunity from God of bearing “His reproach” now is wonderfully honored. Eternity will never supply such a moment as this to any of us. We shall reign with Christ in heaven; but it is only on earth we can suffer with Him. Suppose one to be so circumstanced that because of his or her place and calling for Christ and with Christ, because of that blessed place before God in heaven, and because sent here to maintain it practically (see John 17:18), such an one may have to turn the back on what they were until now connected with, and that at cost and shame, they know a little of what “His reproach” means. How blessed to think I am set here to be like a tree rooted in heaven, and the blossoms and buds all here upon earth; and that there is nothing here save what hinders the maturity of that fruit; everything is against it, not a solitary influence belonging to this world as such that is not against you, either as running, or bearing Christ’s reproach. Everything on this earth is lowering in its tendency, and deteriorating to us as new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a good thing to find out that I can receive no help from this world; hindrances in abundance, and any amount of opposition on all sides; but no help, no cheer, no support, no succor. Everything here has the tendency to keep us down, and prevent our progress; and yet we are to be “like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jer. 17:8). Thus you perceive we are to be here as evergreens amidst the frosts and snows of this wintry world, racing through it, and bearing His reproach in it.

I would here mention two things, beloved friends, two exercises, which made up the history of the children of Israel during their wilderness journey, as I conceive strikingly significant of our position on earth. What were they? One was sustainment, instance the manna; the other was resistance, instance Amalek. (See Ex. 16, 17.) These, I believe, are the two great features of the wilderness: sustaintment and resistance. And must it not be the same with us? Hence, if these two things do not go on together, it is hard to see how we are occupying the place God has called us to. If we are not sustained from heaven, and resisting on this earth, how are we in any true sense standing for God here? May the Lord awaken in each heart the sense of this. May He Himself show you that there is nothing here to help you, but that you must derive all your sustaintment from outside, and that it is only as you are so sustained you can resist. There are two opposite forms of hindrance turning aside at this present time many of God’s children; they are attractions and afflictions. There are some who reckon that the afflictions of the path are too great for them, that it is too narrow, whilst others succumb to the attractions, the pleasures of sin, which are sweet to them, and they are caught by them, they cannot go on in this terrible resistance. The atmosphere of this age induces slumber; they become heavy with sleep; it is indulged, but it is but the sleep of death!

But who can tell the exceeding and superlative excellency, yea, blessedness, of having the eyes opened to a scene where everything is perfect, and where Christ is in all His beauty and glory as the eternal solace of the heart, so that we are free to turn our back upon the best things here, and to know too that, because one with Christ, there is really nothing on earth that we desire beside. Do you say that is high ground? True; but it is God’s ground, and that is everything. Was there anything here for Christ? Beloved friends, we are sprung from Him (John 12:24) as well as one with Him. You may say it is a wonderful thing. Truly it is so; I do not deny it. It is the most wonderful reality the heart can conceive, and I do pray this evening that our hearts may get a fresh and renewed sense of it. I know how feeble one feels -- well may we say,

“Cold my warmest thought” --

and the greater the thing is, alas! often the more feebly one feels it; but the Lord can give our hearts to taste of it, at any rate, and I pray He may give each one here at this time such a taste (a renewed taste, if you have had it before) of what a wealthy place He has led us to, not only clearing us from everything, but making us one with Him who has cleared us, that our hearts may say, “Lord Jesus, it is our joy to walk thy path here; joy to bear thy reproach.” Oh that we might be like Moses, whose parents saw in him a beautiful child, one who was fair to God! They did not look at him with natural eyes, Moses, whose parents saw in him a beautiful child, one who was fair to God! They did not look at him with natural eyes, but with the eyes of faith; hence “they did not heed the king’s command.” And when that child grew up, the faith of the father and mother was honored in the child; and hence we read, “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:24-26). Observe well these three things -- he refused, he chose to suffer affliction, be esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than Egypt’s treasures.
The Lord, by His Spirit, grant that there may be at least a few here to-night who, like Moses, will refuse. It is not, as one has often said oneself, “these things will drop off”; you must refuse them. He refused what even Providence gave him. I dare say there are many here who cannot trace up what they have got so distinctly to Providence; but he could, and he refused it, and he chose the suffering, trying, afflicting path, rather than “the pleasures of sin for a season.”

The Lord grant that our hearts may prove the reality of it; and as He has revealed to us, far more than Moses knew in his day, our souls may take hold of it by the Spirit, so that we may accept the path in simple devotedness of heart, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake!

“And with Him shall my rest be on high,
When in holiness bright I sit down,
In the joy of His love ever nigh,
In the peace that His presence shall crown.
“Till then ‘tis the path Thou hast trod
My delight and my comfort shall be;
I’m content with Thy staff and Thy rod,
Till with Thee all Thy glory I see.”

Chapter 2:
2 Kings 2:6-22

I should like to ask this question: If the Lord Jesus were to say to us this evening, on the eve of His departure out of this world (supposing that He had not as yet left it, and that we had been the companions, as His disciples were, of His blessed path down here) -- “Ask what I shall do for you, before I be taken from you”; what answer would you give? I desire solemnly to exercise every heart here as to this. Because, remember well that whatever would be your request, whatever the nature of your petition, so would be indicated distinctly the object of your heart. Your request would declare what was in your heart; and hence it is that our prayers are the expression of the real state of our souls more than anything else, even than our conversation. What is really in our hearts, whatever is the commanding object of our affections, that which sways us, comes out more in prayer than we might suppose. If, then, you can put yourselves in this place for a moment, just reflect, if the Lord Jesus were to put that question to you now -- “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee” -- what would you ask? You can see that it is a solemn question. I ask you, What is the dearest and nearest thing to your hearts? This scripture I have read will answer the question as to what we should ask if Christ were all to us. The one commanding desire of a heart that is really loyal to Him would be this -- “I want to represent you on this earth.” That was the nature of Elisha’s request; and it would be the nature of the request of every heart in this company that was really true to Christ. If you were really true and devoted, if you really loved the Lord Jesus -- I do not mean with natural affection, that is not worth anything -- but if you loved Him divinely, if you had divine affection for Christ, if you had affection by the Holy Ghost in the new man for Christ, the one ruling desire in your heart would be -- “Lord Jesus, my desire is to represent you when you are not in this world.” That was Elisha’s desire respecting Elijah, as can be seen in this chapter before us.

Elijah, as you know, was on the eve of being taken, and he was about to leave Elisha behind him. Elisha was attached to Elijah -- would not leave him. He said, in effect, “I will not leave you. As long as you are here, I will cling to you.” “Well,” Elijah says, “I am about to be taken from you; what then?” “Then,” said Elisha, as it were, “when I cannot have you, let me represent you.” It is a wonderful thing to think of it: “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me”; meaning not simply double in the ordinary sense of quantity, but as if he had said -- “The desire of my heart is, that when you are removed you may still be here in me.” That, I believe, is the thought, beloved friends -- That I may represent you so distinctly, that it will be, as it were, a reproduction on this earth of the absent one. That is what I desire; the one thought and longing of my heart.

Now that requires power; and that is what I am anxious to speak to at this time. I spoke the last evening of our place both in heaven and on earth, and I wish this evening to look at what I feel properly follows that, and that is power. I do not want {need} power to maintain my place in heaven, but I do want {need} it to maintain my true place for Christ on earth; for we are in a world (and may we all feel it more, and have the sense of it more deeply in our hearts) where we are absolutely destitute as regards the place itself. We ought to expect nothing but opposition from this world; nothing but trial, difficulty, and hindrance at every turn; and this not only from bad things, but from good things. The tendency of everything, even the best on this earth, is to make us forget that we do not belong to it. You may think that very sweeping; but, I repeat, it does not matter what it is, even the best thing that belongs to this world has the tendency to make us forget that we do not belong to it. Thus everything becomes a test to us; mercies test us, favors test us; and we find that we cannot trust ourselves even for a moment.

As I was saying last week, the two things that make up our life here -- as was the case with Israel in the wilderness -- are, sustenance and resistance. The sustenance is necessary in order that we may be able more effectually to resist; not that we may sit down and say, “Resistance is over,” but that we may resist the more. The more we are sustained, the more we can resist; and the more we resist, the more we are sustained. It may seem strange, but it works from both sides. It is not what many people think, that having come to a certain point in your history you may then as it were lay down your arms and settle into quietness. I believe it is resistance to the end of the journey; and I am confident the more you are walking with God, the more you must expect the resistance to increase instead of decrease.

Now the first thing I desire to notice in the portion I have read is this, and I beg you to mark it well, that Elijah first of all carries Elisha, in the power that belonged to himself, across Jordan. He took his mantle and smote the waters, and he carries Elisha over with him. Now every child of God has been, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His
power, carried over Jordan; of course I mean **positionally**. If you are a Christian, you are over Jordan. He has carried you over. And note that it is not until they are across the river that any communication takes place between them. When they get over Jordan, Elijah says, as it were, “You are about to be left without me. You will have to be alone in this world; you can no longer have me, or count upon my wing to protect you. You have hitherto had my sustainment, my presence, personally with you; but now you can have it no more; and before I depart ‘ask what I shall do for thee.’” Elisha’s reply is, “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” And Elijah said, “Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee.” Now there you have what I wish to speak about; that is, **power**. What Elisha wanted {needed}, and what he asked for, was **power**, in order that he might be a true representative of the one who was absent; and this is what the true saint of God desires; it is the longing of all who are devoted to Christ. He does not say, “I want to get all the blessing I can -- heaven secured, and everything in the future made good -- taking no thought about the present.” This is not true-heartedness for Christ; it is not loyalty and affection for Him. A person who, as it were, says, “I am very glad to take all the blessings, all the good of Christ’s death, all the advantages that flow to me from what He has done: I shall be in heaven with Christ, in glory with Him; but as to this world He does not expect me to do anything save the best I can” -- such an one has no loyalty, or devotedness, or true-heartedness, to His rejected Lord. True-heartedness, on the contrary, says, “I delight that He has brought me into all the blessings, but at the same time my heart longs to be for Him here, and all the more so because there was nothing for Him here but rejection.” Is it not a wonderful thing to think that before the blessed Lord takes His throne in this world -- for He has no throne in it yet, though He will have -- He condescends to take a throne in our poor hearts; and the one who is really loyal to Him delights to say, -- Before He has His throne here {in the millennium} I will give Him the throne of my heart. I delight in my affections to antedate the day when He will sway that sovereignty over the whole universe. I delight He should do it in my heart now -- that Christ should be Lord of every motion there, the sovereign of my heart; that there should not be a single motion -- wonderful though it be to say it -- not a single motion of which He is not the spring, and source, and satisfaction. Thus it is the heart longs to represent Him here. It knows He has sent us here to be for Him, and it wants to be in His mind as to this; it longs thus practically to be the friend of Christ. Now this is true loyalty to the Lord Jesus. Of course it is at best in a poor, feeble way; but still, no matter how feeble it is, what He looks at is the **heart**. Remember there may be a great deal of show and profession that has no reality in it; but if He sees that at cost, and loss, and trial, we place all we have on one side, in order that we may truly represent Him in this world, it delights His heart. It was this Elisha wanted {needed}, and asked for. He asked for nothing else -- not for usefulness, not that he might be the great benefactor of his age, or some wonderful person that all would look up to, and record him as the means of blessing to hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures. Not a word of it; it was something infinitely beyond that, and it was expressed just in these simple words: “I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” And the reply is as simple; viz., “Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee, but if not, it shall not be so.” Now the very thing we require for that is **power**, as I have already said. Therefore, when we come to the doctrine in the NT, we find that when the Lord Jesus Christ went away from this world the Holy Ghost came down. It is extremely interesting, as well as important for us, to look at the order of this in Acts 1. There you will find that the word “**taken**,” which is used here in 2 Kings -- “if you see me taken” occurs no less than four times, and that in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ going up. “He was **taken**” -- that is the thought running all through that chapter. Afterwards the Holy Ghost came down. Christ being taken up, the Holy Spirit descended. So Elijah being taken, his mantle descended upon Elisha.

If you are a Christian, you have the Holy Ghost dwelling in you, hence no one ought to turn away and say, “I cannot represent Christ.” That word “cannot” should never be in our vocabulary. Think of your body being “a temple of the Holy Ghost”! Could you imagine anything more profound or more solemn than that our poor weak bodies should be the vessels of the Holy Ghost’s dwelling? Is power the question? Why the power of God dwells in my body. The real question is, How I use it? But I need not ask God for power, because power has come down; the difficulty and confusion so many Christians are in, arises from this, they are asking God for power, and thus denying the power that is there ready to work. I fear the common sorrow is in this, that the cross of Christ is practically set aside, and the world cultivated, and the world’s ways adopted, and then saints ask God for power. Why, if we act so, we are grieving God the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us, who is the power. I say power has come down, and in no less a way than this, in the person of God the holy Ghost, who dwells in our bodies; and hence it is we can say there is any amount of power for a Christian.

Now let me point out two or three things about this power, which will make it more simple. This power acts in two ways, and in two circles, and we have an illustration in the chapter before us. The first way is by **resistance**. This is a very quiet thing; it is not some great display, some wonderful achievement which stirs a city. Power in itself is most noiseless. When you see the elements charged with electricity, and hear the solemnizing clap of thunder over your head, it might be thought how mighty the power there displayed; but it is not so, the power is before that, the power has then passed, it is not in the noise. The power is in the lightning, not in the thunder. It is noiseless, but **irresistible**.

Well, as I have said, this spiritual power resists. Let me give an illustration of it; in swimming there are two actions quite distinct. The first is a resistance of the element the swimmer is in. If he does not resist, he himself will sink beneath the waves; for he is in a hostile element, which otherwise will engulf him. This is the very first action. But
now, observe, there is another; viz., he must introduce into that element a new motion altogether. He brings in a new principle which is really a new aspect of power. He resists the element he is in, but in the power of a new force completely. Now those are the two things that are connected with power — there is first of all resistance, and next to it expression. There is the resistance of the element that is there, and the expression of a new motion, foreign entirely to what is there. And so when you see a man walking in the power of the Spirit of God in this world you will find those two things, not only the resisting of the influences that are around him, but the bringing in of a new principle of action altogether.

Now, beloved friends, are we exhibiting this power? This is the question. May I be allowed to ask the younger brethren and sisters here this evening how many of them are afraid of the influences that surround them in this world? It is the very essence of all security, to fear the hostility of the element by the influences that surround them in this world? It is the very bringing in of a new principle of action altogether.

...to be for Christ in power on earth you must resist. “Happy is the man that feareth always.” I am told the difference between a dead and a living fish is this: the living fish goes against the stream, and the dead fish with it. Just so is it with Christians. And hence the power of that word, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” The Lord give each one here that same wonderful energy. We find it in Elisha’s history. What was the first thing he did when this mantle of the departing Elijah was taken? “If you see me taken.” We do not read that he ever saw him more than the once; on the contrary, it says, “He saw him no more.” But he saw him taken, and that is the point. Now I ask you, Could you conceive anything more wonderful than that? Show me the sovereign, the potentate, of this world who ever could say to his subject, “If you see me in a certain position, I will impart something of myself to you.” That is what we have here. “If you see me taken, it shall be so unto you.” The only question was, Will he fix his eye upon him? Will he accept the affecting challenge of the departing Elijah, and simply, earnestly fix his eye upon him as he goes? This is the question. I will show you from Scripture how that principle
runs all through. It is the blessed reality of looking outside and apart from everything to Christ. When the eye is turned away from all else to Him, then we find the power of the Holy Ghost in active operation. It is the beautiful simplicity of it that is so wonderful.

Let me give you another instance of a like kind. Turn to that scene in Matt. 14, and look at Peter. What does he say? “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” The Lord Jesus says, “Come!” He left the boat, and walked on the water, to go to Jesus; and it is a wonderful thing to think of -- as long as ever his eye was simply on that blessed One, he walked the water as scathless as Christ Himself. There was no question as to the power that was there; it was manifest. How could a man walk the water, except by supernatural power? It is the very come I am speaking of -- supernatural power; not unnatural, but supernatural -- power outside of nature altogether. But see, beloved friends; presently the winds and waves became boisterous, and Peter, beginning to look at the water, was about to sink. As long as ever the Lord Jesus Christ simply filled his eye, he walked that tempestuous ocean in the security of the Lord Himself. A scathless journey it was; and I say it matters not what the difficulties are, they need only call forth occupation with the Lord. Our eye fixed on Him keeps us above them. People often say to me, “If I take this path or that path, I shall lose everything.” Very well, I reply, suppose you do. Is not Christ worthy of it all? You will, moreover, never have another opportunity of both proving and showing forth the sufficiency of Christ. And there is another thing as well: in proportion as you have lost for Christ, you will get the most blessed, the most wonderful sense of the joy of it from the Lord Himself to you; you will be paid back a thousandfold in another way. It is a subject past all mere human conception, that the moment my eye rests on Christ as He is now in glory, I can accept everything here -- the shame, the opprobrium, the hatred, the rejection. Why? Because it is Christ’s power that is with me. I can accept His place on earth -- and why? Because now I see Him in glory, and I am one with Him there.

Now take another instance; that of Stephen, in Acts 7. No one since has ever been in exactly like circumstances to him. Just look at him for a moment. There he was in the midst of an infuriated mob, pressing upon him, gnashing upon him with their teeth, and thirsting for his blood. He looks up steadfastly into heaven, and sees the glory of God, and Jesus. Nothing moves him. He kneels down and prays for his murderers, and commits his spirit into the hands of the Lord Jesus. Where did he get the power for it? He, full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly at the One who was taken. Just as Elisha saw Elijah taken, and received his mantle, so Stephen, when he looked up at his Master, could lay down his life here, could bear all the terrible hatred, the stones, the murderous assaults of his enemies, and fall down and pray for the men who were killing him. There is one thing more connected with this which is very important for our hearts, and that is, how this power is displayed. Granted that it is there, what is the characteristic way in which it comes out? There is one scripture, Heb. 11:27, which will, I think, bring this out. Speaking of Moses’ history, the Holy Ghost says, “He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” The one word which is prominent here is that which specially and distinctly characterizes the exercise of this power, and that is endurance. How is this reached? Trace it here in Moses’ history. What is the first thing he did? He refused. It is just what I have spoken of: he resisted his circumstances. I know, beloved friends, that people constantly say, referring to their circumstances, “Well, it was God who put me there. You know Providence placed me in this extraordinary position, and why do you say that I must turn my back upon it? It was the Providence of God that set me in this place.” There is no person living, I care not who, that can show me a providence so distinct or marked as Moses was. It was the Providence of God that rescued him from a watery grave in the ark of bulrushes, that sent down the daughter of the monarch to the river side, that opened her heart and made her lenient to that poor babe. It was the Providence of God that put Moses into the position of being the adopted child of the daughter of the monarch. It was all Providence from first to last.

But, beloved friends, there was a day when faith came; and that is what people forget. As soon as faith became operative in Moses’ heart, he refuses the most wonderful position that a man ever had. He refuses the very post that naturally every man would have tenaciously grasped in the interest of his nation. It might have been said, perhaps was said, “He is just the man to deliver Israel. Look at the place he is in; he is the reputed son of the daughter of the monarch -- the greatest man in Egypt next to the king himself. He will bring in a wonderful deliverance.” But think of this -- he gives it all up. “He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” He is the swimmer in the hostile element, and he resists it. In his case the circumstances appeared to be friendly, though they were really hostile. This is the terrible thing. They appeared to be advantageous, but were really adverse. What does he do afterwards? He chooses suffering. He gives up ease, and chooses hardship. He gives up luxury, and chooses degradation. He gives up the very thing that the heart would delight in, and chooses the very thing that flesh and nature shrink from. He resists the ease of Pharaoh’s court, he refuses the dignity of the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chooses suffering and affliction with the most crooked people that were ever upon the face of the earth -- a people that he himself suffered from all his life. And what is the commentary of the Holy Ghost upon that act? What was it worth in God’s sight? What was God’s value of it? We get it in Heb. 11:17. It was the “reproach of Christ” that was esteemed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. What a wonderful thing for the Holy Ghost to give such a testimony as that to Moses’ act!

And then there was one thing more -- he forsook Egypt. First of all he gives up the luxury of it, and chooses affliction with the people of God; and now he turns his back upon the whole thing. What was the power of His endurance? He saw the one who was taken -- the invisible God. “He endured as
seeing Him who is invisible.” So with us; the invisible power works in us, as the invisible Christ is seen by our eye of faith. As our eye sees Christ in heaven, who is invisible to everyone but the man of faith, the invisible power works in us.

But most of all do I particularly call your attention to this instance of Moses, because I know it has a warning voice respecting the snare and danger of the people of God at this present moment, and especially the younger ones. And observe, it is not so much the bad things of the world that are the present snare -- I quite own that many, thank God, have a conscience that would prevent them desiring the bad things -- but it is the good things of this world that are sought after by so many a saint of God. I affirm solemnly, that such ways are a total denial of Christ’s pathway of suffering and rejection. How different it would all be if you could henceforth truly say to the Lord Jesus (and that is what I began with this evening), “I desire to represent Him. It is not a question of what I am allowed to walk the path of the Lord Jesus Christ through this world!) and the suffering becomes sweet, and the shame of it as nothing, because of the joy of being with Him above it all where He is. Thus it is the soul expands into all the blessed fulness and infinite glory of that place. It was so with Abraham and Lot. Lot -- the type of a worldly Christian, got the cities of the plain. When he went there, and had the thing his eyes looked on and his heart desired, it was a scene of trouble from beginning to end. But to Abraham God says, “Lift up thine eyes”; and he lifts them up to God, and then gets all those divine communications, and divine succor as well. He becomes God’s friend, and is allowed into most wonderful intimacy with the blessed God Himself.

The Lord by His Spirit so encourage each of our hearts, and make Christ so really the one portion of our souls, that each one may be able to say, “My one desire is to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in this evil world”; and may we know for ourselves this wonderful power. The Lord secure the allegiance of every one of our hearts for Himself, that we may regard it not only as our calling, but one of the greatest favors and privileges that could be conferred upon us, to be sent here where Christ was refused, to stand fast for Him in evil days.

Chapter 3:
1 Samuel 17:48; 18:4; 31:16;
2 Samuel 1:11-27; John 20:11-18

Our subject this evening is, the true spring and motive of devotedness, and the rewards of it; and I call your attention to the scriptures I have read for this reason: they bring before us the two kinds or aspects of devotedness which you find in Scripture, one of which is intended of the Lord to lead to the other. But if it exist simply by itself -- that is, if it does not go further, it never meets the mind of Christ in its fulness, and it never secures the person in whom it exists from the dangers or counterfeits of the enemy. It may be very real, as far as it goes; for it does not follow by any means that a person who has what we may call now, for the sake of distinction, the lower kind of devotedness, is untrue; but it unquestionably follows that a person who only has the lower character of devotedness is not a friend of Christ at this present moment. He does not know the secret of the Lord, and is not secure against the attractions of the scene around. The purpose and the mind of God is, that the one should lead to the other; and the danger in souls is not simply in possessing this lower order, but in being satisfied with it. And where the heart rests in that, and goes no further, where it does not travel into the higher order and the fuller thing; then I say it is not safe, it is not secure.

Now I will endeavor to explain to you what these two kinds are. We have a beautiful illustration of the first, or lower kind, in the first scripture we have looked at -- that which arises simply from the knowledge of service rendered to us, but which has no knowledge of the person in himself.
who has done us the service. Now this was the nature and character of Jonathan’s devotedness. You know, I doubt not, at least many of you know, that Jonathan’s devotedness is often brought forward as the greatest instance of the kind in Scripture. Now I confidently assert that it is not so. I say it is beautiful after its order, but it stops short; and it was imperfect just because it stopped short; it failed in this very essential element, even the fulness of devotedness. I have no desire to detract from it in the least, but the history itself will tell the extent of Jonathan’s affection. It is a melancholy thing to see a man whose heart was so knit to Israel’s deliverer come to such an end; and this we can all read from the latter scripture in Samuel. Jonathan, it appears, had no knowledge of David before this, nothing existed between them previously; but it was the wonderful deliverance that David had effected for Israel, the people of Jehovah, for David was God’s servant to this end; it was, I say, this wonderful single-handed deliverance, which had been wrought in simple faith in Jehovah over the Philistine, which had such an effect upon Jonathan, so that when he saw the trappings of death in the hand of the simple stripling of Judah, His heart was knit to him. It was in very fact the savior of his nation who was before him.

The meaning of the opening verses of 1 Sam. 18 is simply this: that Jonathan looked at David with the marks of victory upon him, the head of the Philistine in his hand, and he said, as it were, “There is my savior”; and in that first hour of freedom, through that wonderful conquest, “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:1) The sense of the service was so paramount in his heart (he had such a distinct realization in his heart of the wonderful favor that was rendered to Israel, of the emancipation that was wrought) that his whole heart was knit to the heart of David, and not only that, but he strips himself -- he takes what distinguishes him as a warrior, and he puts it upon David. There is nothing too much to give to David. Yet, mark this, he did not give himself. He gave his possessions, but he kept back himself. He gave his possessions, but he kept back himself. Oh, think what he kept back! He gave all he had; he denuded himself, he stripped himself. It is a wonderful appreciation, I quite admit it. It is beautiful after its order; but what was kept back was a thousand times more than what was given; and be assured this is the way that God measures everything that is given, not by what is given, but by what is kept back. Herein is the divine measure of it.

And now I ask you one solemn question, What have you kept back? Do not tell me what you have given. Perhaps you have given your bow and girdle, or what answers to it; perhaps you have given your possessions; perhaps stripped yourself. You may have often denied yourself much. You may say, “All I possess in this world I put it all on one side compared with His wonderful love, and my heart has the sense of the service He has rendered me. Was not He the one who set aside in His death the mighty power of that great Goliath who at one time held all of us under his sway? Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ who vanquished the power of Satan, sin, and death? David, it is true, wrought a wonderful deliverance; but our Deliverer won the victory by laying down His own life; Christ triumphed by giving Himself.” You may have in your heart the sense that He has taken you out of misery, and wretchedness, and sin, and the deliverance is so wonderful that you may give him everything you have; yet if you have kept back yourself, it all falls short of what He wants and loves to possess. And now you may ask me this question: how do I prove that Jonathan kept back himself? Just in this -- that he never cast his lot in with David; and when David is in rejection, Jonathan is in Saul’s court; and when David is in the cave, he is next to the throne; when David is in danger, Jonathan is safely housed in the palace of Saul. He never thoroughly, openly, manifestly, identified himself with the rejected, hunted, scorned, outcast David. He had affection; I do not deny it; but, beloved friends, it was never openly seen. It was all secret. I quite grant the affection, but he would not stand out before the whole universe and say, “I would rather have David than Saul’s court.” He never did it, and the consequence was, that when the Philistines (who were the enemies found in the midst of Israel, and used against them for their sins) had gained in power and defeated the armies of Israel, not only the king, but also Jonathan, are numbered with the slain; and that is why I referred you to 2 Sam. 1, which is a most melancholy and touching song of sorrow, a lamentation of one who really loved Jonathan. Think of all that is conveyed in the words, “Thou wast slain in thine high places.” He had never left the high places for the place of rejection. David was, as it were, outcast, and Jonathan was in the king’s court, and thus as such Jonathan falls; and therefore I say, that although the devotedness of Jonathan to David was beautiful after its order, it did not prevent them from being separated. Now can that really be love of the highest order which is content to be apart from its object? And yet here we find a man who could strip himself of everything that is valuable, and give it to the one who has rescued him, and yet remain in the very court of the enemies of David, while David is in rejection, and cast out by everyone -- a true type of the Lord Jesus Christ at this present time. Oh, be assured, beloved friends, if you have nothing more with reference to Christ than the sense that He has served you, you will never be a really a devotee! Do I make light of the service? God forbid. Do I take away from the sense of the greatness of it? God forbid. But I should like you to know which is the greater, the service or the One who renders it? That is the question. And now as to the difference between what I have been looking at and the higher order of devotedness -- what is it? It is not looking to give something to Christ, but it is the sense of having received our all in Christ, as well as from Christ, so that He Himself displaces everything else in our hearts. The lower order of devotedness has its spring in the service; it says, “I should like to give you in return everything I have”; the higher order says, “I receive from you in order that you may be personally the one that displaces in my affections everything else that could have a place there.” Herein is exactly the difference between a person who knows the service of Christ, and one who knows Christ personally.
I thank God for every soul here that knows even the 
\textit{service} of Christ, but my great object is to press upon you the transcendent blessedness of a \textit{personal} intimacy with the One who has done you the service; and I desire it for you because I know well you will never be secure against the counterfeits, and attractions, and allurements of this world, until you know the One who casts it all into the shade for you. There are two powers, one of which commands every heart here; the one is the \textit{world}, and the other \textit{Christ}. And be assured you are not secure against the one, unless you have found the other.

You may tell me you know your sins are all forgiven. I do not deny it; that is \textit{relief}. You say it is a wonderful relief. I quite admit it, and thank God for it; but if you have not as yet known the One who shed His precious blood to forgive you your sins, you are not safe from all the attractions of the age. I know many near kindred of my own who know their sins forgiven as truly as any here, and yet they are in the world as fast as can be. They have no question as to the forgiveness of their sins; no doubt about it; they are sure of it, and could give as divine a reason for this blessed assurance as any one here to-night; and, moreover, they \textit{enjoy} it. I have no desire, be assured, to make little of it; but I tell you they enjoy the world too. They have the forgiveness of their sins, and \textit{enjoy} it; they know the services of Christ, and they enjoy them; and they constantly tell you it is a wonderful thing to see sin, death, Satan, hell, and everything vanquished and conquered by Christ; they appreciate it all; but they have never known the blessed displacing effect of the knowledge of the Person who turns everything beside out of the heart because He possesses it Himself. They know nothing of what that is, and never did; and hence it is, when you speak to people -- Christians I mean -- about \textit{Christ}, there is no heart to listen.

I put it solemnly to every one here; I ask you, If we sat down to talk together about the Lord Jesus Christ, how much would you be at home with that subject? If I were to sit down and talk to you about His service, you would be at home; but if I were to sit down and talk to you about Himself, would you be at home there? Would that be a theme that your heart could go over -- the various perfections of the One whom His grace allows us adoringly to call our Friend? It is solemn for every one of us. What then would be your answer if I were to say, \textit{Let us talk about this blessed One, who left the throne of God and came down here to become a man, that He might manifest His Father's love to a wretch like me -- that He might lay hold upon this poor, miserable heart of mine, and win it for Himself? If He has won your heart and mine, we can surely speak about the One who has thus become our common object. I am often amazed at how little there appears to be of that blessed, simple, personal intimacy with that blessed One; that personal knowledge of Christ which delights in Him as a \textit{person}, not in a mere doctrine about Him. Very little more is known of Him than if he were a mere doctrine; there is no sense that he is a living Man upon the throne of God in heaven -- a living Person who can fill every desire of the heart, and whom I know as God in a \textit{man}; that is the wonderful part of it. I know God in Jesus. How else can I know God? I can only know God in that blessed One, beloved friends; that is the wonderful part of it. True man, very man, really man, yet the mighty God. But it is God in man. "This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It is the only way in which I can know God; I see God in Christ; I know God in that man, and I am brought to God in Him. What a blessed thing it is! \textit{That} alone secures me, and nothing but that \textit{can} secure me. I say it to you affectionately -- you are not safe, you are not secure, there is no garrison in your heart, until Christ is the alone simple commanding One that occupies its throne. When He does, and He is there personally, then you have the true motive, and the real spring, and the real power for walk and testimony for Him here on earth. In figure, it was this which Jonathan lacked. I do not wish to be the least one-sided; I admit that his devotedness was true and beautiful so far as it went; but it never rose beyond the lower order. It was deficient in this respect, that what was kept back was the very thing David's soul would have desired. That is what Christ is looking for; it is your \textit{heart} -- in other words, \textit{yourself}; therefore says the Holy Ghost, "Keep thy \textit{heart} with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Let me refer you to another instance from the OT, by way of contrast to this, which will throw this history of Jonathan into relief, and put it more into the light I am seeking to present it to you in just now. Turn with me to the history of Ruth; you are all, I trust, familiar with it. It was no question of \textit{service} with her. Naomi had rendered her all the service she could; her service days were over; that is the way the book of Ruth begins. We find a poor, desolate widow doubly bereaved -- a woman who had lost her husband and her children, saying "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." It was as if she had said, "This world is all over for me; my sun has gone down while it was yet day; I can do no more for you; go back to your gods; I can give you no more; I can render you no more service; your sister is gone back, do you return likewise." Now, what do you think was the answer to that? What did that evoke from the heart of Ruth? What was the effect of that appeal? The issue of it was this, that it brought out the simple fact that Naomi was enshrined personally in the heart of the Moabitess. In substance her reply was this: "It is you I want, I value you; it is your person I cling to, it is not service, I want nothing more; you have given me all you could give, but I will not leave you, neither in life nor death can I part from you; I have known you in the days when the sun of prosperity shone upon you, and I shall cling fast to you now in the days of adversity; I have known you in your bright days, I will never leave you in your dark days."

Look at this difference, and mark it well. There was neither service on the part of Naomi to Ruth, nor was it a question of service on the part of Ruth to Naomi as yet. And I say that, because I know a great many who think that if you go out and spend all your day in service, if you are exceedingly active, and going about hither and thither, you are a very devoted person. I cannot say so at all. You might be all that, and more beside; you might scour every haunt in
this great city, and not have one solitary trait of that
devotedness which rejoices the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.
I say, you may be a very hard-working person -- and do not
fear that I make light of it, God forbid -- but there is a great
difference between that and a person being in the intimacies
of personal nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He can
say of him, “There is one who values my mind more than he
values anything in the world; I call him my friend, and I make
known to him my mind.” Is not that a very different thing? I
could never say that one in that position would be a whit
backward in any service; but the difference is just this, that
the service comes to be of the character of His mind, and not
according to our own tastes. It is His taste, and what He
would like, that we then study. And let me assure you of this
to-night, that I do not want to lessen the love of service in any
of your hearts, but only that you make sure of this, that you
have consulted Christ’s pleasure about it, and not your own,
because that is what a devoted person will do; he rejoices in
being free to sit down and study the pleasure of Christ. Could
anything be more blessed than to be able to sit down and
study the pleasure of the One who is our object? What will He
like? It is beautiful to me to think of Saul of Tarsus. What
was the first thing he said? “Lord, what wilt thou have me to
do?” His thought is, “I now have the Lord Jesus Christ; He
has displaced everything in my heart, satisfied me with
devotedness which rejoices the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.
I said that to a person time other day, and he said, “Where
that? It is most interesting for every one of us to study. If you
trace the whole of the history in the gospels -- I ask you
earnestly to do so -- if you will search the history of Mary
Magdalene, you will find that in every circumstance of the
life of the Lord Jesus Christ this woman was mixed up with it
from the moment she had experienced His delivering
power. She had given herself unservingly to Him -- she gave
her substance; she is mentioned as one of those who
ministered to Him; she waited on Him. She had given herself
everything she had. You will find her in life with Him, she
was with Him at the cross, she was with Him the last
ing the grave, and the first thing on the first day of the
week at the grave. A most interesting history! Wherever you
search in the NT, you find Mary Magdalene connected with
the history of the Lord Jesus Christ from the moment she
experienced His delivering power. He had delivered her, and
He was her Savior -- had cast seven devils out of her and she
had become through this service attracted to Himself. That is
the point, and she never leaves Him; and what to me is so
touching, she clings to Him as much in suffering, opprobrium, and shame on the cross as under any other
circumstances. The real test of devotedness is, whether a
person will stand by Christ in the dark day. The day is
coming when Christ will have it all His own way, and it is
blessed to look forward to it; but how many are in spirit and
heart with Him now, when He has not as yet taken His own
rights and titles? Solemn question! The devoted ones are those
who abide with Christ while He is in rejection, and this is
exactly the very test of this present moment. If Christ were in
power, if everything were in divine order now, everything as
He would have it, as it will be in the day that is coming, there
would be no cross, no test, no trial, every one would throw
in his lot with Him; but the test is this, whether I cast my lot
in with Him in His rejection; and it is not merely the
question, as I said before, of a person being forgiven, having
the forgiveness of his sins. You may have that, just as
Jonathan got the good of David’s victory, and never spent a
moment with David in rejection; and that is the case with
many now. They say, “I have the forgiveness of my sins,”
and there they stop; but the question is, Where is Christ now?
I said that to a person time other day, and he said, “Where is
Christ? What do you mean?” I say, What position has Christ
in this age at this present moment? In what estimation is the
truth of Christ, the Word of Christ? Are His saints engrossed
upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of
my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of
heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new
name.”

I do not pursue that, beloved friends, but will turn to the
NT instance I read to you, this case of Mary Magdalene.
Observe how interesting it is. Here was a person who had
been served by the Lord Jesus Christ, just exactly as Jonathan
had been served by David, and it is very interesting to trace
the history. Of course it was the service in the first instance
that introduced her to Christ. You know He was her
deliverer, He had cast the legion of devils out of her; that is
clear from the intimation we get. But what do I find after
that? It is most interesting for every one of us to study. If you
trace the whole of the history in the gospels -- I ask you
earnestly to do so -- if you will search the history of Mary
Magdalene, you will find that in every circumstance of the
life of the Lord Jesus Christ this woman was mixed up with it
from the moment she had experienced His delivering
power. She had given herself unservingly to Him -- she gave
her substance; she is mentioned as one of those who
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I said that to a person time other day, and he said, “Where is
Christ? What do you mean?” I say, What position has Christ
in this age at this present moment? In what estimation is the
truth of Christ, the Word of Christ? Are His saints engrossed

with the thing that Christ most values and loves at this present moment? You know it is far otherwise. There is not a person who would contradict as to this, viz., that Christ is not owned. Christ is rejected and cast out by this generation. We are living in the world, the scene of His murder, and the generation of His murderers are in power; that is where we are. Christ is rejected, cast out, and refused on every hand. I quite admit there are those who are uncommonly glad to get the good of what has been termed “the plan of salvation.” In fact, selfishness is the very principle, the latent principle, of the human heart. People are glad to get the good of Christ’s work, and to feel sure they won’t go to hell if they die; they rejoice in being secure against judgment; but oh, the great question at this present moment, when Christ’s interests and truth and Word are all thought little of, is, How far are you taking the place with Himself? and I say this is the test of all true loyalty and devotedness to Him. Are you prepared to stand by him, at cost, and loss, amid suffering and shame, at this present moment?

There are many who shrink from that, yet I could not therefore deny them to be Christians; but I say such are not devoted to Christ. I go even further, and I say that those who apprehend Christ’s present position in the heavens, and Christ’s present rejection by this world, will like to be in circumstances, in their business, in their house, in their person, suited to such a Christ. They see a suitability in the cross casting its shadow upon everything about them. It is not merely to get the good of the cross, not only to get into heaven as the result of it, but they want to be with Christ now; their desire is to answer to His mind now, here in this present scene; and I say, that if He had not a place where to lay His head, if He had only a manger at His birth, and a cross between two felons at his death, and the tomb of Joseph for His burial, how much can those who love Him desire to possess in this world? Would to God our path and ways were shaped a little more after the pattern of His own! How different it would be with us all if that were so! And may I not say this to every one of you, you have now a wonderful opportunity of showing that Christ has the place of sovereignty in your hearts, because it is becoming more difficult every day, and it will continue to be so, to give testimony in this world to a rejected Lord and Christ? It is blessed, the very fact that God has allowed such days to fall upon us, it is the most wonderful favor that He can confer; wonderful that He should allow us to be in the very darkest hour of the night to prove the value and blessedness and fulness of Him who is the alone light of our hearts. Should you not like to suffer for the person you loved? Is it merely the question of giving Him what costs you nothing? I will not pursue that further; but, if the Lord permit, I will touch a little another evening upon the rewards of it. It is well to observe this with reference to John 20, that the reward that this devoted woman gets is of a double nature. She receives a double reward. The first side of it is, He causes her to hear her own name on His risen lips. What a moment of blessing for her heart! Have you ever thought what that must have lingered over as if in death was there alive before her? Angels saw her weeping, and so did He, and knew well the value of her tears; and He says to her, “Mary!” Was that no reward, beloved friends? What springs that must have awakened up in her heart! “Rabboni, my Master!” she answers, as the delight of recognition dawns upon her. But He goes further than this. Now He says, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God”; i.e. “Go and carry to my brethren the most wonderful message that was ever communicated by human lips to human hearts.” Oh, beloved friends, we are living in days when the effort of the devil is to displace everything, to set aside that which is first in God’s thoughts; to put everything out of divine order is the devil’s great object! He is the author of it all. I look at this woman, and I see her in devotedness clinging to Christ, and I see her rewarded for her devotedness in the way a devoted heart delights. He did not send her out to preach; she was not commissioned to preach — the great effort and object of the devil is to put people out of their sphere, and things out of their order — she was not sent out to be a preacher to the world. She was sent to the brethren of Christ, to tell them the most wonderful communication that ever human lips carried; she was sent to tell them that Christ was risen out of death, and to tell them that the firstborn of the many brethren had gone {was going} to His Father, and their Father; to His God, and their God. Was not that rich reward? Her first reward was personal; her second reward was with reference to others. She was a sheep of Christ, and therefore He had called her by name; she was a friend of Christ, and therefore He communicated the most wonderful tidings to her.

May the Lord give you this evening to taste this devotedness that has Christ Himself personally for its spring. Thus you will be preserved, thus you will find that which weans your heart from other things. I do not deny that the world is attractive, or that it is a trying time for saints to live in. I am certain it is so. You must not think that when once you have to do with Christ all your difficulties are over; they never really begin till then. You never had such difficulties, never had such trouble, such up-hill work, as when once you are on the side of Christ; and why? Because Christ is not yet in power, and Satan is permitted to work, and therefore it is all difficulty and up hill work at this present moment. But, oh! there is this, He is worthy of it, worthy that I should be here in this poor wretched world that cast Him out, simply and entirely and only for Him. For that I pray most earnestly for you and myself, I press it upon my brethren especially, that we seek to be here in circumstances that more suit Christ rejected, that our houses, our persons, our very conversation and manner should maintain the testimony. It is true we have to pass through this world of our Lord’s murder, and we have to do with the generation of the people that did it; but we are apart from it, we do not belong to it, but to a brighter scene, and to the One Himself who is in that scene.

The Lord, by His Spirit, lead each heart here to taste the sweetness and joy of having Christ, and to be simply devoted to Him, that there may be that in which His heart takes
pleasure in each one of us, for His own name’s sake.

Chapter 4: 
Jeremiah 2:1-13

The subject I have on my heart to bring before you this evening, beloved, is one of exceeding solemnity for us all; and I pray God that both hearers and speaker may have the impress of it. The subject is declension, and I would seek to trace, as simply as I can, from Scripture, the source or rise, and the issue, of declension in the soul. I will say this at the outset with reference to declension itself, that it is never a momentary thing. Under no circumstances and on no occasion is departure from God a momentary thing with anyone of us; on the contrary, I state it positively, and say that it is a departure from God. And hence the need for us to be on our watch as to good and bad alike. To a certain extent every saint is afraid of bad things, he avoids them; but what Satan is doing is this, he is displacing God Himself from the place that belongs to Him in the hearts of His children, not by bad things, but by good. Let me refer to an illustration of that, just in passing. Have you ever been struck with this, that in the parable in Luke 14, it was not a single bad thing that hindered those who were invited from going to God’s supper. All the things that engrossed their hearts were good things. Who would say that a piece of land was a bad thing, or five yoke of oxen to till it, or that entering into a relationship of life was a bad thing? And yet every one of these, the piece of land, the five yoke of oxen, and the wife that was married, all displaced the supper of God from the hearts of the invited ones. It is the good things which displace Christ. Oh, what a wile that is! What a stratagem of Satan! How ingenious! And that is the way hundreds of God’s people have been caught. Many who would have been proof against the open, above-board, evil thing, are completely turned aside by a favor from God. It is so good in itself, and they can trace it so directly from God; they say, “God gave me this. This is a thing that He has bestowed upon me. It is a mercy of His own giving.” And so the heart is taken off its guard, so to speak, and the place of Christ, or the blessed God himself, becomes occupied by one of his gifts.

And thus, as I have said, the first seeds of departure from God are laid down in the heart, and that is the reason why I have referred to this passage in Jeremiah to-night, for the sake of one verse. He says, “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” “I am displaced,” He says; “I have not my place in the heart of Israel. You have put me out of my place, you have forsaken me.” That is the first thing, beloved friends. Do not be deceived in the least about it. You never go and hew out broken cisterns first. People never turn to the world first — they give up God first, they give up Christ first. “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters;” and then, “they have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” The first step is that God has not his place of supremacy in the heart. For us, as Christians, it is Christ; for Israel, it was Jehovah.
comes in there must come in under Him -- that is the difference, and a mighty difference too. If Christ is the supreme sovereign of my affections and my heart, if He is enthroned king there, then all that comes in must come in under Him. If He is only first, then I can put whom I like next; but if He is all, then nothing can come in except in accordance with Christ, and under Christ. And I know you are not safe, you are on the ground of temptation, you are near to a slip, if Christ has not that place of entire sovereignty in your soul. If He has not the entire command of your heart I say you are not safe; you have begun the downward path, that is the commencement. And hence the wise man says, by the Spirit of God, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

Now there is another principle that goes along with this; and that is, that in this first step downward, this beginning of declension or departure from God, something is sought for self in almost every case. It would be a very interesting study for you to search the Scriptures as to that. If you will examine all the instances in the Scriptures, you will find that the moment the only true motive-power and object is no longer supreme in the heart, self comes into prominence; self-consideration, self-indulgence, something to gratify self, something to please self. I shall refer to one or two instances of it. Take the case of Noah; he planted a vineyard, and entered on a course of self-indulgence, and fell. Abraham goes down into Egypt in a famine; self-consideration brought him down there. The same with Jacob; he becomes weary, settles down at Shalem, instead of going on to Bethel; and what trouble did he not get into there! And here was self-consideration again. Lot, in the same way; what trouble and sorrow he fell into through his seeking his own pleasure and profit in Sodom! You will always find it so; and it does not require a very great thing to separate the heart from God, and to hinder communion. It is a very small thing that will break communion. Nothing, thank God, can touch eternal and to hinder communion. It is a very small thing that will break communion. Nothing, thank God, can touch eternal life; but the very weight of a feather, as it were, will snap communion. Nothing can interfere with eternal life; if we could lose that, every one of us here would have lost it long since. There would be no hope for any one of us; no, not one; save, of course, in the immense, wonderful grace of God. There is no limit, thank God, there; but, as far as we are concerned, if our safety as to eternal life depended upon ourselves, there is not one of us would be saved. Through the infinite grace and goodness of our God, it is entirely out of our keeping. But as to communion, and testimony, and pleasing God down here in this world, all that rests (of course it is the grace of God alone can help us) upon our own responsibility; and if there is no communion, no cleaving to Christ, there is no display of Christ in this world, but departure from Him, and then comes the seeking after “broken cisterns.” It is wonderful how the links of the chain do fit into each other. You can hardly perceive the departure at first, but at last it becomes so apparent that everyone can see it.

And here may I say a few words very much on my heart, which I think God perhaps may make useful to the younger ones here. I have known many a young Christian to be persuaded by those who ought to have known better; for I regret to say it is very often the older ones who mislead the younger; it is very often those who ought to know better who are the occasion of stumbling to the younger ones. I have known many a young Christian to relax a habit that I thank God for an increasing appreciation of -- I mean morning and evening reading of the Scripture and prayer. I know there are some quarters where people have considered they have reached to such an advanced state that they can dispense with what they look upon as worn out, if not old-fashioned. Thank God some are increasingly old-fashioned about that. They feel the increasing blessedness of it. Surely as often as you can, as well, but do not give up that. I have known many a young Christian who has relaxed that blessed habit of prayer; for I do call it blessed, to seek His face morning and evening; such I have known to slip, almost immediately. I believe it is an immense thing, and of the very first importance, to begin and end the day distinctly with God. You may say, “I can begin the day with God without that”; but remember, if you are truly dependent, you will never object to the expression of it. Do you say, “It is not necessary”? I say, beloved friends, it is most blessed, it is wholesome, and it is refreshing. Nor is it small in His eyes, the distinct recognition that nothing in my heart has displaced that blessed One, that He is supreme there. But there is even more than this in connection with it. Have you ever thought that the devil sees it? You may say, “But then God knows my heart.” Yes; but I say Satan does not; he has no knowledge of your heart, and your thoughts, and what is going on inside of you. If he did he would be equal with God; but he sees you on your knees, and it is a wonderful thing -- if I take it even on the lowest ground -- it is an immense thing for a poor, helpless, weak one like myself to be a witness in some measure of dependence upon God. It is a wonderful thing, and I thank God for it, that I can be there on my knees, a witness to the creature that lost his first estate through being lifted up and independent, of what the grace and power of God can do in a nature that is in itself independent; how that grace can produce that dependence which is in every way suitable to us. What do you find was the first thing that was said of Saul of Tarsus? What was the proof given that he was a new creature? What did the Lord say of him? Was it, “He is preaching?” Was it “He is giving forth the most wonderful account of all these new things that his heart has got hold of?” Oh, by no means! What then does He say? “Behold, he prayeth!” Christ has His place there now. What a wonderful thing for the devil to see that! For Satan to see his once prime tool, dependent! Was not that a glory to Christ, and an immense mercy for Saul of Tarsus himself? Was it a small matter for him to be so completely turned out of everything he was connected with, that he is now as dependent as he was formerly independent? I say, beloved friends, it is everything; and so I leave this little word with you. And I pray that God may deepen the habit a thousand times more in us than it is; and instead of loosening by one single thread that which God has made the means of blessing to His people so often in the past (and the tendency is to unloose everything in these days), I would fasten it
sustainment, and solace) as we are kept in the simple fact, that it is everything for our souls (it is a help, and wrong direction. The Lord keep us in the remembrance of this least the blessed habit I have been referring to. I for one brethren here to-night who may have been over-persuaded, by tighter if I could. The Lord grant this to any of my younger so-called advanced views or anything else, to abandon in the.

The first instance I would refer you to is in Judg. 16 what Samson left. I will only mark this. That verse shows you what Samson gave up. What was he? He was a Nazarite; and a Nazarite was a man who was completely and thoroughly separated to God.

Now mark this well, and let me press it earnestly upon you, that separation was the secret of his strength. The secret of Samson's power was his Nazariteship; and that meant that he was completely and thoroughly separated to God. The moment that he divulged that secret, he lost all his power. Now I am struck with this history, for this reason, that I find the blessed God succored Samson even whilst he was being enticed by allurements; God was succoring him in a wonderful way up to the moment this seventeenth verse records. He had been enticed by allurements turned aside by them frequently, and yet up to the last God helped him; but the moment he divulged the secret, God succors him no more. It is most solemn. The moment you lose your separation, God succors you no longer. Of course there is ever His recovering grace, blessed be His name for that; but that is not the saint's guide along this.

The providence of God is what God does here in this world, through God’s grace, to maintain the principle of separation in everything, whatever it may be. I cannot limit it to any one particular sphere; it applies to everything. There is no way whereby the saints of God are more effectually allured from the place of simple separation to Him, and which becomes the glory of His Christ, than in this way of unholy association. It is this worldly principle which bids fair to destroy the whole testimony at this present moment, and therefore I warn my younger brethren about it to-night. Here was the beginning of all that Samson fell into afterwards -- “Give me this woman to wife”; this woman of the Philistines. In the PROVIDENCE of God his wish was defeated, and God turned aside this terrible slip for a time. The woman was given to his friend; Samson did not get her. That was the PROVIDENCE of God. But when I say that, I am not in any wise making light of that which is entirely foreign to the path of faith for His saints. The providence of God is what God does here in this world to keep evil back, when everything is out of order. Everything is out of order in this world; the whole condition is disorganized, and in moral chaos and confusion; and I find the blessed God (who has not given up the reins of government, though He works as it were in secret) acting to turn aside that which would be opposed to His purpose. But faith is the principle by which His saints track the divine path through the intricacies of present confusion. Faith alone can guide you and me. I thank God for His providence with all my heart; but still that is not the saint's guide along this world.

I tell you what has been said, and in truth too; viz., that this world is like a great lunatic asylum. You never could tell
how a man would be treated in a sound mind from knowing how he was treated in an unsound mind. No one would treat a man in his senses as he would one who was insane. Even so is it in divine things. The providence of God is keeping evil in check; but while I own humbly the blessed sovereignty of God, I must be subject, and I must walk by a principle which glorifies Him, and that is faith. I thank God for restraint; that is what He is doing now in a world of evil; and that is why I compared this world to a lunatic asylum -- all is under the restraint of God's providence. But how blessed it is when we walk with God! then we get motives and springs outside the whole thing. Faith becomes the principle and spring of our actions.

Now we see it was through the providence of God that Samson's wish was defeated for the time being; but how little he profited by it! His whole subsequent history shows that it was this very same principle of entering into associations contrary to God which led him step by step to the climax which we see reached in that seventeenth verse of the sixteenth chapter. Let us look again a little at that. First of all, he loves this woman in the valley of Sorek -- this Delilah. His heart has wandered away from God. God is displeased; he has another object beside God. Look at the steps, how immensely solemn they are, and how they bring out the gradual nature of declension! He first of all loved the woman, and then he entered into temptation: he talked with her, listened to her insinuations, until at last his soul was vexed to death, and she forced him to tell his secret, and then his downfall is complete. Look at the solemnity of it. The Philistines come and cut off his locks, that wherein his strength lay, the sign of his separation to God; and when the challenge comes from Delilah, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," he wist not that the Lord had departed from him. "I will go out," he says, "as at other times before, and shake myself"; then at last the moment that was too much for him was upon him, and he found he was shorn of all his strength. How solemn it is! Observe how the thing was gradual; it began with this question of unholy association; it waxed stronger and stronger in the cultivation of it, although he was warned, and received help from God, until at last he falls into the trap, he gives himself up completely to Delilah, loses the locks of his head, and falls captive into the hands of the Philistines; and the first thing they do is to put out his eyes, and he grinds in the prison-house. How many a saint of God is just like Samson! How many there are who have, as it were, slept on the prison-house. How many a saint of God is just like Samson Jehovah has departed from us. Well may we say, "The Lord, you will always find that instead of seeking company above, you have sought company below himself, he will always seek company above himself -- spiritually, I mean, of course. When I see a Christian seeking the companionship of those below himself spiritually, I say that person is on the road to declension.

We shall now turn to an instance in the New Testament. I shall only say a word or two about it. It is the history of Peter. You will find what I refer to in Luke 22. It is the same solemn history here, though in rather a different aspect. It is the history of a man who has overweening confidence in himself. Samson was self-indulgent, and Peter is self-confident -- "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." I would ask you to notice just one point in this passage. Look at the difference between the work of the blessed Lord, and that of Satan. "Satan hath desired you [that is, all of them], but I have prayed for thee." "Satan wills to sift you -- I have prayed for thee." Oh, think of that for a moment! "Satan wishes to get you into his grasp that he may sift you, but I have prayed for you; I have been beforehand;"
I have interceded; I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”

Let me just briefly mark the steps that preceded Peter’s downfall. The first thing was that Peter was sleeping instead of praying. I know very well it has been said he could not help it in his weariness. Beloved friends, it is wonderful, if a matter really had possession of you, how sleep would leave your eyes. It is wonderful, when the affections or heart are much engrossed, how sleep flies from the eyelids; and if Peter’s heart, if Peter’s soul, had been engrossed with the sorrows of Jesus, sleep would have pressed lightly indeed upon his eyes. But it was not so; his own sorrow filled his mind, and therefore he slept while the Lord was in agony.

Mark the next step. It is, that when the Lord is suffering, Peter is striking. The Lord allows Himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter; Peter smites with the sword. First of all he sleeps in nature, and then he awakes in the flesh; he sleeps in nature, and he awakes in nature. Observe the difference: he drops asleep when he ought to be watching, and when he should have suffered he is smiting. How like unto many of us!

Then there is another step. The Lord is taken; and then we read that Peter went and sat down in the hall amongst the enemies of Christ, warming himself by the fire. Oh, beloved friends, think of that! While the blessed Lord is being buffeted, despised, reviled, ill-treated by men -- whilst the enemies of Jesus are expressing the malignity of their hearts towards Him, there is Peter, one of His own loved disciples, sitting down and warming himself by the enemy’s fire! He has dropped down to the very lowest conceivable degradation of humanity -- warming himself at the fire, in company with the enemies of Christ.

Well, mark what next. It only requires the jeer of a servant maid, and Peter denies His Lord with oaths and curses. I refer to it because of the gradual nature of the steps. It was not all in a moment of temptation; it was gradual. And so it is, beloved friends, with all departure from God. It begins in what we think small, and the thing goes on step by step -- the first step the most difficult of all -- until, like the man who said, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” the very thing we pride ourselves so much upon is the very thing in which we break down. I beseech you therefore to weigh these things before the Lord this evening. Oh, take them to heart! Remember the exceeding ease with which the heart can get away from God. Remember the multitudinous efforts of Satan to entice in every kind of way, and thus to catch unwary feet. One can only look to the Lord that He will, by His Spirit, keep that blessed One distinctly and only before our hearts, Christ Himself enthroned in our affections, first and last and all. Not merely, as many act, giving Him the first place, and then letting other things come in, but Christ all. We are only safe or secure as Christ has that place, because when it is so we are watchful. Whenever Christ is the commanding object, there is watchfulness. It is the person who has the treasure who fears it may be lost. If I have this treasure, I know the whole league of hell is pledged to rob me of it, and therefore I watch.

The Lord keep each of us watchful; and may we listen to His own blessed word which was spoken to His disciples, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” The Lord give His word a place in every heart here this evening, that, as we see what those principles are which precede declension, and what they lead to, we may take warning as we go along step by step, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 5:
Zechariah 12:9-14; 13;
John 21:15-19

It is interesting, as well as instructive, to see how the principles, the great moral principles, of God run through all the Word. The subjects of these principles may be in different relations with Him and differently circumstanced, so much so, that what is characteristic of an Old Testament saint is not at all the position in which Christians are looked at in relation to God in the New Testament; but always allowing for that, the great moral principles of God in His ways with the soul and with the conscience are alike in both Old and New Testament. And that is the reason why I have directed you as well to the prophecies I have read as to the history we have looked at in the New Testament, because both Scriptures relate to restoration. It may be of different individuals and under different circumstances, but still it is restoration in both cases; and not only that, but restoration on the same principles; that is to say, that the conscience and heart are reached by God in both cases. And I affirm that strongly, because all I have to say about it this evening is connected with the fact that all restoration begins in the conscience, even as the first work of God in a man’s soul begins in his conscience. I quite grant that it is better for a man to be an intellectual believer in the Scripture than an avowed infidel; but unless his conscience has been reached, he is not one whit nearer to God, though he is in a most responsible position, for this reason, he believes what condemns him. I say that, because I feel it must be conscience work, whether it be conversion in the first instance, or whether it be restoration after a person has wandered from Him. Oh, these are not subjects upon which you can let your intellect play! You have missed the mark if you do; you have mistaken the arena. You are entirely at sea as to this matter, if you think it a subject on which you can dilate as you would upon any ordinary theme. It is a subject for the conscience, a subject for the affections of the new man, if you are a new creature in Christ; and unless the conscience and the new man are in exercise, it is impossible that you can really grasp and understand these things. As I said before, I quite own that you may understand them in an outward way; but you cannot understand them as they relate to you individually. It is a remarkable fact -- I only mention it in passing -- that you will find just now a great deal of what I may term outward interest in the things of God. Just as a man would be interested in some scientific problem, and
would survey all its parts to see the due arrangement of all the
phases of it, so it is quite possible that a man may take the
word of God and subject it to the analysis of his mind, and
perhaps believe it outwardly. But let me tell you solemnly, it
is exactly of that very class of people that the Lord Jesus used
those words in John 2. When He was at Jerusalem, on the
feast-day, at the Passover, “many believed on His name.”
They were not infidels or sceptics; “they believed in His name
when they saw the miracles”; and yet of them it is said,
“Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew
all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He
knew what was in man.” And what follows that? “Ye must be
born again”; there must be a new nature, a new principle.
There must be the introduction of that which is not in any
man naturally; and that is the meaning of the new birth -- it
is the introduction of a completely and totally new thing.

Well, I say, beloved friends, that is the very first work of
God in a man by His Word and Spirit. The conscience is
wrought upon by the Word of God and by the Spirit of God,
and the Word by the holy Ghost becomes the forming power
of this new nature in every one that is born again. There I
come to an entirely new thing, a new creature, which is
empowered by the Holy Ghost to understand the things of
God, as we have it in 1 Cor. 2:12:

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.

But unless you have the Holy Ghost you cannot understand
the Scriptures according to God’s thoughts. You may take and
put them together, as I said, in an intellectual way, just as one
would take up any ordinary subject in this world; but you do
not understand their bearings as to yourself. I have been led
to make these remarks by noticing, and it has much struck
me, how that, when it is merely an intellectual interest in
Scripture, people most carefully avoid the personal
application of it. They do not like what is personal, hence
they avoid it. They will speak about Scripture, reason about
it, argue about it, as they would about any other subject; but
when it comes to be a question of what is personal, and what
relates to their own conscience and soul, then there is an
almost inevitable turning away from it. I am very far from
saying that all personal dealing is to be dragged into open
daylight, so to speak; but still, at the same time, it is very
apparent as to whether a man’s conscience is truly in exercise
because the truth relates to him, or whether it is merely a
subject of interest, as people would speak about any ordinary
matter in this world.

Well, I have only said that in connection with the
scriptures we have read, to introduce the first point that I
desire to speak a little about to-night, and that is with
reference to “restoration.”

It is exactly like conversion in this particular, that the
first work is in the conscience; and I say, beloved friends, and
I am thankful to be allowed to say it, the more distinct the
work of God is in the soul, the more it is in the conscience in
the first instance. And, further, the first effect of the work of
God in a man’s conscience is to produce, not joy, but misery;
I affirm it without the slightest fear of contradiction, on no
less authority than that of the word of God. And it moreover
agrees with the order in which Scripture reveals what God is
-- “God is light,” and “God is love”; that is the order, and
that is the order in which a soul apprehends it. And, may I
ask, what else but misery could be produced in a man’s
conscience when, for the first time in his history, he is
introduced into the searching presence of One who is said to
be “light”? For a man who is a sinner to be brought into the
presence of that light, what is the effect? Joy? No; but misery,
and rightly so. I quite admit that there comes in the
blessedness of what follows, “God is love”; and very blessed
and wonderful is that which follows even this, the provision
for removing all that the “light” makes manifest; but that is
the order in which a soul learns it, whether in conversion or
in restoration.

I am speaking now specially for those here who may have
wandered. I have such in my thoughts this evening, looking
to the Lord that He may be pleased to make His word fit into
the conscience of anyone here who may have in any way
departed from Him. The first effect of the light, then, in a
person’s conscience who has slipped away from God is to
produce misery and unhappiness. Of course it is different
from the misery that one has in his unforgiven state; yet it is
deeper. Oh, there is no sorrow, no anguish, no pain, so bitter
as that which comes from the heart that knows it is
forgiven. Its very bitterness is that it has wandered away from the One
who has expressed such love. You see it in the history of
Israel; and this is the reason why I have referred to this
prophecy in Zechariah, which relates to the restoration of
Israel, the bringing back of Israel from all the distance they
were in. I must say one word in connection with the first
verse of chapter 13, which perhaps may offend some here,
though I am only saying what is a matter of fact. “In that day
there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to
the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”
Observe, that is not a fountain of blood; poetry says so, but
not Scripture. I refer to it because I believe this verse has
misled a great many people with reference to the question of
the cleansing after conversion. It is the restoration of Israel,
and the cleansing by Jehovah of those who had Lo-ammi
written upon them as to their relationship with Him, and it
answers to the purifying power of the word of God upon a
person’s conscience who has wandered from Him now. There
is no such thing in Scripture as a re-application of the blood
of Christ; it is a mere invention of man. It is the greatest
dishonor that was ever -- unintentionally, no doubt, in many
cases -- put upon the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
I cannot believe that any Christian would intentionally
dishonor the precious blood of Christ; but still it is a
dishonor. To talk of the re-application of the blood of Christ
is doing an unintentional dishonor to the value of His work.
“The worshipers once purged,” says the Holy Ghost, “should
have no more conscience of sins.” “Once purged” -- no
frequent repetition. It is quite true that there is a constant
application of water, or in other words, the continual
application of the word of God by the Holy Ghost, but there
is not a single line of Scripture, not a solitary sentence of Scripture, upon which a person could found truthfully the thought that the blood of Christ is re-applied to a man every time he sins. I say it is a total and complete misapprehension of the gospel of the grace of God, and a total perversion of the truth of God. I challenge you to search and find, if you can, a solitary scripture that speaks of it so. I can find you abundance of scriptures that speak of the purifying by water, that is, the Word, as it is here, “There shall be a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.”

Now if you trace in this prophecy what will be the future of God’s dealings with that people, you will find it is exactly the order in which He deals in restoring grace now. Let me refer for a moment to another scripture, Hos. 2:6-15. The expressions that are used here show that it is all conscience-work. If we look at the order, we shall find, first, that there is the sense in the conscience of the remnant of the condition they had got into. It is as in every case -- conscience first. And oh! if there is anything that one longs for, if there is anything that one’s heart desires in these days more than another, it is for more real, solid, earnest work of conscience amongst us. What we mourn is so little real exercise of conscience. I am sorry to be compelled to say it, but I fear it marks the character of the conversions at present, there is not the ploughing of conscience; it is not out of the misery, and unhappiness, and wretchedness, and weariness of a heart broken with the sense of death and judgment brought upon it, that people find the Savior’s love coming to remove it all. This is God’s order; this is the divine way of working. God forbid that I should say that no one was ever converted who was not converted that way, but I am speaking of what is normal, of God’s way, of God’s order of working. I know God can overrule even the mistakes and follies of His people; but I am speaking of the way in which God works, as we find it in His word. It is, then, the conscience which is reached, whether it is a sinner before conversion, or whether it is a saint after he has fallen, all must begin in the conscience. It is the sense brought home to him of the misery he is in, and not simply the consequences of his actions. Many a one would be sorry enough to find he has got into a false position, but that may be mere selfishness; I am not speaking of that, but of the terrible sense which God gives the conscience when He begins to deal with it -- “I have departed from the One who loves me better than every one else.” Is it nothing to have the light of God showing me that I have grieved the One who loves me better than every one? That I have turned my back upon the One who loves me perfectly, and with an eternal love -- who loves me still, even in my wanderings -- who is not changed? Is not that a wonderful thing? And, beloved friends, it is because He is not changed I feel the bitterness of what I have got into.

It is His love to Israel that is brought out here in Hosea; and He works with the conscience of the remnant until this point is reached, and then He says, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hos. 2:14, 15). That is, the very scene of judgment will be the very starting-point of recovery. It must be out of “Achor” -- that is, out of trouble -- that the deliverance comes; it cannot come in any other way. That is the way He will work with Israel by-and-by, and similarly now in the souls of any who have wandered from Him.

If you will turn to another scripture in Hosea, viz., the first three verses of the last chapter, you will find another beautiful description of this restoration.

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, ‘Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Look at the way in which the conscience is in exercise there; there is all the sense of what they had sought after instead of God, how they had turned to the contrivances of this world instead of Jehovah. Afterwards, in v. 4, you get God’s reply: “I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him,” etc.; but, before that there is the sense of their whereabouts, there is the true work of God in the conscience, and it always is so.

Take that prophecy of Zechariah once more. Look at the mourning of every family apart -- could you conceive anything like it? Is there any one here who knows what it is to mourn after this fashion, to be “in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”? (Zech. 12:10). If there is a pang, a wound that reaches down to the very depths of the heart, it is the loss of the firstborn. Well, that is the character of the sorrow, of the work in the conscience; and observe the individuality of it: not all in a lump, but individually, “every family apart.” It is a thing between God and the conscience, and every one of them in their individuality is made to taste in his conscience the terrible bitterness of the position he is in. It is then that the grace of God comes in with the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

Now I turn to the New Testament, because it bears more distinctly upon us, and gives more the character and details of the way in which God works in His restoring grace with us at this present moment. I turn to the case of Peter, and the first thing I call your attention to (I alluded a little to this last week) is the solemn warning of the Lord Jesus to Peter, with reference to the fact that He would deny Him. Peter was warned; oh, remember that! The very lips of the Lord Himself carried the tidings to him: “I tell thee, Peter, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” But, then, along with that -- and bear this specially upon your hearts tonight -- there is this blessed, wonderful word, “Nevertheless I have prayed for thee.”

Now there is the grand, precious foundation upon which all restoration to God now rests: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” I love to think of it, because it brings out
this, that on Him everything rests from beginning to end. I believe that no man ever became a child of God by his own will. “Oh,” you ask, “do you deny the freedom of the will?” By no means. I fully, entirely, and completely own the freedom of the will; but all on the side of what is bad, all on the side of what is evil. As regards this question of restoration, the beginning of it is with Christ, as we have it in Peter’s case, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not”; and it was that prayer of the Lord Jesus that maintained his faith. Peter’s faith would have gone to wreck if the Lord had not prayed for him. All his boasted attachment went to pieces, all his fancied devotedness to the Lord went to the winds; he denied Him three times over, with even an oath and a curse upon his lips; but his faith was kept by the prayer of Christ: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art brought back [that is the meaning of the word “converted”], strengthen thy brethren.”

There is another thing connected with this history which is exceedingly precious for our hearts -- that after Peter had thrice denied his Lord, notwithstanding the warning, notwithstanding the fact that the Lord Jesus had pressed it solemnly upon him that he would deny Him, the Lord “looked upon him.” Now I beseech you to think of this -- think of the prayer of Jesus, think of the look of Jesus! How affecting to one’s heart to think of it! “I have prayed for thee!” “He looked upon him!” And that prayer and that look restored [exercised?] Peter’s conscience; and what was the effect of it? “He went out, and wept bitterly.” His conscience was reached; the prayer and the look effected a moral revolution in his conscience, and he went out and, as it were, broke his heart; and, as another has beautifully said, he lived on that look until the resurrection morning. Have you ever thought what kind of a look that was? Have you thought what expression was conveyed to Peter’s heart by it? Oh, how much there was in that look! That eye of love smote deep down to the depths of his conscience. I do not believe there was hardness in it, or severity, or reproach; but there was the deepest, most tender and wonderful love. The effect of it was that the fountains of Peter’s heart were broken up, and “when he thought thereon he wept.” Oh, think of it, beloved friends, for a moment! What an affecting thing for our hearts! Jesus praying, Jesus looking, and Peter weeping! These are the things which the Spirit of God puts together in Luke 22. The Lord prayed, the Lord turned and looked, and Peter remembered and wept! It is interesting to trace the work of God in bringing the thing back to the conscience. He used the crowing of a cock, a simple thing like that, to awaken the memories of conscience. Oh wanderer, have the memories of your conscience been stirred? When you get away from everything, and get alone, I ask you tonight, (poor child of sorrow, and yet of brighter days, you that have known what it is to have had happier and better times,) do you ever think of that love that you have sinned against? Do you ever sit down and think of that grace that you have turned aside from? Do you ever sit down to ponder over that unfailing goodness which all your sins have never altered in the smallest degree? And is there nothing in it to melt your heart? Is there nothing to awaken the thoughts of other times in your soul? Oh, to think, “Here am I departed from Him, and yet He is still the same.” Here have I chosen my own way, and He is still the same. Here have I brought the clouds in between Him and me, and He is still the same.” I say, if that cannot touch your heart, nothing can. If that is not sufficient to awaken the depths of your conscience, nothing can.

May God by His Spirit give you, as it were, to see that eye of Jesus turned upon you to-night, wanderer! “The Lord turned and looked upon Peter”; and He can use some little circumstance, trivial it may be, something that no one thinks of but Himself, to touch the memory, as He made the crowing of the cock to awaken the memory of Peter. Peter “remembered,” and went out, and wept bitterly.

Now I desire to say one word upon the second part; and that is, restoration to service. The account is not given in Scripture of what took place between Peter’s denial and his restoration, beyond the bare record of the fact of the Lord’s first interview with him. The details of that interview are not recorded; the fact is recorded, and that only (Luke 24:34). How blessed to think of it. Peter got a special visit from the Lord after His resurrection; and hence the apostles and disciples, when they announced the resurrection to the two disciples from Emmaus, announced grace along with it. “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” What grace in the Lord Jesus, to single out his poor wandering sheep, and give him a special, peculiar appearance of Himself after He rose from the dead! But I only mention that in passing; we have no details of it. In John 21, from which I read, we have the second phase of restoration, which does not refer to conscience at all. Peter’s conscience had been restored; the Lord’s prayer, the Lord’s look had done that.

You may ask me to prove this. Scripture does it, beloved, in the most simple, beauteous way that can be conceived. In the earlier part of John 21. we find the disciples had gone back to fishing, and they had toiled fruitlessly all night; and Jesus shows Himself, and displays Himself in almost identically the same way as in Luke 5, when Peter received his first call to follow Jesus. Here the Lord works a similar miracle, and it says they were not able to draw the net to land for the multitude of fishes. John says, “It is the Lord.” Now, mark. “When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.” For what purpose? To get to Christ. Do you think he would have done that if his conscience had not been restored? Do you think, if there was a sense of dread and distance upon his conscience, that he would like to get to the One whom he had denied? If you offend and grieve even a friend in this world, one whom you have walked in happy intercourse with -- if you have violated the confidence that was between you in some way, unless there is perfect clearance you do not court the society of that friend. The thing must be removed which has brought in the distance. It was so with Peter. His conscience was good; his conscience was restored; his conscience had been in the light. It is true, the roots of his sin were still to be probed; but as to his conscience itself, it had been dealt with, and the moment that
Peter heard it was the Lord, he said, as it were, “I will get to Him as quickly as I can.” His faith had not failed; his confidence in Christ’s love had not broken down.

But mark, friends, what follows. As soon as ever they had partaken of the repast, then the Lord Jesus speaks to Peter in this remarkable way; which was intended, no doubt, to bring back to his memory his threefold denial. And what I believe is taught in John 21 is this, that the Lord reaches down to the roots of that which had produced the fruit. The fruit is one thing, the root from whence it springs is another; and it is the root which is touched here. I believe that when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, the fruits were apparent before Him; but when He said, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” three times, the roots of all Peter’s denial, of all Peter’s sin, were exposed. The Lord applies the probe deep down to that which was at the bottom of it all. And what was it? Self-confidence. “Though all should deny thee, yet will not I.” And that is what the Lord exposes to His servant here in this threefold question. He puts it to him in this wonderful, blessed, distinct way; and it reaches down to the very depths of the man’s heart, and brings the thing in all its vivid distinctness before him. And what was the end of it? The man who would boast that he would go to prison and death with his Master, who could say, “Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I deny thee,” that man has learned from his fall. He has learned a wonderful lesson; God grant that every one of us here may learn it. He now says, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” Once he would say, “I am equal to any sacrifice. Though everybody in this world should disown you, I will not.” But oh, he has learned differently now; he has been through the furnace! He has been sifted; he has been tried; he has been in every shape and form so completely manifested, that he can now say, as it were, “Lord, I retire upon the infinite knowledge that you have of what a poor worthless creature I am. Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

There is one point more about this scene that I could not leave out to-night. I feel it would be leaving the thing imperfect if I were not to notice it. It is so unlike us, so beyond all our thoughts. I mean the exquisite grace that puts this poor, erring, feeble servant and child back into his place as a pastor and a shepherd of Christ’s flock, as well as a witness for Christ. I know what kind are our poor hearts naturally. I know what we should say -- “You will never trust a man like that again! What? Do you mean to say the blessed Lord would put a man that positively swore and cursed that he did not know his Lord, in the place of prominence, in the conspicuous position of a shepherd of His sheep and lambs, and to follow Him to prison and to death too?” That is what we should say; and I tell you why. Because grace does not belong to us naturally. Grace is not a plant that grows in any of our hearts naturally; but it is one of the most blessed characters of God. He is “the God of all grace.” It is this very apostle Peter who uses those words. How well he understands it for himself! “The God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” You have the grace brought out here in John 21 perfectly. Peter is restored to his service, “Follow me,” and to the position of being a witness -- “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow me.”

One word more before we finish, to prove the thoroughness, the completeness, of this restoration, both in conscience and heart. So completely was the past wiped out for Peter, that in the Acts of the Apostles, we find him in the irresistible energy of the Holy Ghost, in the moment of that new and blessed anointing, charging home on the Jewish people, his own nation, the very thing that he had done himself: “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just.” Was not that what Peter himself had done? And do you think he could have branded his nation with it if he had not been completely cleared, as to his own conscience and heart, from every stain? Oh no! he had been subjected to the action of the towel, as well as the water in the basin. Oh, the delicacy of that hand which uses the towel to remove the very smallest spot that could be upon him! Thus it was that Peter is free to bring home upon the conscience of the nation their denial of Christ, though he himself had been guilty of the very same sin.

I bring these things before you this evening in the hope that the Lord in His mercy may be pleased to use His word to any soul here who has wandered from Him. I know there are those in this room tonight who have had brighter days than they now have, and that by their own confession too. There are those here to-night who once enjoyed the blessed communion of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; they have known what it is to have a peace, and a joy, and a satisfaction, that the world cannot give. And where are they now? All the joy is fled, leaving them miserable and depressed. Let me say one word. He says, “Return, come back!” He is where you left Him; He is unchanged. “Thou art the same.” His love is the same, and more than that, He is interceding for His people, just as He prayed for Peter beforehand. He has not forgotten you, though you have forgotten Him. That eye of tenderness and love is on you, and He loves you. There is for you a welcome, if you will but come back, just as with Israel in the day that is coming. Jehovah says, “My people,” though they had wandered and got far away from Him. So He says to you, as it were, My poor wandering child, my poor wayward child; but my child still! Remember that! Perhaps some of you may have known, beloved friends, or if you have not known the pang of it practically, it may have come under your observation, what it is to have a wandering son. Is that son less a son because a wanderer? Is he not the child of your heart still? Are your affections gone? Would the most determined wandering that was ever known alienate the heart from one who was a child? Never. And do you think, beloved friends, it is otherwise with God? Do you think if God is a Father that He has not a
father’s heart and a father’s eye? Oh, be assured that as the eye of a father or a mother would look with the most intense tenderness and pity upon a wandering child, even though as yet there seemed no prospect that that child would come home, so the eye of God is upon His wanderer; and it is to me a most blessed privilege to be able to say to any such who may be here this night, His eye is on you, and His heart is the same. How blessed, how comforting is the thought!

“Still sweet ’tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
To me, as e’er, thou’rt bright.”

The Lord, by His Spirit, use His word at this time to restore any who have gone back from Him; and may He keep those who are in danger. Perhaps some are on the eve of wandering, if they have not as yet. The Lord, by His Spirit, make His word His messenger of grace to your souls to-night, and thus bring afresh to your hearts and consciences the sense of His love that never changes, never alters, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Chapter 1:
The Rock and the Rod
Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 34:1-7

I greatly desire to call earnest attention to these two chapters for a little this evening, not only because they have a very intimate bearing the one upon the other, but also because you could not find in the whole of the blessed word of God, two chapters which give you more perfect wilderness experience.

I do not know whether you have ever been struck with it, but it is very remarkable that the 20th of Numbers begins with death and ends with death, and it is more remarkable still, that in both beginning and end it is death in the same family; Miriam, the sister of Aaron, closes her eyes in death at the commencement of it; and Aaron, the priest, the brother of Miriam, lays aside his official garments and closes his eyes upon the scene, in the end of it. It is a perfect chapter of wilderness history; it is in very deed the beginning and end of the wilderness; it began with death, it ends with death. The brightest day the wilderness ever saw, is tinged by the dark clouds of death; it separates the musician from the timbrel, for Miriam was the one who led the song in the palmy days of Israel's triumph on the shores of the Red sea, and the loudest above all the notes of praise that were sung in commemoration of Jehovah's victory, was Miriam's voice, “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” She led the song on that occasion, and now her lips are sealed never to be opened again; and when you come to the end of the chapter you find a man who stood as the priest, laying aside his priestly robes and bowing to death.

It is well to remember that priesthood always supposes a person who was to kill the heifer before the eyes of Eleazar the priest; the priest himself did not slay the victim, it was slain by another in his presence. The Lord Jesus Christ did not enter upon His priestly functions until He had passed through death and resurrection, and gone into the heavens. He was no priest on earth, “If he were on earth he should not be a priest”; but after He has gone into the heavens, we have Him in the exercise of His everlasting priesthood, founded too upon His death and resurrection. We find a picture of it in Aaron's rod that budded, which was God's way of silencing the murmurs of rebellious Israel, and hushing the rising murmurs of their hearts. He caused the rod to be laid up before Him in the tabernacle, and the dead rod on the morrow budded and brought forth almonds, etc.; it was typical of priesthood, founded upon death and resurrection, which is the only principle upon which God could bring the people through the wilderness. Moses' rod would never do, because it was symbolic of judicial authority, and hence when God was about to turn the rivers of Egypt into blood, His direction to Moses was, to strike his rod over the river; but when we come to the 20th of Numbers, what we find is this, though the blessed God is manifesting, in His dealing with Israel, that they are a rebellious people, still He does not recognize any other rod but one. “Take the rod.” What rod? Aaron's rod which budded and blossomed; that was the rod, the rod of priestly grace, the only power by which God could lead a rebellious people through the wilderness; if He used the rod of Moses, it would have been destruction after destruction.

What we have in the end of this chapter is Aaron, the man who stood between an outwardly reconciled people and God -- God's priest, the man who stood also between the living and the dead, now yielding to the power of death himself. The priest must put off his priestly garments, the sweet singer of Israel must lay aside her timbrel, and must go into that great silence that nothing can break: these are the things that go to make up the wilderness; in it you ever find the dark cloud, disappointment and death. Israel murmured that they had no water, and even that but reveals the interest, and care, and love, and provision, of Jehovah, who said Himself that He had looked after their clothes and for forty years in the wilderness: let no one turn away and say we do not act like them, because that is the tendency of all our hearts every moment. The thing that tests us is the wilderness; the circumstances of the way are the very things that bring out what is in us. If our eyes are on the living God, we can stand the pressure of wilderness circumstances; if not, we break down. We are all sooner or later tested -- God knows what will test each in their wilderness experience, and He suits the testing to the condition and state of His people, but we are all tested; you will find it so in Israel, they wanted bread and they murmured; every circumstance in their history brought out what little confidence or repose of heart they really had in God, and thus the reality of their state comes out.

The people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the
Lord, and why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die, and wherefore have ye made us to come out of Egypt to bring us unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink.

What a picture! dissatisfaction, discontent, complaint, and rebellion upon the part of Israel, death in their circumstances, and death in their families; death in their circumstances, for there was no water; and death in their families, for Miriam and Aaron had fallen upon sleep; in fact, death on everything. But now observe there is a beautiful contrast here; for if there be in very deed change on everything, yet there are two things in this very chapter that do not change. What are they? The Rock and the Rod. There you get no change. Aaron may die, Miriam may die, Israel may murmur, the waters may fail, there is nothing, as to earth, that the eye can rest on, but the Rock and the Rod are the same. It is a blessed thing to learn that; if Miriam, the sweet singer of Israel, fades like a leaf, if Aaron the priest puts his priestly garments upon another and dies under the righteous government of God like the great Moses himself, who has to go up Mount Pisgah, gaze at the goodly land, and then fall on sleep, all liable to death, I look at the Rock, it is the same, and at the Rod, it is the same.

The Rock is Christ, as the One who was bruised as an atonement for sin, because you remember, on the first occasion when Moses smote the rock, it was a type of Christ lifted up on the cross; I allude to the 17th of Exodus, “Smite the rock and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink” -- because you can have nothing, no good, no blessing, neither salvation nor sustenance, that does not spring out of a smitten Christ -- if there is water to come forth from the rock to satisfy the thirst of Israel, typically Christ must be smitten. When I speak of the rock, I speak of Christ as the One who was an atonement for sin. He is the One out of whom everything comes, by Him sin is removed, by His precious death the barrier is removed, and now everything fully comes out; it is not that God had it not in His heart, He had, but righteousness barred the way, and the moment sin is removed all comes out righteously; refreshment, pardon, liberty, in fact, everything. If you trace everything up to its source, you will find all in heaven or on earth, all flows from Christ crucified; He is the Rock, and in another sense the One on whom the heart builds for eternal security. But now the Rod is Christ, though in another aspect of His glory, even Christ in the exercise of His priestly grace as the One who is in the heavens; because He is a priest in heaven, not on earth, and He is exercising the functions of His priesthood in heaven. “He is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec”; that is His order, the functions are Aaronic. The Rod then is typical of priesthood founded upon death and resurrection; and so these are the two things that remain amid all the vicissitudes in Israel’s journey, the Rock and the Rod. What a blessed thing it is that no one will ever go to Mount Hor and see Christ strip Himself of His priestly robes and put them upon another! No eyes will ever look upon such a sight as that. Moses himself afterwards must toil up the steep incline of Mount Pisgah to die in the Mount, having first feasted his eyes upon that which death shut him out of. What a blessed thing it is that we shall never do that! Christ never commits His office to another. He holds it eternally. That is the great and blessed fact in this chapter. As we go through the wilderness, what God would lead us into is, the sufficiency of Christ. He is enough -- we constantly say He is enough, but then all the way we are proved as to that. The Rock and the Rod are not enough for Israel, and they are ready to malign God who had brought them through, up to that moment. Have our hearts known the sufficiency of Christ? Is all the fullness and the blessedness in Him our competency, so that when we are tested, it may be by the passing away of some creature mercy, it may be by the withering of some gourd, it may be by being stripped like a tree, Christ is enough for us? That is the test; it is in the complete death and desolation of everything here; am I then able to say Christ is enough? He is sufficient, all fullness is in Him; it is not a question of having our needs met, or getting relief. I do not deny that He ministers relief, I know He does; but that is what Israel’s heart was always upon, they were hungry or thirsty, and they wanted relief, they were in that sense always on relief. I don’t deny that God gives relief, but I do say there is a higher thing than that, there is the exercise of the heart that it may know, before the relief comes, the need of continued dependence which the hunger and thirst were designed to promote. If Christ is our resource, then we can endure until relief comes; and do you think the relief is less sweet when it comes if I have been proving the sufficiency of the One whose hand is stretched out to give it me? On the contrary, it enhances the gift, and in place of measuring His heart by your need, you measure it by His own heart. Christ’s own heart is the only measure of itself. If it were otherwise, supposing your necessities are not very great; then the proportion of what is in His heart will be very small; and am I not to know Him beyond the mere extent of my necessities and needs? Am I not to know Him on His own side? I am speaking now of what is individual, of what is to be known in the wilderness -- a resource, so that if death and decay be on everything around us, we can turn to all and say, “Thank God, there is the Rock and the Rod, and nothing can touch them.”

I would glance a moment at that wherein Moses’s failure consisted at this time. It was this -- in giving a false representation of God to Israel -- that was simply his sin, he misrepresented God to a rebellious people. Jehovah had said to him, “Take the rod,” i.e. Aaron’s rod, symbolical, as I have pointed out already, of priestly grace, “Take the rod, and gather thou the Assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes.” Now observe how different that is to Jehovah’s word to Moses in Ex. 17:5, “And thy rod, wherewith thou smostest the river, take in thy hand and go.” That was the first occasion; here he was to take the rod, and speak to the rock. That is, God was acting in reference to Israel in the unbounded grace of His own heart; it was grace, and priestly grace too, because it is only priestly grace that can bring a murmuring people through the wilderness; whereas Moses, instead of taking the rod, takes his own rod; the rod of judgment and government -- thus he misrepresented God in every way, he denied in type the one sacrifice of Christ by smiting the rock twice, and he misrepresented the voice of God in speaking to Israel as he did; he stood before the people the very contrast to that character in which God was dealing with them. It is a solemn reality for us
at this present moment, in our acts, conversation, and ways down here in this world, that we give a proper representation of Christ because that is what we are left here for. Are we really exercised as to this manifestation of Christ to men?

The only way the world can see Christ is in His people, who are in the world, for He is gone away; there is no Christ on this earth, but His people are left here in order that others may both learn and see Christ in them. Are we sufficiently near Him and in communion with His mind to weigh the importance of this? Are we walking in the quietness of His own presence so that we can catch and thus be molded by His mind, and so naturally and easily express Him? Is it that which now is forming us? Think of Moses, he speaks unadvisedly with his lips; and if we speak unadvisedly with our lips we give, in our way, as far as we can give, a false representation of Christ, and if we are in circumstances where Christ would not be, we so far misrepresent Him. How careful it ought to make us! But a person may say, how can I give a true representation of Christ? You must know His mind in order to represent Him. The man who represents another’s interests knows what those interests are, and is acquainted with everything about them. Herein is our chief deficiency; there is so little nearness to, and intimacy with Christ, hence we so little represent Him faithfully in this world. The Lord give us to be near to Christ every moment -- it is as you are near to Him that His moral features are in measure reproduced in you. He is the producing power, and, as you are near Him, He produces certain qualities in you, and that is likeness to Christ in our ways. Now here Moses is not the true delineator of God in that sense; and hence he lost Canaan. Two things run all through the word of God, viz., Grace and Government, and they never interfere the one with the other -- both are here; hence it is Moses died. Aaron likewise goes up Mount Hor, and dies, as we have already seen. This is government. Government and grace are going on still; this is government, viz., “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” That is as true of a Christian as of a man of the world. It was government that shut Moses out of Canaan, but grace gave him a sight of the goodly land ere he died. Before Moses fell asleep, Jehovah led him up to the top of Pisgah, and traced out with His own hand, as it were, all the land of promise. What a sight that must have been; that which is wanting in everything else, viz., nearness to the Lord, is exhibited in God’s ways.

One thing in order to show the contrast that is here; Moses standing on Mount Pisgah, and looking on the land into which he was not to enter with Israel, is not the sort of view the Christian now gets of the glories of Christ and the heavenly land; through grace we have title to look at heaven and glory, not as at a distance from us, but as in them. If the Spirit of God dwells in us He invites us to Christ in glory; not like Moses, who saw a better thing than he possessed; it must have been in some sense a tantalizing thing to him, and that is why people are in a sense tormented by looking at the glory. When you speak of a place where everything is in perfection, you must be tantalized by it if you do not know that it is yours, if you have no sense of possession of it; but if you are a Christian, all is yours. A Christian is a person in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, and hence one with Christ in the place where Christ is. Why should people then, be tantalized? Why should the blessedness of union with Christ in heaven make any soul think it is not possible to know it? The blessed Lord Himself looking on to the day of the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth says, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). No doubt it is all wonderful, yet, if Christians, we are one with Christ, and it is not looking at the thing as from a distance, but looking at that into which we have been brought; and be assured the difference is great as to whether we are looking at the things of Christ as Moses looked at Canaan from Mount Pisgah, or as being brought into the very center of it; because if the Holy Ghost dwells in us, He unites us to Christ where He is, and I therefore say we are brought into it. Then besides all this, we have here what is peculiar to the wilderness -- “the Rock” and “the Rod” -- the Rock on which we may build for eternal security, even as the scripture expresses it -- “A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2). That all belongs to the wilderness, because there will not be any heat or want of water in heaven. Thus then this weary desert is the very place to elicit the hidden virtues of the mystic Rock and Rod, the Rod that blossomed and budded (type of the resurrection of Christ), to carry a poor feeble one along, our murmuring, all quieted and silenced, and taken away, and we led so blessedly along, until we shall have changed the dry and parching sand of the deserts for the blessedness of Christ’s own presence.

The Lord give us to know the reality of this Rock and Rod, when Miriam the prophetess and Aaron the priest die -- because this is real wilderness life; Israel murmur, Miriam and Aaron die, the waters fail, but the Rock and the Rod remain the same, and that which is wanting in everything else, viz., sameness, is the glory of this. The absence of this stamps everything here in the Wilderness as faulty and deficient, but when we come to Christ, what do we find? “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever.” The Lord by His Spirit give our hearts to prove Him the same day by day, for His own name’s sake!

{Note: “The Rock and the Rod” also appeared as “The Wilderness,” Nos. 1 & 2 in Helps in Things Concerning Himself, vol. 1.}
Chapter 2:
“The Father of Mercies, And The God of All Comfort”
2 Corinthians 1

There is a very close connection, and yet a striking contrast, between the circumstances in which the apostle is found, in ch. 1 and 12 of this Epistle. In ch. 1, he is, we may say, altogether in human circumstances, surrounded by straits, difficulties, and trials, which came upon him no doubt in his service; he was in circumstances in no way peculiar to him, but which might be ours at any time. But in ch. 12 he was altogether in God's circumstances, taken up into the third heaven, and then sent back into this world to go through it as a crippled man. He gets a thorn in his flesh because God would have Paul entirely in His strength. At some time or other we might be called to go through, in our measure, what we find in ch. 1. Ch. 12, save the expression, “a man in Christ,” is entirely an exceptional case; God having a distinct purpose towards His servant in connection with His ministry; still, although we may not be caught up into Paradise as he was, we do get thorns in the flesh.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 1:3). What strikes one here is, the apostle begins the opposite way from that in which most would begin. If we had anything to relate as he had, we should have started with our troubles and pressures, and gone on perhaps to tell of the comfort and consolation ministered by God to us; but the apostle begins with the source of all comfort, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies.” Thus he begins at the fountain head, and not at the stream; he comes down to the stream; “that we may be able to comfort”; he did not go up to God from that, but from God Himself he came down, to the comfort he ministered. It makes an immense difference at what end we begin. We find broken hearts in this world, it is the very scene to meet them in; who can bind them up but God Himself? But we must take care not to make our need the measure of His comfort; if you make your troubles, or sorrows, or difficulties, the measure of anything is in God, you limit to that what is in Him.

There was One who had unmeasured trouble and sorrow here, and only One -- the blessed Lord. To us, all is measured out, either God-given, or God-permitted, sorrow. He puts on us only what He sees needful for us. There is no temptation, but that which is common to man. God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. He knows exactly what the vessel is able to bear. He puts the right amount on it, and then places His own blessed strength, as it were, under it, and so helps us to carry it. All goes on under His hand, no amount of God-given consolation, in the midst of the troubles we pass through, could ever be the measure of what is in God’s heart, so the Apostle breaks out with “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” who is the source of it all. Then we find the relationship, “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” -- this defines the relationship we are in to Him, and then adds, “the Father of mercies.” He is the spring and source of every mercy -- it is all mercy, mercy every step of the way; every trouble is mercy, all His way with us is mercy. Paul begins with God; he starts from the holy glorious person of the blessed God Himself, -- all in Him is perfect fulness, divine sufficiency; and then the Apostle comes down to what He does, “who comforteth us,” etc. The Apostle is passed through all he speaks of here in order that he might be able to minister it to others. The servant is passed through many an exercise and difficulty, many a pressure and trial, often not so much for himself as for those he would serve under Christ. He produces in the servant that character which it is His object to develop by means of his service. He puts the servant in the stocks, as it were, that he may be able to come forth and say, -- “Oh, I have tasted the mercy of God as ‘the God of all comfort.'”

We never can get sympathy from others while they themselves are in the same circumstances; when they have passed through them, they are fitted to help and comfort us. Some say, -- “You cannot sympathize with me, because you are not in the same circumstances”; but if it were so, they could not sympathize, because they would be engrossed with their own trouble. How often in trouble, people claim to be shut up to themselves; they think none can understand, but after any one has passed through it, he can draw near to those in sorrow, and tell them of the comfort wherewith he has been comforted.

There must be school time in God’s family, and everything must be fully tested and proved. If walking with God, are we not conscious of how little we are able to help one another? Painful it is to see how well able we appear to be to find the weak points in one another. To tell a man he is at the bottom of a deep ditch is one thing, but it is quite another to be able through grace to take him out of it. We must know the hand and heart of God, and His sustaining power for ourselves, and then we can meet others in their varied circumstances, and like a skillful physician, we shall know the relative value of each medicine, and be apt to apply them. He must have gone to school in order to learn, and so must we, as it were, walk this great hospital of suffering, that is, this present world, and taste the balm of consolation ourselves, ere we can commend it to others.

God was thinking of the Corinthians, they were in His mind, and therefore He says, as it were, I will take my servant and pass him through the heights and depths, through every variety of circumstance (2 Cor. 1). For what purpose?

In order that I may display in him the power of Christ, and in order that the same power may go out through him and reach the Corinthians. Paul is afflicted for the sake of the Corinthians; this makes the position of the servant of Christ very solemn -- the servant ought to be ready for everything. Some act as if they thought they could carry the world before them; they are applauded, made much of. This is the world’s notion -- the thought in Scripture of a servant is, one who suffers, not one who reigns, who goes through pressure and difficulty, evil report and good report (2 Cor. 6). He ought to be one who has such a hold upon God, and who has God so before him, that he can say, “Here am I, send me,” content to be placed in the furnace, that out of a broken heart, he may be able to minister the consolations of God. Was it said to Paul, “I will show him how great things he must do?” No, -- but what he must suffer for My name’s sake. It is not only a man’s gift, or his words, but God takes up a man’s person, and puts him into every sort of up and down, that he may stand by the
It is a lonely, quiet, unnoticed, and unknown path, but one of most precious blessing. When a person has lost his reputation, his good name, if ever he had one, not only in the world, but even among the saints, when a person is in the shade, in the deeps with Christ, it is an opportunity to see how near He can come to him. “At my first answer, no man stood with me,” he was absolutely alone, and he had not a hard thought about one of them. “I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.”

“The Lord stood with me.” Paul proved what God was. The time to learn the power, and the comforts, and the consolations, of Christ is the time when they are wanted, so “out of the eater comes forth meat,” &c.

Verse 8. There is another thing. God has a reason in it all -- a reason on our side for all the difficulties and troubles, and a reason on His own side. First, on our side. -- Take Adam, innocent in the garden of Eden, he did not know what exercise was, -- if we had no will against God, we should not have exercise; the stronger our will, the greater the needs be for exercise. If a person says, “I never go through exercise.” I should much fear he is led by his own natural will, because we have two natures in us, and “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” Though you may not be conscious of it, your will may have gained the upper hand; the amount of exercise then is proportionate to the amount of will; Adam, innocent, had no exercise for a time, he does God’s will; but we spring from Adam fallen, though now we are in Christ, and our only power is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Thus God puts His servant through death and resurrection, “we had the sentence of death in ourselves.” He puts us into death that we may trust Him who is the resurrection, and know Him who is the life; this exercise keeps us on the watch, and subjugates us in many ways. Trouble is intended to subdue and quiet us, otherwise there is ever the danger that our will may be active. God has no cure for it but death; our part is to bear about in our “body the dying of Jesus.” God’s part is to deliver us to death, and we apply the death of Christ to ourselves. Whatever He died to, is the measure of what we must renounce. God hands us over to death that we should not trust in ourselves: a man drowning needs a savior and a deliverer, -- rescue and help must come from outside. Never is the bright morning of resurrection known in the soul, except as we have passed through the gloomy night of death, then what awaits us is the bright resurrection morn. The disciples met Jesus on the shore; in this case He had gone through death for them, and they found He had everything prepared for them as delivered from death. We must go through the gloomy night, and the darkness of the grave; we must, as it were, be invested with the shroud, and go into the tomb, but only that we may come forth and bloom in resurrection beauty. I should be sorry to make anyone gloomy or depressed. We have nothing to do but to be passive in His hand and not in anywise to be analyzing the death we must pass through. May God keep each eye on the resurrection morning. He is the God of the living; resurrection and glory is God’s great thought both for our bodies in future, as well as for our spirits now. He does for us morally in our history now what He will do literally in our bodies by and by; hence we go into death, in order that through it we may come out into the bright morning of resurrection. But there is God’s side as well as ours; I say it with all reverence, these things are God’s opportunity; His heart of love never overlooks the wants and woes of His own; there are no broken hearts, or weeping eyes, in heaven; and if there were no trouble here, we should be debarred the knowledge of how God Himself can draw near to the brokenhearted one, and bind up his wounds. He says as it were, “See how I can comfort you!” as He said of Israel whom He has never given up, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” It is evident enough how on our side there is necessity that we should have trials and sorrows, but if we think of the wilderness, its difficulties, exercises and griefs, we can also blessedly understand how they afford Him an occasion of displaying His tenderness amid them all to us while in them, that He may prove to us how equal to every occasion His grace is, and how entirely He can go through everything with us. “I have surely seen the affliction of My people . . . have heard their cry . . . I know their sorrows.” He is all eye, all ear, and all knowledge, when His people are afflicted, cry, or are sorrowful.

There will be no occasion to display this grace in heaven; there, the absence of sorrow, suffering, and death will mark that scene, just as their presence here marks this poor world. What a sight to faith! God turning the sorrows and afflictions of this poor world to His own account, and displaying in them a tenderness and compassion that overlooks none. He delights to show how He can heal a broken heart, as well as sustain a weak body. The first is not beyond Him, the second is not beneath Him.

You will remember how Joseph felt when his brethren doubted him, and gave him no credit for the affection of his heart; his brethren reasoned thus, “Now Jacob our father is dead, Joseph will hate us, and requite us all the evil we have done to him”; they thought of him as they would have acted; and he wept. Did he rebuke them, or speak harshly to them? He spake kindly, or as in the margin, “he spake to their heart.” We read in Hos. 2:14, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence.”

Thus we see how that, literally, death will be Jehovah’s way of dealing with Israel in the future, as it is the way of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ with His people, morally, now. May the Lord graciously incline our hearts by His Spirit to accept His own blessed perfect ways with each one of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake!

**Chapter 3: The Treasure, Vessel, and Power 2 Cor. 3 and 4**

There has been a ministry on this earth, which had its day and purport in the mind of God; it was introduced at Mount Sinai by Moses; it carried the law, which claimed righteousness from man, and was in form written on stone; it was thereby the knowledge of sin came in, and consequently it became a ministration of condemnation and death. It is to this ministry these words refer, viz.,

If the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of
his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how
shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious.

It is of the deepest importance to remember that this ministry
was suited to bring out the unwelcome but solemn truth, that
the trial of man in the flesh only displayed his entire and
complete ruin; not only had man come short of the glory of
God, but the reflection of that glory in the face of the mediator,
carrying with it, as it did, the claim for righteousness from
man, repelled him instead of attracting; the glory of God in the
face of Moses, had the same effect as “the sound of the trumpet
and the voice of words” at Mount Sinai. With regard to the
first, Israel demanded that Moses should hide his face; with
respect to the other, they entreated that the word should not be
spoken to them any more.

Moreover, this ministry being, as has been said, one of
claims and demands from man in the flesh, it could never be
formative in character or power; indeed, it would cease to be
of its own nature were it to produce in man that which it
claimed from him under the sanction of condemnation and the
curse. To sum up, then, respecting this ministry, its sphere was
the earth, its character, a principle of claim and demand, and
its issues, bondage and death.

Now the contrast to all this is, what is entitled in chapter
3 the ministry of the Spirit, as well as the ministration of
righteousness, and the great point in the contrast is that what
the first claimed, the second carried with it. The source of this
ministry too, was very different from the former, as was also
its basis. Its basis was the accomplished victories of the Son of
God, who as Son of Man, glorified God on the earth, and
finished the work which was given Him to do. It is to this
blessed culmination of all His obedience, He Himself refers as
follows,

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).

We know that this was spoken in anticipation of the sufferings
and judgment of the cross, as well as the blessed proclamation,
in resurrection and ascension, of how completely and fully He
had glorified His God and Father. The basis then of this
ministry from the heavens was the perfected atonement of the
Lamb of God; therein was demonstrated the truth and love of
God, and the great point in the contrast is that what
righteousness, and the Spirit are the
basis, transformation into the same image from one degree of
glory to another is the result. What a blessed, wonderful
ministry! Well may our hearts exclaim -- Surpassing glory!
excelling glory!

Now it is perfectly clear that, as another has truly expressed it --

A man of like passions with us, he (Paul), was one who in
a wonderful manner lived with God so as to carry out this
ministry; he (Paul) labored more abundantly than they all.
Still what he ministered we receive; only he was a vessel
filled in more than ordinary degree. But this same blessed
truth, as it especially regards the testimony, is committed
to us, whatever the sphere, whether the greatest as an
instrument or the least, and therefore the thing that he
ministered is ours, so that we are vessels, each one in his
own little measure, of that with which he was filled.

It is very instructive to see in the case of Paul, the double
character of testimony, if I may so say, which he was, as a
vessel, called to bear. We read in Acts 26:16,

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for 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.

We learn from this he was to be a minister and a witness, if
I rightly apprehend the mind of the Spirit of God; the
expression “witness” meaning that he was to exemplify
practically what he ministered. What a wondrous calling,
beloved friends, -- poor, feeble, failing man on this earth,
now the vessel, and the “chosen vessel” of heavenly glory,
was to be in his own person the expression, as a witness, of
that ministry which he was called by the Son of God, whom
he had seen in the way. I cannot conceive anything
more wonderful than the testimony of a witness; all are not
called to be ministers, but I submit that every saint is called
to be a witness, and I am bold to say the most telling and
weighty ministry at this present time, is the silent, noiseless,
but explicit unfolding in one’s own person of this heavenly
testimony. Oh, to be more like clay in the hands of the potter;
shaped and fashioned by His blessed hand as He Himself
pleases. The purpose of God as to His people being His
witnesses here on the earth, is their being so controlled and
handled by Himself, that He can point to them as the living
testimony to what His own Son from glory can effect for His
people on this very earth. Now in 2 Cor. 4, where the subject
of the ministry is pursued practically in every detail, we find
in v. 7, three distinct subjects, viz: -- “this treasure,”
“earthen vessels,” “surpassingness (excellency) of the
power.” It is on my heart to say a little on each of these.

“We have this treasure.” I do not believe “this treasure”
is intended to express the value of the possession to him who
has it, valuable though it be, but the intrinsic blessedness of
the thing itself: this treasure is described in vv. 4 and 6; it is, according to v. 4, “the radiance of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ,” as well as in v. 6, “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” What a treasure to enrich us, as well as for us to be enriched by! Nor is it less wonderful and blessed the way in which we are taken possession of by it, hence we read -- “The God who spake that, out of darkness, light should shine, has shone in our hearts.” The possession of this treasure is nothing less than a revelation of the Savior in glory in us; producing, as illustrated in the history of the Apostle himself, a moral revolution in the subject of it: this, and this alone, takes the brilliancy out of the best here. I ask, can you say, as the Apostle did, “We have this treasure?”

The next subject is the vessel, and the contrast is sharply marked between the treasure and the vessel in which it is lodged; nothing could be more significant than the expression, “earthen vessels,” i.e., perishing vessels of clay; in human things, man looks out for a casket commensurate with the value and beauty of his treasure; so much so, that the brilliancy of the treasure is often obscured by the magnificence of the casket -- but far otherwise is it with God; in His eye the treasure is everything, and the vessel is selected with a view to the display of the treasure; it is not the vessel holding the treasure, but the treasure governing the vessel, and displaying itself through the vessel. Could anything be more blessed? In verses 8 and 9, are set forth the inward and outward exercises to which the vessel is subjected, with a view to the display of the treasure. Then in v. 10, we have the only power in our hands by which we can have common thought with God in His purpose for displaying this treasure through us; hence we read, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” Observe, it is not our dying, but the dying of Jesus, the practical application of the cross to the dying of the Lord Jesus.” Observe, it is not our dying, but the dying of Jesus, as expounded in Col. 2 and 3, is dead and risen with Christ. Place, as expounded in Col. 2 and 3, is dead and risen with Christ.

Lastly, we have a power working as well as a treasure shining, hence we have the word “that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not of us.” What wonderful contrasts are thus grouped together by the Holy Ghost; the costliest conceivable treasure to shine out through an earthen vessel, by the surpassingness of Almighty power!

This power, too, is displayed, at this present time, so differently from what we would naturally conclude; there are two scriptures which speak of it in the manner of its energy, viz., Col. 1:2, “Strengthened with all might according to the power of His glory unto all patience (endurance), and longsuffering with joyfulness.” These are the elements in which surpassing power declares itself in earthen vessels at this, present time. The other scripture is 2 Cor. 12:9, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me” -- i.e., “may pitch its tent over me.” What a calling, beloved brethren, vessels in whom such a treasure shines, weak and feeble in ourselves, but so held by the treasure, and so wrought in and upon by surpassing power, Almighty energy, that Christ and Christ alone is seen and heard; and each circumstance on the road to the Father’s house, used up by Himself, and wonderful to say, by us too, in fellowship with Him, that He may be magnified in our bodies whether by life or by death. The Lord awaken our hearts to the dignity and glory of such realities, for Christ’s sake!

**Chapter 4: Our Place And Its Consequences**

It would be impossible to overrate the importance of the two great subjects which I propose to consider; they lie at the basis of all true practical Christianity. It is equally important to understand the relation of the one as the other; indeed, so essential is such apprehension, that it may be safely affirmed that, where the first is not known, the second does not follow. With regard to the place of the saint now, it is first of all to be understood that it is the exact contrast to all that belongs to nature. As born into the world, we are lost, and in that state we have contracted guilt, and we are moreover in a world into which death has entered, and where death is rampant. By nature then our condition is miserable, and this world, where we find ourselves, is both blasted and blighted, and, from the standpoint of “under the sun,” the testimony must be, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Now out of this wretchedness and misery, God in mercy purposed to deliver us, and has accomplished all that was in His heart, in and through His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But deliverance out of our misery, most full and blessed though it is, was not all His purpose, but introduction into all the blessedness of an open heaven through deliverance, and union by the Holy Ghost with Him who died, and rose again, and ascended up high. It is very wonderful how apt we are to limit what was in God’s heart for us, and what has been accomplished and secured by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and it is this very limit, beyond which so many never get, which is productive of the very painful and low type of practical walk to be seen all around us. It may perhaps startle the reader at first, to be told that forgiveness of sins is not of itself power, nor can forgiveness of itself enable a man, i.e., give him power, to walk so as to please God. Forgiveness is relief, and blessed and needed relief too; but power relates to my place in Christ, and the portion I have in Him. For example, when we read in Col. 3:5, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,” &c., it is an exhortation flowing out of the place we are in, and that place, as expounded in Col. 2 and 3, is dead and risen with Christ.

It is all important and blessed to see that I get both relief and power from Christ. The first relates to how He meets me in my deep need; the second has to do with the new place in Himself, into which He has brought me. Both are most blessedly expounded in the parable of the Good Samaritan, viz., “bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set
him on his own beast,” &c. It is amazing how few there are
who have laid hold by faith of the fact that the Christian has
been transferred to an entirely new condition and place, in and
by Christ; that a Christian is a man after another order of being
altogether, sprung from the second Adam now, as surely as, by
nature, he was of the first Adam. Oh, what a reality to the soul
is the deep blessedness of the fact that, as a Christian, I am
now part of Him who 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).

Who can overrate the magnitude of the fact that, as a Christian,
I am sprung from Him -- part of that fruit which His death has
brought forth?

Then another truth, akin to this, and closely allied with it is,
that a man in Christ no more belongs to this world than he
does to the man who, upon it, fell. The same precious death
which severed his connection with the one, has equally severed
it with the other. This world, this ordered system, which Satan
is heading up against God and His Christ, is no more my place;
by the Cross it has been crucified to me, and I to it, by a
double death, as it were, a judicial sentence passed upon it, and
me. I am for ever liberated from the slavery of being its friend.
Blessed, wonderful emancipation! reaching up to the full tide
of blessedness, when it is stated that His place, the One who
has risen from the dead, has become, in sovereign grace, and
by union with Him there, ours, who are quickened together
with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly
places in Christ. There remaineth nothing more for us to
desire, save to see Him face to face, and, in a body of glory
like His own, to be with Him forever. In the presence of such
manifested purpose and favor, so wonderfully accomplished by
Him, and bestowed upon us, the soul bows down in adoring
wonder, worship, and praise.

These two great kindred truths of which I have spoken, are
very blessedly expounded in Eph. 2. There the Christian is
looked at as out of man, and out of earth. In the closing verses
of Eph. 1, Christ, viewed as the glorious Man, is set forth as
the subject of the working of the mighty power of God,

who raised Him from the dead, and set Him 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; 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.

Oh, the amazing brightness of the glory which shines in every
line of this magnificent declaration! If God had a man to turn
out of Eden for disobedience, He has also had a Man to
reward, who glorified Him on the earth, even to death, the
death of the cross. He it was, and none else, who was raised
and glorified, and all things set under His feet, and He,
constituted "Head over all things to the Church, His body, the
fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Then in ch. 2, we are introduced to the same power in
operation, quickening the heirs, to give them a part and a
place, in and with Him, so glorified and exalted: and in order
to set forth the blessed reach of this power, the position in
which they are found is unfolded, viz., dead in trespasses and
sins, walking according to the course of this world, according
to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit working in the
children of disobedience; out of this state of death and distance
from God, His power quickened them, so that they have been
also raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places
in Christ Jesus. And in the ages to come, God will display in
them the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness
towards them through Christ Jesus. Then in verse 2, He
contrasts the two states, “At that time,” referring to their old
condition, “ye were without Christ, being aliens from the
commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of
promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, but
now,” referring to their new condition, “in Christ Jesus, ye
who sometime were far off, (i.e., dispensationally, for,
morally, a Jew was no nearer than a Gentile), are made nigh by
the blood of Christ.” Blessed contrast, and still more blessed
Person, in Whom and by Whom it has been all made good and
secured!

There are some consequences which follow from our being
consciously in this place, which I will note here. There is
superiority to circumstances, as we pass along through this
world, and there is rest amid the turmoils and troubles to which
we are ever subjected in a region like this. Nothing can carry
the soul into the atmosphere of superiority and rest, but the
divine consciousness, by the Holy Ghost, of our place in
Christ, and our union with Him in glory. When these are so
possessed, known, and enjoyed, rest and superiority follow as
divine consequences. No amount of effort can secure either;
they are not to be acquired by any artificial struggle; effort
always betrays weakness, and carries restlessness in its bosom.
There is nothing more distressing to witness than the morbid
and oppressed strivings of real and earnest souls after that
which they make as truly a matter of attainment, as the sincere
legalist does eternal life. The truth is, if a man is a Christian,
he is in Christ, where Christ is, and the Holy Ghost dwells in
him. He is out of man, and out of earth. Is there no sanctifying
power in this, where it is really and divinely apprehended and
known? I do not speak now of the mere assent of the
power in this, where it is really and divinely apprehended and
known. I do not for a moment deny that
there is to be on our part dependence and subjection, and that,
failure of a serious nature. I do not for a moment deny that
matter. I believe there is a tendency in many of us in this
direction, and I cannot conceive any result that can follow, save
failure of a serious nature. I do not for a moment deny that
there is to be on our part dependence and subjection, and that,
failure of a serious nature. I do not for a moment deny that
there is to be on our part dependence and subjection, and that,
is an indigenous plant; it is not only, in one of its aspects, the noxious weed; which grows rank in many a field, and which is branded and shunned, as such, by almost all; but it is also, in another of its aspects, the apparently beautiful flower which fain would blossom, and give forth a refreshing sweetness, and invite the passer-by to pluck and regale himself with its rich perfume.

Another consequence which follows from knowing our place in Christ, is, practical separation from all around us. In proportion to the sense we have of being at home in heaven, do we practically walk, as from home, here on the earth. No one can make himself a pilgrim; no one can acquire strangership on the earth. The spirit and mind of Christ, as well as familiarity with the place where He is, as our home, alone can impart the tone and character of pilgrims to us.

Another consequence of our place, known and possessed in the power of the Holy Ghost, is the manner in which everything connected with us, over which we have authority, is shaped and formed, so as to suit the truth which has suited us to itself. Our home relationships, our families, are not to be, and will not be exceptions in any wise, if the truth lays hold in power on ourselves. How deplorable the failure amongst us in this respect; the world, sought for the families of those who had surrendered it for themselves; prosperity, in respect of it, gloriéd in, even where this very success was Satan’s blindfold to delude and destroy. After this fashion, many a testimony has been ruined, many a one, alas, has the sorrowful confession to make, viz: “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” Alas, the children, the families, and households of the saints, are a great reproach to the testimony. Other instances I could bring forward, but enough; it is self-evident that, if this heavenly position is maintained, neither pride, nor love of the world, nor love of money, will be tolerated; it will operate upon us in every direction and on every side; it will permeate everything; it will be seen in everything; both forming and maturing that which is of Christ in each of His beloved people. The Lord give us to know this truth in reality in these last days.

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Chapter 5:
Our Portion, and Its Consequences

As we have just been considering our Place and the results of it, where it is consciously known and enjoyed in the soul, it would seem suitable to consider the Portion of the saint now, and some of its corresponding consequences.

I trust we have clearly seen that our standing and place are in the second Adam, where He is, and not in any sense in the first. If this be not apprehended in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, everything else will be both vague and feeble; it is the divine platform upon which, in grace, we are set, and where we are maintained by the Spirit, in order to our enjoying and using all that is ours in Christ.

There is a double danger, which it seems suitable to indicate here. First, measuring the greatness and blessedness of what we have in Christ, where He is, by any enjoyment of ours, be it ever so elevated; being in fact so one-sided about it, as to lead people to suppose that the possession of it depended upon the use of it, or the enjoyment of it.

Secondly, -- overlooking the fact that earnestness and diligence of soul, prayerful dependence of heart upon the Lord, and counting on the energy of His Spirit, are all necessary in order that I may appropriate and use what is mine already; and thus discover the good of what is mine; like a man entitled to large estates, who never knew the value of his property until he lived on it, and worked it.

It is an important thing to preserve the balance of truth in our souls, and to give every part of God’s Word and revelation its divinely ordered place. Our Portion, then, is Christ Himself! And what a portion!

Now, while it is blesédly true, that it is not in our power to forfeit the possession of our Portion, or to lose it by any folly of ours, it is equally true that the realization of its blessedness, the satisfaction of enjoying it, the consciousness of our union with Him who is our Portion, all depend upon ourselves. It is only by the Holy Ghost who dwells in us that we have power. If He be grieved, His witness in this respect is for the time lost to us; in that case He witnesses against us, that the failure which we have allowed may be judged, and He be free once more to pass the glories of Christ before our souls, and occupy us with them; thus have we fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and thus our joy is full.

It is also important to observe that our Portion is our Object; that which marks Christianity specially is, that we are furnished with an Object in heaven, and a power in us and with us on the earth. Nothing of the kind was ever known under the law; it proposed no object outside of wicked self, and it supplied no power to meet its requirements, which were backed up with condemnation and death. The new order of things tells of power at every turn, the power of God quickening, raising us up, seating us in heavenly places in Christ, our Portion and Object, and “working in us” (Eph. 3:20). That is to say, power surrounds us on every hand, but power equally works in us for the realization of the enjoyment of that for which power has laid hold of us.

Now, it is important to remember that neither enjoyment nor realization are our Portion or Object, and yet the more earnestly our souls are fixed upon Him who is both, we do realize and enjoy, “Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18) secures two things to us

First -- Satisfaction of heart with Him on whom the eye of the soul is steadfastly fixed.

Second -- Transformation into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, -- moral likeness to our Object and Portion.

Stephen in Acts 7, is a fine illustration of all this. Filled with the Spirit, he steadfastly gazed into the opened heavens, and there his eye was filled with Jesus in glory, his Portion and Object! No strife or clamorous uproar, which, like a wall of fire, encircled him around, could prevail to turn his eye or heart from that blessed One who Himself filled them. No; he “looked up steadfastly into heaven.” There was his place, his home, his Portion, he is satisfied and at rest here on earth.
from which he must shortly depart; he shares the fortunes of a rejected, crucified Christ; hatred, enmity, and violence here, are the counterpart of rest and satisfaction there, and to him, too, they are the consequence of it; these he accepts as those he enjoys. It is a wonderful scene to us, but how heaven must have looked down upon it, who can tell? But this is not all; not only does he behold, but he is like the One into whose blessed face he looks; like Him who said, “Father, forgive them”; he too, says, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Truly, it is so; “beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord,” he was “transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

There is a beautiful illustration of our subject in Lev. 7:34, where we find that the wave breast and heave shoulder of the peace offering were the appointed portion of Aaron and his sons. “The wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel, from off the sacrifices of their peace-offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest, and unto his sons, by a statute for ever, from among the children of Israel.” What excellent things are here for faith to feed upon!

The strength and the affections of Christ, as well as Himself in whom is our all, are the blessed Portion of His people. Of old, it was said of Israel, “The Lord’s portion is His people.” Now, in the highest way, we can say, “The Lord is my portion, O my soul,” “Christ is all and in all.”

My Lord, my life, my rest, my shield,
My rock, my food, my light;
Each thought of Thee doth constant yield
Unchanging, fresh delight.”

I shall very briefly note some of the consequences which would follow from all this.

1st -- With such a Portion, things here would be eclipsed, and esteemed as dung and dross. The knowledge of Christ Jesus is the most excellent of all sciences; the possession of Him, true riches. Thank God, there is what another has designated as “the expulsive power of a new affection,” and, for the heart possessing this portion, and possessed by it, earthly themes now cease.

An incident in David’s history is an apt though poor type of all this. When David returned to his own house after the death of Absalom, among the first to meet and bid him welcome, was Mephibosheth, the son of Saul. With genuine and true hearted loyalty, he carried in his very person the evidences of David’s absence, while he was as yet away (2 Sam. 19:24); but now that the king has come again to his own home in peace, Mephibosheth’s cup is full; his portion was in David himself; and because it is so, even the good things of David, the bounties and favor of his hand, can he let go with a willing heart. “Yea, let him take all; forasmuch as my lord is come again in peace unto his own house.”

2nd -- One other consequence is, the way in which every part of our history here is used up by us to show the good of what we have in our Portion; there is not one trial too many, not one sorrow too grievous, for the heart that is possessed by Christ, to manifest the value and blessedness of Him who is our Portion, and our compensation in every grief and perplexity. May the Lord give us to abound and have all things, in having Himself, until we see His face, are like Him, and with Him for ever!

Chapter 6:
Surpassing Glory and Surpassing Power
2 Corinthians 3:7 - 4:9

There is a great contrast introduced in this third chapter between the ministry which had its day on this earth and that ministry which is now in progress, and, I may say, very near its close. It is of importance to understand what is the character and nature of these two ministries. They are in complete contrast, the former not answering in any measure to the latter. There is a distinct and definite ministry from heaven at this present moment, which has for its object a formative character in God’s people. There are two things that stand out very prominently in this ministry in contrast with the former ministry; and when I speak of that, of course I refer to that which was instituted on this earth at Mount Sinai, given to Moses with a distinct and highly definite purpose of God in it. These two things which mark the present ministry from the heavens are quite apart from, and not to be found in, the ministry from Sinai. They are spoken of in this third chapter, and cannot have escaped your attention: they are liberty and a formative efficiency. These are the great characteristics of the present ministry. I will speak presently of what the purpose of God is with respect to the character which this is intended to produce in God’s people; but these are the two great features of it: liberty in contrast with bondage, and a formative power in contrast with the entire absence of anything of the kind in the ministry from Sinai.

To be simple about it: when the ministry of Sinai came, it was embodied in the ten commandments, which were written upon tables of stone, and were given by God in the character of one who was making a demand upon man as he was, he being incompetent to answer to it. That was the special characteristic of it. It was God demanding; God come to look for that which man had not to give. He looked, for instance, for righteousness, but man had none; He looked for a character suitable to Himself in the then revelation of His character, but man had not that suit-ability; and the consequence was that man, being unable and incompetent to render to God what God was claiming from him, fell under the condemnation and power of death which was attached to that ministry. Hence it was “the ministration of death” (2 Cor. 3:7).

And that must be always a ministry of death which makes a demand upon man in the flesh. I do not care what it is; even the most exalted ministry that could be conceived from the heavens, if that ministry were to come and claim from us on the ground of what we are, it would be a ministration of death, just as Sinai ministry was. The moment a demand is made upon the ground of what we are, it would be a ministration of death, and cannot have escaped your attention: they are liberty and a formative efficiency. These are the great characteristics of the present ministry. I will speak presently of what the purpose of God is with respect to the character which this is intended to produce in God’s people; but these are the two great features of it: liberty in contrast with bondage, and a formative power in contrast with the entire absence of anything of the kind in the ministry from Sinai.
spirit of all that is in the Old Testament. You will find certain things represented in the former thing, in the way of types, and so on; but the spirit of it all was the Lord Himself. Then you have the Holy Ghost in the next clause, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” This marks the new position in connection with this new ministry. The Holy Ghost is there; but if the Holy Ghost be there, then there must have been previously a ministration of the very thing that was formerly demanded, namely, righteousness; because it is the ministry of righteousness, and glory, and the Spirit, in contrast with the ministry of bondage, death, and condemnation.

Well, now, that is simple enough, at least as to the doctrinal part of it. The previous order of things, and, I may say, that which people want to revive in a mongrel way now, consisted in God making demands upon man in the flesh; and, if God do so, man must necessarily come into the condemnation which inevitably flows from it, for he has no righteousness for God; he is in unrighteousness. But now what comes out is this: that God, from the glory, from the very place where that blessed One is at the right hand of God, ministers to a creature upon this earth a righteousness that he had previously demanded from him. He ministers it to him, instead of looking that man should be up to the glory of God, from which he had fallen so far short. It is a ministry of glory, and of righteousness, and of the Spirit; that is, the Holy Ghost is the characteristic power of everything which is based upon this righteousness -- the pedestal upon which it all stands.

But there is something more, an exceedingly blessed and important element, in this second ministry, far beyond even what I have spoken of as to righteousness and the Spirit. It is its formative power; the effect of being under the ministry of glory is to be transformed into the likeness of the blessed One in whose face the glory shines. The law never did that. The law never made a man like itself, but condemned him for its unlikeness. It cursed him on account of his shortcomings; and let me say, that if it did not do that, it would cease to be the law. You will thus see the folly of taking away the penalties of the law. What good would it be if they were taken away? If you take away the penalties of the law you destroy the whole power of it. The law, without its necessary penalties, is a miserable thing, good for nothing. The principal constituent element of law, its characteristic, its very nature, was this, that it condemned man for being short of its requirements. Man was short of the chief requirements of the law of God, and it condemned him necessarily because of it.

What is it that suits a poor wretched creature now, in the full consciousness of his shortness, and inability, and feebleness? Just this, that the very thing that he had not for God, God has for him! Man had no righteousness; God gives him righteousness. He was under bondage; God gives him liberty. He could not stand in the presence of the glory; God ministers glory to him. And the necessary consequence of that is, the formative power of which I was speaking.

I ask you affectionately, are you in the liberty of that ministry? Do you know, in your soul and in your conscience, the liberty that comes from being under that ministry? That you have got a righteousness which is suited to the presence of God, and that the glory from whence that righteousness is ministered to you, and the One in whose face the whole glory of God shines, is just the One who suits you; and besides that, as you look at that blessed One in all the glory of God where He is, do you know the transforming power and effect of that vision, producing in its feeble measure (because of the vessel upon which it acts) something of the likeness of Christ, “changed into the same image from glory to glory”?

You see, it is a wonderful thing to think of, what the purpose of God is about it; and this is where the deficiency is in every one of our souls. The thought of God is to have a people on this earth walking in the steps of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the heavens. That is His thought, His present thought about His people; and if you and I, have not in our souls the sense of that, that God is seeking to have a people upon this earth, in their feeble measure the reflection of His own Son in the heavens, how can we have that communion with God which apprehends His things? If the thought of God be to have a heavenly people upon this earth, in the life of His Son, you cannot go on with this world; and if this be not God’s thought, what is? If God be seeking to have a heavenly people, a people in their practices, and ways, and walk, and character, and relationships, heavenly, if that be His thought, then we cannot possibly go on with the world. I do violence at once to the purpose of God if I do.

If we mean to go on with the world, I think it would be far more honest if we said, “No, God has not such a thought in His mind at all. His purpose is to have a people here to enjoy the world as much as they can; that is His purpose.” I think it is a great deal better that we should be honest with our hearts and consciences. There is nothing God hates and detests so much as unreality. The great thing that He is looking for in His people is reality, and not to be trifling with conscience about these things. Better for you to give a denial to the fact, and say, “God has no such purpose; Christ did not go up to heaven to form a people like Himself, and the Holy Ghost did not come down to keep a people like Christ.” It is better to say so at once, and then go hard and fast with the world. There is nothing so miserable and detestable as a sort of truckling with this wretched, polluted world, taking just as much of Christianity as you think will suit you. This is exactly what people are doing. They take just as much of the truth of God as they think will put some sort of status upon them; but the part that cuts them, that strips them of the thing their heart clings to, they turn it aside. It reminds me of what used to be done in days gone by, and is even now very common: people take and read the word of God the Old Testament; they find most wonderful promises and blessings, and wonderful prospects for the Jew, and they take them to themselves with the most perfect self-complacency; but what is done with the curses? They quietly leave those. This is exactly what people are doing with their consciences with reference to the truth. They take as much of the truth of God as suits them (what a terrible snare it is!), just as much as will make their consciences easy to go on with the devil and the world; but the part that cuts them asunder, that exposes them for their worldliness, that brings them in as short of this wonderful testimony, and shows them up with the light of God streaming upon them in all its brightness and glory -- they turn aside from that. Believe me, you must either take Christianity or leave it. You cannot mix
Christianity and earthly religion. This is what people are trying to do, but it is the destruction of the testimony of the people of God in these last times where it is the case. They are semi-Christians and semi-Jews. They find that God gave certain things to a people on this earth, and they take them for themselves, thus setting aside the heavenly character of the testimony committed to them.

But when I open such a Scripture as this, for instance, a Scripture that shows me the beloved Son cast out of this earth, rejected, refused, and despised, spit upon by the world and the people of the world, and the glory of God put in the face of that blessed One up there whom man despised, I have no question whatever about the character of the ministry, and about the character of the glory. The very rejection of Christ upon the earth, and the very glory of Christ in the heavens, opens my heart to all the liberty that is up there, but equally shuts me up to the narrowness of His path down here. You cannot help it. And therefore I feel it is really of moment to bring people at issue with their consciences about it; and I do feel it is a solemn thing to stand here and say it; I feel, before God, it is a very responsible thing, to speak any word for God in such a moment as this; but there is nothing that is working more mischief and more harm at the present time amongst the people of God than that sort of half-and-half bowing to the truth. There is a want of straightforward, open facing of the question with conscience, a turning aside of the edge and power of the word of God from the soul. And not only so, but some are positively seeking by the Scriptures to vindicate this degradation of the truth of God. I say it is a very solemn thing, and one which everyone of us ought to seriously lay to heart. Do we really mean to be governed in our ways by the thoughts of God? May He give you and me a firmer grasp in our being in bondage; and every ray of glory that shines from that blessed face in the heavens is the reflection to my soul of the completeness, and sufficiency, and fulness of His finished work -- the eternal pedestal of blessedness He has set me upon.

But there is more than this. As I look at that glory it has a formative power in me. I tell you, beloved brethren, and I say it to myself, as well as you, what we all stand in need of (I speak especially to those who have a genuine desire in their souls to be a little more after the power of this ministry) is, to be long enough in the presence of that blessed Christ who is glorified to catch the features of that Christ, and so have Him engraven upon the "fleshy tables of our hearts." That is what is wanted. It is not an effort. You might try to be like Christ in glory until you were worn out with trying, and you would not catch one feature of His. The very fact of your striving proves your inability. But what is it? It is a thing that nobody can explain. I do not believe you can even convey to another what it is to sit engrossed with that blessed One who is there in glory. Who could explain it? It is a thing that a person may speak of out of the fulness of his own heart; but who could convey either the satisfaction of it, or the effect of it upon oneself, individually? The word of God speaks to me of the fact, but there is no man living, nor has there been one, who could convey to another, be he ever so intelligent, or spiritual, or earnest, the sense which his heart gets while he sits as clay in the hands of that glorious potter. It is impossible to describe it, and yet it is a reality. It is a reality, that the person who sits in the company and presence of the glorified Christ, insensibly to himself, contracts moral likeness to Him.

When Moses came down from the mount, though it was the mount of condemnation, there was a glory streaming from his face which no one could look at; but there was only one man in the whole of that company who was insensible to the fact that there was glory in his face, and that was himself. Where did he get that glory? He went up and he was alone with God in the mount, and the glory, though it was connected with the ministry of condemnation, was reflected upon his face when he went down. You and I, with unveiled face, no veil either on us, or on that blessed One up there (for I think the passage will bear the thought of that), there is neither the veil upon Christ nor upon us, everything is open, unveiled; and, as we by faith look at that blessed One, as we sit before Him, as we are sufficiently passive in His presence. He is engraven on our hearts by the Spirit, and when we come down there is the reflection upon us.

You know perfectly well what it is to meet a person who gives your heart the sense that he has been with Christ, who reminds you of Christ. But how seldom is it the case! What I feel so deplorable, and what one mourns over, is that even with reference to the very best of things, we leave so much the impress of ourselves upon them, instead of Christ. That is what is so sad. In what is done for Christ, we are more impressed with the one who is doing it than the One for whom it is done. What one longs for, what one’s heart yearns after, is to be just like clay in the hands of the potter, as our hymn expresses it:

"Thou art the potter, we the clay."

God’s thought is that we should be as clay, absolutely passive, so that the potter might leave the mark of His own beautiful
hands upon us. What a wonderful thing it would be if that were
the case with us, as we move through these scenes of sorrow,
and difficulty, and trial, and temptation, and besetment,
surrounded by all that is in this poor, wretched, miserable
world, which the devil will head up with his masterpiece of
iniquity against Christ; if we were distinguished, not so much
by what we say and do, as by the way that hand governs us,
controls us, guides us -- the hand of the potter. That is the
meaning of this last verse of the third of Corinthians. As I said
before, it is not effort, it is not grasping after something, it is
not seeking to possess yourselves of anything, it is simply this
-- "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory
of the Lord, are changed into the same image." That is the clay
together under the hand of the blessed potter.

It is a wonderful thing that God should take such a thing as
clay to reflect His glory in. I will speak of that more fully
presently; but what I want to press now is that there is this
formative power in this ministry. Instead of demanding or
seeking for anything from us, it brings to us from the heavens
the thing we could not give, and besides that, it transforms us
into the image and likeness of Christ, as we are sufficiently like
clay in His hands.

Now, may I ask you affectionately -- and I do not want to
make anybody depressed or morbid -- but I ask you, how much
of your time do you really sit down in the Lord's presence?
How much time and leisure have you, not merely from the
business of this world, but even supposing your service is for
the Lord, how much time have you for this that I am speaking
of? Do you not know that in order that there may be great
outgoings, there must be great incomings? There will be no
outshining, if there is not in-shining. What is it then? Simply
this, that my heart and soul have leisure enough, both from the
things without and within, to sit down in the solitude of the
presence of that blessed, holy, glorious Person who is in
heaven, finding my delight in Him for His own sake. Now
what do you and I know about that? What do we know
positively, in our own souls, of that blessed, wonderful
retirement, sitting in the company of Christ, blind to all else
save His beauty and His glory, deaf to every other sound but
that of His voice?

"Oh for a heart submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone."

Would not a person fresh from a scene like that be redolent
of Christ?

Some one once said to me, speaking of another, "I like to
be in the company of So-and so." I replied, "Why?" The
answer was, "Because he always reminds me of a third
person." "Who is that?" "The blessed One in glory." Oh, what
a blessed thing it is to walk through this world, and as we meet
each other, in our business, our households, or domestic
relationships, to remind each other of that One in glory, to
have the fulness of that Christ in measure reproduced in poor,
wretched creatures like you and me! It is a most blessed thing
-- the most marvelous ministry that could be conceived.

Well, now, if we come to the fourth chapter, there are
only three things I will speak of in connection with this
ministry. They are in the seventh verse. He says, "we have this
treasure," and it is "in earthen vessels," and there is what is
called "the excellency of the power," or, as I believe it should be,"the surpassingness of the power." These are three
wonderful things to get before our thoughts.

"This treasure," what is it? I do not think the treasure is so
much the estimate that my heart forms of Christ, as the value
that God has found in Him. That is the reason, I believe, why
it is called a "treasure." I do not deny the fact that the Lord
Jesus Christ is to be a treasure to His people, because you get
the Scripture elsewhere: "Where your treasure is, there will
your heart be also"; but here the treasure, which is, of course,
Christ, is presented more as it is looked at from God's side. It
is the treasure in God's estimation. It is what the thought of
God is as to this blessed One. Christ is His treasure. How did
that treasure come into the vessel? Look at the sixth verse for
a moment. He says:

For God, who commanded that out of darkness light
should shine, hath shined in our hearts, for the shining
forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of
Jesus Christ.

That is the way the treasure comes in. It is not that I have
possessed myself of the treasure. It is a wonderful thing -- it
sustains one's heart -- to think of the sovereignty of the grace
of God; to think of that sovereign grace in its actions as well as
its purposes. How, then, did this treasure find its way into
our hearts? Let me ask, how did light come into this dark world?
Remember this, the sun was not the creature of the first day; it
was created afterwards. How then did light come? What was
the light of the first three days in the old creation? This: "God
said, Let there be light; and light was." Just so spiritually in
our hearts: God, in His wonderful, blessed, sovereign way of
dealing, God Himself, who commanded that out of darkness
light should shine, is the God who has shone in our hearts. It
is not merely a ray from Him, or some emanation from Him,
but God Himself shining; that is a very different thing; God
Himself shining in a man's heart, in all His blessed illuminating
power, for, or in order to, "the shining forth of the radiancy of
the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Take an instance of it. This very Saul of Tarsus himself,
on the road to Damascus, a persecutor, who had never had a
good thought of Christ, nothing but hatred, a man who thought
he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of
Nazareth, suddenly, in a moment, without the slightest
warning, saw "a light from heaven above the brightness of the
sun," a light that put out the sun, shining in His noonday
splendor, and a Savior in glory was revealed in his soul. He is
thus the living instance of the way this blessed treasure is
deposited in a man's soul. Paul himself, who was writing this,
is the living instance of the way in which God would command
the light to shine out of darkness in our hearts, to give the light
of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus
Christ. The whole glory of God is thus expressed.

And you cannot understand one single thing about the
glory of God, except as you understand how it is seen in the
face of Jesus Christ, and it is in the presence of that glory that
my conscience is dealt with; and if you think you can learn God
in any other way, you are seriously mistaken, because the
moment you bring your understanding or your mind to bear upon the things of God, apart from your conscience, there is the greatest danger of shipwreck as to faith. If I really see the whole glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, I cannot help being challenged in the depths of my conscience, and that is the blessedness of it. There are royal roads to learning in other things, but not in this. The moment you have to do with God and Christ, you are convicted, and the earliest expression of your heart in the presence of that glory must be, “I abhor myself.” And yet, as I said, this leads to confidence, and is the only thing that is formative in our hearts.

That is the first thing. Next observe where this treasure is placed; that is the second point in the verse: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” You may have often observed that when man has anything valuable, he generally encases it in something that is far more valuable. The outside coverings of men valuable things are generally a great deal more brilliant and valuable than the thing that is inside. The casket eclipses the jewel. Not so with God. He takes His treasure, the costliest and most precious of all, and puts it in the most contemptible vessel that you could conceive, that is, a poor, fragile vessel of clay. This is what he calls an earthen vessel; a poor, perishing, fragile vessel of clay.

But then He has a purpose in this; it gives Him the opportunity of doing two things. First His delight is to make everything of the treasure, and second, He is pleased to bring out the surpassingness of the power. There is not only the surpassing glory of the treasure, but the surpassing power with which He works in the vessel -- the vessel broken to atoms; indeed, not worth anything until it is broken to pieces; but behind this poor vessel there is surpassing power. This, indeed, is a wonderful sight to look at. The whole power of God goes along with the poor vessel, into which He puts this treasure.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power should be of God and not of us.” But we have not only to accept the breakings that God brings upon us; but beside that, and in addition to that, we must keep the sentence of the cross, the death of Christ, which has given us liberty from the condemnation to which we were exposed -- we must keep that death upon ourselves. God breaks the vessel; but we must keep the sentence of death upon it as well, in order “that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not of us.”

I do not pursue this further, but would ask you to think of these three things which are connected with this ministry: first, the vessel of clay, just what you and I are; secondly, a treasure placed in it of surpassing glory; and thirdly, a power that is surpassing in its efficiency behind it; and that power ever working in company with nothingness and weakness and self-abnegation, as well as a complete, utter, thorough denial of the flesh and the world. You cannot have power otherwise; and there is no manifestation of Christ, no shining forth of Christ, except as this vessel is entirely as clay in the hands of the potter. There is no shining in, or shining out either. It must be clay for Christ, the treasure, to shine into, and clay for the Holy Ghost to bring the features of Christ out of; so that others may see them.

The picture alluded to here is no doubt Gideon’s army. They put the light into the pitcher, but the light never shone out until the pitcher was broken. They had to break the pitchers, and then the light shone. And no doubt the Spirit of God alludes to that fact here. You have the shining in of the glory, and you have the surpassing power working that it may shine out. These two things go together, namely, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining into our poor earthen vessels, or pitchers, and the surpassing power of God that works through these vessels for the display of the brilliancy of Christ.

How little our hearts are really up to God’s wonderful purpose in giving such ministry as this from those opened heavens! How little of affection there is in our hearts to enter into the purpose of God and into His thought, that, in a world which rejected His Son, cast Him out, despised Him, nailed Him to the cross, there should be those who should be the expression, the manifestation of that blessed, wonderful One whom the world rejected, but whom God glorified. Do your hearts desire that? Is that what you long for? Is that your purpose and object? Is that what you propose to yourself? God will help you if you have such purpose of heart. Can you say to Him, I have only one desire, that I should be upon this earth a vessel in whom the display of the glory of Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be found in every circumstance here? God delights to help us, and you will have the comfort, the sustainment, of being in communion with His thought. I do not know any greater comfort in the whole word of God. Oh, the blessedness and rest of having, through grace, common mind with the Lord in any little measure! God and His people of one mind about those things that relate to the glory of His Son. It is most wonderful grace on His part to bring us into such a place that we can have like mind with Him, and to enable us by such surpassing power.

Suppose I see one turning his back upon everything in this world, who looks for nothing in it, who has no interests here, who does not expect anything, and would not take anything from the world. I say, What surpassing power is displayed in that man! If I see a poor, feeble creature lying on a bed of sickness, racked with pain, the poor body pressed down with disease, morn, noon, and night, and one who might be tempted to say, What good am I, a trial to everyone about me, and a burden to myself? -- yet if I see, amid all the weariness and pain, instead of complaint, satisfaction, instead of querulousness, rest and quietness, instead of quickness of temper, the blessed manifestation of Christ in meekness and endurance, I say, What a surpassing power there is there!

That is what this ministry is able to do, beloved friends, and that is God’s thought about us in relation to it. There is not a circumstance in life, or a detail in our history, or a position that we can be called into, whether sickness or health, pain or its absence, prosperity or loss, trial or ease, there is not a single thing too many for the one who is satisfied to be clay in the hands of surpassing power. And more than that, it is in these very circumstances that Christ is endeared to us, for He alone is our sufficiency for all. Also, it is where we are, not where we would be, that the blessed God desires to have His Son seen in us.

This is the testimony that is really lacking at this moment. Every one has heard us speak of doctrines, and we are
supposed to be clear about them, but people are amazed to see so little of the doctrines practiced, because they fail to see anything correspondingly in us. Oh, for the manifestation of the truth, that exhibition of Christ which would stop the mouth of the rejecter, and commend itself to the consciences of men! And hence, says the Holy Ghost, "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God" (v. 2). Men would be forced to say, Though I hate those people because they are so narrow, yet at the same time my conscience is bound to give this testimony, that they seek to please God. Herein is the efficiency of the power manifested, that in every circumstance, every service, everything I have to do, I am to be an expression of the skill of the hand that is handling me.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give our hearts to desire to be His handiwork, to say in reality, and to act it as well, Lord Jesus, take me, and form me after the fashion of Thine own heart, place me where Thou wilt, only grant me this desire, that Thou mayest be magnified in my body, whether I live or die! Oh, may our hearts prize more than ever this blessed ministry, characterized as it is by such glories as we have had before us!

Chapter 7:
The Artificial and the Spiritual
2 Corinthians 3:18

It is very clear and distinct, feeble though the measure be in which the soul apprehends it, that it is only as we are occupied with Christ where He is, that we are like Him in our ways. "But 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."

But, I may ask, have we grasped in soul, or rather, have we been possessed by, all that is implied in these wondrous words? Do we not often detect in ourselves a lack of that spring and power of life which imparts quietness and ease and restfulness of heart? And in the absence of these, yet knowing they ought to be there, are not many forced into what I must call an artificial state of soul, which carries on its very bearing the opposite of life and the Spirit?

There is something refreshing and beautiful in the spring and freshness of life, and it matters not how diligently or carefully formed anything resembling life may be, the difference between what is artificial and what is real is at once apparent.

Light and heat are neither of them, nor both together, the tree, most necessary though they be as the soil and atmosphere, as it were, in which it is planted. A Christian is, as such, in the light, and he is moreover the object of the Father’s love, even in the measure of it in which Jesus was loved -- “hast loved them as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23).

Now, is there not a great difference between a soul held and governed in divine power and reality by these things, and one who, because painfully sensible of the mere outside owning of them, is seeking to hold them? It is just the difference between my heart keeping the peace of God, and the peace of God keeping, as in a garrison, my heart. But there is more than this difference, for there is the practical effect. If the soul be not held, but seeking to hold, there is ever prominent in its state, the unrest that invariably accompanies effort; disquiet and fear about almost everything, as well as uncertainty even where most was expected from God. The contrary to all this is Christianity. Unseen realities are the governing power acting on the soul, absorbing and commanding it, the affections of the man formed, sustained, and satisfied by Christ, their only object; and, as a consequence, rest, quietness, and ease in the most untoward circumstances, walking in that path which “the vulture’s eye hath not seen.”

There ought not to be anything forced about us as Christians; effort of any kind betrays the absence of power. The presence of Christ not only imparts to us, but secures through us, all that is suitable to His presence; effort tells the tale of our being out of His presence, and is invariably resorted to for the purpose of acquiring that which is the simple result of being in His presence, and of being acted upon by Himself. I do not for a moment wish to excuse anything like sloth, or ease, or self-indulgence of any kind, in anything, much less so in these things which have to do with man in the Spirit and not in the flesh: but I do feel it is a great and solemn reality to press upon the people of God that the presence of Christ can alone command the heart. What a blessed thing for a poor worm to be held by the presence of the Lord of glory! Oh, I cannot but speak of it! such glories as are indeed to be found here: to be the subject on which His presence acts, instead of our poor hearts and thoughts acting on Him; to be the subject; of light and heat, such light and love, too!

What was it formed John? Was it not that he leaned on the bosom of Jesus? John lay there because he knew it pleased his Lord and Master; and may we not do the same? How much effort was there about John when he lay there? Did he find it difficult to say, “Lord, who is it?” Peter may have felt it difficult, and was glad to use John’s nearness; but as to John, the question came forth as the simple and natural result of being where he was. That bosom was everything to John: he was not thinking of being there, or of the results to him of being there; he was there for its own sake; hence he was not restless or unnatural. That blessed Person on whose bosom he reclined was to John “all.” Oh, to have the scepter of Christ swaying its dominion of life and liberty from pole to pole in our poor hearts! Our looks would then tell of Him, our words speak of Him, our thoughts rise and set in Him, and all so easily and naturally, that is, in spiritual power; in a word, Christ would be our life practically, as He is our life truly and really; the glory of the Lord would thus transform us into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Lord alone knows what searchings of heart this leads to. The heart that has passed through it alone knows what it is to rise and walk apart from all that once governed and influenced it, often, too, beyond what we suspected even; but so it is. Yet Christ is worthy. May we know what it is to be in some more full measure the subjects of His power and presence before Himself, formed by Him alone, long enough in the mount, as it were, to catch the pattern of the glory, not because of the good of it, nor even in the first instance that we may be a testimony to others, or enrich ourselves, but because of what
He is in His own intrinsic blessedness and preciousness.

It is a great cheer to the soul to know that the whole power of God, by the Spirit, is for us in the maintenance of this blessed walk on earth; only as Christ alone fills our eyes and hearts are we enriched ourselves, or any testimony to others; thus it is we are at rest, having reached the haven of quiet. Another has blessedly said, “Heaven is the metropolis of Christianity”; may we know it is so in deep blessedness. If a Jerusalem or Rome were enough to divert for a moment such an one as Paul, surely much less prevails with us who have so little of that divine energy and power which characterized him in so remarkable a degree.

May He by His own Spirit so attract, win, and satisfy the hearts of His beloved people, presenting to them Him who alone can secure this in them, that they, finding their all in Christ, may be like “a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

{This also appeared as “Transformation and Satisfaction” in Helps in Things Concerning Himself, vol. 1.}

**Chapter 8:**

**John’s Dying Note**

*John 3:25-36*

The true test of every one and everything is Christ. It was so when He lived and walked on the earth; it is so now, though the world seeth Him no more. It is wonderful how latent principles and concealed thoughts are all elicited, and brought to the surface, before this test. Every man on earth is posted in his true place morally, when tested by Christ, and the importance or the contrary of everything is detected when its relation to Christ is found out. This world, with its motives and principles, its greatness and its littleness, is eminently favorable to questions. Many and varied have been the topics which, from time to time, men have suggested and debated; the din and strife of party clamor has again and again been heard, and when the fury of the fight has subsided, and the battle is over, the question which raised it is still without solution, and is left unanswered.

The present age delights in questions, reasonings, and uncertainties on all subjects, but specially in the region where revelation claims exclusively to be heard. The delight and highest pleasure of philosophy and science, at the present moment, is to tear to fragments every little shred of faith or uncertainty. The present age delights in, to show how entirely He is above them.

Now it is this which marks what I designedly call “John’s dying note.” He had spoken much and often ere this; he had testified, too, in earnest and to purpose; there were around him those who loved and valued him; and in this sense the greatest of women born was not alone. Questions between John’s followers and the Jews were raised by the latter; and an attempt to make John and Christ the leaders of opposite factions and parties was an occasion for John to show where his heart was, and how entirely Christ had settled all questions for him. Observe how blessedly he hides himself behind the Christ of God, and how he makes little of himself in order to make much of Jesus. What was John but a poor creature of the earth? His words, too, what were they but the language of one who was “of the earth, earthly?” It was to the bridegroom the bride belonged, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stood and heard Him, as John did Christ, rejoiced greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. How blessed to see a man himself so captivated by Christ, bound with chains of love—embracing as it were his conqueror’s feet—that he is ready to break every vessel, and himself first of all among them, if he may but set forth His excellency and His glory, who coming from above, is above all!

But he will not even rest here: he will go beyond his own thoughts of who and what this blessed One is, and hence the Father’s thoughts about His Son must form “John’s dying note”; he will sing, even on earth, a nobler, sweeter strain; and how simple, yet impressive it is, as the revelation of God in his heart, giving him heaven-born thoughts concerning the beloved Son -- “The Father loveth the Son” . . . “He giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” . . . “He hath given all things into His hand.” It is all Christ from first to last; man, Israel, bride, John, are all eclipsed and distanced; the tiny stars all diminish, yea, retire, before the rising Sun, and we are left to sit down and rest our weary, hearts beneath His rays, and find our satisfaction in the fact of Jesus being all!

“Hark, the thrilling symphonies,
Seem within to seize us;
Add we to their holy lays,
Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!
Sweetest name on mortal tongue,
Sweetest note in angels’ song,
Sweetest anthem ever known,
Jesus, Jesus reigns alone!”

{This also appeared in Occasional Helps, vol. 1, and as “Christ or the Mahatmas, Which?” in Helps in Things Concerning Himself, vol. 1.}
**Chapter 9:**  
**Christ, the Object of Affection and Sympathy**  
*John 20; Mark 14*

“What wonderful times are ours!” are words on almost every lip present. Showers of blessing, as they say, are falling on every side. Some have gone so far as to state that, like history, Pentecost is being repeated; as if the blessed Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, had left the earth since then; and that prayer, earnest prayer, had brought Him back. Truly these days of ours are strange and solemn. No doubt there is an energy of the Holy Ghost abroad in the land both in the spread of testimony, and in the awakening of souls. It is well to bear in mind that God is sovereign while we are to be subject, and that in the exercise of His sovereignty He may, and does use any instrument that He pleases: and the more His people are walking with Him, the more subject they will be on the one hand, and the reader to rejoice in all that He does on the other. But what about the Lord Jesus Christ in these times? I would seriously and solemnly ask if it be true that this spring tide of blessing, which, it is said, is carrying on its waves thousands of souls, is bearing them to His feet, there to worship and adore? Is it awakening in their hearts new affections which find their goal in Himself? Is it bearing them on high, so as to lead them to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord? The enquiry is of the deepest moment to us all. God forbid that any of His people should undervalue or under-estimate any service rendered to fallen man. But is Christ dearer to us than everyone beside? And is it a small matter to us if His desires and claims seem disregarded or forgotten? It is because such thoughts are awakened and kept alive by the aspect of professing Christianity, that I propose taking a glance at the two Scriptures which stand at the head of this paper.

The touching story of Mary in John 20 is familiar to almost every one. It is a striking instance of ignorant, yet genuine affection. She might have known His glorious resurrection. She ought to have remembered His words, -- “After three days I will rise again.” But though her faith and intelligence were defective, her heart beat true to its object and her treasure. Contrast her with Peter and John and does she not stand on a platform far above them? They can return to their home, satisfied that Jesus’ body was not in the tomb, though they knew not where He was. This was not enough for Mary; her loyal heart pants to know where He is, and finding Him not, is ready to break with grief. She stands at the sepulcher weeping, stooping to gaze at the spot where they laid Him. Unperturbed by the angels, disconcerted in no wise, there she lingers, and there her heart must be -- beautiful instance of genuine though ignorant affection, and the amazing power of one object when the affections are governed thereby. “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take Him away.”

How was she rewarded? Most surely according to the desires of her heart towards Himself. First, He allows her to hear her own name on His risen lips. Wonderful moment for Mary! Wonderful moment for Jesus! Was not every pulsation of her devoted heart met, and more than satisfied, when His blessed voice caused her to look into His own face, her Master and her Lord? I am bold to say that two hearts were made glad that daybreak, -- hers who could find no home where He was not, and His who gave His life for worthless rebels like us. And I am bold to say further, that it gave Him greater joy to own her as His sheep, calling her by name, Mary! than it did her to be so owned and called. But this was not all, for He commissions her now to carry the most wonderful message ever entrusted to human lips (see v. 17) --

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

He sends her forth to proclaim the victory of His love, not only that He had triumphed so gloriously, that every enemy was under His feet, but that He, the risen man, was Head of a new race, that,

both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren (Heb. 2:11, 12).

He sends her forth out of the second garden, where the mournful history of the first garden (Eden) had been more than wiped out by the glories of His triumph, to say to poor trembling hearts like ours, that He Himself had not only won a new place for them, but that He had positively brought them into it in Himself: “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one,” which does not mean that He was degraded to their level, but that He, by His death, His glorious triumph and victory, had elevated them to the heights of His own new place before His Father and God.

What grace! wondrous grace! He passes by angels that excel in strength, and comes down to a poor weak woman upon the earth, owns her as His sheep, and then sends her forth to wipe the tearful eyes, and comfort the trembling hearts of His own, by announcing unto them the conquests of His love. Who can say now that Jesus does not delight to reward the devoted heart? And who can deny that in thus rewarding it, He gratifies His own changeless affections?

Let us now turn to Mark 14. It is the only instance recorded in Scripture of any one having intelligent sympathy with Christ: it is a wonderful scene; every one is thinking of death. Jesus has the vision of death before His spirit. How must the Passover, with its lamb whose blood was shed, have brought forward death, before every mind? There were the type and the antitype face to face as it were -- the chief priests and scribes, with a hatred to Christ which nothing but His death could appease, seeking how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. Thus we see how death filled all thoughts; but there was present one, a poor weak woman too, whose heart kept company with all that was passing through His; she alone was in full sympathy with His feelings at the moment, and entered into the thoughts of God concerning the beloved Son.

It has been remarked that the account with which Mark furnishes us of the close of His blessed mission of love, presents Jesus more solitary in it than any other; incidents and
circumstances which are recorded more or less in all the other gospels, are absent from Mark. If this be so, how strikingly significant is the record of this act of Mary’s in the house of Simon the leper! Her heart and her affections, in true and genuine sympathy, traversing with Him the dreariness and loneliness of His path, as well as marking her sense of the utter worthiness of all around in view of His agony and death; on one side intelligently apprehending not only who and what He was in Himself, but likewise His value in the eyes of His Father; on the other, making use of His tomb as a burying place for every valuable thing of hers on earth. For her, if Jesus dies, He carries all of hers down into the grave with Himself!

In Matthew and Mark, the blessed Lord is consciously in man’s hand, in the closing hours of His life. This indeed characterizes these gospels in their record of His death, His cross; which was both the fruit of the counsel of God in view of redemption, as well as the fruit of Jewish enmity, and man’s revolted, reprobate, heart. How blessed it is then to see Mary here at such a moment, marking her sense of the glories of His person in the face of the accumulated hatred of both devil and man! It is a blessed sight, in the intelligent apprehension of faith, the homage of one willing, loving heart, thus laid at His feet -- one solitary soul in that rebellious land owning Him Lord of all. All this sheds its light on His own words -- “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”

Let us now look at the facts, as they are here recorded, a little more in detail. Mary’s affection, her intelligent sympathy, takes the precedence of the treachery of Judas. Her love to Jesus was of that order and character, that it secured for Him that which was suitable to Himself at such a moment, and that which entirely met His heart and thoughts. “The box of ointment of spikenard very precious,” answered to all that was around Jesus, in the hatred and malignity of man, in that hour; but it also coincided with all that filled His soul; and it was, as well, community of thought with the Father concerning the Son of His bosom. It is a sight of surpassing blessedness to gaze at Him as He sits there; to see Him accepting, and vindicating, too, the affection and sympathy which His own Person had created and called forth; to see her, too, fruit as she was of His grace, expending on Him to whom she showed her all -- that all, as another has touchingly and blessedly expressed it. Mary, as it were, says by this action of hers, “While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”

There is another point of solemn interest in this affecting scene, namely, how opposite the thoughts of men are to what suits the mind of God and His Christ; and the most that some could say concerning Mary’s act was, that it was marked by waste. Oh, how little was He in their eyes, who measured the service rendered to Him after this fashion! For it is the person to whom the service is rendered, that is the true measure of its value. Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father; Jesus, the spotless and perfect Son of God; Jesus, the willing and ready friend of need, and want and sorrow, stood so low in their estimate, as to call forth the expression of waste in regard to that which was voluntarily expended upon Him. It is the same today; the present is but the offspring of the past; the family character is not wanting in either; the heirloom of indifference to God’s Christ, and no sense of who He is or what He is, passes on from generation to generation; and today, with all its boasted light, superiority and advance, the poor, the perishing, the destitute, and the oppressed, have their friends and allies, but Jesus, the precious, blessed, wondrous Savior, is forgotten and neglected -- only remembered to be slighted and despised.

There is a bright spot in this dark cloud; turn your eye upon it for a moment: Jesus vindicates her. How blessed! The eye under which this act was performed discerned its value, and the heart that had caused to spring up affections so suited to Himself her Lord, measures out its appreciation of all that was expended, on Himself; and He lets every one know what He felt and thought of this manifestation of her devotedness to His Person. “Let her alone, she hath wrought a good work on Me; she hath done what she could; she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Oh, the joy of being vindicated by Jesus, and the satisfaction of knowing that, however feebly, we have truly ministered to the longings of His heart.

The Lord give His saints in these last days more genuine affection for, and true sympathy with, our Lord Jesus Christ, and His interests, that nothing may be able to divert their hearts from Him, engage their powers but Him, satisfy their souls but Him!

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These addresses, similar in character to *Our Pilgrimage and His Rest*, are sent forth with the humble desire and earnest prayer of the author that God may be pleased, in His sovereign grace, to overlook their many defects, and to use them for His own glory, and the blessing of His beloved people.

W. T. Turpin
Brighton, November, 1876

**Chapter 1:**
*The Christian’s Pathway and Hope*
*Genesis 5:18-24; Hebrews 11:1-6*

The principles of the times to which the Old Testament primarily relates are very different from the principles of God’s ways and dealings with His people now. If however you look at the OT worthies, saints of God in those days, particularly those that are enumerated in Heb. 11, it is very interesting to see how God raised up for Himself independent witnesses to the great principle which was to obtain as soon as ever His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, had finished the work that God gave Him to do, and had gone into heaven. What I mean is this, that the principle of Judaism was one that acted upon the sight and senses of men just as they were. All this had its time, had its day, had its object, and God worked through it for purposes of His own; but in the midst of it, whilst it was in its full force and vigor, the blessed God had, as I have observed, independent witnesses for Himself out of that very nation, who were the people of sight, with reference to what was to come out, and what has come out in our days, that is, the simple principle of faith.

Now, at this present moment, such is the position of a Christian, that if I am governed by anything that I see, I have left the path of faith. I know that it is a very searching thing for one’s heart but, I repeat, the moment I am governed by anything that I see around me, or if I act with reference to it as a motive or object, or look to it for guidance, or direction, or understanding as to my path, I have left this simple, blessed, pathway of faith which God has marked out for His own. You may say that when you look around amongst the saints of God, you see a thousand instances, where the act is with reference to what is seen; but then it is all important, beloved friends, whilst confessing the failure, not to act as if making a principle out of our failure. There is oftentimes a great tendency to do that in our hearts, to make a principle out of that which is really nothing more nor less than a breakdown with us as to the blessed and wonderful ground God has called us out unto. What He has really called us out to be a witness unto, is the blessed fact that we have an invisible God; and faith acts with reference to Him as an object that is not seen by any power of human ken or understanding. This was the wonderful thing in Moses (though I only refer to it in passing). You find the Spirit of God saying of him in Heb. 11, that he “endured, as seeing the invisible.”

You see, the two things that characterize a Christian are these, he has an invisible object in the heavens, that is, Christ glorified at God’s right hand, and an invisible power in him here -- the Holy Ghost that dwells in a believer’s body. So that we have an object entirely outside everything that is seen here in this world, and a power dwelling in our bodies (for my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost), and that power that dwells in my body acts on me and in me with reference to that object, and gives me motives and strength and everything from that object. The more we descend from that, we are inconsistent with our calling -- it is not faith, not the principle that looks beyond everything else to God, sees God, and acts with reference simply to God, and receives power from God. I believe half of our difficulties, individually and collectively, at this present moment, arise because we have not simply acted upon that principle. Most of the difficulties that saints of God experience in their individual path would be obviated, if they simply walked by faith.

Let me say this, and I say it humbly, I believe the difficulties we have collectively are created because of our low state individually; that is, there is a lack of individual faithfulness, there is some want, some feebleness, individually. A good corporate state is the result of a close individual walk with God. You never have corporate power apart from individual faithfulness. And what I believe is this -- I often think it over, and pray about it -- the reason of our corporate weakness just now is, that we have overlooked individual state before God. The individual state of our souls before God tells immensely upon the corporate relationships that we have to sustain as members of the body of Christ.
Suppose I am not walking with God as one in the relationship of a child of God, as an heir of God, and fellow-heir with Christ, how can I ever comport myself as a member of the body of Christ? It is impossible; and you may rest assured of it, where a person is deficient as a member of the family of God, he is sure to bring trouble into the church of God. The one thing tells upon the other. This it is which is on my heart in taking up this subject a little tonight. One reason why the Old Testament is so exceedingly beautiful is this, there is brought out in it, the intense individuality of our place with God. You find individual godliness, individual piety, individual walk with God, though, of course, it is after the measure and order of those times. The walk with God must be up to the revelation of God for the time being. This it is of vital importance to maintain. It would not be “walking with God” now for a person simply to live up to the measure of what Enoch knew. It was “walking with God” for Enoch at that time: but there is now, for God’s people, a revelation of God now for a person simply to live up to the measure of what Enoch knew. It was “walking with God” for Enoch at that time: but there is now, for God’s people, a revelation of God, and a communication of His mind, far beyond what Enoch knew. And therefore, to know this walk with God, I must individually be before God according to the revelation of His mind to me by His Spirit, as He has been pleased to bring it out in His word.

But I will point out to you where, in my mind, there appears to be a very interesting analogy between the time of Enoch and the times we are passing through. If you reflect for a moment on the times in which we find Enoch, and compare them with those in which our lot, by God’s mercy, is cast, you will find a very close analogy between the two. People have often said, “It is all very well to talk about Enoch ‘walking with God,’ but he had not half the trials, half the difficulties, that saints of God have in these days”; but that, beloved friends, is a very superficial view of the history of Enoch’s times, as God has given it to us in His word. If you remember, the times of Enoch were simply these -- he was surrounded by, and going through the midst of, a system of things that Satan has improved upon at the present moment; it was nothing less than Cain’s world. Enoch lived in the midst of the world as Cain made it. I say Cain’s world, and remember this, we ought, when we speak of things, to speak of them as they are. God never made the world as we see it. He made the earth, but He never made the world, or ‘age,’ as it really means. No one supposes that the ordered system of things round about us is the production of God’s hand. Satan is the god and prince and head of that. God made the literal earth of course, but this ordered system of things that is round about us, where we see such terrible departure from God -- God never made that, He is not the author of that. Satan has manufactured the ordered system of things that is around us, out of the total revolt of man. That is exactly what Cain’s world was, in principle, in Enoch’s days. Now there were two things that entered into the constitution of it. I will only just touch on them. There was a religion, and a city. Those were the two great constituent parts of that system of things in which Enoch lived.

There is a great fact embraced in those two things. Cain was the founder of a religion that disowned the claims of God in righteousness, seeing that man had fallen from God. He also overlooked the fact of the curse that had come in through that fall. A few words may not be out of place as to Cain’s sacrifice. He brought to God of the fruit of the ground. It was not that he lacked in energy, or that he wanted in earnestness, or that the man was unruly. Cain toiled on the earth, and, though cursed, it yielded its fruit to him, and he brought the fruit of the earth that was cursed, as if there had been no curse at all, and offered it to God. Observe, beloved friends, and there is a great principle involved in this -- the moment that the fall exists as a fact, as well as the utter departure of man from God in nature and in practice, we can bring nothing acceptably to God except through the death of Christ; and the moment that we attempt such a thing, it may be unwittingly, we have fallen under the power of Cain’s religion in principle. That which characterized and marked what I call the religion of which Cain was the inventor and founder, was bringing to God an offering, and doing it so as to deny the great principle, “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” You can trace it in the history for yourselves.

Then, if you look at the city, it is exactly what we have all round us at the present moment. There was manufacture, there was the art of man cultivated to its greatest possible extent, ingenuity taxed beyond all conception, to produce something which would make the world, out of which God had been rejected, bearable to man. This was Cain’s world. Herein lay its religious, political, and moral aspects.

Well now, it is a very blessed thing to find God calling out a man in the midst of a scene like this, surrounded as he was on all hands by that which disowned God; and it is a comforting thing, too, to our hearts, to find the Spirit of God giving us a record, such as you have in those verses in Genesis. With that state of things on every hand, right and left, here is a man that is called forth as a witness to the power of God, so far at least as it was known then, being kept in the midst of all that, and as it says, “walking with God.” Beloved friends, it is exactly what you and I are called to in these days; we are called to “walk with God.” I will tell you what very much struck me lately. I heard a beloved servant of God say that when he left this country, and went abroad, he came across many of God’s people who had gone out from England to settle there, and he asked them how it was they came out there. He got one reply from one, and another from another, but not a word that indicated to him in the least that there was anything like an exercise of soul before God as to His pleasure in the matter. And he said to one something like this -- “Well, but I read in scripture that Enoch walked with God,' and I also read in scripture that God says, ‘I will guide thee with mine eye.’ What do you know of that?” Well, the only reply he got from several to whom he spoke after that fashion was simply an evasion of this direct appeal to their conscience. Now, beloved friends, all that is very serious; and here is the solemn part of it, these very people were not unintelligent people, they had a very good knowledge of dispensational truth; they understood the scripture, as God has given it to us, outwardly at least; they
could tell you the bearing of certain parts of scripture, and so forth; but when it came to this practical question of individually “walking with God,” and communion with God, and guidance by God’s eye, and this principle of faith, which carries beyond circumstances to that blessed One who is up there in glory, they were completely, as is often said, at sea. I say that is very solemn, and I think that you and I have to be on the lookout. We have to take care, beloved friends, that our outward intelligence is not in advance of our personal communion with God. Be assured of it, the moment it comes to be so, Satan has got materials at hand with which he will make terrible havoc. The outward understanding of the things of God apart from this blessed question of personal “walking with God,” is a weapon in the devil’s hands by which he will sow all sorts of seed, producing terrible results by-and-by, if we are not on our guard.

Well now, let us look at this blessed character, “walking with God.” What does it involve? The first thing that must be clear in our souls is, as to whether our relationships with God are understood in our consciences. May I ask you now, Are the relationships which God has been pleased to bring His people into, as Christianity reveals them, are they understood by you in your souls? Is it all right, may I ask, between you and God, as to these relationships? Is there any cloud on these relationships, as between you and God, any unsettled question between you and God in any of these relationships? You perceive it is impossible to “walk with God” if this is not clear. It is no use speaking of “walk with God” if the relationships between me and God which He has been pleased both to form and to reveal, are not clearly entered into, and understood, and enjoyed. Or, supposing there is unjudged sin upon my conscience, how can I “walk with God”? It is folly to talk of it. Look at the bearing of that for a moment. Suppose a person with unjudged sin upon his conscience, takes his or her place in the assembly, that person is a member of the church of God, and walks in the outward expression of it; but look at the trouble that person brings in, and the weakness, and the difficulty. I do not believe we think enough of these things, and I believe you will find that they account to a great extent for the immense amount of feebleness and weakness that one finds amongst God’s people. You see, the Lord puts it very clearly before us; He says, “Let a man so examine himself.” You could not have anything more intensely individual than that. He says further, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,” that is, many die. Unjudged sin -- sin tolerated in the assembly -- was the thing that brought in trouble at Corinth. Of course that was a special instance, but the principle is the same; and if you come to the assembly of God now, if any of those comprising it have not got the joy, and the peace, and the satisfaction of their individual relationship with God, if that relationship is not clear and distinct, and further, if there is any evil unjudged or tolerated, there is sure to be weakness, and difficulty.

It is a wonderful thing to find how few there are who know that we are in relationship with God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The utmost that many get to as to this question of relationship -- it may appear strange to say so, but it is true -- the utmost that a large number of Christians get to is, that they are pardoned criminals. That is the extent of it -- pardoned criminals. I say it is a terribly solemn thing. How can I “walk with God” as His child, if I do not know my relationship? How can I “walk” with Him as a member of the body of Christ, if I do not know that relationship? and if all that pertains to the responsibility of that relationship is not maintained? All this enters into this question of “walking with God.” The relationships in which my soul stands to God must be without anything that compromises them on my side. If this is not so, then there is trouble and difficulty.

Well now, there is another thing in connection with this “walking with God,” which is exceedingly blessed. We see it in Enoch. He had but one object. I will say a word about that, because it is most important. He had one object before him. Now you will always find that where there is this simple walking with God, there is this one object. There is the relationship enjoyed, there is the soul in the sense of this relationship, but besides this, there is an object. You will find it brought out most beautifully in Heb. 11 in the end of that fifth verse. “Before his translation,” (I will speak of that presently) “he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” That was the one thing that was before him. Beloved friends, may I ask you affectionately, is that the one thing before you? Take everything in your life, take every circumstance in your history as a Christian, take everything that your hands are engaged in, your business relationships, your home relationships, your church relationships; is that the one thing that is simply before your heart? Is it this, that you want “to please God”? This is very searching. “He had this testimony,” that is the most lovely communication that we can possibly conceive of, that before ever he left the world of Cain, with all the hindrances, all the attractions, that were in it, “he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” You see, the eye was entirely off everything but God; there was the one thing that commanded him and controlled every movement of the man, the intense desire “to please God.”

You will notice a contrast, and a very beautiful one, between this and what is said of Abel. There you find that God testified “of his gifts” (Heb. 11:4). It was there a question of the acceptance of an offering. Abel is an accepted man, and he brings the blood and the fat as an offering to God, recognizing the claims of a holy God, and the ruin in which Adam had involved the world. He brings and places the lamb between him and God in righteousness, a victim chargeable, so to speak, with all that pertained to the judgment; but there was the excellency of the sacrifice as well, for there was the fat. He brought the fat and the blood, and God bore witness to him of his gifts. But where it is a question of a man walking with God, the testimony was, “You have pleased me.” It is a wonderful thing to have that testimony for myself, to have that divine secret between God and my own soul, that secret that nobody knows anything about but God.

But mark this, with a soul that has God before it, a soul
that acts with reference to God, you may be always sure of this, there will always be the most thorough, complete, self-abandonment in everything. It is no good for persons to be saying they have God before them, when it is manifest that they have got self before them, in whatever form it may be. If I have God before me, if I am acting with reference to Him, if I see the One who is invisible, if I am thinking of pleasing Him, I have the testimony in my conscience that I please Him, and that keeps me up; it is a secret spring of satisfaction and joy in my heart that none else knows anything about. It is a blessed and wonderful thing, because it separates the affections of your soul from the ten thousand motives and influences that would act upon you, and puts before you just the One who should be the center of your thoughts.

So that you see, “walking with God” at any time, in Enoch’s day or now, whichever you take, embraces this blessed motive-power as the spring and source of everything -- “I have now to please but One.” My eye is on that One; I consider what would be suitable to that One; I think only of that One. It is not a question of myself, or of what people would say about me; it is this one simple, blessed, wonderful thing, that I have God to please. “I have now to please but One”!

Look at all this in the path of the perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, upon this earth. In Psa. 16, where we see Him as a dependent man, we find Him saying, “I have set Jehovah always before me.” What a thing for your heart and mine, if we set the Lord always before us! Think of what subduing power there would be in it! What a satisfying object! What a sanctifying influence it would have upon us, if there were just the simple reference to that blessed unseen object -- the seeking Him out.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him out.

The meaning of it is, that He is set before the soul as an object for consideration before all others; that is the thought of the Spirit of God, “seek Him out.” You place Him before your eye, and the affection of your heart beyond and above all others; and “He is the rewarder.” What is the reward? Just this -- the blessed consciousness that He gives your heart, as between Him and you, that you have pleased Him. The Lord give us, beloved friends, to know more of what it is to study His pleasure, to please Him! And while that will secure divine energy, it will also secure divine subduedness and restlessness; and this we need. There is enough of energy in all of us for service, but there is not restfulness for communion. That is a solemn point. There is energy enough to carry one hither and thither in service, but for communion there must be rest and repose; the result of which blessed, passive, quiet condition of soul is having to do with that blessed One who is in heaven, and my heart, kept and sustained by the fact that I have studied His pleasure, pleased Him.

Well, now, with reference to this “walk with God,” this that characterized Enoch, this to which you and I are called now, what does it contemplate? I do want to say a little word, strongly and decidedly, yet affectionately, about this. What does it contemplate? This “walk with God” contemplates something as to the present, and something as to the future. What is it as to the present? Mark this -- suffering, loss, shame, degradation, every step of the way! That is what is contemplated in a person who walks with God in an evil day: because it is not walking with God when the rule of everything is godliness, it is walking with God when everything is in revolt from Him. That is the character of the time, such as it was in Enoch’s day. Therefore it is suffering, and I will tell you more than that, beloved friends, it is self-abandonment. Believe me, if there were a little more self-abandonment amongst us, many of our difficulties would vanish. Self-abandonment is God’s way through difficulties. Look at the difficulties we have around us on every hand. Where do they come from? No doubt from the very contrary to self-abandonment. It is a simple question of God, His claims, His pleasure, His interests, His thoughts, why the difficulties are overcome at once! And if God’s will is sweetest to me, even though it triumphs at my cost, look how well out of the difficulty I am! We know the doctrine, I was going to say, beloved friends, too well. You understand what I mean. I do honestly think it in my own soul, that many of us have never really thought of these things out on our knees before God. We are becoming educated, it is true, but it is the most deplorable thing in the world to imagine a set of people educated up to certain things. The tendency of the time is to have everything easy. You have everything now, as it were, chopped up for you, broken up so easily for you, and, worse than that, positively an attempt made to garnish and make attractive the things of God to the natural ken, and we are reaping the sorrow of it; because, instead of the truth having gone like an arrow into our consciences, right through our very souls, and ploughed us up, so to speak, so that we are overcome with a sense of the greatness, the wonderful greatness, of this truth of God, and are brought into the presence of God, feeling the very gravity of it -- each thing has been accepted, as if there was nothing involved in it. That is simply what it is. People take things, and accept them, as if there were nothing involved in them. Just like a piece of history that is recorded for you in a clever book; you accept it, and believe it, it may be, but it puts you under no sense of responsibility.

Whatever is the tendency of the day is the danger of the church of God; whatever is the character of the time is a temptation to the saints of God. Well, the character of this time is to make everything as easy, and as smooth, and as possible for man as can be, to save him trouble, so that he may have everything with the least possible anxiety or care. But there is no royal road to learning in the school of God. The moment I enter that, there is no way for me to be schooled except through my conscience. If my conscience is not reached by these things (and if it is not a question of my conscience before God, it is terrible work), there is no “walking with God,” there is no divine sense of the greatness of these things. That is what you and I ought to have in our souls, and God has got but one avenue to reach the heart of fallen man, and that is through his conscience, and if the thing does not reach my heart through my conscience, I am
not reached at all divinely. This is solemn indeed.

Now, just let me explain to you what I mean by “walking with God” now; and I shall address a word or two to those who are young in the things of the Lord tonight. I do not mean young in the sense of youth merely, but in the sense that recently only they have known the Lord, or taken His things as theirs. Alas! how little we have the sense of what the acceptance of divine realities will entail upon us. You cannot but observe, as a general rule, that the tendency is, in dealing with the truth of God, to make something of people, instead of making nothing of them. It is all wrong. There is some deficiency in the soul, and some lack in the heart, where that is the object put forward. The moment divine truth lays hold of me, the effect of it is to make nothing of me -- not a little, but nothing; and not only so, but it brings home to me this fact, that I must suffer here in the midst of this world. I do not want to depress any one, or make any of you morbid, but I ask you seriously, did you ever entertain this question yourself, with reference to the wonderful place you are occupying, to which God has called you out? If I walk with Christ in that place, must it not somehow entail surrender? Have you ever so regarded it, beloved friends? I say it with all reverence, I desire not to cherish one irreverent thought in my soul, but, looking at the pathway of the Lord Jesus as a man here, was He successful as a man? Was it not shame, scorn, contempt, reproach, loss, all the way from the holy mount to Calvary? Was it not downward with Him every step? Was it not surrender with Him: surrender, too, of what belonged to Him in right and title? He was very different from us. You and I have no right to claim, everything is pure grace with us: but with Him it was the abandonment and surrender of everything that belonged to Him, from the throne of God to the cross. Is that the pathway that you and I are called into? You see how little we weigh these things. I doubt, beloved friends, whether the oldest of us has ever sufficiently weighed them. There was a time, at the commencement of the increase of everything, plenty of corn and wine, plenty of wealth, dignity, honor, ease. That was all perfectly well in its time; and was what a Jew looked for; it was his birthright, his inheritance here, and there was never a thought of being out of it -- length of days, long life, was that which was before the Jew. But when I, as a Christian, look at this “walk with God,” what is the issue of it? Look at it in Enoch. It is just this -- to be taken out of the world -- it may be tonight! Do you believe that? Do you believe that the very next moment may be the cloud of glory? It is a subject that is common amongst us, this blessed hope of the Lord’s coming, the blessed expectation of our Lord, as the expression is -- when I first of all believed in the second advent -- what a wondrous brightness, and
freshness, and vividness, there was about it. May I ask you, how is it now with you? What about today? Is the freshness with which it came to your heart, twenty, thirty, forty, or any number of years ago, that which is welling up in your soul now? Do you calculate just minute by minute with reference to that? Is that the next thing before your soul? Is that the expectation of your heart, that you should be translated, that you should not see death, like Enoch?

He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him.

There was a power of life in him that completely overcame the power of death, such a power of life as set aside death completely, the common lot of man since the fall.

Nothing shows me what the power of the redemption-work of the Lord Jesus Christ is like this -- that there will be a people alive in the world who will not pass through death. So completely has His death been the answer to everything, that, in right of His prerogative, there will be a people alive when He comes who will not go through death. Do you believe, beloved, that tonight you might be caught up to the cloud of glory, "to meet the Lord in the air"?

The way that these blessed facts of God have become stale with us is this -- because we have received them as doctrines, the doctrines of a well-framed creed. There is a solemn part of it -- it has become our creed. We are in danger, and no one, I trust, will feel hurt or grieved with me for saying this; I say it affectionately, I am in danger of it as much as you, I am in exactly the same position as you are yourselves, and therefore you need not be angry with me for saying it -- we are just as much in danger of having our creed, our "Thirty-nine Articles," {of the Church of England} saying it -- we are just as much in danger of having our creed, your own, and therefore you need not be angry with me for saying this; I say it affectionately, I am in danger of it as much as you, I am in exactly the same position as you are yourselves, and therefore you need not be angry with me for saying it -- we are just as much in danger of having our creed, and our “Thirty-nine Articles,” {of the Church of England} as anybody else. Do not be deceived about it; the instant that the divine freshness and living reality of these blessed truths of God pass away from our souls, so that all we can say of them is, "That is my doctrine, that is what I hold," instead of their having a practical, operative, power upon us, searching us each moment -- I say the instant that is the case, we go down, we have lost our standing, we have really dropped from the blessed, wonderful, divine power of these things, just to be, as somebody has expressed it, "as clear as the moon, and as cold as the moon." What a mournful picture that is! The Lord keep us from it.

I have spoken to-night as I feel He would have me do, though feebly I know. I believe, if there is one thing we need in these times, it is “walking with God” individually. If you and I were walking individually with God, understanding what is entailed upon us now, and what we look for as the ultimate issue of it -- to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and be with Him -- we should banish the idea of trying to get on in the world, trying to surround ourselves with anything that would make us comfortable. How foreign the whole thing would be!

The Lord help us to look at ourselves in the light of His presence and His truth; that we may take it with us tonight; that our hearts may take these things right home, and in the secret of His presence, in the solitariness and quietness of His company, go over the thing with Him, our hearts before Him, with this thought upon them -- “Lord, really, is it I?”

May the Lord command His blessing; may He use His word to stir up our hearts to more personal, individual, walk and fellowship with Himself, in the blessed hope of being taken out of this world, at any moment, to see Him, and be with Him for ever!

Chapter 2:  
The Christian’s Dwelling Place  
Psalm 27:4-6

I take these verses, beloved friends, simply as the expression of the life of God in the soul. There is one thing that I think we do not sufficiently ponder over, and that is, that (if we are Christians) we have got a divine principle in us. I do not think that fact rests or dwells sufficiently in our souls. It is a marvelous thing to think that I have the life of Jesus. Do ever you think of that? The apostle says, in 2 Cor. 4. (I quote this in order to show you the scriptural nature of the expression), 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.

That is a wonderful thing! It is a wonderful thing to know that, as a Christian, not only is my conscience cleared and set at rest in God’s presence, and that I have an uncondemning conscience, but that I have life, the life of [Christ] Jesus in me. And I may say that it is a most solemnly momentous subject for all of us (and I merely throw it out now that it may rest upon our consciences and our hearts, mine as well as yours) as to how far that life is operating in you and me, how far that is the life that is seen. I do not want to turn the eye inward, but, beloved friends, it is necessary to think of this in these days, when depth and reality are little thought of and when there is very little sense at all of the dignity, the blessedness, the greatness, of being a vessel in which this blessed life is deposited. Therefore, I simply throw that question out now in passing, as a matter of exercise for your conscience and mine. Take for instance, to-day: because we have to do with plain things and homely things. How much has that life been seen and manifested in the details of your life to-day? It is a very searching thing to think of it. How much do you live in the power of that life in the things you pass through, or how much proceeds merely from the energy of your own nature? I feel it good for us to be called up. Oftentimes, when I think of it myself, I am arrested by its solemnity, it calls me up, and I have to go to God about it.

I take these verses, then, simply for this reason, that here we get brought out the normal character of the life of God in us -- this blessed, divine principle that is in us. Here is the simple, normal character of it.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

That, I say, is the simple, normal position of a Christian, of a person that has this life in him.

Now, of course, I suppose, and take for granted that
your souls are thoroughly at rest, and completely established as to the great foundation facts and resting-place of Christianity. As long as ever there are unsettled questions between your heart and conscience and God, it is out of the question to talk about these things. If your conscience is not at rest, and if your soul is not settled on the grand foundation that God puts under His children’s feet, of course there is no use in talking about this -- you are not in a position to entertain it. And that is what one finds every day. It is wonderful how few there are whose consciences and souls are established, really and thoroughly, upon the blessed groundwork of Christianity. I do not mean to say that people have not got thus far, that they know that if they were to die, it would be all right with them; but that is a very poor thing. It would be a very great thing, a wonderful thing, if it were all that God had given; but if it is only the very beginning of what God has done for us, then I say it is a miserable subterfuge of Satan when he comes and takes a thing that is preliminary, and makes everything of it. That is really what goes to make up the history of things about us at the present moment, that the very simplest starting-point of Christianity, the commencement of all, should be made everything of, and that the center of the circle around which my thoughts, and affections, and feelings, and desires, should revolve, from one end of the year to the other, should be myself. That is what is really the case. You may think it seems a little strong to say it, but it is the truth. The truth that people all round about us never get beyond themselves, never.

Now I take it for granted then -- the Lord grant it may be so in truth and reality -- that such is not the case here. Surely one ought not to expect it in a place like this. You ought, at any rate, to know what it is to be brought to God. Is that too much to expect in this place? It is not merely that certain things have been brought to you, that is not the question; but that you are brought to God, and introduced into the relationship which God delights to bring His children into in the Son of His love before Him, setting them down in the acceptance, and perfectness, and fulness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own presence. I do not think it is taking too much for granted (it ought not to be) that your souls know what that is. Let us, then, go from that point. I take it that all that is an established fact, and I go from that.

Now all this being the case, what goes to make up my life here? You see there are two things that are connected with it. The first is what we have in v. 4, and that is, that I have one simple absorbing and commanding object before my affections. “One thing.” It is the simple expression of a heart that has but one motive, one object; in other words, it is what the Lord refers to when He speaks of “a single eye.” “Let thine eye be single,” that is, an eye taking in but one object. I have but one object, one commanding object before me, and what is it? Mark this, “that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” -- that I may dwell there. Of course I pass over the fact that this is a Jewish figure, such as would necessarily be found in the Psalms. We find there all that which was connected with the Jew, the tabernacle, the temple, the place of God’s own immediate presence, where the Shekinah was, and so on. I pass over that; and I take it simply as an illustration, a most beautiful and exquisite instance, of how the life of God, this divine principle in a soul, whether we find it in the OT or the New, returns to its source. I do not care what the time may be, this blessed principle, this divine principle that is in us, this new life, always, where the soul is simple, such as you have unfolded here, returns to its source.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

May I ask you, Is that the desire uppermost in your heart? How much does it operate in your affections? What is the one thing that you desire and seek after? We have to speak to one another personally, beloved friends, about these things. What then, is the one thing that you desire and seek after? Well, you say, I seek after salvation, and I seek after safety, and I seek after deliverance from wrath and judgment, and I seek after the things of God. But is this the thing that is in your heart, the thing that you seek after, is it the continuous abiding, and dwelling, in the house of the Lord? Because, you see, it is this which alone gives character. You may depend upon it, the place where you live is the place that gives you character.

We often hear the expression “heavenly.” Well, no person can be “heavenly” unless he lives in heaven. The fact is, we all of us have too much the tendency to put off heaven until we die. We think of it as the place where God is, and where Christ is, and it is the resource for us when we leave this world, when we leave our bodies behind us. When we cannot live any longer here, we go to heaven. Or, it may be, if you advance a little upon that, when a person has everything blighted and ruined down here, and there is not a single thing left, then he turns to heaven. It is like a person taking refuge from the storm, and when the storm is over, coming out again to enjoy the things around. Is that the case with you and of me, beloved friends? That is the natural tendency and feeling of our hearts. We have, very poorly, if at all in our souls, the thought of continuously abiding in that wonderful place, where God is free to express Himself in all the infinite fulness of His love to us. He does not express Himself to us here. He gives us His care, His sympathy, His help, His cheer, His solace; He takes us by the hand, and leads us along the way, every step of the journey: but He does not express Himself to us here. He does there, that is the difference. That is what I feel, beloved friends, that we want, every one of us in these days, a more habitual dwelling in the house of the Lord. You may depend upon it, we should be a different kind of people altogether if we dwelt there. It is not visiting there, it is not running there for shelter out of the storm, but I will tell you what it is, it is knowing it as home, with all the joys of home. Do you know what they are? Home! It is not being driven there through sheer necessity, but it is the attractiveness of it that draws us there. What do you know of the attractions of that blessed One who is up there? You see, it is not a doctrine, nor a theory, but it is a divine, living, adorable, blessed, transcendent Person for our affections. It is a Person who has an attractiveness peculiar to
Himself, and one who throws this attractiveness, and blessedness, and beauty, connected with Himself, around the affections of my heart. It is not, as I said, that I am driven by mere necessity from all the things that are round about me here, but I am attracted by the beauties and blessedness and glories of that scene where Christ is everything to God, and where God delights to express Himself in all His fulness. There is the spot I long more to dwell in, to live in, to abide in; that is the place I desire to know as my home, and that is the “one thing” the psalmist speaks of here. To me it is a beautiful instance of the expression of this divine life in a person, the life of God -- 

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

Now I see all this in its perfection in Christ as a man. We get it in that beautiful passage,

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man -- who was in heaven. Is that it? No. “Who is in heaven.” Take Him as a man (He was the mighty God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, as well) as the perfect man, He who walked that magnificent, blessed, shining pathway, that we have tracked out for us in the gospels, and which, by the Holy Ghost, we can read and think over, and delight in. Was it not this continuous, blessed, wonderful communion, intercourse with all that belonged to that blessed place from whence He came, that so marked His way? As He said, “I know whence I came, and whither I go.” There was all that blessed distinctiveness and separateness about His walk here. Is there in our measure that about us? In walking along every day, are we like people who know whence we come and whither we go? Is that the thing which day by day is telling itself out in your business, in your home, in your intercourse one with another, in your families? What I am speaking of is a practical thing. It goes down into the most minute circumstances of our daily life. There is to be this blessed testimony stamped upon it, that I “dwell in the house of the Lord,” that “I know whence I came and whither I go.” What a thing that would be in our souls! What sort of people should we be if there were that distinctiveness, and divine power, about us, and divine life, and divine satisfaction and rest?

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ again, as a man. It was not that there were not all the genuine feelings of a man, and, as to His Father, perfect obedience, perfect dependence, but at the same time there was perfect rest, in all the fulness and blessedness of a perfect man going through this world. Everything was met in that way. So you find it in a most exquisite and beauteous passage in Matt. 11 where, as you know, every single thing was against Him. Everything had failed that pertained to Him as a man. John doubted Him, the cities where His mightiest works were done had rejected Him. There was not a single bright spot, not a solitary thing that could meet His heart as a man. What does He say? “I praise thee, bearing witness to thee, O Father.” Such is the true rendering of that beautiful v. 24, and there we see the blessed, wonderful perfection of this blessed man down here in this world, surrounded by everything that was adverse to Him, and a distinctiveness that pertained to the place whence He came and whither He went. He was the Son of man who is in heaven, but there was the manifestation of all that down here.

Well, beloved friends, we are called to the same thing, and where this divine life is operative in our souls, we find just what we get here,

One thing have I desired, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

The Lord awaken the sense of that in your souls! We need all of us to have the sense of it created, formed, quickened, in our souls. What a wonderful thing it would be if you and I here this evening had the stamp of it more upon us! What a power, a silent, blessed power, we should be in this world! It would be said of us, “They are a people that are living in the midst of the sorrows of earth, in all its pressures, and difficulties, and troubles, but all these things only serve to bring but this blessed life of Jesus in their mortal bodies. They dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life.”

Well, that is the first thing, the habitual, abiding, resting-place of the heart. I ask you and myself again -- the Lord help us to look at it seriously -- how much have our minds been there to-day? That is the question. How much have our hearts been there to-day? How searching it is! How it challenges one’s heart! People often say, “Thank God, I am outside the whole thing through which I am moving.” Exactly. “Outside of it,” but how? In your body, it may be, but is your spirit in it, are your thoughts in it? Ah, that is another question. You see, many a person is outside the world in that way, as a matter of profession; but if my spirit is entangled with it, or my thoughts engrossed in it, or my affections centered in it, I am not dwelling in the house of the Lord. I may be able to say, “I do not go into this or that,” but are my thoughts in any way in it? It is a very searching thing. You see nothing can possibly keep your heart separate unless you are sustained at the spring and source from whence your life comes. That life, if it is not sustained at its source, and gratified at its source, and attracted to its source, is a sickly, feeble thing. I do not mean the thing itself is sickly, but there are hindrances of all sorts that prevent the manifestation of it.

I am very much struck with that expression in 2 Cor. 4, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” I have no doubt there is an intended analogy here to what we read about Gideon’s army. There were two things there, first, the light was put into a pitcher, and secondly, the pitchers were broken. It was not merely the breaking of the pitcher, but the light was put into it to shine out brightly when the pitcher was broken. It is a wonderful thing that God puts this treasure into an earthen pitcher, such a breakable article. He does place a light in it; but then observe the other thing: He breaks the pitcher, and when the pitcher is broken, the light shines out. Now, I have not to break the pitcher, blessed be God for that. That is God’s part; but when He breaks the pitcher -- and be assured of it He will do so -- if you are walking with God, you are certain to be in His mind when He breaks the pitcher, and take care that you do not place
something else in the way, to prevent the shining of the light. That is where the hindrance is to be feared.

But that which would give me power and freshness in all these things would be this -- dwelling in the house of the Lord. Dwelling there; there I am sustained, qualified, fitted for Him. I have divine ability, divine power, divine rest, divine freshness. I can face the storms here. What is the effect of these storms? They only bring out the power of this rest, the rest that we have in the place where God delights to manifest Himself to us. That is heaven now, not heaven only when I die. It is heaven now; and, beloved friends, I ask you, would you not like to know a little more of Him before you die? Would you not like to be a little more acquainted with that Jesus with whom you are going to spend eternity? Would you not like to say, “I live with Him now, from day to day, in the midst of all the difficulties and trials that belong to this poor world, and through them, I am better acquainted with Him, I know Him, I know and I have communion with Him, and joy in Him, in that wonderful place where He is free to come out and receive me, and where I am free to go in? God can come out in the perfection of His love, and I can go in in the perfection of His righteousness. God dwells there, and I dwell there. Just think of it, that He does not consider anything commensurate with the expression of His own heart in the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ; He regards nothing sufficiently large to express what He thinks of that redemption, except this, that I am to dwell in the house of the Lord! The Lord help us to dwell there, to know it as our home, the resting-place of our souls, our “sweet retreat”; where we have true and real communion!

That, then, is the first thing. Now look at the other for a moment. For what purpose are we to dwell there? To get out of the storm? No. Out of difficulties? No. Out of the exercises and trials that we are in here? Not a word about it. What is it, then? Just this, “to behold the beauty of the Lord.” Just think of what that is, I go there to behold His beauty. One object fills the vision of my soul there, attracts the affections of my heart there, “His beauty.”

Now just think what a wonderful thing it is “to behold the beauty of the Lord.” It is not merely to escape from the difficulties that are here, the troubles, and exercises, but to go there for His own sake. There is a beauty, there is an excellency, a virtue, an attractiveness, a glory, connected with that place, which I behold, and I never really know what it is until by faith I see it. Beloved friends, a little bit of that would distance all here in the world! A little beholding of the beauty of the blessed One in those wondrous regions would turn the brightest scene on this earth into a poor and contemptible thing to our hearts. You see, we learn everything by contrast. A person who knows what it is to see Christ where He is, is the one who thinks very little of earth. He can turn his back upon it; there is nothing in it that is suitable or congenial to him. He can say, The very scene where God Himself is, is the place where I desire to abide, and where I long to gratify myself.

I ask you this question to-night: Suppose an angel were to come down into this world; do not you think he would move through it in a different way from what you and I do? Do not you think (if you could conceive such a thing), that a messenger from God, one of those blessed created intelligences that stand before God, coming down into this world, would move through it (though he might have something to do for God, and from God, in it) as one who was entirely apart from its principles, its maxims, its habits, its ways, its attractions? You know he would. Now, beloved friends, an angel is not what you and I are. An angel is not a member of that body of which Jesus glorified is the Head. An angel is not a son of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. An angel could not say, “He loved me, and gave himself for me.” An angel does not belong to that which Jesus esteems His body and His bride, that which will be with Him to behold His glory. Is there nothing that touches your heart in all that? To think that God passed angels by, and that He came into this smallest of all worlds, and took out of it a contemptible, miserable, wretched people, to exhibit in them the principles of His grace, and the life of His Son; that He has taken us up in grace and made us positively members of Christ, uniting us to Him in glory, thus separating us from this scene altogether, and then as it were sends us back into it, to exhibit the maxims and principles of the place to which we belong! It is wondrous!

Do we act like this? Do we touch things like people from another country? Do we move through things like people from another place? Do we impart the savor of that place to all whom we meet? I feel how little, beloved friends, there is of that place about us, and how much there is of the world allowed in us. I am humbled when I think, as I do constantly, how many things there are about us all from day to day which savor of that which we profess to be entirely taken out of; and how little manifestation there is of this blessed new principle, new place, new home, new rest, new delights, which God has brought us into. Look at the young, for instance -- look at the state many of the young are in, many of the children of God’s people -- attracted by the most contemptible, miserable things that are to be found here in this poor world. If there had only been the smallest taste, the feeblest taste, of the joys, and beauties, and blessedness, and glory of that scene where Christ is, it would make them despise, as beneath their notice, the counterfeits, and miserable, wretched, vanishing things that the devil hangs out here as his wares to attract.

I feel it is a solemn thing, and what I especially feel is this, that those of us who are older are not able practically to display a better picture ourselves. That is indeed most solemn! It is all very well to say, “Look at the young”; but what do we show them? Can you and I say to them, “Look on me, and as I do, so do you?” I know you will suffer a word from me, beloved friends. God knows how I have gone through all this in my own heart, and I am taking my place with you to-night about these things. I feel how little, deep down in one’s soul, one has got the sense of living up there where He is. If you are not from him, and of Him, you will
never be for Him. We are, blessed be His name, of Him, and from Him. The Lord, by His Spirit, write the sense of that in your heart this evening.

Now, if Christ rebukes me by His word, it always puts me into company with Himself. You and I might rebuke one another, and the effect would be to separate us, but not so with Him. If He touches my conscience, it brings me into His presence, and attracts me to Himself. May it be thus with all of us this evening!

I dwell, then, in the house of the Lord, and I behold His beauty. There is another thing in that verse, “to inquire in his temple.” Now, without the slightest pretension to scholarship, I may say that the strict meaning of the Hebrew words is, “to meditate with joy in his temple.” That is, I believe, the literal force of those words in the original language. “To meditate with joy.”

One thing have I desired, to dwell, to behold, and to meditate with joy.

This latter is greatly on my heart; for I do not believe that with any of us there is sufficient meditation. We read, that is quite true; and a great many people (I hope none will misunderstand me) satisfy their consciences, when the first of the month comes round, if they read all the periodicals. I am saying what I know to be true. But I am assured that this kind of thing is most damaging; and nothing will contribute to lower the tone of things amongst us more than this, if our hearts lose the sense of the intrinsic, blessed, wonderful nature of that book that is in your hand and mine at this moment -- I mean the word of God. There is nothing that has impoverished the souls of God’s saints more than when the effect of all the blessed things that God has given has been blunted by the bringing in of man’s work. I believe that Satan has been especially watchful in this way. Those who walk with God know it well. The way by which he seeks to turn aside the edge, and shaft, and power of the word of God is by a sort of wile. It is not by throwing any open contempt upon the scripture. It is not done in that way; but if he can get our thoughts or affections absorbed and occupied with anything else, though it may relate to, or bear upon, the word of God, he has thoroughly succeeded, and he has ensnared us in the wile. Why, you know that the very best thing that any servant of God, or saint of God, could communicate to God’s people concerning that blessed book must be as nothing compared with the words that are spoken in it; and therefore, you may depend upon it, that you and I suffer in our souls if we do not learn what it is to meditate on God’s revelation and communications, and if we know nothing of that blessed Person who is the subject, object, theme, and delight of God, whose name, and person, and excellencies, run, like a golden thread, through all this wonderful revelation of God. How can we go on without it? If you and I do not learn what it is to “meditate with joy,” and to dwell upon all that God has been pleased to unfold to us about Christ then what we suffer from is, that, though we may have our heads thoroughly well-informed about doctrines, we are almost like pieces of lifeless clay. We may be a people of outward intelligence, of doctrine, of understanding as to certain things, with a well-arranged creed, and all that, but not one single sign of living freshness, power, or energy from God. The Lord enable us by His Spirit, to get more alone with Himself!

If there are any I feel for more than others, it is those of God’s people who are engrossed in business, and who have to spend their time in the midst of all the bustle, and excitement, and turmoil of business life, with little leisure from it. We do not feel enough for one another as to this, beloved friends. It is wonderful how little we care for one another in this way -- how little we feel for one another. We are becoming so intensely individual, so isolated, as it were. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,” is the scripture thought about it; but how much do you and I? How often do we pray for one another? How much do we carry one another upon our hearts before God? There are many of God’s people that are engaged in business, and with all our hearts we should feel for them, seek to help, strengthen, and sustain them in the tremendous rush and confusion that they go through every day; because there must be a loss, a positive loss, to the soul of any one who has not time to enjoy solitariness, and meditation, and communion with God. I cannot see how it is possible to get on without it. The Lord help us to understand the meaning of that word, “To meditate with joy in his temple!”

I desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate with joy in his temple.

Such is the simple, normal exercise of the life of a Christian.

Just one word on what comes afterwards. Observe, now you get to “trouble” -- "for in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion." Now you know, beloved friend, we should have put all that has gone before in connection with the "trouble." We should naturally say, “How beautiful it is to dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold His beauty, and to inquire in His temple, when everything is withered all around.” But that is not the way God puts it. He puts all that before us as the natural normal exercise of the life of God in us. Then what about trouble? Ah, we need not disturb ourselves about that! “In the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion.” If my continual desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord, then in trouble I rest, “He hides me.” That is exquisite, every word of it! “In the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion.” What could you have better than that? “In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.” When trouble or difficulty comes, I am not running about to see how I can get out of it, but there I am, resting and quiescent, and God is active. He hides me, He upholds me, He undertakes for me in the time of trouble. He hides me, and sets my feet upon a rock.

And mark that there is not as yet deliverance in this verse. It is not “in time of trouble God will come in, and take me out of it,” but “he will hide me.” It is not "he will quiet the winds and waters" -- not a word about it. It is not generally His way, beloved friends. It was His way always with Israel. Jesus showed Himself to be perfect man when He slept upon the pillow while the waves were roaring around
Him, and showed Himself to be God when He commanded those waves to subside. God opened the rock to supply His people with water, He sent down manna from heaven to feed them, He divided the waters for them to pass over, but that is not His way now, not the rule of His action now. It was the rule of His action once; that is, He operated upon the elements for His people of old; but He does not do that now, He carries us in His power. He hides us. It is not that He removes the difficulty but He gives me superiority to it, His own power carries me through it. He hides me in His pavilion. Think of that for a moment! Do you think the person is to be pitied who is in trouble, if Jehovah hides him in His pavilion? It is worth the trouble to be hidden of God, to be hidden of God, to be hidden in His pavilion, in the secret of His presence.

Now we come to deliverance, and that is the last thing. All that I have been speaking of is not deliverance, but now we have it. “And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in his tabernacle, sacrifices of joy.” Mark that the believer is never out of the dwelling-place of God. He dwells there, that is where the life of God, this blessed principle in us, abides. You must work it all out more fully for yourselves; I have only just given you the outline of it.

You will find all this portrayed to perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect man, who manifested all the perfections of a man before God in this world as He walked through it. If you take His life, you will find to perfection those things that are unfolded here. He was “the Son of man who is in heaven.” In trouble in this world, in difficulties, He hid Himself behind the will and pleasure of His Father. “I thank thee, and I bear witness to thee,” as we have already had this evening; and farther on, after He had gone through that terrible judgment upon the cross, then He praises! “In the midst of the congregation will I sing praises unto thee.” It is exactly the same thing in principle, and in our measure, to which we are called. It is the same life, the same dwelling-place, the same God! I know nothing more wonderful than the way God can sustain a man who has this blessed life in him, when everything is against him, as it is with you and me as Christians in this world. There is not a single thing connected with this scene that is not a hindrance. It is a blessed thing to find that out, and to find out, too, that our only secret of safety is in dwelling in the house of the Lord.

I was much interested the other day in reading Ex. 16 and 17. There you see that two things went to make up the history of the people through the wilderness -- feeding and resisting. There was the manna that came down from heaven to keep them, and there was the resistance. That is exactly what makes up the life of a Christian. Christ sustains us; He is the bread of our souls, sustaining this new life that is in us, and we dwell with Him in that blessed place where He is, beholding His beauty, our eye satisfied with the delights of that place. Thus I can resist the pressure of things around. What do I care for all the beauty here if I can be satisfied with Him? If I behold His beauty, do you think I am allured by the beauty here? And, further, if I “meditate with joy in his temple,” I am hidden when trouble comes, and I praise Him.

The Lord instruction us by His Spirit! May He be pleased to use the simple things I have spoken to make you read the word of God more for yourselves. That is the true object of ministry, to bring hearts back to the word of God, with a fresh appetite for it. May God grant that we may have that appetite created, where it is not existing already, and strengthened where it is now, it may be, feeble and drooping; so that we may indeed be able to say,

I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food!

Chapter 3:
Separation, Dependence, Suffering
Daniel 1; 2:13-23; 3:12-30

I have one definite object, beloved brethren, in my mind, in referring to these scriptures this evening. I am not going to touch the history itself, nor the circumstances connected with it, but I simply want to bring out the great principles which are connected with the history of this remnant of God’s people -- which they were in their day -- principles which, I submit, have passed down to us as being the very principles by which God would characterize His people in these days. It is very interesting when you find certain great principles of God running through His word at all times. Of course the peculiar circumstances of Christianity in which our lot is cast, and the new and blessed position that we have been brought out into, in connection with Christ glorified at God’s right hand, intensify these principles, but they themselves remain the same; and I take a history like this in the book of Daniel, because I think it serves as an illustration suitable to us all, and especially to those who are younger (for I have them much on my mind to-night), to bring out the grand, and blessed, and wonderful position, privilege, and power, that is ours by grace, in order that we may be for Christ in these days.

Now, first of all, you will notice this, that there is an immense analogy between the times of Daniel and those we are in. There is a verse in Isa. 39 I would just refer to for a moment. It contains a prediction of the fact that we get here, namely, that the days were to come when the nation of Israel itself would be prostrate, which was exactly the case in the days of Daniel, and referred to in this history. The nation was to be, as it were, at the feet of a foreign power, and the very pick of Israel, the very flower of the nation, were to be eunuchs, and serving in the palace of the king of Babylon. That was the prediction of the prophet Isaiah long before these times -- God’s warning voice to the nation. In Dan. 11 you will find it word for word accomplished. The nation of Israel was paralyzed, it was broken up, so to speak -- thoroughly prostrated. Jehovah had retired from directly dealing with the earth, and every single thing was in the power of the king of Babylon.

This is exactly what you will find in principle as to the times we are in just now. What has taken place? Simply this -- that which God set up here to be a witness for Himself on this earth, out of which His own Son has been rejected, has
gone to pieces in the responsibility of man’s hand. That is what is meant by the ruin and confusion that is all round about. It is a complete wreck. If you look at the thing that God set up here in the earth to be for Him, what is it? What has it become? I am not speaking now, remember, of that which belongs to Christ -- belongs to God -- which nobody can touch; that is genuine and true: but I am speaking of that which was committed to the responsibility of man; and if you have never yet seen the difference between that which the Holy Ghost builds, the true, and real, and genuine thing for God, and that which was committed to man in responsibility as a builder, you have got a great deal to learn. There is that which God builds, and there is that which man builds. Well now, when I look out all around me, I see that which was entrusted to the responsibility of man to build, and the consequence is that, like everything else that man has had in responsibility, it has gone to pieces.

And that is the difficulty with souls to-day. You see really inquiring, anxious, intelligent, true minds, finding an immense difficulty when they look out, and see the confusion that is all around; and, let me say this, sometimes I fear we do not help them. For are we not very prone to be forgetful of the fact that we have our share in the ruin which has been perpetrated by man as a builder? We give them, I fear, the idea that we are reconstructing something that is to take the place of the confusion. I am sure that if you have got that in your soul you will always be feeble as to the maintenance of the truth of God. It is an immense thing to understand clearly and distinctly what things have become in man’s hand, and what God’s principles for His people in such a day are. Now I want to speak as simply about that as I can, and to point out to you this evening what these principles are, simply and plainly.

Now the first thing that marks a feeble remnant who are a witness for God in days of confusion, and ruin, and wretchedness all round about, is exactly what you find in the character of these “children,” as they are called here in this Dan. 1. And what is that? Just this -- intense distinctness and separateness for God. That is the first thing. Here are a few, a feeble few, a little handful, so to speak -- less than a handful; here are three or four men, poor, weak things, but there is the distinctness of their Nazariteship and separation to God wholly acting in their hearts. Nothing will induce them to break that separation.

Now, beloved friends, let me say to you this evening, that kind of thing has become very feeble with us. Is our Nazariteship kept intact? Is our separateness to God preserved? Have we refused what the world offers? You can fill up the details for yourselves. I ask earnestly, have you refused to “pollute” yourselves? Have you refused to compromise, not only God and Christ, but the truth of God? Have you refused, at loss and cost to yourselves, to compromise the truth of God, and the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, in days like these? That is the question. I believe the great question that God is raising amongst us is the question of our Nazariteship. Are we separate? And never forget that inward separateness of spirit produces outward separateness of walk and testimony. That is the very first question for each one -- Am I inwardly separate? It is an individual question, though, of course, it passes into what is collective. You cannot raise the collective state unless the individual state is right first. The reason of our weakness corporately is our weakness individually, because it is the individuals that go to make up the corporate thing.

I ask you tonight, beloved friends, does each individual here who is a member of Christ’s body, each one who, by faith in that blood which cleanseth from all sin, belongs to Christ -- I ask, have we the sense of the distinctness which pertains to us as being set apart by that blood unto God, as those who are “elect according to the knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ?” Is there among you the sense of what it is to be a member of Christ? It is not a question of being saved. People say, “I am not afraid to die: I am not afraid of going to hell: I expect to go to heaven when I die.” Ah, but there is a great deal more than that, if you are a Christian. Let me tell you this evening, if you are a Christian, you are a member of Christ, united to that blessed One in heaven, that glorified Man at God’s right hand, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. I say it is a wonderful thing to know I am a member of Christ. Just think of it for a moment! Why it separates me at once, the moment that it gets hold of my soul. Think of being united to Christ in glory! Beloved friends, the measure of His separation in us must be the measure of those who are one with Him. There can be no contradiction as to this. If I am united to that blessed One who is at God’s right hand in the heavens, if I am a part of Christ, I belong to that which is the complement of Christ. You see I pass now from the individual to the collective; if I belong to that which the Spirit of God speaks of as “the fulness of him who filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23), I have my separation marked out for me at once. It is not, “May I do this, or may I do the other?” but I have the distinctiveness of my position, and my separateness, marked out at once for me; there can be no mistake as to it.

You know very well what the separateness of Christ was here. Look at His path as a man down here in this world of sin and sorrow. Look at that beautiful, wonderful, isolated, separated pathway through this world. Trace it from the manger, where He was ignominiously laid at His birth, because “there was no room for him in the inn,” down to the cross. Look at the separateness of it, the holiness of it, with Him the divinity of it! But mark what He says --

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.

Think of that! You see, we have not the sense of these things. I feel it in my own soul, I am often compelled to say, Blessed God, is it true that I am not only united to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, but I have as distinct a mission on this earth as He had from Thee! Oh, it is wonderful! I do believe in my soul, and I speak what I believe tonight, that it is in this question of Nazariteship that we are feeble. I believe that is the point of our departure; there is not this distinctness, there is not this divine, thorough, complete separateness to God. Look at Daniel. He “would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat.” He would not touch it. But what people say is this -- “Ah, that was a wonderful thing, but the Providence of God so ordered that Daniel was in those circumstances.” Just exactly as they say about Moses: “The Providence of God so ordered it that Moses grew up to be the reputed son of
Pharaoh’s daughter. There never was a more distinct case of providence than that.” I do not deny it for a moment; but, beloved friends, do you think I touch that? Do you think I say one word against that? God forbid. But I am speaking of a thing that does not relate to the Providence of God at all.

The Providence of God is always blessed; but when I come to a principle that is to actuate me on my side, that is not Providence -- it is faith, another thing altogether. And it was on that principle that this man Moses acted; as soon as he came to years, as soon as he passed out of childhood into the maturity of years, that divine principle of faith asserted itself in him. “He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” and he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. That is exactly the very principle manifested here in the case of Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is beautiful to look at them. Their names were changed; the king called them by other names, to obliterate from their hearts, if he could, all remembrance of the land of Israel, and the Jehovah of Israel. Every sort of thing that could be brought to bear upon them was tried, to efface, if possible, any little lingering trace of their connection with the people of God, and the Jehovah of Israel.

For myself, when I look at it, beloved friends, all this is most blessed. Here is this first principle, this blessed principle, living and dwelling in the heart of Daniel and of his three friends: “He would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat,” and he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Now it would be entirely outside my present purpose, and I will say quite unsuitable for me to refer to the details of this great principle as it applies to you. We, beloved friends, are better able to do that than we would fain persuade ourselves. People are fond of saying, “Well, how does that apply to me?” and so forth; and they feel all the time that it applies to them more closely than they like: all the while conscience is wincing under the application of it. So that I do not mean to go into details, but I simply press this first great principle as an individual principle, applicable to everyone of us in our individual character before God, and applicable to us in our corporate relationships as well. This is the first thing for each of us -- have we kept and preserved, and are we keeping our Nazariteship intact? Have I refused to pollute myself with the portion of the king’s meat? That is the first thing.

Observe what comes after that. It is exceedingly blessed for us to remember it in these days, as an encouragement and comfort to our hearts. That which follows the preservation of their separation to God is this -- God marks His appreciation of it by giving these men wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge. That is the way He marks it. And, beloved friends, let me say this to-night -- there is not one who can contradict it, it is impossible to gainsay the fact -- that what at first characterized the feeble few (that is the only way I would speak of them) to whom God was pleased to make known His mind in these last times, and who have escaped, through mercy, out of the corruptions of Christendom all around, to know the simplicity of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the holiness of that name, was understanding and knowledge of God’s mind, in a word, divine intelligence. Does that characterize them now? That is the question. It was not work that characterized them in former days. I hope nobody will be offended with me for saying this -- it was not activity which made them remarkable. There is where our danger is; there is where we are feeble, beloved friends. We have practically lost our separateness, and we have correspondingly practically lost the premium that God puts upon it, and we are obliged to make up for it by a sort of pretentious display of activity before men. You know perfectly well that is the tendency, and that is what catches the young especially. They are caught by it; it has a certain amount of attractiveness about it, and I will tell you why. A round of continued activity, a series of perpetual evolutions of that kind, is a sort of quietus to the exercise of the soul. There is no time for thought, no time for heart-searching, little time for meditation or prayer. It is a most wonderful thing and I repeat it again, I do not in the least feel that I am going over old ground -- I say it is sorrowful how little we pray; it is sorrowful how little people read the word of God, how little they meditate. I am sure our prayer-meetings are humbling at times. Why is it so, beloved friends? What is the reason of that? Why is it that there is so little real waiting of soul upon God? Why so little dependence upon Him? Why is it one finds so few hearts that are burdened?

Now let us ask you this as a practical question. How much today have you prayed for the church of God? How much have you prayed for the saints of God? and how much do you pray every day of your life? How much is it upon your heart as a burden, because it relates to the interests of Christ and the glory of Christ? How much do you seek solitude with God, and retirement with Him and long to be at home with God, to shut the world out, and yourself in, that you may be there with God about those wonderful interests of Christ, because you have got communion with His mind about that which is so dear to Him on this earth? I tell you the lack of all this is simply the result of the want of separation; and it is not merely a person being separated outwardly. It is possible for saints to satisfy themselves if they have outwardly escaped from the wreck and the corruption that is all around. They say, “Oh, well I have escaped from the corruption that is outside; my body is not in it.” But the question is, is your heart outside the world, and is your spirit separated from it as much as your body? Do you think, if I may speak strongly (though I do not apologize, for I speak before God, I trust) do you think that what the blessed God wants is a number of individuals brought together into a place before Him, but whose hearts are far away elsewhere? Do you think it is a mere question of what is outside and seen? Beloved friends, what He is looking for is the affection of a heart, and the earnestness of a soul that has found His own Son in heaven! If it is merely a question of your bodily presence, while your heart and affections are outside, what I say is, and I say it with all gentleness tonight, “My son, give me thine heart!”

This is where the feebleness is; it is this want of separation. Inward separateness would lead to outward separateness; but outward separateness will never produce inward separateness. If your heart and affections, your intelligence, your inner man, are separated to God, then your body, as a vessel, will soon follow that which controls it.
Now look at Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Take that second chapter (Dan. 2). I will just say a little more about prayer. As soon as ever that decree of Nebuchadnezzar goes out to slay the wise men of Babylon, because they could not make known the dream—not the interpretation, but the dream; the dream itself had passed out of Nebuchadnezzar’s recollection, and the interpretation, of course, was gone—what was the first thing that Daniel and his companions did? They took the thing to God, beloved friends. What is the first thing you would do? I would bring it down to homely, every-day, circumstances. When difficulties come, what is the first thing you do? Do you go to God? Let us be honest now before the Lord tonight. When you have a difficulty, is not the first thought in your mind whether there is anybody that has wisdom enough to give you direction about it? And if you knew of any wise man, or any man of skill, if he was in the very farthest end of the city, would you not find him out, and get all you could out of him? Exactly. And is not that the very thing that is creeping into the church of God? Take, for instance, any difficulty coming into the company of saints. Do they go down on their knees, and humble themselves before God, first, because there is a difficulty, and next, because they have not understanding enough to meet it? Does the thing really burden them at all? Is not the first thought that comes into their mind just this—as they could get some person of ability or skill, some great man that has a name, to settle the difficulty? I am speaking of practical things tonight, beloved friends, and you and I know that what I have been saying is exactly what takes place.

Now look at Daniel. The moment that his life was at stake, the instant this difficulty was presented to him and his companions, he says, “Give me time.” For what? That they might make supplication to the God of heaven! They are dependent, they go to God about it. Now I will tell you what all around reminds me of. We ought to feel it. Our conduct is far too like Jacob, who skillfully made all his arrangements, and then went and prayed! He made every arrangement with all the consummate skill of a tactician, made himself perfectly safe first of all, as he thought, and then went and prayed! That is exactly what we do. But here I find, in this simple representation of the remnant of God’s people in those days, they come and make supplication to the God of heaven, in the dependence of hearts that knew what it was to be cast upon Him, Jehovah their resource, their help, their only stay, but at the same time their all-sufficient stay.

I often think, beloved friends, and oftener find myself saying, and often hear others say too, “We have no one but God to go to; we have no one but the Lord”; as if He were not enough. Our very expressions, I feel in my heart, show exactly where we have dropped. “We have no one but the Lord.” Do you think we are the worse for that? Are we not well off for that? Nay, are we not ten thousand times better off that we have no one but God? Do we want anybody else? Is He amongst His people? Is He sufficient? Is He equal to every emergency? Has Christ forgotten that which is so dear to Him? Do you think the Head in heaven is indifferent to the necessities of the members on earth? Do you think the ear of the blessed God is not interested by the cries of His people?

But, alas! so poor is our testimony to the blessedness of prayer, that you would never think that there was an ear up there that was waiting to be interested with prayer. You would never think that there were hearts down here that felt the burden of things around. You would never think that there was a blessed, wonder-working God, who stoops to hear the whisper of a poor heart that has nothing but wants to spread before Him. That is what He looks and waits for. Look how blessed it is here in this history. What is the result of this waiting upon God? Of course the result of it was that the thing was made known at once to Daniel. There was a way out of the difficulty at once, of course there was. I often think of that passage in Hebrews about Abraham:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, and, says the Holy Ghost, commenting upon it, so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Do you think that anyone ever waited upon God in sincerity and reality, in true earnestness of heart, without finding that God came in and marked His sense of it?

You may depend upon it, in proportion as we have the sense that we are interesting God’s ear, there will be real earnestness, though my soul may be burdened with but one thing. It is most blessed oftentimes to see a person whose spirit is burdened with one thing, and who, in the simplicity of a full heart, can tell that one thing out into God’s ear. The Lord give us more true dependence, and real prayer! I do feel we are not people of dependence and prayer as we might be, and I feel that in our difficulties, and exercises, and straits, we run hither and thither, looking for help from every quarter but God. Let me say this, that the result of that is simply going down to Egypt. That is the full-blown result of taking the eye off God, and looking to an arm of flesh, whatever that arm may be. We cannot avoid it. It is simply the story of Abram going down to Egypt repeating itself.

Well, now, the last thing I notice in connection with this remnant in Babylon, as also being characteristic of what should be found amongst the people of God in these days, is suffering. That is the last thing I will speak of thus evening.

You see here the king tests the fidelity of these men, as to whether they will give up the worship of the true God, and their allegiance and adherence to the true God, and bow down to the great image that Nebuchadnezzar set up. There is a little word here that is to me exceedingly interesting. It occurred to me as I was reading the passage this evening. It comes in in connection with another passage of scripture I was speaking of elsewhere last evening—that passage in Philippians, where the apostle speaks of Christ being magnified in his body (Phil. 1:20). The one desire he had, the ruling desire of his soul was, that Christ should be magnified in his body, “whether by life or by death”; that is to say, that which originally was the platform whereon Satan displayed his power, man’s body, that wherein he manifested all his hatred and all his malignity against God and Christ. God says, “I am going to take up that same vessel, and make it the platform on which I will display the power of Christ”; and the apostle says in Phil. 1—“it is wonderful to think of it—‘I have full communion with what God is doing.’ That is the meaning of the words.” My earnest
expectation and my hope." He had full fellowship with the thoughts of God. It is a wonderful thing to have fellowship with the purposes of God concerning Christ; and here, in Daniel, are people who have this same thought before them, according to what was then known, and hence we find that the king is obliged to own (Phil. 3:28),

They have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.

You see these men thrown into the fire, bound hand and foot, the emblem of weakness, cast into a furnace heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated; that is, the perfection of malignant power to destroy them. Was not God magnified in their bodies? And what is the result? They come up out of the furnace, not even the smell of fire upon them, not a hair of their head singed. And, more than that, there was companionship. “I see four men walking, and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.” There was most blessed company. They were cast down bound into the midst of this burning, fiery, furnace, and there is not a word of complaint. They were not careful. Think of that. “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” They were not disconcerted, not “put out,” as we say, but yielded themselves entirely into the hands of God, in patient meekness. They are prepared to suffer at any cost. God is their stay and strength, and God comes in, and intervenes for them, and they are the exhibition, under the circumstances in which they were, of that blessed power of God by which He can in magnify Himself in bodies like yours and mine.

Now just look how little Christ is magnified in our bodies! Alas! there is a great deal of the magnifying of the world in our bodies, and of self, and of the flesh, but how little there is of the magnifying of Christ! It is humbling when you think of it. If you look around, and see the bodies of God’s people, and look at what they are, what are they an exhibition of? The power of the flesh too often, and the power of the world, and the power of nature, but very little of the power of Christ. “That Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death,” was Paul’s desire. Oh, may it be ours likewise! Well, now, I believe those principles that come out of these three chapters of Daniel, namely, first, separation to God at every cost; secondly, thorough dependence upon Him in difficulties; and thirdly, patience in suffering for His name, are the three great characteristic principles that ought to mark the people of God today. I am not speaking now at all of what relates to us in our church position, but of that which would bear upon our church position, of that which enters into it, of that which would give a wonderful vitality and wonderful power, and wonderful freshness, to our church position.

May I say one word on another remnant that you find in the OT, comparing it with a remnant in the NT? Just turn with me to Mal. 3:16.

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

You see what characterized the remnant in the closing days of OT history -- the fear of God, and communion one with another. Does that characterize us, beloved friends? Is there anything like that amongst us? I say it is a good thing that we should see where our dangers are. Is there anybody here tonight satisfied with the state of things as it is? Are you satisfied to see things as they are? Well, I should think a person who is satisfied with things as they are must be very far from God. Any person who could sit down in self-complacency, and say, “Oh, well, I think it is not so afflicting after all. We are not so bad as all that. That is an extreme view of it; that is a very hard thing to say”; I say such a person has no sense whatever of what is befitting the testimony of the Lord.

Beloved friends, all I say is this, the nearer we are practically to God, and the closer we walk with Him, and the more the thoughts of God are controlling our minds and affections, the more we shall feel how lacking we are, and how infected we are by that very spirit of self-complacency which characterized Laodicea, which said of itself, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”; not knowing that it, of all others (such is the force of the expression), was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

But looking at that blessed characteristic of the remnant at the close of the OT, “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another --” Do you get that now? Where is that now? Where is there “fearing the Lord, and speaking often one to another,” beloved friends? But think of God hearkening to, and noting that! Think of that having an interest for the ear of the blessed God! “The Lord hearkened, and heard it.” And think of Him writing that in a book of remembrance! He thinks it worth His while to record in a book of remembrance before Himself, this expression of “fear,” and communion, and fellowship.

Well now, the same thing we find in the remnant when the Lord Jesus Christ came. In the New Testament, what do you find about Simeon and Anna? Turn to the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, where you find the remnant, in principle just as you did at the close of the OT. What do you find about it? Do you find any great thing marking it, any activity or display of wonderful deeds distinguishing it? Nothing of the kind. It is simply this, that Simeon was “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” and the Holy Ghost on him, and a revelation to him that he should not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And when he went into the temple, and saw the child Jesus, as soon as ever he got that blessed One in his arms -- the salvation of God in the person of Jesus -- he said, My cup is full, and I can die now. “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

It was the same with Anna. She did not depart from the temple, and her one thought was, “Him.” She “spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Just as in the Old Testament remnant I was speaking of, “they feared the Lord, and spake often one to another,” so her one thought and subject of conversation, the thing that occupied her, was “Him.” “She spake of him” to all them that were of like hope, and expectation, and affection, with herself.

Beloved friends, I feel it is a good thing for us to look at these traits of character marking the people of God, in times when there was general departure, and declension, and
feebleness around, because such are the times we are in now. We are in a time of the most exceeding departure from God. I believe Satan’s great object at the present moment is to get us to take up with something -- it may not be wrong in itself. I do not think that is the temptation now -- but something other than the one thing that God would have His people occupied with. It may be activity for God towards man, or anything with which he can get your heart engrossed and occupied, except this -- the simple maintenance of “the testimony of our Lord.” As the apostle says in 2 Tim. 1:8, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God.”

Observe that the great thing that is the regulating power for days like these is to know one’s position. It is Christ who marks that position for me. Where is He? He is at God’s right hand in heaven. Then, I say, I am a heavenly person. As regards this earth, He is rejected out of it. That separates me clearly and distinctly from it. The acceptance of Christ in glory gives me a heavenly character, if I am one with Him, and the rejection of Christ on the earth puts me into an outside place, if I have devotedness and affection for Him.

The Lord stir up our hearts, beloved friends, by His Spirit, in these last times, that we may not be unmindful of what Satan is doing, that we may discern the counterfeit that he is spreading before the people of God. You may depend upon it, it is a counterfeit, it is a wile; if he can get our hearts off Christ, and fix them on anything else than the testimony of our Lord, that which I have feebly endeavored to set forth this evening, though it may be something that appears to be for God, then he has succeeded in his object.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give us to keep our Nazariteship, to be a separate people. What a wonderful thing to be separate! The Lord, give us to know, too, that He is sufficient for us! The Lord save us from looking to man, and teach to look simply to Him, to have our resources in Him, to have our hearts confident that He cares for His own, and that He is amongst us! Blessed it is to think of that! Look how little we have the sense of that -- that He is amongst us!

The Lord bring these things before our hearts this evening by His own Spirit, and quicken us, and give us a sense of what is due to His own name, that we may be more distinctly for Him in these times, to the praise of the glory of His grace, through Jesus Christ!
"All Things of God"

being

Six Addresses

Delivered in London, October, 1885

London: G. Morrish

Preface

These spoken words, uttered in how great weakness, no one is more conscious of than the speaker, are now committed to print.

Those who have had experience of it, are well aware how difficult it is to reduce an entirely extemporaneous address to the style of writing demanded in a printed page; this must be remembered as to anything unusual in these addresses, to the deliberate character of that which is conveyed simply by means of writing.

With regard to the subjects treated, no words could possibly exaggerate their importance or their blessedness; in proportion to this, stands out the feebleness of all the servant’s efforts, however helped in grace, to give expression to them.

The object of the preacher, in preaching, was to minister Christ so as to reach conscience and heart; this he desired above all, as he diligently sought to avoid all that would minister to the mere mind and intellect.

May the Lord, in His sovereign goodness, bless these feeble utterances to souls; this is looked for, as it is remembered that He it is who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise . . . the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, . . . and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Chapter 1:
The True Grace of God

1 Peter 5:6-10;
Hebrews 9:11-15; 7:23-25

There are three great facts, three grand realities, which are unfolded to us, beloved brethren, in these three scriptures.

The first is God’s unfailing grace, and that, remember, presented in an epistle which is especially the wilderness epistle, which deals with all the ups and downs of our history as we go through the desert of this world; our changeable history and our failing history too, we may say, because it is just in that part of our life where the failings, and the haltings, and the slippings, are liable to come out; and therefore it was suitable in a very especial way for us to have alongside, and with all that, as the resource for it, and as the comfort for our hearts in connection with it, God’s unfailing grace. And hence He is spoken of in that beautiful way, as “the God of all grace.”

The second subject, is the eternal efficacy of Christ’s blood, in all its precious consequences and in its own nature. It has the infinite value of Him, whose blood it is, attached to it. It was by the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God. By that offering He secured “eternal redemption,” “for us,” no doubt; yet it is of real importance to remember that those words are put in italics in the scripture, showing that they form no part of the sacred text; they no doubt express what is true, still here the sense is clouded instead of being improved by their insertion -- it is eternal redemption which is the issue of it. And then, further, it is eternal inheritance that is the purchase of it. The eternal Spirit was the One by whom He offered Himself without spot to God; through that offering He obtained eternal redemption, and secured eternal inheritance.

And then the last subject, beloved friends, is the continuous intercession and advocacy of the great High Priest. He lives for ever, and is able, because He lives for ever, “to save to the uttermost,” which does not mean that He is able to save our souls from either the consequences of our sins or from the effects of sin; for you will notice that it is connected with His intercession; because He continueth ever, He hath a priesthood that does not pass on from father to son, like the Jewish priesthood, but He abides and remains a priest for ever in heaven; and therefore, always living to intercede, He is able to save to the uttermost; that is to say, He is able to carry right through, on to the end, all that come to God by Him. His intercession is a thing commensurate with the existence of His priesthood; He lives for ever, and therefore He intercedes for ever.
Now just let me say a word upon each of those three subjects this evening; and may the Lord fit the subjects to the needs of each one here.

We begin where we must always begin, and indeed, I was going to say, where we must always end. We begin with grace; we go on with grace and we end with grace that never ends; we end with it, yet it never ends. But it is just the very thing that I suppose our hearts never really get to the full extent of the marvelous grace of God in its fulness, in its divine comprehensions. It is a blessed basis of all the actings of God, “the God of all grace.” It is the eternal source and spring of everything that we get from Him, blessed be His name. There is a great difference, as it seems to me, between grace and mercy; both belonging to God. He is “rich in mercy,” but He is also “the God of all grace.” And I suppose the difference between the two is this, that mercy is that which belongs to God’s own character and nature, especially and peculiarly, because if He acts on the principle of mercy He is shut up to Himself; and what, may I ask, could be more blessed for you and me than that if He acts on that principle of mercy, then God (we may say it again with reverence), blessed be His name, is shut up to Himself.

Mercy, then, is that great principle in His nature which specially and peculiarly marks Him off; but grace is the ground or basis upon which He acts. Mercy is in God Himself, and grace is the principle of all His actings towards us: that is, to say, He acts towards us on the ground of grace, in contrast with acting towards us on the ground of law, or of any responsibility of ours entering into it. He acts towards us in grace; grace it is which underlies every part of it, The foundation of it, the great and precious platform of everything that has come to us from God Himself. Hence, He is “the God of all grace.” And, beloved friends, from the first moment that we had to do with Him, on to the very end of our journey through the wilderness here, it is grace and mercy too. Mercy we have, as we have to do with Him who is rich in mercy, but grace is the divine basis of it all; and therefore, He is “the God of all grace.” And for poor, wretched, feeble, failing things, such as we are, nothing could be more comforting and sustaining to our souls than that great truth. You can never get to the end of it. And what we shall find is this, even that it is the very thing that we are least well established in. Strange as it may appear, we seem to be far better exponents and expounders of law than we are of grace. The principle of law, somehow or other, is akin to our nature.

Grace is not indigenous to any of us. It is not in any one of us naturally. Not one of us has got the sense, of what grace is, by nature; and even after we have found Him, or rather been found of Him in His grace, and have tasted it, and proved His goodness, and been saved by His grace, and lived on His grace, and been carried through His grace, and supported through it here, how little we have drunk in of it, how little and small a sense we have of it; though we have proved it so often, and so unfailingly been ministered to of it by God Himself, see what a poor impress that grace has made upon us. Hence it is that the apostle, in that first passage in Peter, when he is marking out the wilderness journey, and speaking of humbling ourselves, and resisting Satan, and all that belongs to us, while passing through present scenes, where we are tested and tried, sets forth God as the God of all grace. It is well to bear in mind the character of the desert. We are at school in this world, it is the place of our education, testing, and trial; heaven is the place of our home and rest; but here God is leading us and sifting us, and treating us in a variety of ways, individually and collectively, because our individual history comes under it, just as much as our collective history comes under it. He tests His people individually, and He tests His people collectively; but then, beloved friends, whilst He does this, the apostle brings this out so comfortingly for our souls; he says, Notwithstanding all, notwithstanding the kind of journey we have to expect through such a world, and what we are subject to here, still He is the God of all grace; and grace is the great spring and motive power of everything that we receive from His hand as we pass through present scenes. He does not deal with us on any other ground. If He comes to discipline us, it is on that ground; if He gives us a blow, it is on that ground; if we need the stripes, we get them on that ground; it is grace that fetches the whole thing out -- it is not law, it is grace. And, beloved friends, that is an immense comfort for our hearts, because it is His own blessed principle of acting in everything, for He is the God of all grace.

And mark, He has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. He has called us to that glory; but then, between that glory, which springs, so to speak, out of His grace, there is a road along of suffering; “after that ye have suffered awhile.” You must go through the mill, so to speak, to reach the home; you must be subjected to the rack, and to pressure, and to difficulty, and all the rest of it, but after you have gone through the suffering, and by way of the suffering -- after you have suffered awhile, not an unlimited time, but of limited duration, “after that ye have suffered a while, himself make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Now nothing is more comforting for our souls than that. It is the end and issue of the whole thing; and what could be so wonderfully cheering to the heart? It is not progress, and it is not the mode of operation by which God secures this thing, it is the end. What is the issue which is in His mind? “Eternal glory!” Because we are looked at here as passing through the wilderness, this wretched world that was once the Egypt of our lusts, where we had our resource and our independences for that is what characterizes this world, we had our resources in it away from God, and we were independent of God; we had all that belonged to this world, over which Satan is the god and prince. But now, rescued from it, it is a desert where we have God Himself, and we go through this world with God. It is the same world that it was physically; it is not changed yet, it is the same world, in that sense, precisely as it was when it was the Egypt of our lusts; but its whole character is changed to us as Christians. It was the Egypt where we gratified ourselves with everything that belonged to it. Now it has become a desert, where we have in it nothing but God, and, beloved friends, where we are uncommonly well off in having nothing but God; so that, instead of being commiserated with, or any one pitying us, for having nothing but God, we are to be immensely congratulated. We should indeed be the objects of great compassion and pity,
if we wanted anything else besides God; but having nothing but Him is part of the glory of the way in which God leads us on. We have the God of all grace as our stay, we have suffering for awhile, and all that is connected with it, as our path, but then the issue is to “make you perfect,” perfect through all the things you pass through, and by them.

And, beloved friends, this is where God leads us in His grace, I do not say to understand, but He does lead us, in His grace, to accept the blessedness of the way by which He subjects us to all these things, and by which He trains us through all these things. And when we reach that glory by-and-by and really are in it, and look back over the whole Way, we shall be able to see that there was not one sorrow too many, and not one burden too heavy, and not one pressure too great, that He did not break our backs, nor break our hearts; He never does the one or the other; but He does subjugate and refuse the will; He refuses it, and leads us to abnegate everything of it that adheres to us; but, as to our hearts, God comforts them; and, as to our backs, the weariness and feebleness of the way to which we are subjected, only give Him occasion to uphold us, and that is what our souls need to get the sense of, and thus of His unfailing grace.

Think of that other instance -- and a wonderful one it is -- a small thing, if you like, but it is the small things that show what is in the heart of God. Think of the blessed God Himself, long before the day of Christianity, and the revelation of His own character in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His own name, and the relationships we are brought into; think of God saying to His poor servant, who was in a pet, and who really got disappointed, not only with himself, but with God, and wanted to be removed out of this scene, “the journey is too great for thee”: and therefore every provision is made for his need; the way was long, and the blessed God, as it were, saying, I have consideration for your frame. Would to God, beloved friends, we had the sense of the delicacy and affectionate care of our God and Father, that He can think about us, in His grace, as to everything, small and great; and, if you will allow me to say so, if we all had the sweet sense of this in our souls, we should not be so uneasily anxious as to what relates to ourselves, leading us so incessantly to think about ourselves. He thinks about us, thinks about the journey, “too great for thee,” thinks as to whether our bodies are equal to the strain. “Arise, and eat, for the journey is too great for thee”: as if He had said, “I have a watchful care for your body in it, I am thinking you need more sustainment; I have provided for you, and there it is.” I give that as an instance, and you may find hundreds of instances of the same kind in scripture, of the wonderful care and provision of God’s grace in everything, small and great, down here, as we pass through this world. We have the suffering, and there is a needs be for us to have it; God has no other way of lifting us up but by humbling us. His purpose and object is to lift us up, but the way by which He does it, is to subject us to the suffering and the testing, to “settle” us through it, to “stablish” us through it, to “make you perfect” through it -- “after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

Well now, it does seem to me this is a wonderful comfort for our hearts. For even if we fail a thousand times over, poor things as we are -- though God forbid I should utter a word in excuse or extenuation of it, for there is no excuse for failure -- yet, when we do fail, what would become of us, if we had not to do with this “God of all grace”? We should get into despair. Thank God, there is no reason to despair. And why? Because we have to do with a God that is unlimited in the resources of his grace. And it is not a question, beloved friends, of that grace being applied to us, when we go on all right; but it is an unspeakable relief to the heart, to know that there is grace for us in God in every circumstance. God’s grace is unending and unlimited; it is not at all, in the very least, that, there is found any desert on our part, nor is it that we are found as being what we ought to be. I fully admit we should be so. I repeat it, there is no excuse for failure, either individually or corporately; there is no excuse for starting aside, or for anything of the kind; but still, notwithstanding all, above all the shortcoming, and through all the breaking down, God is “the God of all grace.”

Now let me give you one other instance. Take Peter as an illustration of this principle. Here was a man who was warned by the Lord as to that denial beforehand, solemnly warned, warned because of the self-confidence that was in his heart; that is to say, the root of all Peter’s failure was this, that he trusted his love to Christ. Do you ever trust your love to Christ? If you do, you will, as is said, go to the wall, even as did Peter. He trusted his own love to Christ; it was his own affection, his own love, that he had confidence in. And it was not that he did not love his Lord; he did love Him, yea, better than any one on earth; and herein lay the bitterness of his denial. I do not believe that there was one whom Peter loved so tenderly as he loved his Lord, but he trusted the affection that was in his own heart towards Christ, and every single thing that was connected with that went to pieces with Peter. And what Peter was brought out to at the end was this, he was brought out to trust that blessed, precious love of Christ that was the only unfailing and unchangeable love that was ever known: to trust Christ’s love, not his own, to trust Christ’s interest, Christ’s care, and Christ’s unchanging, blessed heart; that was what Peter had to learn. His confidence was in his own affection for his Lord, and therefore he broke down.

But the part of his history that I am referring to now is this, that after he was restored, and the depths of the failure were reached by Christ Himself, and his moral being searched, as in John 21, and the root of the denial manifested, and the blessed, skillful hand of Christ was, as it were, laid on the very sore; for it was not merely that he was restored in his conscience, but he was brought to judge his sin in its depths -- what did the Lord do? Restored him to everything; restored him to the place of a martyr, restored him to the place of a shepherd of His Jewish sheep and lambs.

It is sadly solemn, and ought to be heartbreaking to us, beloved friends, that it should be said, as I have myself heard it said, and that not many days ago, that there is very little hope of any one being restored or forgiven by the Lord’s people if they fall. And I know perfectly, it is not in any one of
our hearts by nature, if a man break down, if a man fail (I am using the words that are commonly employed), to have such person put back again, even as Peter was; why, beloved friends, it is in perfect contrast, with our whole nature; we should shrink from any such thing, we should cherish an everlasting suspicion about that person. But then, that is not what Christ did. That was not Christ’s grace to a man that had denied him three times over, cursing and swearing; one too, who had been warned of it; that man, I repeat, was put back into the position of a shepherd of Christ’s sheep and lambs. That is the manner of Christ’s grace; that is God’s grace, to call that man to be a follower of Christ, and to say to him, “Follow Me”; and not only so, but to say to him, “You shall be even a martyr for Me, and shall have the path of a martyr; that path that you essayed to pursue and walk in, in your flesh and natural energy, you shall tread it now as a restored, broken man.” He restored him to everything; there was not a single position that pertained to Peter, that he was not restored to: that is grace.

And now, I pray you, mark this -- and I know it so well, because one is made to know the workings of one’s poor heart within one -- it was not that Peter was to be watchful. Now I do know that when souls are brought back, when the Lord in His wonderful restoring grace brings back the soul after failure, or any other turning aside, how earnestly we seek to press upon such a person, the following: “Now you will have to be very watchful and very careful, and walk very guardedly”; and so forth. I do not deny it, it is perfectly true; but oh beloved friends, do let us try and occupy people’s souls with the producing power, God’s grace, and not with themselves. You never can secure a person that has failed, from further failure by pressing upon him what he is to do; there is only one source and spring for lifting us up or keeping us up. It is the grace of God. I quite admit there should be watchfulness, I quite admit there should be care, there should be diligence, but there is no power to keep or restore in all the watchfulness, or in all the care. And I maintain more than that, that the more His grace is in my heart, it is productive of the watchfulness, it is formative of the care needed, it is causative of the diligence called for. You must have a spring to produce those things; and it is God’s grace that is the source of watchfulness, it is God’s grace that is the spring of care. The more my soul has drunk in the sense of that grace, that unchanging, unalterable grace of God, the more diligent, and careful, and zealous would I walk with reference to everything that was before me. Whereas, if you press upon souls, as I have often heard it, that unless they walk watchfully, and unless they are very zealous and very guarded, and all the rest of it, they will fall again; you are occupying them with produced things, which have no power to produce themselves. You must have a spring to call those things into exercise, and that spring is God’s grace; and therefore you can see what a blessed thing it is to imbibe this into our souls, that He is “the God of all grace”; grace to us as sinners, grace to bring us back when we have wandered, and grace to keep us. How is one to be kept? Is it not grace that keeps? And have not we often sung, and rightly too, that beautiful verse –

Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.

What is it that has ever kept any one but grace? What is it that has ever saved any one, but grace? What is it that has ever restored any one, but grace? Nothing. And therefore I delight to dilate on the subject; but I cannot get to the end of it. Look at the wonderful field it is. Look at -the many sides of the glory of it. It is impossible to get to the full extent of it, this marvelous, precious, wondrous grace of God. “The God of all grace”; “the grace of God”; but the grace of God is the grace of Him that is the God of all grace. God is the God of every kind of grace. Oh, may the Lord impress our hearts more, with the sense of it, because that is what will keep us, and guard us as we go along. Law never could do it; it never could accomplish it. The law is just as bad for a saint, as it is for a sinner. I suppose we should all admit law was a rule of death for the sinner; it is just as much a rule of death for the saint. And you will find that the only principle which wears well every day, as it is for the sinner, so for the saint as well, is the grace of God. Grace is the great source, the great spring, the great principle of every single thing from God to us.

Well now, let me say one word on the second subject -- I need not speak long about it -- and that is, the preciousness of the efficacy, the eternal efficacy of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because, observe, it is in the power and virtue of that blood that we were put in relationship with God. And a wonderful thing it is to think of, beloved friends, that every soul in this company tonight, who through grace has been brought to God, is before God, mark you, is before God in a double way -- before God, in Christ. I know of no other footing to stand upon before God, no other platform to stand upon before God, except in Christ. But I am before God in Christ in all the eternal blessedness and efficacy of His blood. I stand before God in the acceptability of the Person who shed the blood; and I stand before God in His own appreciation and measurement of that blood; it is not our sense of its value, it is God’s. None but the blessed God Himself could appreciate and estimate in its full efficacy the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God’s value of the blood; it is what God has found in that blood; it is what God sees in the blood. And therefore the relationship is unchangeable; must be, beloved friends. If that is the basis of it, it must be.

Does the blood lose its value? Does the blood change value? Is it more valuable at one time than another? Is it more efficacious this year and less efficacious next year? You know well, thank God, it is not. You know full well that the precious blood of Christ has an eternal value in God’s estimation. And therefore it is said, and it is so precious and blessed, that verse that is so often used, so often on our lips, and I trust as well, fixed in our hearts -- I am now thinking of the Epistle of John, that blessed word of our God in 1 John 1:7. Oh, what heart can conceive, or lip adequately convey its full, deep, eternal blessedness, namely, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” He is
speaking of what that blood is in its own actual nature before God; and what is that? That it cleanses; that is to say, that is what it effects, that is its abstract nature. As poison kills and food nourishes, so that blood cleanses. It is not the continual application, as some would in their mistaken zeal assert. The perpetual application of the blood would be the destruction of its efficacy; no surer way to cast a slight, even though unwittingly, upon the efficacy of the blood of Christ, than to speak of it as continually applied: hence to say here is "cleansing," meaning thereby as continually applied, is to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. But when you speak of it in its own blessed nature as God does, and say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," it is simply unfolding it as God does there. And so blessed and so full is it, that the believer stands before God in the acceptability, and nearness, and dearness to God, of Him who shed His blood, and in all the value of that blood as God measures it.

Now what a blessed, living reality that is! Here then, is a basis that never changes, here is a relationship that never can be broken, here is a place in Christ before God, that knows no variation nor shadow of turning. The precious blood of the Christ of God in its efficacy, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; that is, to the age of ages. What He has accomplished in His grace by the shedding of His blood, puts us, in all the unchangeableness of its own blessedness, before God, according to God's measure of it. And it is an immense thing for our souls, to know the ground upon which we are, and that it is on no less a footing than this our God has set us. And I am assured nothing could be more important, for every one of us, than to be established in all the truth and reality of it by Himself. And bear in mind it is not our taking a place. We have no right to take a place; but if God puts us in such a place before Him, can we exaggerate its blessedness, or make too much of the grace that bestows it upon us? Or would it be possible to exalt too highly the changeless efficacy of Christ's blood, and thus the glory of the One that shed it?

Oh, beloved brethren, how much the truth of God has suffered from, and how much it has been lowered by such thoughts. What a really blessed thing it is to look at that precious blood as the blood of Him who upheld and vindicated all the glory of God. And who will limit the issues and consequences of all this work? Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, where His precious blood was poured forth and shed, for remember, the blood came from the side of the One who had been crucified, it came from the side of a dead Christ, not of a living Christ. If, let me say, Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, down to where we lay in our moral ruin and distance from God, who will deny that we must be blessed up to the very heights of where that Christ is? If you lower the blessing, you must somehow reflect upon the Blesser. And that is the very reality which we should strive to impress upon one another's hearts more and more every day.

If you limit or lower the blessing, you correspondingly take away from the glory of the One who secured it. But the more your heart has been impressed with the sense of the glory and perfections of Him, who has made all this good for His Father's glory, and for us, the higher your conceptions must be of the blessing. I repeat it, if Christ has given to God a glory that He went down into the dust of death to secure and make good, if the blessed God has been glorified down to the lowest, where He went and lay in death, then I say, the believer must be blessed up to the very heights of where that precious One is, whom God has raised up from among the dead, and claimed as His own. And therefore, Christ's acceptance, blessed be His name, is the measure of ours. His acceptance as man, the glorified Man in heaven, is the acceptance of His saints, who through grace believe in Him. Then see, beloved friends, what a wonderful comfort that is; because it settles and establishes everything as certain. It does not leave things uncertain or undecided; it settles everything, and for ever; it puts everything into a fixed, settled position before God, and that is outside all the fittings, and all the ebbings, and all the flowings of our poor life down here: well may we sing

"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 safer stand;  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,  
In Emmanuel's land."

Now one other word upon the third subject that I named. I would say affectionately and humbly to you, I felt, I trust of the Lord, led to touch these subjects in a kind of way as introductory tonight, as I felt one not only ought to do so, but, thank God, the delight of one's heart is to look at these great transactions as between God and Christ. I do not know anything that is more comforting to the soul than to stand outside of contingencies, and to look at divine transactions and facts which never can change. One is continually impressed with all the change down here, but, oh, to have to do with the things which know no change! The glory of such things is their changeless character. The exact failure of everything on earth is their changeability. It is just the contrast between what is divine and what is of the creature. This poor world needs constant change; men of the earth and world, could not endure the monotony of its sameness -- they crave for the change; sameness is to them wearisome in the extreme. Is there anything whereof it may be said "See, this is new?" This is the craving of man's heart, and his disappointment finds vent in the words of the reply: "It hath been already of old time, which was before us." The glory of Christ is that He is the same, that is redemption's glory, that is the glory of the place in which we are set before God, in virtue of the blood; there as been secured not only eternal redemption, but eternal inheritance.

Well now, allow me to say a little on this third subject, the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have often thought lately whether our hearts have really given to that subject the
the afflictions, and the trials of His poor beloved saints when we know, and be able to enter into the feelings, and sorrows, and belong to a man down here in this world, that He might down here, and passing through all the circumstances that poor saints when in them!

And that is the meaning of that passage in the beginning of Hebrews, “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”; literally, who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses. It is put in that negative way to present the intense reality of His sympathy. We have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses: He is able to do it. How precious! He is able to sympathize, He is able to succor, and He is able to save; the three things that are said of Him in connection with His priesthood. “He is able to sympathize”; “He is able to succor,” inasmuch as “he hath himself suffered, being tempted”; and “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth”; to carry them in His arms, in His affections, and to lift them up -- “He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Oh! beloved brethren, it is connected with so much of our history down here, things that we never could have got over, things we never could have surmounted. Have you not often found yourselves face to face with circumstances in which you could say, “I do not know how I ever got over that, how I passed through that trouble, or was able to endure that pressure that was upon me”? I will tell you. The Priest on high succored you, saved you, carried you, because that is the meaning of it, “He is able to save to the uttermost.” There is no circumstance which He is not able to carry you through; there is no wall too high that He will not carry you over; there is no pressure too grievous that He will not support you through it. “He is able to save to the uttermost.” I remember very well how that scripture has been used to set forth the gospel; and though I have a longing desire for more gospel energy and evangelic desire after the souls of the miserable and perishing, still, I am jealous of that passage being misapplied, and this is the case, if it be attempted to bring the gospel into it. Further, it would be an entirely false conception of the gospel to connect it with the intercession of Christ.

If it be a question of the salvation of the soul, that is connected with His cross, and blood-shedding, and death, and not with His intercession. This in Hebrews is the salvation of a saint, not of a sinner. The saint needs to be carried through the wilderness, over the difficulties, through the trials, lifted over all the ups and downs -- that is the salvation a saint needs. He must be carried in the arms of the Priest, if he is to get through: but that Priest is the One who bled, and wept, and suffered, and died in this world. He died to be the Savior, and He lives to be the Priest. He died, and it is His death as the Savior, and the shedding of His blood as the Savior that settles the question of our peace with God, even the question of our sins; but it is His life in the heavens that supports, and carries, and sustains through all the difficulties down here. And such a High Priest became us; not a Priest for our sins, a Savior for our sins, but a Priest for our trials, a Priest for our sorrows, a Priest for our difficulties down here, a Priest for our weaknesses. A saint cannot do without a Priest for his weaknesses, a poor sinner wants a Savior for his sins, thank God, He is both; He is the Savior of our souls,
and He is the Priest for our weaknesses.

Bear with me if I apply it in a personal way: I would ask, Are you conscious of this gracious ministry? Have you got the sense of this blessed priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ in its sustaining character in the heavens? What a cheer it is to the Christian as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to know that there is One up there on the throne of God, who came down to earth about his sins, and now He is gone up from earth to heaven about his infirmities. Think of the blessedness of that! It was our sins that brought Him to earth; it is our infirmities that He is occupied with in the heavens. He came down about our sins, settled the question of them for ever on the cross, and now, raised up from among the dead, and gone into glory, He sustains, and supports, and He represents us on high; He sustains us in weakness, He cheers us in sorrow, He sympathizes with us in all our trials and distresses, where we feel them aright.

The Lord give our hearts a better, a more divine sense of what we owe to the all-prevailing priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His unceasing intercession. Oh! how blessed to think of those hands ever lifted up, those unwearying hands of intercession, those hands that do not grow weary like Moses’ hands. Poor Moses! his hands failed and fainted; he was a poor weak man, like ourselves, though while those hands were lifted up Israel got the victory, but Moses had not divine continuity, and his hands failed. The hands of Him who continueth for ever never grow weary, blessed be His name; His hands are ever uplifted, His heart is eternally interested in the objects of His love, and that is supreme comfort for our souls as belonging to Him. We are not only borne on the breastplate of judgment upon His heart, but we are borne upon the strength of His shoulders. We are borne on His affections, and we are borne on His strength. Just as the High Priest bore the names of Israel on the breastplate of judgment, ever on his heart when he went in before the Lord continually, and bore them, too, upon his shoulders, so Christ has got the names of all his people indelibly recorded on his heart, and on His shoulders; the Lord be praised for such cheer!

I commend those three subjects to your prayerful, earnest consideration, so that you may receive the full blessing that God would give each of you individually through them -- the grace of God in its unchanging character, the blood of Christ in its unchanging blessedness, and the intercession of Christ in its eternal continuity, And, oh, may the Lord give our hearts to be fully encouraged and comforted by those blessed realities, and increasingly, too, for His name’s sake.

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**Chapter 2: The Revelation from God and of God**

**John 1:14-17, 28-43**

In order that we might truly and really know God and the Father, there was a twofold kind of revelation necessary -- not only one kind, but two kinds. That is to say, we needed a revelation of God, as really as we needed a revelation from God. We need both. A revelation from God we have in all its precious blessedness in the written word, which we call the scriptures; but the revelation of God we have in the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is that no one can really know God or the Father except in the Son. To be without the Son is to be without the Father (see 1 John 2:23). And that is a very solemn reflection for our hearts, an immense thing in a certain way, because it meets at once all the ideas in the minds of men, who would speak of the knowledge of God or understanding of God, without Christ.

It is a very striking, precious, searching word, too, that the Spirit of God writes in the second epistle, when He says, “He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God” (2 John 9). There is no question of human reasoning about it; it is a simple divine statement of fact: he that hath not, he that refuses, the Christ, the anointed One of God, God’s own beloved Son, has not God. Very solemn! And my object in bringing this scripture before you for a few moments is this, that what we have here, is the first subject that I desire to interest your hearts in; no subject more blessed, more soul invigorating, none more full of deep and holy joy for the heart that knows His love, than this precious revelation of God in Christ.

There were communications from God previously, there were words from God, assuredly there was a communication of His mind in the manner in which it was conveyed before from God. There were Moses and the prophets, there were the writings of Moses and the writings of the prophets; “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”; but there never had been previously a revelation of God in One who, whilst He became a Man, was ever and always God, until Christ came. And hence, we have that blessed simple utterance of the Holy Ghost in the verse that we began to read from, here this evening, “The Word was made flesh”: mark! “the Word,” that blessed Word of whom he speaks in the first verse of the chapter;

In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;

that is to say, He was

in His existence eternal,

in His nature divine,

in His Person distinct,

and lest there should be any mistake about it, it is said,

the same was in the beginning with God,

and also He “was God.” Now that blessed Word, who ever existed for we are carried into eternity here in the gospel, just as we are brought into time in the epistle -- became a man;
“the Word was made flesh.” What a thought for adoring hearts to bow down and worship and adore, as they dwell upon it!

It is of great moment and interest too, that we should rightly understand the value of the words “in the beginning” and “from the beginning.” “In the beginning” in the gospel of John connects us, as we have seen, with eternity; “from the beginning” in the epistle, brings us into time. But then, whilst it is so, the connection is most precious, beloved friends, for our souls; for He who was “from the beginning” in time, was also “in the beginning”; the One that was “from the beginning” was “in the beginning.” And that brings us at once to that fourteenth verse, “The Word was made flesh.” Now we have got into time. “In the beginning” in the first verse we are before time, we are in eternity. In verse 14 He has come down and become a man, He who was the Word and with God has become a Man;

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father, full of grace and truth -- the fulness of grace, and truth.

Well now, how blessed, beloved friends, to have all this as food for our souls, because it is a subject really for our souls; it is not a subject for our minds or our intellects, it is a theme specially for our consciences and hearts. What a blessed thing if you think of it, and just dwell upon it for a moment, that God should He pleased to come down and reveal himself in the Person of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; that He should come so near to us, that He should come to where we were; He Himself, apart in the intrinsic nature of His holiness and perfection, from everything, yet as truly did He come down to where we were. And hence it is, that we read in that verse, so full of comfort as well as so precious in itself, suited in every way to comfort our poor hearts within us, and raise our thoughts to the height and blessedness of God’s own love. “The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

Now mark that verse well, and connect with it the first verse of the same chapter –

that which was from the beginning;

that is, from the date of His manifestation in time as a Man down here.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon,
or contemplated, because, observe, it was not a passing sight, so to speak, just as we would say that we saw something in a passing way; it is most blessed to think of how they dwelt upon Him in contemplation; they looked upon Him, “which we have contemplated.” And, be assured, there is a great difference, beloved friends, between merely looking at something, that is most blessed and wonderful in itself, and the soul being so entirely detained, engrossed, occupied with that precious Object that is worthy to engage it. “We have contemplated Him,” we have dwelt upon Him. How blessed to think of that; and all this is, through grace, just what we are privileged to enjoy and know now to-day. It is not a mere passing look at Christ, a mere passing glance at Christ, but it is a fixed contemplation, the whole soul detained, and engaged, and engrossed, and filled by a Person who is entirely worthy to satisfy it, an object that has so perfectly satisfied and delighted the heart of God the Father, that His good pleasure is to turn our poor eyes to rest, where His alone could find rest.

How blessed to think of that. And, moreover, here, beloved friends, I am persuaded is the need, the pressing need, of the present moment, even that Christ, before all other sights and sounds in this world, and apart from all the things that relate to Him, that relate even to His blessed interests, that Christ Himself should be before our souls; the very revelation of God in His own blessed Person down here, that that blessed One should fill every gaze of our souls, and that continually. What a wonderful reality it is when you think of it, the attractive power amid spiritual delight that is in it, and in addition to all, the expulsive power of the affection that springs from it! How entirely carried outside of, as well as, above everything the affections are, when Christ really fills the vision of the soul! And that which promotes it, is set forth here in the first chapter of the Epistle of John -- they contemplated, they looked upon, they dwelt upon the glory of His Person; the intrinsic worth of that blessed One was the object that riveted every power of their souls. “Our hands have handled of the word of life.” Think of Him coming down to earth to be the revelation of God in His own blessed Person as a Man among men; not loving as has been said, at a distance, but coming down to us where we were, so that poor eyes like yours and mine looked on Him, and poor ears heard Him, and poor hands touched Him and handled Hun.

Oh, the blessed grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as the revelation of God, to come down into this poor world, and to place Himself at the disposal, so to speak, of poor, wretched things like you and me, that we might really see in His very Person, “God manifest in flesh.” “The Word was made flesh”; and it does not say visited us, but lived and dwelt amongst us, tabernacled amongst us, took a tent as a passing stranger, if we may use a familiar expression, yet being as no one ever was, a stranger all through the scene here, yet taking for the time being a temporary resting-place; and in no sense was He a visitor;

He dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father, full [the fulness] of grace and truth.

Well, now, in speaking of this revelation of God, for a moment, there was a double character in it, as it presents itself to me, and I would simply touch the points, leaving you to fill up the details, as the Lord may help each of us, for our own hearts’ comfort, and edification too. There was a double character, if I may so convey myself, in this revelation of God. God was revealed, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ here, in a twofold way: He was revealed as light and as love, the two things that God is said to be in His own nature. He is light: “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” And, beloved friends, it is very important for our souls to take in that “message” heard of God, because, not only was He revealed
in the Lord Jesus Christ as light and love, but that is the order, the divine order, in which the conscience and heart are made acquainted with that revelation, and that is a deeply important point for every one of us, the divine order in which the revelation reaches us -- the revelation of God I am speaking of now. Let us dwell for a little on the order of that revelation, as it reaches our hearts through our consciences. Ponder well this order, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all: "that is our first acquaintance with truth and with Christ, who is the truth; and, moreover, it is, our first acquaintance with God, who is revealed in the Person of his own Son down here in this world. We first of all have to do with God, who is light, through our consciences, and it is in this way that our affections come into play because it is through the conscience that the affection is reached. Well, when our consciences are brought up, as it were, and acted upon by this blessed order, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all: it reaches our hearts through our consciences. Ponder well this now. Let us dwell for a little on the order of that revelation, as revelation reaches us -- the revelation of God I am speaking of.

The law did not do that. The law did not manifest what man really was; it declared what he had done, but it did not manifest what he was. It showed, in the breach of its requirements, the shortness and failure of man as a creature subject to the claims of God, the Law-giver; as a creature under responsibility, it brought him in guilty, it exhibited him as short of the holy requirements of God, but it never brought out into the light and manifested either what God was, or what man was. The Lord Jesus Christ did; Christ was the great manifesteer of man, because He brought out what was in man, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

And in the second chapter of John, which ends in that way, you have Him bringing it out, exposing man. How solemn the words, "did not commit Himself unto them." He exposed man, but He was the revelation of God. He revealed God in His own blessed nature and character, and He exposed man in his vileness and corruption. And this it is that makes those verses so exceedingly important -- the last few verses of the second chapter, and the opening verses of the third chapter of John; for, whilst in the end of the second chapter, though there were those "in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day," that gave credence to His words, and believed on Him, when they saw the miracles -- for man, as man, may be affected by miracles -- something outward, that addresses itself to his senses, yet the Lord did not commit Himself to the people that so believed on His name, in the feast-day at Jerusalem. "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Then the third chapter begins with this: there must be a new birth, another order of man;

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

There must be a new order and generation altogether. But then Christ was the One who brought all that out. I desire earnestly to speak now of that first great revelation of God in His own Person, and that is, that "God is light." And, oh! what an immense thing it is for our souls to have to do with a God that is light. And this is a real want in every one of us, even a break-down of conscience before God. That is a present, pressing want, and every day makes the necessity plainer, it is the great want of the hour. It is the light of God, as displayed in Christ, entering into the conscience that is the immense power for bringing us into the presence of God.

It is deeply important for us all to ponder solemnly, one most arresting fact -- the Lord give us to weigh it. The proof of the conscience not being reached by the light, is, that the mind is active in judging and reasoning. When the mind is thus employed, or the reason is at work, conscience is not in exercise, it is not reached. When the conscience is reached -- and it is only light that can reach it -- the whole man is judged. There is a very great difference between those two things, between a man judging in his mind and reasoning in his intellect, and God, in His own light, shining into the conscience, so that the man is judged, and is down in his true place before God, and thus an avenue is made through his conscience to his affections. And, no doubt, the reason why there is so little real divine affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, is, because the conscience is so little in exercise, beloved friends.

We often say to one another that there is a want of more devotedness to Christ. You will never find it where conscience is not reached; because conscience is the avenue to the affections, and the true way by which an opening is made to
the soul, and it is in that way that the depths of the affections and the soul are acted upon. Now, the Lord helping me, let me endeavor to show how the second revelation comes in here; because if the light which Christ Himself was in His own blessed Person, and which God was -- when that light detects us, judges us, as it does, when it reveals things as God sees them, not as we see them, or others see them, the light of God thus entering into the conscience, morally compels man to take cognizance of the thing as before God, then the way is prepared for the other revelation; and remember, not only is God light, “but God is love,” and Christ is the great revelation of that. Just as He was the revelation of God who is light, He was also the revelation of God who is love. And look at the blessedness of it. When the bottom of the soul is got at through the conscience -- and oh! what wounds and smarting, for there are no wounds like those of conscience, there is no sorrow like the sorrow of conscience, that real “godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of” -- when there is all that, when the man is thus subdued and broken down, the full sense of his condition seen in the light of God, not mere surface work, but what is at the root, as it were, the thing that is really down deep there, unseen by all but One, unmeasured by all but One; then look how blessedly the other revelation comes in; because the revelation of love is the revelation of that which can remove and put away everything that the light has manifested. And thus it is they work together. The one makes manifest the unsuitability of man as he is, to God; the other makes manifest the divine love which ever was in the heart of God, but which awaited the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, to righteously gratify itself in removing all that His light detects. And Christ came for this purpose. Thus we have the two parts of his blessed life.

We see in His life down here upon earth, in His public ministry amongst men, a testing of all that man was. Hence a living Christ was a testing Christ: man was thus exposed as far from God, alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works. True, that in His life, there was a most perfect manifestation of God in His own Person, yet at the same time there was a detection and exposing of all that was in man’s heart towards God, as well as towards Christ. But a dead Christ is One who has wrought atonement, and from whose riven side, as dead, the blood came, to remove everything that the light reveals as unsuitable to Him; and thus it is we see both things in His blessed life, very vividly set before us in this way. We have God manifested in His own Person down here as man, and we have man exposed in all his viliness before God; when the conscience is reached through that light, then there is for it the revelation of God in His own character, as love. And, oh! what a revelation of it we have in Christ, the Christ of God, the Son of the Father, the Son of the bosom; how blessed thus to wait on His glories! And thus it is we have in this very Gospel, “The only begotten Son, who is in the Father’s bosom,” not “who was in the Father’s bosom,” for He never left it. “The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him,” declared Him in all the affection, in all the love, in all the heat, in all the very truth of that bosom; Christ, the Son of the bosom, revealed and manifested the Father in all that pertained to Him in that relationship. Now these are two great things that meet us in these verses from the fourteenth verse of the first of John.

And now let me pause, and ask all our hearts, -- How far do we know God in these characters? How far really have you and I been made acquainted with God in the Lord Jesus Christ, as light and love down here in this world? In what character do we know Him? Have we been brought to Him, so that we can say, we do know Him in that way? Can you say that the bottom of your soul has been reached by the light? And, observe, it does not refer merely to the first moment of conversion, when that light reached us as poor wretched sinners, but refers as much to what comes afterwards, in all our course as Christians down here in this world; we are brought into the light, that is to say, we are brought into this full manifestation of God. That is our Christian place, our Christian position before God. We are in the light. It is not a question of walking according to the light; of course, we ought that is perfectly true; but we are brought into the light, we are set in a distinct position before God, which is expressed in these words, “in the light”; that is, we are before the eyes of God, and our walk should be before the eyes of God, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is. Now you will judge what a solemn thing that is; it is a most blessed position to be in the light, but it is a most solemn one and, remember, if we are in the light, then everything about us must be suitable to that light. The position we are in, defines the character of the conduct that suits it. Thus it is we are led to discover all kinds of things, and if the conscience is really sensitive as before God, (and the Lord give us to have sensitive consciences about everything) if the light of truth by the Word is making it sensitive, then is the judgment according to God, of all that will not suit the light. If it were a mere question of our getting through the world, or picking our steps through the ruin of the church the best way we could, we might perhaps get on and make a miserable kind of pass through; but if it be the genuine desire to be suitable to God, and suitable to the light that we are brought into, and that everything about us is to be sustained according to the character of the position His grace has set us in, it is a very solemn and searching matter, and thus it is that we are kept in continual exercise of conscience and soul. I cannot believe there is any real, true progress of soul, unless it is so. I quite admit there may he a great deal of sentiment, and that, alas! is abounding on every side, a vast amount of sentiment, but very little conscience.

Now what is the value of sentiment? The sentiment of the truth is not the truth; there is a great difference between these two things. The sentiment of the truth can tolerate, and in fact, does tolerate, that which at best is merely the honey of nature; but salt is truth, in power. It is the preservative element, and is applied to us, even to our conscience; and the conscience in a healthy state takes cognisance as a witness. Truth is that power which acts upon the conscience; and when it is so acted upon by the truth, then it is a truthful witness for God, and for all that is suitable to God there; but if the conscience is not in this state, then it is the most blinding, dangerous thing that can be. And, hence, you may often hear the remark, “Oh! I have done nothing against my conscience.” Well, that is all well so far, but what is acting on your conscience? How solemn to remember that Saul of Tarsus persecuted Jesus in the glory,
thinking in himself that he ought to do so:

I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, it is vain for any to plead in a wrong cause, “My conscience does not reprove me”; the reply is, if you were walking in the light, that is, if you were walking before God’s eyes, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is, your conscience would undoubtedly accuse you.

It is an easy matter for anyone to assert, “My conscience does not reprove me, or convict me,” or, “I have got a clear conscience”; but the whole question is, What is the rule of your conscience? Is it the Word of God, or is it the blind influence of your own will? Is it the truth of God that is acting upon it? Is it the light that is upon it? If it be, then the soul is before God in His judgment and estimate of the matter. If it be not this light, then it is the blinding power of self; and there is nothing amongst men so blinding and deceiving as that. Conscience without truth upon it and without light acting upon it, is one of the most dangerous tools of Satan: thus it is the adversary gets hold of souls, and deceives them, and blinds them, turning their conscience into weapons to his hand. I do not know anything worse than this, that men should exalt the conscience into the place of scripture; it is thus the conscience becomes enslaved and degraded; it appears to rule and guide, but is in reality, enslaved and ruled by the will of the flesh. No; there must be the truth of God, there must be the light of God shining upon the conscience, working upon the conscience; thus it is in healthy exercise, but before God; and His Word, operative and active as light upon it, in divine power, so that it gives a true witness according to God and according to His truth. It is no guide at all; it never was intended to be a guide; God never gave to man a conscience as a guide in any sense. That conscience was to be in him as a witness, to be illuminated by the truth, and to be manifested by light and the Word of God shining in upon it, is true; the Word of God, that blessed Word, which reveals things according to God and according to God’s thoughts. And, beloved friends, how very solemn it is to think how little any of us thus submit ourselves to this action of the living Word of our God.

And then let me say one word further as to this; it is of great importance to note it, that when the conscience, thus illuminated by light (for I have only spoken of light as yet), when the conscience bears its witness as the result of the light and truth of God acting upon it, when it gives its verdict, its testimony, and if there has been departure, as light would measure and mark it “for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,” it matters not in how small a measure the departure may be, departure is departure, failure is failure, turning aside is turning aside; granted, it may be but in the measure of a hair’s breadth; still, let us ever hold fast it is a hair’s breadth of turning aside; there is on our side but one way back, beloved friends, and that is by confession; only one way of restoration, really and happily, and that is by confession -- a thing that is greatly dreaded in these days, greatly shunned, and greatly avoided. Oh, what a comfort for the soul that loves light! Suppose I have missed the heavenly road; it matters not, as I have said, how little it is, still, I have missed it. Well, who could overestimate the blessed comfort for the soul, to be able, with the light shining upon the conscience, to go right to God, and to have the whole thing out with Him. It is the true way of getting back -- in fact there is no other way. And it is what we shall find increasingly in our own souls, that the way of getting back is by that path which makes little of us, and that is the very thing we do not like, that is what we try to avoid, that is what we, alas! dread. It reminds us of the word of Saul to Samuel, “Honor me now before my people.” Alas! poor wretched, small man. It is the littleness of our nature that is humiliating, and it is the littleness of these wretched hearts of ours: “Honor me now before my ‘people.’” Oh, how often have these words been repeated in our ways! Be assured, it is only true greatness, the effect of the light of God upon the soul, that can afford to go down, and take its true place before God or man: Saul could not. And that is exactly what we may often observe. And I cannot believe that any person that has ever missed any part of the path -- I care not what it is -- I am assured that man never can be happy in his own soul and conscience, until he owns the thing before God. I could not be persuaded to the contrary. I believe that there is a want, a vacuum, in that man’s soul, well expressed too in the words of the poet, in the hymn

“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.”

Oh, how true that is of a soul, in the pressure which confession can alone remove, there is a gnawing and a dis-satisfaction, not to speak of the reserve and distance, which must be felt, and almost intolerable, until confession disperse the dark cloud.

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, amid mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord.

The Lord give our hearts a true sense of this wonderful revelation of God in Christ. This first great part of it I have spoken of to-night the light. “God is light.” Christ is the great exposition, the great manifestation of it. Then there is the other part of the revelation, namely, that “God is love.” The delight of that blessed love is to remove all that the light manifests. And oh, the comfort of that for our souls! God is love, and therefore He says, I will remove everything from you that the light detects; everything that the light exposes, I will remove it all, I will reveal it as light, but I will remove it as love: how wonderful the comfort for our souls. I will not leave a stain or a spot or a sign of it upon you; and not merely judicially -- most blessed to see the judicial removal of it in the death of the cross, the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, the atoning efficacy of His work to remove the sin judicially -- but it is removed practically as well. And this makes that thirteenth chapter of John so exceedingly precious. Because, look at the manifestation of that love, practically, in that chapter, and the practical removal by feet washing; it was not in any sense, judicial dealing with it; it was the manifestation of the Lord’s
unchanging love in the removal of moral distance by the water, the application of the Word of God. Mark how it opens:

Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

I love you so well, that I will not have a stain upon you; I will not have a soil between you and myself in that bright scene I am about to enter. Oh, blessed love, blessed grace of Christ! and this all made known by Himself to them, as that hour was just upon them. Permit me to ask you, if your hearts have taken in, or been taken in, by such a blessed kind of love as this? It was on the cross the work was finished, here it is the practical application, by the Lord Himself, of the Word to the feet of His poor disciples. Well, I must leave the details of it with you, to go over them in His own blessed presence and company.

I come now to one other subject here, which I desire to dwell upon tonight, and reserve what follows, if the Lord will, to another time. Now that one other subject brought out in this first chapter of John, is the two parts of Christ’s great work. We have had before us the revelation of God as light and love, and then we have the two parts of the Savior’s great work; those two parts are expressed in the twenty-ninth and following verses.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which bapizeth with the Holy Ghost.

Now here are the two great parts of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as in the other part, we have the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His double manifestation of God as light and love -- the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us -- so here you have the parts of the work of Him who was the Word made flesh. And the first part was that He was the Lamb of God; that is, He was the One who came from God’s side to restore the foundations of the world’s relations with God. He is set forth here not as Messiah, but according to the whole extent of His work. He was the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. It sets the work before us in its fullest and widest extent. He was God’s own Lamb, the One whom God alone could furnish; He was for God, and in every respect according to His mind. It is not here, how we get the good of the work. We do not learn, from this verse in John, how a poor sinner can lay hold upon Christ. Here it is the unfolding of the precious work that He can get the good of. But let us ever distinguish what God distinguishes. There is a great difference between the work that was done, and how we get the good of it.

Now, as to how we get the good of it, we have most plainly set forth in scripture; but here is the great work that was done, unfolded too in its divine worth. And what was that great work? That He taketh away the sin of the world -- observe it well, sin -- in its widest and largest sense, so much so, that there will be new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. It is very blessed to dwell on this glory of Christ set forth in that way. He was God’s Lamb; He came from God, He offered Himself without spot to God through the eternal Spirit, the Lamb without blemish and without spot, to restore the foundations of the relations of the world with God; sin had entered into the world, and death by sin. He was God’s Lamb to do this work; but the work by which He did it, was that blessed work of the cross, and He did it by giving Himself up, upon the cross, bearing the whole judgment of God there; Himself made sin, He who knew no sin, on that cross; bearing the whole of God’s righteous judgment against sin, becoming the sacrifice for sin, so as to accomplish, and that perfectly, that work and so He was glorified according to all the blessed appreciation of God, and according to God’s own infinite estimate of the value and fulness of that work. God was glorified by that work of Christ, and the effect of that work is boundless in all its blessed application.

But there is the other part of it, which I can but merely glance at this evening, in the lateness of the hour. The other part of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the words, “baptiseth with the Holy Ghost”; this was consequent on His having gone up into the heaven as the ascended, glorified Man. God come down in flesh, He was; but Man gone up in righteousness and ascension glory, He is; in incarnation, it was God come down in flesh; in ascension glory, it is Man gone up in righteousness: and having gone up in righteousness, and being as man, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, He sends down the Holy Ghost; He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. And this baptizing with the Holy Ghost implies not merely a negative blessing, but it implies an entirely new thing, it is characteristic of an entirely new heavenly status and position before God. It is not merely the negative clearing away of our guilt, but it is the introduction into the entirely new blessings and privileges of the heavenly position before God, of which the Holy Ghost is the seal and witness. Oh, how blessed it is to think of it! How blessed to be made acquainted with the negative and positive sides of this work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to know how perfectly and completely and for ever, He has cleared everything away as God’s Lamb, for God; so that for you and me to-night the whole thing is settled, once for all. As Christians, all our sins are gone in virtue of that work, which he did as the Lamb. Our souls have known the application of it to our individual needs and wants, to the circumstances of our cases; thank God, we can say, Our sins are gone in virtue of that work of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” It does not say the sins of the world, but the sin of the world.

But you and I can say, as we adoringly behold that precious aspect, that of the work of His cross, we can say, all our sins are gone in virtue of that work; individually we can say, that it was the purgation of our sins; and more than that, the Lord Jesus Christ in accomplishing that work, bore His people’s sins “in His own body on the tree,” and therefore they
are all gone -- our sins are for ever buried and gone. But then, thank God, we have more than that. We have been baptised with the Holy Ghost, that is to say, we have been brought, not merely out of darkness, not merely out of the distance we were in, but we have been brought into a new positive position in all its blessedness before God, in the Christ who shed His blood; we are set in this position by redemption, and the Holy Ghost is the characteristic seal and pledge. So that it is a totally new thing; it is a heavenly position, because we are in a heavenly Christ. We are not standing in Christ as He was incarnate, we are standing in Christ as He is in ascended glory in the heavens; that is our position before God; we are in the ascended, glorified Christ before God, in all the fragrance and in all the acceptability and blessedness of that Christ who is before Him. And the Holy Ghost, who dwells in our bodies -- for Christ was the baptizer with the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost -- dwelling in our bodies is the seal and witness of that new magnificent status that God has set us in, in that risen and glorified Christ. Oh, the blessedness of these glories! What a thing it is, to be assured from God of the blessed footing He has set us on, and that He has set us there according to all His own thoughts, having shown Himself to us as light and love, in Christ. He Himself has done it, and He Himself has brought us -- through that which has perfectly glorified Him, and met as well the need of our consciences -- He has brought us through that, to stand in all the perfection of this wonderful footing, on which He has set us in that blessed One before Himself; in the acceptability and fragrance of that precious, blessed One who is in His presence.

The Lord give our hearts to enter into it more! -- and better still, the Lord grant that it may enter into us, and then we shall truly enter into it; sure I am that is the truth of the whole matter; when it enters into us, and His blessed Spirit can give it an entrance into us -- then, and then alone it is, that we enter into it. The Lord grant it may be so, through His own Word this evening. I feel assured none ever have so much the whole matter; when it enters into us, and His blessed Spirit can give it an entrance into us -- then, and then alone it is, that we enter into it. The Lord grant it may be so, through His own Word this evening. I feel assured none ever have so much the sense of their poverty, as when they are seeking divinely to set forth the truth of God. Any other theme is, as it were, within our reach naturally, but oh! this is so immensely beyond us, and yet so blessedly for us; so infinitely above us, and yet so acceptably and fragrance of that precious, blessed One who is in His presence.

The conscience must have the work of Christ, to make it perfect before God. It is impossible to have a perfect conscience, except by the application to it, of the precious finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that, which puts us on a divine footing before God as to conscience, and gives what Scripture calls "a perfect conscience." A perfect conscience is one that has not the smallest fear of either death or judgment, but a divine fitness through the blood of Christ, for being in the presence of God, in the light, where God is; not a single misgiving as to God, in virtue of the blood of Christ. But then the heart needs an object, if the conscience wants clearance; and that is the value, beloved friends, both of Christ and of His work. The gospel presents both. Both are set forth in Scripture; the work for the conscience, and the Person for the affections. And that is the reason, no doubt, why we find too many, who may be clear perhaps as to their conscience, no fear or doubt as to their acceptance through the work of Christ, but yet, have not heart satisfaction; they have not heart rest or repose, and why? even because they have not as yet found one who can meet their hearts, not as yet been acquainted with one who can satisfy their hearts. And this very often accounts for what you may see with regard to those who have been cleared by the work of Christ as to their conscience, viz., the world has inducements for them; the age has attractions for them; there are things down here that bid for them; the suitors are found in the world who bid for the hearts of God, and the object of all His infinite satisfaction and joy, so God ministers Him to us, to be to us in our poor measure, what His heart has found, in all its infinite satisfaction and ineffable delight, in Him.

It is most blessed grace to think of, that our Father God, in the delight of His nature, should turn these poor hearts and eyes of ours, to Him in whom His own have found their unceasing delight. Wonderful subject to dwell on, beloved friends; the same object, the same Christ, the same Savior, in all His intrinsic excellences, Person, worth, and blessedness -- He who fills the whole heart of God, delights every part of his nature, over whom He could open the heavens, once and again, when He was upon earth, and say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom is all my good pleasure” -- is ministered now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and that, too, in the gospel, both to sinners and to saints, as the object. And, therefore, if the preaching of the gospel be in question, there is nothing so effectual as the presentation, to the hearts of sinners, of an object worthy of the confidence of their hearts. And I often fear, whether we do not leave that a little too much out, in our thoughts.

The conscience must have the work of Christ, to make it perfect before God. It is impossible to have a perfect conscience, except by the application to it, of the precious finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that, which puts us on a divine footing before God as to conscience, and gives what Scripture calls "a perfect conscience." A perfect conscience is one that has not the smallest fear of either death or judgment, but a divine fitness through the blood of Christ, for being in the presence of God, in the light, where God is; not a single misgiving as to God, in virtue of the blood of Christ. But then the heart needs an object, if the conscience wants clearance; and that is the value, beloved friends, both of Christ and of His work. The gospel presents both. Both are set forth in Scripture; the work for the conscience, and the Person for the affections. And that is the reason, no doubt, why we find too many, who may be clear perhaps as to their conscience, no fear or doubt as to their acceptance through the work of Christ, but yet, have not heart satisfaction; they have not heart rest or repose, and why? even because they have not as yet found one who can meet their hearts, not as yet been acquainted with one who can satisfy their hearts. And this very often accounts for what you may see with regard to those who have been cleared by the work of Christ as to their conscience, viz., the world has inducements for them; the age has attractions for them; there are things down here that bid for them; the suitors are found in the world who bid for the affections of their hearts, and the heart is not safe until it is
pre-engaged, until it is pre-occupied, until there is another there that is worthy to fill it, and not only worthy to fill it, but able to fill it. For there is no one and nothing that can fill these hearts of ours but Christ. The world is too small, the things down here are too little; your hearts are a great deal larger than the world, far too large for the world to fill them; all that is in the world, whatever it be, has nothing in it that can really fill your heart; your heart is too big for it, but Christ can fill it. And herein is the blessedness of having an object set before us perfectly capable, perfectly worthy, perfectly able to fill every longing, every desire, to satisfy every craving, to meet every desire of the affections and of the heart. Christ can do it, and moreover, it is His great delight.

Now this is the first subject presented here in these Scriptures this evening -- a perfect object. Because, observe, this is no part of John’s ministry as such. John’s ministry we might say had closed, so far as that is concerned, when he testified to Jesus, as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” There you get his ministry, and he speaks, as we have seen, of the work of Christ in its large and full extent. But this is not his ministry here; it is not addressed to any one. This v. 35 is not spoken to any one. The v. previously, where Christ is set forth in His work, is. Just look at the 29th to the 34th v. for a moment. There, in John 1:29, is John’s ministry, setting forth Christ in the two parts of His work these we had before us last week -- “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” and the One who “baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” Now, that was distinctly addressed to persons, just as ministry is addressed to persons, having persons in its view for edification, and instruction, and comfort, and building up; and such here was John’s ministry. It was about Christ; it was for persons. Christ was the subject of the ministry; but individuals were those to whom Christ was thus ministered, in this double application, the two-fold nature of His work. But this is not ministry we are looking at tonight. When he looked at Jesus as He walked, he did not say to the people that were around him, “Behold the Lamb of God!”; it was the delight that his own heart had found in Christ; he is entranced with that blessed object as He stood before him, and everything is displaced in John’s affections, and soul, and mind, and thoughts, as Christ is there before him. “Behold the Lamb of God.” His eye rested on Jesus.

And oh! beloved brethren, what a moment it is for us, what a moment of abstraction, and what a moment of occupation, and supreme satisfaction and delight, when every other object is gone from our gaze but Christ. Have you, as yet, traveled into that moment, when Christ, and only Christ, was before your soul’s vision? What a moment! A moment in time, that has all the elements of eternity, and the delight of heaven connected with it. For what will be heaven? This, beloved brethren, that we are with the Lord; “so shall we ever be with the Lord”; or as the verse of the little hymn so sweetly expresses it

“To see Him still before me.”

Never to be conscious of a moment when Christ is not there still before us. Again I say, what a moment! And that, remember, in all its blessedness, underlies all true testimony (though I do not go into that now), but that, I repeat, underlies all true testimony and witness for Christ upon earth. It is the secret of all understanding of his mind, and of being able to walk in His mind when it is understood; do remember these two things. The only way really to know the mind of Christ is to be in divine intimacy with Himself. You cannot know His mind in any other way. There is no royal road to the understanding of what is suitable to Christ, except the knowledge of Himself.

Some one has said (it is most precisely true in every sense) that “the knowledge of Jesus is the most excellent of all sciences.” And it is the real secret of knowing all divine science {knowledge}; all real, living knowledge is reached by that road. If I know Him, I know what is suitable to Him -- I know what becomes Him. It is vain to attempt to produce it, you cannot; it is not as a matter of fact possible to produce. Suitability to Christ is only learnt by intimacy with Christ, and the company of Christ. We never can be suitable to Christ, if we do not know Him and enjoy His company. We never can know what becomes His mind, unless we are intimate with Him. It is even so on earth, and amongst men. Intimacy with a person gives you a knowledge of the ways, and of the mind, and of the desires of that person. You must be intimate with a person to know what he desires; to know what would please him you must know him, you must be in intimacy with him. So it is as to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is exactly what we find here in its objective blessedness. John was perfectly entranced with this precious object that ministers to the whole delight of heaven, he looked on Jesus as He walked, and his heart utters its expression, its own simple expression of delight; “Behold the Lamb of God!” It is the heart’s adoring contemplation of all the preciousness and perfection of its object. How blessed it is!

What a moment for a poor thing like you and me upon earth! to come to anchor, as it were; and we never really come to anchor in our heart’s affections until Christ fill them -- never. There is an aching void in your heart that the world can never fill. There is an unsatisfied longing of the heart where Christ is not, that nothing but Christ can ever satisfy.

Now permit me to point out to you, two or three instances in Scripture, in proof of this; and there is nothing like the Scripture, whether in preaching the gospel or speaking to the Lord’s people. There is nothing like letting the Word of God speak.

The Lord make our hearts to know the blessedness of that, more than ever in these last days -- the power of the Word. I have felt what a thing it is to stand behind the Word of God and just let it speak, let the living voice of God, in this precious word, leave its own impress and mark upon the hearts of God’s people.

Look at one or two instances now of the power of an object in scripture. I will take the most opposite instances from the word of God. I will take the lowest conceivable type of degradation of humanity. Look at the poor woman in the fourth of John. What was the moment that settled everything for that poor wretched woman? When He stood before her as the very One that she expressed, in her own words, she was looking
The attending circumstances, as it were, by which Saul was arrested, on this terrible course of history, instead of being mastered by them.

Thus you find in the most opposite characters, it is the same object; it is Christ: it is the Man in the glory. And it is very precious, and wonderfully comforting, when you think of it; no doubt it is perfectly true, that the effect of looking at this blessed Object, this same precious, blessed Object, in different positions, has different effects upon the soul. Look at Him in humiliation. Look at Him in His unwearied service of love down here, through this wretched world. Look at Him in the way in which He went about doing good. Look at Him wiping widow’s tears, and raising the dead to life. Look at all that lowly path of Christ down here, in His marvelous humiliation, and you will get your heart broken down. It is a humbled Christ which breaks and wins your heart; but still, it is a humbled Christ, in His lowly grace, as humbled, that breaks the hard heart. Think of all that love, and kindness, and wonderful goodness amongst men. Was ever such love, ever such known, ever such grace, ever such mercy seen, as in His own blessed Person — God manifest amongst men -- to poor creatures like us? But then, look at the other side of it. In glory, He satisfies our heart’s affections. He wins the heart as humbled; as glorified, He satisfies it. Stephen saw Him glorified; he saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God; and in the power of that Object, and in the preciousness and blessedness of it, he could give his life up, and could become a martyr. He prays, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”: and he commits his spirit to Jesus, and falls asleep.

Now, I will take one other instance, and it is neither a poor sinner nor a martyr; but an apostle. And it is the same thing, whether it be a sinner, martyr, or apostle. Look at Paul in the third of Philippians. There is one little word there of exceeding beauty and sweetness. He says, in the seventh verse, 

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

There you have the power of the Object in his past history, unfolded by himself in his experience of it. The things that were gain to him as a man down here -- they were religious things, they were not what would be understood as worldly things; they were religious advantages, fleshly advantages connected with religious status down here in this world; carnal, earthly religion, that a man would pride himself upon, that he would consider gain to him, as a man -- the “things that were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” When he saw Him on the road to Damascus, that blessed, wonderful Lord in glory, everything was turned out of his heart and affections. His heart was won, and satisfied too. The whole thing was changed for him. It was a turning moment, when that blessed One was revealed in his heart down here, and he really saw Him, and heard Him; so much so, that he says that those that journeyed with him saw the light, that is to say, they saw the outward display of glory, the attendant circumstances, as it were, by which Saul was arrested, on this terrible course of
slaughter and death -- "they that journeyed with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid" (because they saw nothing but what was external, and addressed itself to their senses), "but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me"; -- the personal dealings, personal transactions between that living Lord in heaven, and that poor, wretched persecutor down here upon earth. Himself before him as an object,

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

And that was the moment that determined the value of them. They were all estimated and measured according to their value in reference to Christ; because nothing in this world has what we call an intrinsic value; everything has a relative value; it is most important to bear this in our thoughts and minds.

Now, what is the greatest or best in relation to Christ -- what is the value of everything else, then? You might think things very valuable in this world, property very valuable, position very valuable, status very valuable, and all that kind of thing, you may attach great importance to it all; but then, look at the thing relatively, bring in Christ; it is all worthless, yea, worse than worthless; he uses a stronger word too, for he calls it "dung," the very refuse of the earth. A thing that would be valuable in itself, if you bring in Christ, all is changed. He says, I counted these things loss for Christ. Now between that verse, mark, in the third of Philippians and the next that follows it, the eighth, there is a considerable parenthesis, remember, of time. Those two verses do not come together historically.

The things that were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Now, mark, this was his past, and it connects itself with the wonderful interference of God, in long-suffering grace to him. But look at the eighth verse,

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss.

He has held on wonderfully on his way, in the power of his object. It is not that the circle of loss has become diminished; but it has been increased now. It is not that other things were more valuable to him than they were, but he counts "all things loss." I feel, I assure you, often times in my own heart and one has to go down before the Lord, and look at things in our own hearts and consciences before Him how very little one holds on one's way in the apprehension of the valued preciousness of Christ, to displace everything else.

In the first moments of our conversion, or of our heart opening out to these wonderful things, and when we first got a view of Christ and His preciousness and His love, how little everything appeared to us. Have we held on our way? Can we now take in "all things," and say, "I count all things loss?" It was only "things" at the beginning, but the circle has widened out to everything now, in the magnificence of this object that commanded every single part of his moral being -- "I count all things loss," I count them all loss for what? "For the excellency of the knowledge," the super-excellency, the surpassing 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 have Christ for my gain"; but then, there is more than that; he not only holds on his road, as it were, in such wonderful energy of soul, but he further says, "I do not count myself to have apprehended," I do not reckon I have reached the goal or gained the prize, and that there I stand, looking down upon, and judging, every one else. Oh, how different to it all are the words, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, I press toward the mark for the prize." He, the blessed One, is the Object; and there is, oh, such power in this Object. Thus we have the expulsive power of this new affection, and the attractive power of it as well. There is an attractive power in the Christ, which draws the affections up to Him; and there is an expulsive power in Him, which weans them from everything down here. But then, observe, it must be a living Person; and it is this blessed living Man in heaven.

Well, now let us turn to one more instance; and it is not that of an individual, but I could not omit to call attention to it, because of the deep interest attaching to it. We have seen the effect upon a poor wretched sinner, upon a noble martyr, and also upon an apostle; all being entranced with a common object, lifted by it out of their various circumstances, by the divine and living power of it. Now look at Rev. 3 for a moment, and we shall find the same true, not only of individuals, but also of the church. See how the Lord Himself commends -- see how preciously He commends this power of an object there. He says, speaking to the church in Philadelphia,

I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Now, beloved friends, what a blessed testimony from Christ Himself, that is! He was their object; His word, that is, His testimony; and His name means that which sets forth Himself in all His own infinite blessedness; His testimony and His name, He says, were everything to them.

Well now, contrast with that for a moment (and it is a very striking contrast) the assembly at Ephesus. Here, we may say, is the church's start in its pristine beauty and loveliness. And, note well, how that the Lord does give full credit for all the long roll of laborious service that was there, He passes over nothing commendable. He says,

I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil -- you are intolerant of evil --

and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

Just think of all that. Why, there is not a single company upon earth that could now command such a commendation from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not an individual upon earth, I care not how laborious, nor a company of people, no matter how assiduous, who are worthy of such commendation; yet, notwithstanding all, He says, you do not meet my heart, "I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." I am not the object. You are doing the works, and you are laboring assiduously, and earnestly, and continuously, but they are not connected with Me as the object: all the works you are doing,
works too, in themselves admirable, so that I give you full credit for them, they do not spring from Me, as object; you have left your first love; you have got away from your first love. Now that is very solemn; Precious though it be to dwell upon the power of the object, it is intensely solemn to think that there may be all kinds of service at our hands, but if Christ is not the center, and the spring, and the source, it is of no value whatever, in His eyes. And it is not only positive labor; it may be even the judgment of evil. I think it is well, we should have all these things plainly and clearly, in the fulness of truth, before our souls. There may be judgment of evil, and Christ not its object, in the heart. And why should He, the blessed lover of His own, care for all that, if He is not the object? How could it ever meet his heart?

If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (Cant. 8:7).

Do you think it could ever satisfy the longings of His heart, if He is not the object? Oh, never for a moment! He must be the spring, and the source, and the outgoing, and the power, of everything about his own, individually and collectively. He must be the One who commands every movement, and awakens every motive of the breast. If it be not so, all is vain. And that is what I understand the Lord Jesus Christ to mean, by those very touching and very solemn words,

Thou hast left thy first love.

I do not understand the first love to be their love, because their love was a created thing. You have left your first love, you have left that which is the spring of all loyalty and affection; you have left the love of Christ.

And I believe it is the same within ourselves. Look at the history of any departure or declension, and you will ever find this, that departure or declension begins inside, in the heart; not outside, in the feet. It may be very slow, but it is like some diseases, slow but sure; unless God, in His wonderful mercy, arrest it; but declension begins inside. I never knew it otherwise, nor was I ever made conscious in my own soul, of coldness, and distance, and darkness, and dullness, that it was not so. Oh, those seasons and times, when the wheels of the soul, as it were, drag heavily! What is the secret of it? Christ is not the all of the soul. Christ is not filling the vision of the soul; Christ’s love, Christ’s affection, Christ’s thoughts, Christ’s heart, Christ’s yearnings, yea, all that Christ Himself is, in His blessedness -- Oh, that is the secret. Is it any wonder, if you go away from the fire, that you should feel cold? And is it any wonder, if you go away from the warmth of His blessed heart, into the cold icy regions of your own, that you should feel benumbed in your affections? Be assured, brethren, the secret lies here. It is getting away from Christ and from His love. And I believe it is a more easy matter than is often thought. Because, if you begin to think of your affliction and your love, and your devotedness, and your work, and your service, Christ is practically displaced: it is yourself that is before your own eyes, and not Christ. It was so with Peter, he trusted his own heart’s affection for Christ, and you know the result. If it be work or service for the Lord, oh, let it be connected with the Christ; we get the measure and value of everything when we bring in Christ. Connect everything with Christ, by bringing in Christ.

Take, for instance, the things that agitate our hearts in every-day life, which relate to ourselves individually, to our domestic circles, or our businesses, or professions; for be assured, this is a most eminently practical subject; for instance, we have a very difficult matter before us, we really do not know how to act; if a number of paths lie before us, and we do not know which to take; some new course presents itself to us and we know not what to do; or, it may be hedged up in business matters, and we know not how to act; bring in Christ, and the whole thing is simple. But you say, If I bring in Christ it will involve suffering; how true, and shall we also say, how blessed to have found for ourselves in this world, an object worthy of all suffering, shame, and loss and because it is so, to esteem the path of suffering, a real glory.

And it is to be feared we have all been shrinking from this path. Is it not just the very one thing we have kept out of our calculations? And do we not go any way round to avoid it? But, if Christ is before you, it is the very thing you cannot escape; and if you make Christ your object, you must suffer; if you make Christ the object of your heart’s affections, you must have loss. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” It is given to you; it is part of His royal bounty, so to speak, to you. What a blessed new way to look at it; it is part of His own heart’s dowry to His people to give them to suffer for Him; “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” “For, verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation.” Would to God that it was more suffering for His sake! Alas! we suffer too often for our own follies, for our foolishness, our shortcomings, our waywardness, our going out of the narrow path. But oh! to suffer for His sake; there is a sweetness when you do suffer for Christ’s sake; it is tinged with all the divine love that comes from His heart, when you suffer for His sake; there is a peculiarity, in suffering for the sake of such a Master, and such a Lord: there is no bitterness attached to it. When we suffer as the consequence of our own ways, there is bitterness in it.

If we have to bow our heads down, and own the government of God, and our Father’s dealings with us, there is no doubt a measure of rest about it, to say, Lord, You are right in putting that upon me; I justify You in all Your ways, I justify You in the stripes and in the strokes I have received: I have deserved it, and You are holy and loving in doing it: but then, there is a want of the joy about that, which is found in the other. But in suffering for Christ’s sake, there is a sweetness, and a consolation, and cheer peculiar to itself; like the apostles when beaten, and then let go,

and they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

But all this was found in this church, though they were poor feeble things: what a cheer to the heart it is to think of it; and it moreover shows it is not great numbers, nor great strength, as men would say, nor great power. He says to them, “Thou hast little strength.” You have nothing to boast of, you are but
a feeble folk, despicable in the eyes of men; you have nothing
to show, nothing in fact to accredit you, but I am enshrined in
your heart’s affections; your thoughts center in me, my word
is everything to you; my name is everything to you; it is that
which controls you, this is that originates everything in your
thoughts, which rules you, and forms the motives in your soul.
How blessed it is when the motives, the spring of the whole
moral being, are formed positively by such an object as
Himself, in everything!

“Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name,”
and further as well, “thou hast kept the word of my patience.”
Is there anything more precious, more sweet to the heart than
such ‘approval? But here is set forth, in all its parts, the power
of this blessed object in its attractive fulness, and blessedness;
and in its expulsive power. Let me further supply you with an
illustration of this, which will show how much there is of
preservation in the Object as well, I believe not only are our
affections and hearts governed by true and right motives, but
I am assured we are also preserved. Ten thousand things, that
are snares to people, would not be snares at all, if Christ as our
object were before the soul. Do I hear it said, Oh! we have to
go through this great world with all its attractions, its folly and
tinsel, and giddy show, and all the allurements of Satan? I
admit it fully, and in all its force, but look, for instance, at
yonder anxious mother. There she is, a poor heart-broken
thing, hurrying along the most attractive thoroughfare of the
West End, with every conceivable thing there, that appeals to,
as well as ministers to all the strength of evil in the human
heart, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride
of life.” Is she attracted by it? Not in the least. That woman
presses on, nothing daunts her; she does not stop to look at
anything, she is not detained by anything; she is hurrying on as
if she were the only person in that crowded street. Why? Her
little, darling, precious child has been run over in that street.
That is her object, and there is the power of that object. The
affections of that woman are riveted upon her child, her own
child, and she is perfectly blind and deaf, to every sight and
sound, and presses on to reach that object. And so should it be
with us, if Christ as our object were before the soul. And though we were going along through
this poor wretched world, with all its allurements and pitfalls,
if Christ were only before us objectively, if His matchless
beauty were only filling our gaze, if His intrinsic worth were
only occupying our affections, and commanding our souls —
how different! Well may we sing:

O fix our earnest gaze so wholly, Lord, on Thee.
And now, mark, there is one thing further, and that is the last
point I shall dwell upon this evening. Not merely is there
preservation — the preservation is just as I have shown you —
but there is something further, there is a power to act upon
others. I am sure there is one thing that ought to exercise all
our hearts increasingly, and that is, our little ability to
influence people — I mean morally. I esteem as utterly without
value all mere natural influence. Indeed, I believe it is
pernicious; I do not believe in any influence as being of any
real worth, save divine influence. I am speaking, observe,
entirely of divine things. I do now refer to people getting
power over others, in a natural way; there is such a thing, and
you will always find grief and sorrow as the almost invariable
result of it: but what I now speak of, is our being divinely able
to influence one another. Now, mark it here, John’s whole
affection, his whole heart, his whole soul, is fixed upon this
Lamb of God, “Behold the Lamb of God,” this was the object
commanding every part of his being. And look at the effect.
“The two disciples heard him speak”; and what did they do?
Followed John? Alas, that is what is so common on all sides.
People have thus followed their favorite teachers and leaders.
Let us, beloved brethren, be increasingly on our guard, as to
to all that kind of thing. What is it all worth? What is the good of
it all? I do not find persons who are thus attracted, in any
remarkable way devoted to Christ; they may be devoted to the
poor instrument, to the poor vessel, attached to the poor voice,
but what is the value of it? What service is there in it for
Christ? What glory to Him, and His truth? “The two disciples
heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” The attractiveness,
the power that attaches souls to Christ, is the thing to seek
after. That has the value of eternity about it; that is what is
grateful to the heart of Christ. “The two disciples heard him
speak, and they followed Jesus.” There was a drawing of
wonderful blessedness. There was the attractive power of
Christ coming out through the man, whose whole soul was set
upon that object; this, beloved friends, left its own mark upon
those who were around, who witnessed it, and looked on it.
“They followed Jesus.”

And permit me to say this affectionately to you: God
knows how deep the longings, and how oft expressed are the
desires in each of our hearts, but here is the power to long for,
here is the influence to pray for, and these are the effects to be
produced. Let us carefully remember, it was not the ministry
of the word at all, and yet that ministry is very like it. It was
not addressed to them. John was not trying to influence them;
he was not seeking to win them, and yet they were won; but
they were won for Christ. They were not won for John; they
were not won for his cause, or his interest, or his person; but
they were won for Christ. “The two disciples heard him
speak”; and what was their object? What glory to Him, and His truth? “The two disciples
heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” And why did they follow Him? What
was their object? Well, I can readily conceive how they must
have said to themselves, That must be a wonderful Jesus,
and they were won for Christ. “The two disciples heard him
speak, and they followed Jesus.” And why did they follow Him? What
was their object? Well, I can readily conceive how they must
have said to themselves, That must be a wonderful Jesus,
and thus they were attracted to Jesus. And is not, in reality,
that true ministry? This was not ministry, properly so called,
and yet what ministry like it? It reminds one of what the
apostle says to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 1:5),

Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in
power, and in the holy Ghost, and in much assurance.
There was the true and real power. It is the power of a Person
who has displaced everything in one’s affections, and filled
every longing of one’s heart. Oh, what a Person, what a
Power!

The Lord give us to know more of that kind of influence,
this passive kind of influence. I remember it was once said to
me by another, “Well, I like to be in the company of that dear
servant of God, even if he never says a word; it is a joy to be
in his company.” I said, “Why?” The reply came at once: “I
never get into that person’s company, that he does not always connect me with Christ.” Oh that is the kind of influence, beloved friends. That is true, divine influence upon the souls and affections of one another down here; an influence that will connect you practically with Christ. And it is not at all, I may say, words. It is easy to have plenty of words, ready expressions, and exalted utterances, but you will find they are little more than sentiment. And what is the good of sentiment? It is no sooner there than gone; there is no substantiality in it. But, oh! it is delightful to see a heart whom Christ has satisfied, whom Christ has met; to see an affection which Christ has filled. And that is the real power, that is the true influence, a person who can turn his back upon everything here, and to whom everything is of little consequence, of little moment, but Christ. “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”

And now, one word more, and then I have finished for this night. When Jesus saw them following, He said to them, “What seek ye?” And they, in all the eagerness of their hearts, “Where dwellest thou?” The point with them was a continuance with Him. And we hear no more of John, it is all Jesus now. The voice is gone; the One, who was its all, remains. Oh, how blessed! The voice is all hushed; and the Person, of whom it testified, remains. That very voice, that cried in the wilderness, is now still. Where do you dwell? “Come and see,” He says. He is the most accessible of all. How very different it is, beloved brethren, as to us. What a contrast to all, even the best, of His own beloved saints, in this world; how little accessible we are, what reserve there is about us, what distance, what coldness, what harshness even, and severity have you not often heard, “Well, nothing would induce me to apply to that person, in any emergency”? Why? Alas! I fear the answer would be everything reflecting upon the person, it would be said, There is so much repelling about him. That was not Christ.

“Week and see.” “They came and saw where he dwelt” -- a humble place, I believe, nothing attractive about it, none of the furniture of this world about it, none of the greatness of this world about it -- but how precious it was, “They abode with him.” It was the company, and not the place; “they abode with him.” It was not the comfort. As some one has said, “Company is greater than comfort.” It was the company; “they abode with him”; they looked out for a continuance with Him; it was not a mere passing visit; it was not merely to see what sort of a place without name, and without title, and without anything here. It was His company they were seeking for. They were won for Him, drawn to Him, attracted to Him, and they abode with Him. That is the real contact.

I commend this subject to you, this wonderful objective power of Christianity, the wonderful power of an object, this blessed, precious, living Christ up there, at God’s right hand, in heavenly glory, there filling every out-going feeling, every desire, the one object, I am bold to say tonight, the one object that interests every created intelligence there -- a Man in heaven. Never was such an object of interest in heaven, a Man in heaven, and such a Man. I like that verse of Hart’s hymn:

A Man there is, a real Man.

A Man in heaven, a living Man, up there, upon the throne of God, exalted, glorified, to whom we can speak, to whom we can come, whom we can hear, whom we can address ourselves to, whom we can have companionship with. And, oh! what a comfort to think that there is One there, who is worthy of losing everything for, on earth! What a comfort! He is worthy of all that can be endured. Thus one is repaid; we are no losers; there is what is called loss, and yet it is not loss, it is the gain of a precious Christ, filling every affection.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give our souls to taste it increasingly: -- His own intrinsic beauty and blessedness for the little while we remain here, to hear His voice. It is but a little moment, and we shall hear that voice, and taste afresh that love. But, oh! beloved, whilst we wait to hear that voice, may we find everything in Him, and so press on after Him increasingly. The Lord grant it, beloved friends, and make His own Son increasingly precious to us, for His blessed name’s sake.

Chapter 4:
The Divine Center
John 1:38-43

We were dwelling last week, beloved brethren, on the divine object, which was found in the blessed One. He was John’s object, and it was the delight and personal satisfaction of his heart, in Christ Himself, that was the power of attracting others to Christ. That was the subject which occupied us, when we were together this night week. And now, there is another subject in this same chapter, which is closely connected with it, which is greatly on my heart to bring before you this evening, namely, that the same Christ who is the divine object to faith, is also the only divine center. He is the center, as he is the object. And there is a further glory of His too, to which I would hope to call your attention, another time, and that is, that He is the divine path. For He is, blessed for ever be His name, all three things. He is the true object, He is the true center, and He is the true path. And think of all the blessedness summed up in those three things that we find in Him even in Himself. And observe, that changing time, and events, and circumstances on earth, can never, in the least, interfere with all the substantial reality of these things. We may change, we do, as a matter of fact, alter; we may deteriorate, and our hearts may get cold, and our feet may get off the line, and off the path; but the path is there, the line is there, all the same. And here, I doubt not, is how the mistake is made so very frequently, that when the poor, wandering, wayward feet, do get off the path and get off the line, Satan tempts the straying one to think that the center is gone, and the line is gone, and the path is gone. It is just one of his wiles and snares, that when he has succeeded in dislodging our poor feet from off it, he would fain persuade us that the whole thing is broken up, whilst, in reality, we have turned aside. We have left it, if you like, we may have given it up; but this abides, Christ is there, the thing that we left is there, unchanged, and unaltered, and unalterable for ever.

Now, it is on this blessed subject of Christ as the true
center, that I desire to speak; because he was the center here, the center of the gathering of this remnant. I quite admit that historically this remnant found here, did not, in their apprehension of Christ, go beyond the fact of His Messiahship; they were gathered to Him (speaking now of what the exposition of the scripture really is) as the Messiah, that is, they owned Him in His Messiahship. That is very clear. But then, there is a great principle of grace here, a great comfort for our hearts, which has a peculiar cheer also for us, namely, that, if we accept Christ, we accept all that is in Christ, and we have all that is in Christ, although we ourselves may perceive but the very smallest part of His glory, and take in but the very least part of His glory; still, if we have Christ at all, if Christ is our center, if we have accepted Him as such, we have accepted all that Christ is. We may not apprehend it, but it is impossible to take away from the fulness that is in Christ, and in having Christ, we have all that Christ is. That, I repeat, is an immense comfort for the soul, an immense solace for us all. So we may say here, though this little feeble remnant, which they were, only apprehended Him in what we may call the less part of His glory, that is to say, in His Messiahship, still they accepted Christ, and were gathered [together] to Christ as their center; and all that Christ was, blessed be His name, was there for them.

But there is more than that in it. Christ accepted this place. And think what a comfort that is, beloved friends, that He was pleased, in His grace, to accept it. It was not only that they were brought there, gathered there; for in truth, John attached them to Him, and it was the effect of John’s ministry that did gather them to Him; it was the supreme delight of his heart in Christ Himself, that did attach them to Him, but Christ accepted the place of center. And you find his acceptance of it, in those sweet and blessed words which He spoke, when they accepted the place of center. And all that Christ was, blessed be His name, was there for them.

A most affecting reality for our hearts. I have often thought of it lately, and dwelt upon it in wonder, even that the poorest of His sheep, the poorest of Christ’s own in this world, have more than He had. There was none upon earth, neither was there amongst the sons of men, any who was in circumstances of strangership, and pilgrimage, and poverty, as He was; alone, we may say, both in His life and in His death; in His birth, in His life, and in His death, “the Lord of glory” was alone. And therefore, as to the outward circumstances of His path and place here, there was nothing in them, save lowliness and poverty; there was nothing of man or earth to distinguish them; but there was a precious attractiveness about the Person whose circumstances they were: They abode with him”; He was everything. He kept them, as He drew them; He detained them, as He both won their hearts and attracted them; He engaged their affections, and He delighted their souls, and there they stayed. But it does not go beyond that. I think it well we should carefully note and observe the true meaning of each passage; here it does not go beyond, in the literal unfolding of the passage, the remnant’s acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus. That was the character of the testimony, and that was the nature of the reception they gave Him. And therefore, observe, I am only using the scriptures now, in order to set forth in scriptural illustration, that which is very distinctly brought out in other scriptures.

Now I will ask you to turn with me to a scripture or two, so as to bring this great truth, of a divine center, down to ourselves now. And the first scripture that I will ask you to turn to, for a moment, is in Matt. 16:13-16,

Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Now mark, beloved friends, how far we have got beyond the truth of the Messiah-ship of the Lord Jesus Christ, precious and wonderful as the grace and the glory connected with His office as Messiah are; but we have got far beyond that now in this scripture. If we have come to the Christ, the Son of the living God -- and that revelation made known by the Father, and not reached or attained by any mental process of man, or reasoning of man, but a divine revelation from heaven concerning His Person -- see how much we have advanced.

And look at the moment this was brought out too, for it is all important. There were all kinds of curious speculations afloat, about the Lord Jesus Christ, at this time. Men were debating about Him, disputing about Him, reasoning about Him and speculating about Him. The speculations that were in the minds of men about Christ, are in minds about the truth today; there is nothing new in these things. Men always speculated, and always reasoned. If they reason about Christ, they will reason about His truth. If they speculated about Christ, they will speculate about His truth; there is no difference. Men reasoned about Christ in His day, and speculated and talked about Him, just as they do about the truth of God now; they reason about it and speculate about it. It is just the same, there is no difference. And if the holiest of all
subjects, even Himself, did not prevent that rude intellectuality which marked man then, neither does His precious truth; it is not safe now, any more than His own Person then. It is just the same thing. One said one thing, and one another; and very little was there in any heart, of care as to who He was. Because I suppose it is not too much to say, whether it be Christ, or the truth of God, in proportion as either His Person or His word becomes a mere subject upon which the mental process of our minds is allowed to work, the preciousness and the soul-delight of it are gone. There is no surer way to destroy everything like real soul-enjoyment of, and feeding upon Christ, and upon the word of God, than to subject it to the microscopic process of our own poor, wretched brains; it is destructive of everything like real profit by, and comfort of, the scriptures. What a profoundly blessed moment when we sit down, with the precious word of God and truth of God, to feed on it! What a different thing that is to merely occupying our carnal minds by scrutinizing it, or examining it, or treating it as a subject to be looked at, as it were, with a microscope, just as a person would investigate science -- but to sit down really to be fed by it, what a different thing! and this too in the need of our souls, yea, in their deep need. Now you see there is not anything of that here; as to the blessed One Himself, it was all nothing but speculation and curious inquiry.

Now it is very precious to the heart, and comforting too, that the Lord says this; it is the Lord who raises the question, observe; it is not Peter’s question. It is not Peter who asks the Lord anything, or that Andrew asks Him anything; not one of them; but the Lord proposes the question Himself -- “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” It is a blessed thing to hear Christ Himself beginning to bring out all these things, but it is Christ who does it; it is not man who brings them out, it is the Lord. And therefore, He it is who proposes the question the bringing of them out. “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” He must have it out is the secret of this question of the Lord, “He could not be hid”; blessed, precious reality! It was as if He said, I will initiate it, I will propose it. Just as the blessed God did in the case of Job; it was not Satan began with Job at all. God said to Satan, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” It was God who proposed the subject, just as Christ proposes the subject here. And that question elicited just where they all were. There was curious inquiry, and speculation, and reasoning, and gossip, even about Him.

And now mark further, He says, “But whom do ye say that I am?” He brings it home then to the narrow circle of the disciples. It was not merely the wide circle of men generally, but He brings it home now to the personal circle with Himself -- “Whom do ye say?” How solemn that is! Think of it. The Lord would have this out, and have it out from us too, -- “Whom do ye say that I am?” And then you get from the man that was taught from heaven, taught of God, by a revelation from the Father, those precious words, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Oh, what a confession of His Person and glory! what a foundation too, and center of this great superstructure that He Himself was about to raise, was that! Before He says a word, mark you, before there is a hint even about that, before He gives a single utterance as to what was the eternal purpose, and what He was about to do now, the center of it all, the foundation of it all, in His own blessed Person, stands out so blessedly here -- “The Christ, the Son of the living God.” How blessed, beloved friends, to look at such a center as that. Oh, what a comfort for us to think, that such an One as Himself is the center, that He is the foundation. The foundation of what? I suppose we should all own, gladly and willingly own that He is the foundation of our souls’ hopes for time and eternity; but here it is the foundation, beloved friends, not of an individual, but of the church. He is not merely the foundation of our soul’ hopes -- thank God, He is that; and a great deal more beside, for who could say all He is? -- but it is here the foundation of the church, the foundation of the assembly; that upon which the assembly, His body, the church, rests; He is the divine basis upon which the whole superstructure, that He rears, stands. I say, what a comfort that is! I think it an unspeakable comfort in these moments, when everybody is looking at the outward building, and looking at it too, as it is crumbling in the hands of men, to be free enough in spirit to turn and look at the foundation. Oh, let us dwell much upon the foundation; and not only let us see the eternal stability of the foundation, but let us think of that building upon which no man’s hand is lifted up, but which Christ builds.

What a mercy, in any degree, it is to get our consciences, hearts, and souls filled with this divine center, and this divine superstructure, I quite admit the existence of that which man builds; I quite admit that solemn evidence of failing responsibility, and nothing shows man’s utter failure as a builder more than the present state of the house of God; that was indeed committed in responsibility to man as a builder, but any one who ever thought or imagined that anything, but failure, could come out of his operations, must have but a poor scriptural knowledge of what man is; in very truth, man never touched anything, man never put his finger upon anything yet, that he did not leave upon it the mark of the incompetency of the being that touched it. There never was anything that God ever set up, upon this earth, and committed to the responsibility of man, in any measure, or any way, that man did not utterly break down, and fail in respect of it; and whether you take the church now, or anything that formerly was committed to human responsibility, you will find the same thing. There is nothing new. What is said in this world, as to history, is true as to the history of man. You have, no doubt, often heard it said that “history repeats itself”: man, I say, repeats himself; man also repeats his ways; nothing is more sure than this, beloved brethren, that man is ever the same. The history of the ages declares plainly the solemn fact, in relation to every part of the responsibility, with which man has been entrusted by God. You will always find it is the same sad issue -- failure, failure all the way.

Take, for instance, the creation. Before sin entered at all into this world, when God made everything, and delighted in what He had made, and rested in what He had made, and looked upon all that He had made, “and behold it was very good,” God could rest in that creation then, the fruit of His own skill and handiwork -- and now, that very creation is groaning. Why? Man has been in it; creation groans because man has been at work in it. He was entrusted with headship there, it was placed under him in headship and responsibility,
and all creation groans. Mark that passage -- a most instructive passage for our souls, that: “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” And why? It was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who hath subjected it, that is, Adam; Adam subjected God’s creation to vanity; Adam was the head of this creation, and was placed in responsibility in, and headship over it, and the whole scene partakes of the consequences of his failure. Hence we find it groaning, and it is groaning now. It is the same thing in regard to all else. If the church is committed, as a responsible testimony and witness, to man, and he is placed as a builder in it, it is the same thing -- incompetency, inability, failure, break-down -- just the same sad story. But then, what a rich comfort for the heart is this, that there is a sphere in which he is not allowed to enter at all; there is a sphere in which he builds nothing; there is a sphere in which he does not add one stone to the superstructure. That is what Christ builds, not only what Christ builds, but there is the foundation upon which Christ builds, and there is the center of that which Christ builds, which He Himself is -- and that is what we have here. Before ever He speaks of the building, He reveals -- and from heaven too -- the foundation and the center. “Thou art the Christ.” Peter was taught of God, a revelation from the Father; not a development of his own mind, not an evolution of his own mind, but a distinct revelation from the Father in heaven; a heavenly revelation from God to Peter. It is that which Peter confesses. How magnificent it is: “Thou art the Christ,” thou art God’s anointed One -- “the Son of the living God.”

And now, mark, beloved friends, further, for a moment. Just look, in reference to this center, and this foundation, at v. 17: “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.” “Flesh and blood.” Some people think that flesh and blood can do anything, that flesh and blood is competent for anything, that flesh and blood is equal to anything. Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee; as if He said, This communication is outside the range of flesh and blood. “Flesh and blood,” of course, means man as he is constituted down here in his present state and form: he is not competent to take in God’s revelation, he cannot unravel it, he cannot know it. (Cp. 1 Cor. 2:11-16.) And more than that though I do not dwell upon it now, not merely is there this revelation from God Himself, but, if you will carefully look at the scripture, you will find there is the Holy Ghost that dwells in us, to give us power to understand the revelation; not only is there the revelation, that God Himself has been pleased to make of His mind, in this precious book, but the Holy Ghost dwells in us, in order that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. Scholarship will not do it, the most acute perception of the mind of man, the clearest head, cannot reach God’s revelation. If it could, it would not be God’s revelation. If God’s revelation were within the range and scope of the natural faculties and power of the human mind, it would cease to be the revelation of God. Being the revelation of God, it must be understood by Him who is God. Just as He is the communicator of it, He is the One by whom alone we can understand it. I know this is not palatable to this reason-loving age; people do not like that which makes nothing of them. Man does not like that which puts him outside altogether, and makes him merely a recipient; but it is the truth of God, and the meek will say, with all their hearts, Thank God, it is so. The true heart, that is taught of Him, glories in it, delights in it; adores God. for the perfection of His grace and wisdom in the whole matter.

Now further, mark this, in connection with our subject, not only was the center outside of the range of human ken and human thought, but observe these words: “I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.” Here we have the superstructure, the building, and Christ the builder, and the revelation of what He was about to do. Here is the church mentioned for the first time: “Upon this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” How blessed to think of that! Such was the nature of the foundation, such the nature of the center, such the nature of the corner-stone, such the nature of the whole of this marvelous and wonderful building that He was about to rear, -- no power of man could attain to the knowledge of it, and no power of hell could prevail, in anywise, against it, so as to destroy the superstructure in the smallest or the least degree. What a wonderful and blessed reality!

And though I do not like here to refer to a subject, now causing so much agitation, still, at the same time, it is almost impossible for one’s ears not to hear the sounds that fill the air through which we pass at the present moment; why, men are agitated, to the very depths of their souls, about all the things that are coming on the earth, and all the things that are likely to happen, and the upheavings and projected overturnings of everything that is constituted; and what may yet be, none can tell: the confiscation of property, the disestablishment of what is called the church. Oh, beloved brethren, what a reality to be able to look at what cannot be disestablished, and what cannot be disendowed, and to be connected practically with what neither devil nor man can touch! Think of that. Think of the immense comfort to the soul that is, to be connected with a divine thing of which a divine Person is the foundation, and a divine Person is the center, and which derives all the strength, and all the power, and all the durability that belong to it, from that upon which it rests. What a comfort that is! Could anything be more blessed for the soul, could anything be more comforting for the soul, than to know that? Mark it well; here is that which nothing can touch; the gates of hell, the power of man, the intrigues of Satan, all the effort, and all the contrivance that is peculiar to devils, or that is found even in men -- earth or hell, devils or men, cannot prevail against it.

Now mark, a moment further, as to this center. We have had the revelation of the center; and we have had the revelation of the future building, of which He was to be the center; and the foundation as well, in His own blessed Person; but now look at how this is brought about. Observe the twenty-first verse of Matt. 16, “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.” Now this sets forth His death, as the basis, on which the blessed Lord would build this wonderful assembly of His. The foundation was to be
His own Person. He was to be both center and foundation of the building, but was to pass through death; it was not a living Christ; the church was not built upon a living Christ, the assembly was not to be founded upon a living Christ, but upon a Christ who should go through death, who should rise again, and ascend into the heavens; His sufferings and glory were to be the firm foundation of the church; it was to be a dead, risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. And, beloved friends, for ourselves individually, -- oh, let me speak affectionately to you for a moment as to this -- it is just the same for our souls individually, as for that which is corporate. What was a living Christ down here upon earth, in all His blessed, gracious ways among men? He was the perfect manifestation of God in all His wondrous kindness and goodness. Never was there such grace, never such kindness, never such tenderness, never such mercy, as was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man down here in this world. But all the worse for you and me as sinners! Why, there was not a single answer in man's heart to it. They condemned that blessed One, spotless, and precious, and holy as He was, in all His ways down here, and they nailed Him to a cross. "For my love they are my adversaries," He says (Psa. 109:4). Man hated Him for His goodness, and therefore a living Christ, a Christ on earth blessed and perfect though He was, the very incarnation of goodness, was a testing Christ. Man was tested. All men stood out in their true character as was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man down here in this world. But all the worse for you and me as sinners! Why, there was not a single answer in man's heart to it. They condemned that blessed One, spotless, and precious, and holy as He was, in all His ways down here, and they nailed Him to a cross. "For my love they are my adversaries," He says (Psa. 109:4). Man hated Him for His goodness, and therefore a living Christ, a Christ on earth blessed and perfect though He was, the very incarnation of goodness, was a testing Christ. Man was tested. All men stood out in their true character before Him, as He was here in this world. His very goodness exposed all the vileness, and all the hatred, and all the enmity that was in man's heart. But then, mark! a dead Christ, a Christ who has endured death, a Christ who bears the judgment, a Christ who meets all the holy, righteous requirements of a holy God upon the cross, who drank that dreadful cup, who goes through it all, and endures it all, and rises again from the dead, He is the One who has wrought atonement; atonement was there wrought by Him; propitiation and substitution also flow from this atonement which has been wrought. Here then, beloved friends, is the grand basis of our soul's hopes; we need no other, could have no other. The assembly, too, is built upon His Person, as the One who died and rose again. Let me ask you, if Christ had not died and risen again, what would become of you and me? what hope should we have? Hearken to the words of the Spirit, through the apostle: "If Christ be not risen you are yet in your sins": "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"; if He has not risen from among the dead, there is no foundation for our souls. It would be impossible to overestimate the deep importance of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord brings in here, in a most distinct way, His death and His resurrection, in connection with the unfolding of this magnificent superstructure He was about to build, and of which He was to be the center and the foundation. The moment He speaks of it, He announces His death and rising again, and tells His disciples from that time, He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Suffering, killed, rising again; observe how everything here is in relation to the blessed, precious foundation, of the assembly He was about to build.

And now there is one other subject here, before we pass from this chapter, which connects itself with what has been before us; it is exceedingly solemn for us all, I mean for all who are Christians here. Look at that twenty-fourth verse: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." There we have discipleship brought in, but discipleship brought in, in connection with what? In connection with a living Christ? No, beloved friends. In connection with a testing Christ? No; but in connection with a hated, rejected, killed, crucified Christ. And observe, it is not exactly martyrdom here, it is the reality of being in Christ's path of rejection and shame; it is indeed the following a Christ, who was the rejected One, the hated, and scorned, and crucified One down here, by all in this world. How striking, and how remarkable, that this question of discipleship should connect itself, at once, with His precious death. He never says a word about discipleship until He unfolds His death. The moment He introduces His death, the treatment He was to receive at the hands of men, His rising again from the dead or being raised up by the glory of the Father, then it is He announces the disciples' path; then He says to His own, if any one will follow me, "if any man will come after me"; if it be in very truth a following of this Christ, of cleaving to Him, of regarding Him so as properly to form the hope and expectation of the heart, that path is the only way. Beloved, are we really set on this? Are we up to it? Are we seeking to follow a scorned, rejected, hated, crucified Christ? Is that the constant aim and purpose of our hearts? Alas, how little the world or men can see in us; how little does it seem to be before our hearts and minds as Christians, in the true and real sense of the word! Is it a joy to us to receive the same thing that He has received? Is it an honor to us to have the treatment that was given Him, given us? Oh, how different from all our natural thoughts, how widely different! How it crosses all the purely natural thoughts of our hearts; how we shrink from the contumely, shame, scorn, rejection, hatred, despising, at the hands of the world, just as Christ received it, in His own blessed, precious ways down here. And yet, this is His path. The Lord connects discipleship with His own rejection, His own death, His own refusal at the hands of man.

Now let me call your attention, for a few moments more, to another chapter in this same gospel, which will bring the subject more directly to ourselves. In Matt. 18:19, 20, which, you will find, is connected distinctly with this, He says, in reference to prayer -- shall I say prayer in divine concert? -- "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, "observe the reason," where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now here we have the blessedness of this center, and that, too, contemplating the very lowest conceivable state of the church's history on earth. For I suppose, beloved friends, we cannot conceive anything smaller in the eyes of men than two people. "What is two?" "Why there are only two!" The Lord contemplates the very weakest, He provides for the very lowest, the most abject condition of the assembly's history, in the world. He comes down to two; if there be but two. And now, think of the blessedness of that for a moment. It would be
hardly possible to conceive of anything less than two poor, wretched, feeble things of the earth. Two poor weak things, what could they do? Oh, beloved, it is that very weakness which brings out the divine preciousness of those words, “There am I.” The power is in, “There am I.” The vitality is in, “There am I.” The competency for everything is in, “There am I.” The sufficiency for every moment is in, “There am I.” And, strange to say, precious as it is, that truth is just the very one we are in danger of letting slip. The very thing we are in danger of parting with; Lord, keep it in our hearts! Lord, enshrine in our affections, the blessed fact of the presence of the One, who is the center; in the midst of two or three gathered together to His name. And you will find frequently and constantly, how little even it is in the thoughts of the saints.

If there be a difficulty to be undertaken, if there be a question to be faced, or a danger to be undergone, the thought oftener is, who is a wise counselor amongst men that can help? Where is the prudent, longheaded man, that can bring to bear on the difficulty, his power of reason and his foresight? How little is the thought, “There am I,” if there are but two or three gathered together to my name. And, beloved brethren, in that thought, at this moment, there is to my own soul unspeakable comfort. There is nothing that I know of so outrageous, no greater affront to His name, no greater disparagement to His glory, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and to the ages of ages, than to think that, because these times are days of darkness, and difficulty, and upheaving upon all sides, Christ is not the same! Oh, may such a thought be forbidden entrance into our minds, may such a slight upon Christ be resented by us with all our earnestness. None but a traitor could entertain the idea of turning away from the truth to individuality, because the days are dark and difficult; none but a traitor, I repeat, would surrender the very foundation of the whole thing, and give up the preciousness and reality of the name of Christ even for the weakest and lowest condition of the church’s history upon earth; -- I cannot conceive a heart loyal to Christ, adopting such a creed as that -- or pleading as an excuse, darkness and difficulty, for turning aside to wretched, selfish individuality, which, after all, is only contemptible, miserable pride, self-sufficient pride. Oh I thank God for the unspeakable resource of “There am I”; a divine resource, contemplating too days of ruin, contemplating the break-up of everything outward, of everything that was once committed to human responsibility and trust; deeply solemn, as it is, at the present moment; yet there remains the unalterable power and sufficiency -- for the darkest days and brightest days alike; for times of storm and tempest, as of calm -- of the divine promise, “There am I.” I admit that faith is needed to profit by it; but, may I ask, what part of God’s revealed will and truth, as set forth in His own word, is of any profit, save as there is faith, so as to get the good of it? Of course, there must be faith -- “the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” -- there is not a truth of God we either apprehend, or use, or enjoy, except by faith. But then, thank God, there is something to have faith in; thank God, there is an unchanging stability in that promise, as there is an unchanging stability in the Person who makes it. There is the resource of faith. Tell me when that was ever revoked; show me when He ever withdrew that; show me, in the living word of God, in the NT scriptures, any such revocation!

Search as we may, through it -- into the epistles, which, describe the state of the church in the latter times and last days, where the history is brought down to the very moment we are in -- and point out, if you can, a single line of scripture that calls back that precious promise and leaves us now without it: There is none, beloved friends; it remains in all its force, and in all its fulness, and it remains through all time. And, therefore, because He Himself in giving the promise, contemplates the lowest and most abject state of the church, all the sufficiency is unfolded in His own words, words which set forth His sufficiency; “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I.” Yes, as the center, as the foundation, as the competency, as the wisdom, as the power: “there am I” for discernment; “there am I” for understanding; “there am I” for action; “there am I” for everything [Matt. 18:20].

The Lord give us more faith, true faith, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, more faith in the One that says He is there amongst those gathered to His name.

And I desire earnestly to call your attention to another point; it is important that every word should get its full and clear place. He does not say, Where two or three gather to my name -- that is a very different thing. He does not say, Where two or three are met in my name. He does not say, Where two or three come in my name. That would make the whole thing different: and I will tell you why; because that would connect practically the preciousness of this sufficiency, with man’s will -- and it is man’s will that is distinctly shut out. He does say, “Where two or three are gathered together unto my name.” And just on this account, that as there is a center, and as there is a foundation, and as there is an object -- and He who is the center is both object and foundation -- so there is a gatherer, and the gatherer is as divine as the Person to whom He thus gathers. It is so blessed to see man’s will shut out. Man is ever the intruder; there is no room left for his wretched will at all; man has ever sought to intrude into the most sacred things of God. Vain man, proud and foolish man would assert himself he would like to have a door left open for him, I may come, or any one may come.

No, beloved friends, where two or three are gathered, that is, by the Holy Ghost, to that blessed, precious name, there Christ is. And faith sees Him and adores Him; faith, too, knows His sufficiency, and faith rejoices in His sufficiency, and faith refuses everything that does not emanate from Him, that does not proceed from Him.

Now nothing could be more blessed for our souls than all that; and instead of difficult moments interfering with it, they are just the moments to prove the reality of it. But there, alas! it too often happens that difficulties, and pressure and trial, and all that kind of testing, bring out how little faith we have in Christ’s resources, how little confidence there is in Himself. Just so we find it individually in our difficulties. I suppose there is not a child of God in this company here tonight that would not own the truth of this -- that when you are exposed
individually to difficulty, and danger, and trial, it just tests how much you have confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and how much He really is before your soul, as the stay of your heart.

Yes, beloved friends, the danger of the church is the danger of the individual; they are precisely the same. I know many a one who has gone on smoothly, whilst as yet there has been no difficulty, or stormy trial, or pressures, nothing, in fact, to cause them uneasiness, and nothing to cause them anxiety or care in their path; but the storm arose, and the wind blew, and then comes the question, how far the soul is trusting in Christ, and having the word of Christ as the stay. Oh, be assured, it is just these very difficulties that bring out the faith and confidence of your heart in that blessed Person. And so it is collectively. I believe, and therefore I confidently speak to you this evening, that the darkest moment, of the history of God’s professing church upon this earth, is the fitting opportunity for proving, and also showing the sufficiency of Christ, to the two or three that are gathered to His name; that it is not the bright moments that show it, so much as the dark moments, the difficult moments. The difficulties, and the perplexities, and the exercises are just the very atmosphere to be assured of the reality, and the preciousness of that blessed presence in the midst.

One little word further with regard to this blessed Person here, this center, this foundation. It is found in another scripture to which I will hardly more than refer, in the book of Revelation, in order to show you how the Lord unfolds Himself in that character to a very feeble company, a feeble few, those whom He speaks of, to the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3). He speaks of them in the character of few, feeble, and little; but look at the way He addresses them. He sets Himself before them, and it is exceedingly interesting for our hearts to see the manner in which He sets Himself before that feeble company in Rev. 3. He says, “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.”

Now, think of the competency expressed in that communication and revelation of Himself. Look at the divine fulness set forth in that word. There is every kind of competency in that revelation of His own blessed Person, to that poor feeble company, whom He appreciated in their devotedness to Himself. But the point here is, who is the One that is before them, and in what character is this foundation and center set before them? “He that is holy”; it is a holy center, it is a holy foundation; it is a true center, it is a true foundation. I do not know anything of a more searching nature to the soul than that. It is not merely that He is a blessed, and sure, and unchanging center; but, He is a holy center, and therefore you must have the holiness that becomes the One around whom you are -- “He that is holy.” You must have holiness and truth; you must have a moral fitness and suitability to Him, in keeping with that revelation of His name. Where, may I ask, is this suitability maintained? Where is that to be found which is in keeping with His name? He, the holy One, and He, the true One, and as such He is the competency, and sufficiency, and power for everything: “He opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man openeth. He has got power; He can open doors as He pleases. You may say, “the doors will be all closed and shut.” I reply, Christ can open them. He can open; and if He open, who can close? and if He shut, who can open? Some, vainly, for ever try to open all kinds of doors, and all sorts of opportunities for themselves.

How different it is to travel in company with this foundation and center, and watch for the doors that Christ opens! “He opens and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens.”

The Lord, in the riches of His grace, give every heart to walk, in faith, round this precious center, and this divine foundation, in all its fulness this evening, and see what there is, as to it, in the scriptures; see what there is in Christ, see what you can find, individually, in Him; see what is there for the church in its weakest moments, in the days of its greatest difficulty, in the moment of its greatest trial; see what Christ is, and can be; our resource on earth, our treasure up there in heaven. The Lord give every heart here to taste it. He can, beloved friends; if there is the least interest in any heart here for Him, if there is the smallest desire to be found in His ways, if there is the faintest, feeblest echo to His own heart’s affection in any heart here, He can open your eyes to see the magnificence of that center, to see the fulness and sufficiency there is in Himself for every occasion, according to His precious words, “There am I” [Matt. 18:20].

The Lord command His blessing on His own word, and may it reach every heart and conscience here, for Jesus Christ’s sake.

Chapter 5: The Divine Path

John 1:43; 12:23-26; 21:18, 19;
Luke 9:57-62; Philippians 3:12-14

The subject here -- one of those precious subjects in this first chapter of John, in addition to what we have had before us -- is the great fact, that there is a divine path through the maze and intricacies of this world; a distinctly divine path, so that we are not left to ourselves in any way to make out the road. It is not our own understanding of how we could pick our steps through the tangled labyrinth, if I may so describe it, which this world really presents, in its present alienated state; but there is a path, a very defined path through it all, for faith. A wonderful cheer for our souls it is even to contemplate that, for a moment; the existence of such a path, even supposing we have not as yet found it; but the fact that it is there to be found, what a comfort to the soul. Not only is there an object divine, and a center divine -- for these are the subjects we have had before us -- but, blessed be God, there is also a divine path, a path that His own blessed feet have marked out for us, through the desert sands of this world, and which faith can penetrate, and discern, and reach, and rejoice in being permitted to walk in, even Christ’s path.

Now the first thing with regard to this subject, is -- and I
will ask you to look at a scripture which shows it -- how entirely and completely it is a path of faith, and that it is only faith that can tread it, as it is only faith that can discover it. It is only by faith that we can see what it is, and it is only by faith that we can estimate the good of it. Turn with me to Job.

28:7, 8: it is a remarkable scripture:

There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen; the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.

You will observe, it is presented here, in figure, by the Holy Ghost as entirely outside the keenest perception of nature. That is the thought which the Spirit of God would leave on our hearts with regard to this path. It is divinely far above the keenest sight or discernment of the creature. The most powerful agent in nature, the most far-sighted and keen- visioned cannot make it out. “No fowl knoweth.” There is no eye, no sight, like that of the vulture for keenness, for quickness of perception, for far-seeing. “There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen”; untrodden by even the lion’s whelps, or the fierce lion. No sight of nature, nor power of nature, can either discern or walk in this path. Well you will admit, beloved friends, that this puts it very simply for us, through God’s grace. It cannot be discerned nor trodden by human power; further, there is nothing to show. And that is where the difficulty oftentimes is. Those who, through grace and faith, have God-given eyes, can see the path, and, thank God, walk in it too but it is not only difficult, it is impossible, to show this path to another; and even more difficult still, to give others the power to walk in it, even if you could show it to them. If you doubt this, try, and you will assuredly find out the truth of it for yourselves. Be assured, it is for yourself, when God gives you eyes to see it. I mean, of course, spiritual eyes; eyes by the teaching of his Spirit, through His word too; His Spirit and His word enlightening the eyes of the heart. It is thus, too, that the apostle prays, in Eph. 1, even that the eyes of your heart, being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

He asks for opening and enlightening in the eyes of their hearts, in the seat of their affections; thus you will at once understand the intimate connection between the affections being in exercise, and thereby knowledge of the mind of God.

What a wonderful thing, to be illuminated in the heart’s eyes; not the mind, not the reason, but the heart, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, the enlightening power of His Spirit in the affections of our souls. And, beloved friends, there is no other way to know, but this. You cannot see God’s path, and you cannot tread God’s path, in any other way than faith in God Himself, the living God. So that the value, the blessedness, of this word at the start, is that it puts the finding of this path, outside of everything that is merely connected with man, as man. No man of himself, or by any power that he has, can possibly discern this path; it is true he may be an exceedingly able man, a man of great parts, as we say; of great faculties, great discernment, great wisdom, great foresight, and all that, but this reckons not here; what we are speaking of lies entirely outside and beyond the greatest of men. And, beloved friends, we cannot insist upon that too much, we cannot press it upon our own hearts too earnestly, because you must perceive how the tendency with us is to think that we can, by sense or sight, discern the things of God. He has to teach us, in His wonderful grace, that we never really see anything according to Him, until we become fools.

If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

He has really to come down from all that fancied ability and power in himself, and the false idea that he is possessed of any sight, or any clearness, or any power; to see these things, or unravel them, or discern them, he must give all that up: and when a man comes down to be a little child, then, there is found before the Lord the proper, true, right condition of soul, in which to exercise living faith in that which is of God, and which is made known to faith. It is to faith it is made known; not to reason, nor to sense. Sense and reason hinder and deceive; all the whole power of nature is misleading.

Now this clears the ground immensely, and then comes the comfort, that there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.

I would, further, ask you to look at another scripture, but not on that point, because that is settled, once and for all.

It is to be noted well, how everything of God is seen in the same way. There is no power of man that gives him an understanding of anything of God. As the apostle, by the Holy Ghost, writes in 1 Cor. 2, and which is the very mind of God, in relation to understanding all given us of God: “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man.” “No man” -- remarkable words. That is to say, no man, as a man, knows the things of the Spirit of God. You cannot tell what is passing in my mind, and I cannot tell what is passing in yours. Even so, you cannot discern the things of God, save as He, by His Spirit, makes them known to you; as surely as God is the author of the revelation, so surely it cannot be either known or received, but by the Spirit of God. This, then, beloved friends, is solemn and searching. But, observe, there is the positive side also -- I merely quote it -- “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.” So that it is not only that there are things given to us of God, but there is power by the Holy Ghost to know them, and there is a capacity in the new man to receive them: further, it is written,

But 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. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ {1 Cor. 2}.

It is, then, by the Holy Ghost, we know the things that are
freely given to us of God, but no man, as man, can know them: the simplest truth of God, no man, as man, can understand; for instance, take creation, though I do not desire to dwell long upon it, only to illustrate the point: how do we know as to creation? Why, “by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” How simple that is! “by faith.” And so it is with regard to everything else -- it is the mind of God, that He has been pleased to reveal in His own word to faith, and faith must be in exercise. And, blessed be His name, faith is that which is found in us, as new creatures in Christ. Faith in the testimony of God, and the Holy Ghost to make that testimony known to us, in all its blessedness and power, are the alone way to the understanding and knowing anything about it.

We shall now turn to the scripture, another scripture, for a little, in order to show you, as the Lord may help, how this path was trodden by the Lord Himself; and this we shall find most blessed. Turn to Psa. 16:11, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” Now this is the language of the Lord Jesus most blessed. Turn to Psa. 16:11, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” Now this is the language of the Lord Jesus most blessed. And, beloved friends, Christ has gone the whole way. And therefore it is, that He can, and does, blessed be His name, call us to follow Him. And further, mark this, it gives a very distinct character to it; Christ Himself is the way, the road. A person may say, But what is that road, what is that path? Christ Himself; that is the path; “I am the way.” “We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” He replies, “I am the way.” And, beloved, think how blessed it is; because it sets that blessed One before the eyes. It is none less than that precious, living, blessed Christ, before the eyes of the soul; that makes the path as distinct and simple as anything can be. Christ is the way. I am to follow Christ, I have to watch Christ, I have to keep my eyes on Christ; and it moreover clears up so many difficulties, it takes so many things out of the way at once; it is not considering how and where we could escape from dangers here, and how we could make the best of our way through difficulties; far from it. Have you reflected on this? There are, in that path which is the opposite to that of faith, quite as many difficulties, yet unbelief is ever ready to take that road; but there is not with those who walk that way, the power of God to sustain: this solemn fact I commend to your consideration.

Be assured of it, beloved friends, in reality the difficulties in the path of faith serve to draw out dependence in us, and to display that power of God, which is above everything; and this is an immense gain and blessing; further, you have not the company of Christ with you in the one, but you have in the other. You will have to meet constant and hard pressing difficulties, you will have to encounter severely trying hindrances and obstacles, but you cannot have Christ with you, and you will not enjoy that sweet and blessed assurance in your soul, that Christ went that road before you, so that you could discern, if you were with Him, as it were the very tracks of His blessed feet, in the desert sands. Whereas, if your eyes are on Him, not on difficulties, but on him, how comforting -- the road is plain before you, the light is on your path at once. If your eyes are on Christ, if it is Christ, who is simply the road, as He says Himself, “I am the way,” if it is Christ simply before you, the whole way is clear as light; it
can be said truly,

“Light divine surrounds Thy going.”

The path is simple and defined before you. Suffering, no doubt, but that is part of the blessedness of the path. Instead of being a part of the trials and difficulties of it, it is part of the blessedness of it. Ah, it is a very different thing from suffering, merely where it is connected with our own deserts. A person may suffer because of his own folly and his own waywardness, and there is a bitterness, and rightly, too, in that; but the suffering that belongs to that precious path, which His own feet have walked in, and the road which is marked out as His own, is sweet beyond all description. Alas, how little we have tasted it! How little we have partaken of that suffering which is connected with Himself, and with the path which He has trodden down here; yet we often sing,

There is but that one in the waste,  
Which His footsteps have marked as His own;  
And I follow in diligent haste,  
To the seats where He’s put on His crown.”

There is a bitterness about the other suffering, and pain attached to it, as well; but in that which is connected with Christ, there is real sweetness, there is true joy. Just like the apostles, when they went out from the presence of the council, it is said, they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” They were beaten, but it was the comfort of their hearts that they had suffered for Christ, had walked with Christ. And so it should be with us, if we were found, through grace, walking in His path, following Him.

This brings us to those other scriptures read at the beginning of this meeting, and we shall see how they tell one upon another. In the first of John, we start distinctly with the Lord’s own blessed word, “Follow me.” That is the divine path, and I have tried to show you how He Himself constituted it, and walked in it first, and thus made a way for us to follow Him.

Now for a moment turn to the twelfth chapter of John. This gives the true character of this path, and shows what it is. The Lord says here,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me. {John 12:24, 25}.

Now, there we have the distinct nature, the positive character of this path of faith through this world; it is a suffering path: it is nothing less than death; it is loss. Observe how here the Lord is on His road to the cross; and what makes it so much more solemn is this, that the whole glory of the kingdom passed before Him there in figure; the kingdom in figure is there before Him, Israel accepts Him for the time being, the Greeks come up and say, “We would see Jesus.” The whole scene is one of deep and solemn interest. Just think what that moment was to Jesus, how at that moment, Isa. 49:6 was present to His mind; but then death was in the road for Christ. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” He could have taken the kingdom alone. There was no necessity for Him, as to Himself, blessed be His name, to suffer, but if He did take the kingdom, it must have been alone. He might have remained alone; He could have abode alone, for, except it “fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” But then observe the words connected with it, “If it die”; and oh, I often wonder if our hearts take in the depth, the intense solemnity that is connected with those little words, “If it die.” Think of what His death involves, think of what is connected with it; it was not only the solemn reality of meeting the judgment of God with reference to sin; no doubt that was all involved in it, as well as the meeting the whole power of Satan, and destroying him that had the power of death, that is the devil -- who could or indeed would underrate the judgment of a holy God in relation to sin? But oh! beloved friends, see what it defined for the followers of that dying Savior, see how distinctly it marked out the nature and character of the path, for every one that would serve Him, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” “Follow me” -- where? To death. Death it must be, because that was what was in the road; that was the immediate thing before His mind; it was that which the alabaster box of Mary had brought so distinctly before the mind, when she anointed His body for the burying.

The deep significance of that alabaster box was there to the soul of Jesus upon earth, at that moment, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” And more than that, you will remember how the Lord Himself had said, “If any man will come after me,” which is following as well, “let him deny himself” -- think of that -- and further,” take up his cross”; which does not mean that each person has his particular trial and special difficulty; that is the way it is wont to be spoken of at times, even that each person has his own special trial and difficulty; as one would say, “That is my cross,” and something else is another person’s cross. That is not the meaning of this scripture at all. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.” And mark, denying yourself is a greater thing by far than self-denial. There is oftentimes a great deal of self-denial, where there is no denying of self, at all. Denying yourself is a most deeply searching reality, the positive abnegation and refusal, even to death, of everything connected with yourself. “Let him deny himself.” Self-denial is very frequently made an opportunity of ministering to self. Very often, acts of self-denial are positively a ministration to self. But think of what a reality it is to deny yourself, the abnegation to death of every principle connected with yourself. Oh, to refuse that! And further, not only what is bad, but what is good; what is naturally beautiful, naturally amiable, naturally attractive, naturally lovely, on this to bring and bear the cross. “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross” that is to say, he has to accept the death that lies in the path; not each person’s particular trial and particular difficulty, but to take up his cross, even death that is in the road; the denial of yourself, the abnegation of yourself to
death, and all else beside, that lies in that path; and for what? Even to “Follow me.” Wonderful reality, beloved friends, but wonderfully searching and deeply solemn truth for our souls it is. And if you will just connect that with service, as the Lord does here, “If any man serve me, let him follow me,” how different it is from our thoughts of service; how different from the ideas of service prevailing at the present moment. Serving the Lord is, very oftentimes, really ministration to oneself; very oftentimes toleration of self, anything and everything but the death which stands in the path and in the road. “If any man serve me, let him follow me.”

Let us now further connect with this, that scripture in the ninth of Luke, and see how near to each other they are. A man comes to the Lord, who evidently has not at all measured the deep significance of this path, nor weighed at all what is involved in following Christ. This man addresses Him and says, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” What words the Lord addresses in reply! How touching are those words! How searching to the soul! What does He say?

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Are we up to that kind of following, beloved? “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” How little did he take in who it was, and what His position was, whom he thus confidently proposed to follow. Think of those words. Think of following such an One as that! Think of such a path as His! We all need to have our conscience and our heart searched, as to this. It is true that there is every kind of blessedness in it, but let us have the due weight of it in our souls; let the full solemnity of it rest on our souls. Do not let it be a sentimental thing with us. One dreads the sentiment. The sentiment of the truth is not the truth. The sentiment of the truth very often saps out the real power of the truth in our souls. But the deep reality of it, the immense significance of that path, is most affecting: a destitute Christ, a Man here who had not a place where to lay His head; a solitary, isolated Man, who was poorer than the creatures of His own hand in His own creation; what could more appeal to our hearts than a rejected Savior, who had not a place “where to lay his head”?

It brings very forcibly to mind that touching scene in the close of the eighth, and beginning of the ninth chapters of John: there was a division among the people because of Him, one urging one thing and another somewhat else, but as to Himself, the testimony forced from unwilling witnesses, “never man spake like this man”; and in confusion and uncertainty all depart, “every man went unto his own house”; but as to Jesus, it is written, “Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.” Mark it well, all had their own house, but He had none; “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

Now look at the next verse or two, “And he said unto another, Follow me.” I think these differences of dealing with souls, are most deeply instructive in scripture, the way in which the blessed Lord, the tender, and yet solemn way in which He corrects the mistaken thought of following Him, by pressing the path in all its full solemnity before one; and then on another His distinct and immediate claim. His word now is, “Follow me.” Observe the reply, “Let me first go and bury my father.” Then the Lord says to him, “Let the dead bury their dead.” And then, another, apparently of himself, says to Christ, “Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.” Now here we have, in the first instance, one who had not weighed the significance of the path, one who looked, as it were, lightly on following Christ, regarded it as an easy thing to follow Him; upon this man’s spirit, the Lord brings the full weight of the deep solemnity of the path. With the others, it was the case of those who put something else as having a prior claim to following Christ, and that is the meaning of the Lord’s reply. The first great thing, the pre-eminent thing, the paramount thing is to follow Christ. There is great force in that little word “first.” “Let me first go and bury my father.” “Let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.” “First!” The Lord says, I must be first, and last too; Christ must be first, and Christ must be last. There can be no first, and there can be no last, but Christ. Blessed be His name, He is first and He is last, but He must be first and last with us, as He is first and last in Himself. And more than that, He is the indispensable One as well. How often our hearts have used those words, “the indispensable” -- what is the indispensable? Jesus. I know no other indispensable; nothing else that cannot be done without, but Jesus. We cannot do without Christ. We cannot do without everything else but Him. Oh! you say, that is very extreme. Very extreme? I say, it is very blessed; you surely will not call blessed things extreme; may the Lord teach us how blessed it is!

Do not your hearts like to give Him that place, and say that He can be everything to you, yea all things, food, and meat, and drink, and shelter? Would you not like to exalt Him into such a position as that, to let Him be everything? Hearken to the words which the Lord Himself addressed to His disciples, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes.” Oh, many a time have I thought of those words; these are what we call the indispensables of life, what would be called the absolute necessities; what would you think of a man going without purse, or scrip, or shoes, now? Yet He says, “When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? What did they say? “Nothing.” Why, beloved friends? Because they had Him.

And was not that the lesson that He taught them in the boat? There they were, in distress and perturbation, because they had not brought bread. He says, Am not I better than bread? Have you not all, in having me? Are you distressed because you have not taken bread, when you have me in the boat? Oh, the comfort for the heart in finding Christ everything, and everything in Christ: Christ the path, and Christ the sufficiency for the path; Christ the way, and Christ the competency for the way; Christ the road, and Christ the power to walk in that road. “Christ is all.” And that is the reason why the Lord brings it out there, the paramount claims of Himself upon those who propose to follow Him; it must be Himself absolutely, first and last.

Further, there is one other little word to which I will call
your attention, before I speak of the last scripture, and that is in the twenty-first of John; and in this scripture, the subject is exceedingly beautiful; here it is the restored soul. In the first of John, it is what we might call the beginning of life, it is the first moments of acquaintance with Him. The Lord finds Peter and Andrew, and says, “Follow me.” Now in John 21, it is Peter after he was brought back, after he was restored, and there is only one point I would call your attention specially to, in this part of our subject. Peter is broken down and restored in conscience in Luke 22. In the force of his nature and the strength of his will, do you remember what he said?

Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

And if you search the history a little further on, you find that when the Lord was taken and all the disciples forsook Him and fled, then it is said of Peter, remarkable words, “Peter followed afar off”; he followed at a distance. And there is great force, I am assured, in those words, “followed afar off”: Because you must know, if you are distant from a person, every turn of the road will hide him from your view; every little obstacle that comes in the way screens him from your sight. “Peter followed afar off.” I do not trace the history further, for I take it we are all familiar with it, and we know what the denial was, we know how he essayed to follow Christ, in the power of his flesh and will, and how terrible was the break-down, trusting his love instead of trusting Christ’s.

And now I refer to the twenty-first of John, for the purpose of showing you, that after the Lord has probed him, and reached the depths of his failure and break-down, and suggested by His questions his denial, when He re-instates Peter in his position of shepherd and martyr, He says to him in that eighteenth verse,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Beautiful words are these; the contrast between Peter in the youthful unbroken energy of his will, in the force and strength of the trust that he had in his own affections, as expressed in the words of the blessed Lord, “When thou wast young,” and Peter’s matured and mellowed condition afterwards, when subjected and broken down, he could be described as one aged and experienced, in such words as, “but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not,” is exceedingly blessed. Then observe how that twenty-first of John leaves Peter and John following; that is the happy place it leaves them in. It closes on them following; Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” “If I will that he tarry till I come,” says the Lord, with reference to John, “what is that to thee?” Here is the path, the main business, the wonderful precious occupation, “Follow thou me.” The way the Lord brings that out before the restored soul, as He presents it to the soul in the first moments, so to speak of its life down here, is to me exceedingly beautiful and blessed, beyond all expression.

And now, there is only one other scripture to which I would invite your attention, it is Phil. 3. As has been so often said, Philippians is the normal life of a Christian, in the power of the Holy Ghost; the normal life of a heavenly man down here in this world, in the energy of the Spirit. So in the third chapter, behold the apostle, as the divine energy -- which his soul was filled with from the glorified man at God’s right hand -- fixed his eye upon that precious Object there in heaven, and engaged all the affections of his heart with that Savior in glory; that very Savior whose brightness shone upon his path, as he was pursuing his mission of death and destruction; hearken to him now, as he says:

I follow after; I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do . . . I press toward the mark for the prize;

as if he had said, I have not yet laid hold upon that for which I have been laid hold of, but one controlling object engrosses me, one thing governs, one thing fills my soul in its incomings and outgoings, “I follow after,” “I press toward the mark for the prize”; my eye is on that mark, and my heart is on that prize; and we may well say, what a mark, and what a prize; and Christ is the prize, and Christ is the gain; I press toward that mark -- “I follow after,” and “I press.” Beautiful words, wonderful words! The energy of the soul filled with a heavenly Christ, a glorified Christ. The streams of light, and life, and glory flowing down from the Man at God’s right hand, fill the vessel here upon earth, so that it rises to reach the source whence the power that set it in motion came. The power came from heaven, and the vessel, as filled with that power, rises to reach the Christ, in the scene of His glory! My soul delights to linger in divine admiration of such a sight. It was not that he had attained to anything or reached anything, it was not that he was already perfect; that is, he had not as yet reached up to the standard of conformity to Christ in glory, that is what he means by being perfect; he had not reached up to that standard of perfection, the only divine standard; but “one thing I do,” he says, “I follow.” My feet are down here in His blessed footsteps, my poor trembling feet, but that Object up there in all His beauty, is filling the whole range and vision of my soul.

“O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none can see.”

Well, beloved friends, there is nothing more comforting to the heart than that there is such a path. The Lord give us increasingly to have our poor feet in that path, which no power of nature can tread; no power of man can discern; which is above and beyond the keenest perception of the eye of the creature, or the wisdom of the wise. “The lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” This is
the language of the Holy Ghost, in describing how impossible it is for the keenest vision or power of nature to either find out or walk in the divine path; but there is such a path, and Christ has walked in it, and faith knows it and faith can walk in it, and the power comes from the One at God’s right hand to carry us all the way through.

May every heart here realize this blessedness for Christ’s sake.

Chapter 6:
The Coming of the Lord in Relation to the Saved and the Unsaved

1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 5:1-10; 2 Pet. 3:10-13

The first two scriptures, beloved brethren, bear upon the first subject which I have on my heart to speak to you about, this evening; namely, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints. I might refer you to a great many other scriptures on the second part of the subject, because I may remind you, that the day of the Lord is a subject that is not peculiar to the NT, but that it is found as well in the OT, as in the New; but that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the air for His saints is only to be found in the NT, and only in those parts which we have read this evening, where it is propounded by the Holy Ghost, as a special revelation not previously known. “This I say unto you by the word of the Lord,” is a fresh revelation of a truth, not up to that moment communicated. And “Behold I show you a mystery,” in 1 Cor. 15, is also indicative of a fresh revelation of the same truth.

Now I am not purposing to speak tonight on the doctrine of the Lord’s coming at all. What I am anxious, and pressed in my own heart, to occupy your time with, is its practical bearing on every class. As to the doctrine, it has been often set before us, in great clearness and distinctness; but the practical effects of it, and the practical issues of it on our consciences and in our souls, is that which we need to be continually reminded of. This side of the truth is greatly pressing on my heart, to speak to you about this evening.

And now, as to the first part of it, namely, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints, His own beloved ones; let us remember how it will terminate the present state of things, as regards the saints in this world. Is it not well, that we should know exactly where we are? Is it not well, that we should have the divine sense in our souls of our present position? We are really between two great judgments.

We are between the past judgment of the cross, and the judgment that awaits both the living and the dead. We are between these two; and we are, beloved friends, on the very eve of that bright and blessed moment which will precede the latter. In order to show you more plainly from scripture -- and it is scripture I am anxious to bring before you -- I will read one or two passages which describe the present state of things in this world, which has developed to what it is, since the cross and rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would say, it is of great moment to remember this -- that the world as it is at the present moment, what we call the world, or better still, the age, is the result of Christ’s rejection; and the state of things found in it after His rejection, the ‘age’ in reality, is what the devil has made, out of the murder of God’s Son, by the wicked hands of men. When we speak of the world, we do not mean the literal world God made, though it partakes of the consequences of Adam’s sin, and groans; “the whole creation groaneth,” but the literal world on which we stand was made by God: there is nothing in it that He did not make, nothing that did not reflect His handiwork, the skilled power of His hand; not a blade of grass, not a leaf of the trees, not a part of that creation, that is not a proof of the skill and power of the Creator -- spoiled, tarnished, because of man’s sin, and involved in the miseries of its federal head, it is yet destined in His grace, to be delivered out of the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But the age is a different subject altogether. When we speak of the world, meaning thereby the age (what scripture calls the age), we speak of that moral order of things that obtains in the world, consequent on the rejection, the crucifixion, the murder of the Christ of God. We might speak, and we do speak, and thank God, we can speak, of the death of Christ as an atonement for sin, but as far as man is concerned, it is the murder of Christ. And that, with all its momentous issues, rests on the age. That is what God will require in a coming day from the world; that is the ground of God’s future dealings with this world -- even the murder of His own Son.

Well now, consequent upon that, I will point you to two scriptures, which will show us exactly where we are at this present moment, and also the state of things which has grown up since the rejection of Christ, and since His murder by the hands of men. The first is 2 Tim. 3:1-5, and I venture to say, that the most casual reader of the word of God can hardly fail to trace the likeness between the description that is given there, and the very times that we have come to "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall be present" -- that is the meaning of the word “come” -- “perilous [difficult] times shall be present, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, pleasure-lovers more than God-lovers, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Now this is the state of things all around us at the present moment, depicted by the Spirit of God, marked out by the Spirit of God. And, beloved friends, it is so different from all the thoughts of men’s hearts, thoughts that many of us here cherished and cultivated many a day in the past; has it not been taught that the gospel of the grace of God, the good news concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, which has gone out since the death and resurrection and ascension into the heavens of the Lord Jesus Christ, was so to permeate the world, and so to change the whole order of things, that it was assuredly to bring in the millennium? That was the notion many of us held; perhaps too, some of us here hold it still. Many of us held, in other
days, that the preaching of the gospel was so to leaven the age, so permeate the age, and so overlap everything that was here, that evil should be banished by the proclamation of the good, and every blessing introduced in that way, until the whole thing spread universally all over the world. Now that is contrary to the plain declarations of the word of God. Here you find an epistle that comes down to the very days we are in, and describes the times that are upon us; not “the latter times, mark, which were the times of the apostles, but “the last days,” which are our own times. Now, observe the difference between these two. There are “the latter times, in 1 Timothy, which describe times to the close of the apostles’ lives down here. There are the last days, which are the days we are in; our times are the “last days”; we ourselves are in the last days. And here are the features, the moral features that are being presented by the world in these last days. Every feature in that description in 2 Tim. 2, all that marked the heathen world (see Rom. 1), is reproduced in professing Christendom in the last days. Solemn it is, to think of that, beloved friends. The very vices, the very sins, yea, the enormities of the heathen world are reproduced under the sham profession of the name of Christ; “having a form of godliness but denying the Power thereof”; it is all shell, but no reality, no kernel whatever; and that condition of things goes on, and will not be ameliorated by the gospel, nor by anything else; all will develop into increased evil till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints.

Now, one other scripture, in Jude 11, “Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” In this epistle, the Holy Ghost describes the condition of things that would be manifested at the end, when apostasy should be rife, when there would be a complete giving up of the truth and Christ, for that is the subject of Jude. Look at these three things -- how solemn they are. Cain, Balaam, and Core. You will find in these, all the elements of that system which has grown up into such gigantic proportions at the present day. If ever there was a period that was distinctly characterised by Cain’s principles, it is the present moment. What were the two leading features in Cain’s history? He founded a religion, and he built a city. Those are the two great things that display themselves in him -- he was the inventor of a religion; and what was the nature of that religion? Why, that which is the spirit of all that we see round about us at the present moment -- what is it? That man as he is in his natural state could approach to God -- Cain was the great exalter of man. His sacrifice declared that there was no fall with its consequences; that the utter ruin, as well as the guilt of man, was no barrier to him in bringing an offering to God. Cain’s religion denied both ruin and guilt; he worked at the ground that had been cursed, and it yielded to his toil, and he brings the fruit of the ground that had been cursed, and places it before God, and it is said “to Cain and his offering, he had not respect.” On the other hand, Abel came upon the ground and merits and value, and in all the nearness and dearness and blessedness of Christ in type, of which his lamb was the expression; he brought the fat, the personal excellency of the victim, and the blood, that which met the holy, righteous claims of God as to sin. Now, if you will but speak to people, you will see how they are under the influence of Cain’s religion, “the way of Cain”: religion without sacrifice, religion without blood, religion without the claims, the righteous holy claims of God being met in the only way suitable to His majesty and to His glory, and without the blessed standing of the perfect acceptance and intrinsic worth of the One who met His claims, of which, of course I need not say, Abel’s lamb was the picture and type, for it sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is, that now through His grace, not only are we clear in virtue of that work of Christ, but we stand before God in all His appreciation of that work, and in all the acceptability of Him who finished it, for the glory of His God and Father; the measure of our acceptance being that of Him whose blood has met all the claims of a holy God, and glorified Him as well; we get both things -- and that is what Cain’s religion denies.

Then as to what is said about Balaam. Why, Balaam was just the type of a person using religion to get on in the world. And is not that what is going on at the present moment? He loved the wages of unrighteousness; he would have cursed Israel right heartily if he could; he was perfectly willing to accept Balak’s rewards and money, but he was restrained by the mighty hand of God, yet his heart was after his covetousness. And this we see very distinctly all round about; the very same principle, full-blown and developed, prevails in this Christ rejecting age.

And then we have the gainsaying of Core, which is rebellion against the authority of God, in His true King and Priest.

Now, all this comes to a full head and climax at this present moment. And that will bring me to the first part of the subject -- the one bright and blessed pole star of the saint’s hope. No preaching of the gospel, however faithful or earnest, can make the age different; there can be no amelioration of that condition of things by any effort that can be made, even through the testimony of God by the preached Word, at this present moment. I venture to say, that there is not an honest conscience or heart here that will not join me in the truth of this utterance, namely, that the state of the world or the age at the present moment, instead of becoming better, is rapidly developing into the very worst condition of things that can be conceived. And it is not only the testimony of scripture -- thank God, there is that most abundantly -- but I appeal to your own observation. Look at what is before the eyes of men. They do not know where to turn; all their hopes are frustrated; they expected a sort of universal jubilee; a bringing in of that which was to change and alter the whole condition of the world; and instead of this, it is all getting worse, and is all going down. The whole course of things, on every side and in every department of society, in every branch of human life down here, is becoming worse and worse. What is to terminate it for the believer? It can never be better. “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” says the Spirit of God. But what is to bring it to a close for the saints? Our hope; thank God for it! And what is that? Why, this blessed, immediate coming of the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to occupy your affections and heart for a moment with that, in its practical bearings upon us. I desire to put a question affectionately to you, and to myself as much as to you. I have often said to myself, as I sat in my own room, Do you believe He is coming? Do you really believe it? Do you believe that at any moment the shout of the Lord Jesus Christ might be heard? Do you, in your heart of hearts, sincerely believe that? It is so searching. Alas! I believe, and yet I do not believe it. I must say, I believe it profoundly, and yet in another sense, when I reflect upon it, and think of it, how little I do believe it! Because, do you think, that if in our affections and hearts, there were this one blessed, living reality, that the next moment, the next hour, I do not put it the next year or the next month, but before we actually leave this room tonight, that blessed One might come; do you think we should be found clinging to all the things we are mixed up with? If this hope were in the depths of our affections, if it were not merely an event we were waiting for, as we talk with? If this hope were in the depths of our affections, if it were not merely an event we were waiting for, as we talk about believing the Second Advent, but the expected return of One "whom, not having seen we love" and watch for, oh, how little I do believe it! Because, do you think, that if in our affections and hearts, there were this one blessed, living reality, that the next moment, the next hour, I do not put it the next year or the next month, but before we actually leave this room tonight, that blessed One might come; do you think we should be found clinging to all the things we are mixed up with? If this hope were in the depths of our affections, if it were not merely an event we were waiting for, as we talk about believing the Second Advent, but the expected return of One “whom, not having seen we love” and watch for, oh, how different then it all would be! How blessed to wait for that living, glorified Christ, up there at God’s right hand; He who is the stay of our hearts to-day, and the one bright prospect before our souls; His glory cheering our hearts at this present moment, united to Him where He is. It is a heavenly hope; not in any sense an earthly hope; and I believe that those who are not heavenly in their ways and conduct down here, have not the power of that hope in their souls. And why? Because it is a heavenly lift out of all below; and that in such power, that all here is distanced; it is not an earthly hope, it is not Christ coming to the earth, it is not Christ coming to set things right here, to bring in the millennium, and to establish an order of things suitable to himself. It is Christ coming to take His own blood-bought ones, and to take them into the Father’s house, that they should follow Him in there. It is for heaven; and hence the apostle says in Phil. 3, “the state to which we belong,” (which is the meaning of the word “conversation”), has its existence in the heavens, from whence we await the Lord Jesus as Savior.” We are permitted to be there now, blessed be His name, in faith and spirit too, and we await the One who is there, to come forth from that blessed place, and to take us into it, that He may have His own joy and delight in having us with himself.

Now let one entreat of you to put this question to your own souls tonight -- Is that the next thing before my heart? Think of this one day, -- How much has it been before your souls and affections to-day? It is very searching if you sit down and put it to yourself, as in the Lord’s presence. And do not suppose this to be self-occupation; it is conviction by the power of the word of God. It is not moaning over the feebleness, and weakness, and wretchedness of your own heart; the great things you would do, and the little you have done. It is not this kind of torture, this is most wretched and miserable self-occupation; but it is sitting down face to face with this living word of God, to see how far these things are mere matters of doctrine that we firmly believe in our minds; or, whether they are living realities which are shaping and forming us in everything we have to do with? A person said to me lately, If I really believed in the Lord’s coming in that way, I do not know how I could go on as I do now with my business. Well, what is it going to be? Are you going to give up the Lord Jesus Christ, to give up the hope of Christianity, in order to adhere to the wretched things that are here in this world? I perfectly admit that it does cut like a knife, all round on every side, and that it does test us as to everything, it finds us out as to everything. But that is just the very blessedness of it, where it comes as a living power before our consciences and affections, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and coming quickly, according to His own word, “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” And why? Because, that is what is in His heart. He does tarry; but what is in His heart is that He is coming quickly. Love is always quick in its movements, swift in its footsteps, always beforehand in its activities. In the desires of His heart, He says, “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” There is no delay in that heart; no slowness in His own deep affection -- He does tarry in His ways, but not in His heart; He makes us know how He longs to have us with Him. Oh, what a poor response that blessed love of His receives from these poor hearts of ours! Oh, what grace and love! Christ longing to have us with Himself!

I was reading the other day, that chapter of chapters, the 17th of John, and those words of the blessed Lord came with renewed power before me, when He expresses this very demand of His heart, “Father, I will” -- it is the claim as it were, of His heart -- “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.”

Think of that! As if He had said, I could never be there without them; I could never have my joys there without them; I must have them with me where I am. How little there is of a desire in our poor hearts to be with Him where He is! How little we reciprocate His love!

It is in this way the truth works, in its practical operation upon us, and finds us out. Alas, that we have to own how correct we may be in doctrine, and yet so earthly in practice! May we know the truth, in the love of it, better in our souls. I could never say what I have heard from others, namely, wish that they did not know so much: on the contrary, I could never say what I have heard from others, namely, wish that they did not know so much: on the contrary, I should say, I wish I knew more, but in power, in the Holy Ghost.

Let me refer you to one other scripture, in order to show the force and power of it in that connection. You remember how the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels, when He is speaking of, and illustrating His coming in that wide and general way, in which it is there set forth, says, “If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming.” Now mark what follows, “and begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.” Observe what results flow from putting off, in the heart, the Lord’s coming. What is it makes a servant smite his fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken? What leads to violence and self-assertion over his fellows, as well as to association...
with a drunken world, “to eat and drink with the drunken”? Is it not clearly and plainly the heart letting go this hope as a present and immediate prospect before it. How solemn, to defer in the affections the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord does not say, “If that servant shall say with his lips,” but “if he shall say in his heart.” And have you never said in your heart, “He will not come tonight”? Have you never said in your heart, “Well, I do not think the Lord is coming exactly just now, I do not think He is coming exactly this year”?

Oh, friends, these are the ways in which this truth searches us; “If that servant shall say in his heart,” mark it well, IN HIS HEART. I have thought of it in connection with that wondrous verse of the Psalm, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,” not in his head, he knows right well in his head there is, but he has said it in his heart; he does not want God; in the case of the servant, it is the secret of the affections which comes out.

Then there is another scripture which presents this in its practical bearings on us who are His own saints here, and that is the Lord’s own words in Luke 12:35, a scripture beyond all others, bringing out the practical nature of the Lord’s coming in relation to every detail of our life. “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning”; “girded about,” that is, there is to be no relaxation of watchfulness. It is like that word “sober”; it does not mean abstaining from one thing that is likely to take away your senses, but it is the general condition becoming those who have such a prospect before them -- we are to be sober. And if ever there was a time that we are called upon to be thus in everything, it is this present moment. The very thing that characterizes the age in which we live is a want of sobriety in everything, a want of girdedness in everything. Now this quality is pressed earnestly here, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.” You are going through a defiled world, and you are going through a dark world, and you need the girdle because of the defilement, and you need the light because of the darkness. “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” How searching that is. It is not merely to say, we wait for Him, but there is to be everything about us that betokens His coming; we are to be the living exponents of the fact that He is coming, we are to be “like men that wait for their Lord.” Do you think one who is really waiting for the Lord from heaven would be grasping after present things, would be seeking to enlarge their borders and advance their interests in this world?

Never let us allow such a thought in our hearts. “Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” Let things go; “sell,” is the word, not “get.” Get -- that is the word of the day -- amass, hold, get, that is the world’s principle. “Sell,” part with, “give,” that is what God says. “Sell that ye have and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

And then He goes on to say, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” Now let me call your attention to this word, “that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately,” that is, that there may be no delay. There is the expectancy that looks for Him, watches for Him, that enters into what He says, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find” -- What? Doing? Not first, but “watching.” He does speak of doing afterwards. Some people have not an idea of anything but doing; nothing ever enters into their minds but doing, they are not at rest unless they are doing; they have no peace unless they are doing; there is no comfort of heart except they are doing; it must be one constant Do with them for comfort or quietness. But oh! beloved friends, there is something more than that; blessed as it is to do in company with the Lord, and in communion with His mind. Do not suppose that I would say a word in any degree to depreciate, or to underrate the value of earnest spiritual service; but I do say there is as great failure in one who is out of fellowship with the Lord’s mind, though in continual doing and working, as in one who is out of fellowship with the Lord’s mind, and therefore never does anything. We must seek to be even, and in the mind of God as to things. Nothing can be more blessed than to work for the Lord, in the Lord’s way and in company with the Lord, and in the power and energy of the Spirit. But there is something more blessed than that, precious and wonderful as it is. And what is that? “Watching”! Oh the blessedness of this watching! You may have seen a mother sitting by the bedside of her little child, how she watches; what are the hours of the night to her as she keeps vigil by that bedside? Or to any one keeping watch by the bedside of one near and dear to them in this world, what are the hours of the night? It is affection which is on watch, you cannot sleep; ah it is impossible, if there is an object that commands all the affections of your heart on that sick bed. Sleep is gone, yea, fled far from you. And look at it here, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching”; that is, looking out for Him, expecting Him, just as you would if you expected, after long absence, one who was near and dear to you. How long and weary would that absence be! How would you not go to the door or to the window to listen, so as to catch the first sounds of their return? Watching: oh, what a reality! I do not know anything, that so brings that blessed One in all His own living intrinsic worth before our souls, as those words, Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh shall find watching.” How affecting to have it thus put in that way! I leave it with you, most earnestly entreating you, in the Lord’s name, to take this great truth of the Lord’s immediate speedy coming for us, to your consciences and affections this night: let us learn to judge everything we are connected with by it. Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that association? Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that company? Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that business? These are the questions -- Should I like Him to come and find me there? Would it please Him to find me in that association, in that connection, in that business, in that occupation? Is it true that I would like Him to come and find me so? These are the ways, it is intended to work upon us.
The Lord give to each one of His own here, by the power of His word and Spirit, a true estimate of how they stand in affection and heart, in relation to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now let me turn to the other subject, for a moment or two. I do not know anything that ought to affect us more, on the other side, than this; namely, that the eternal blessedness of the saint is the doom of the sinner. No heart can conceive anything like the grace of His coming to the air, of His coming to fulfill the last service He owes to His Father and to us, to take us home to the Father’s house; He just owes that one service to Him. But reflect a moment, if the Lord were to come an hour hence for His saints, if He were to come to take up all that are his -- all His own blood-bought ones, for whom He gave Himself, in this great city and throughout the whole earth, would be all caught up together; the dead raised and the living changed in the twinkling of an eye; not a solitary one left behind, no grave of His own unopened, the sea retaining none, the ashes of the martyrs all brought back again by His own power, all caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. But think of this, I entreat you, think of what it will be for the unsaved, think of what it will be for those that are not Christ’s, think of the awful closing of that door, think of what it will be to be shut out for ever, for those that are not Christ’s! Now, beloved friends, that is what makes it so solemn. And let us bring it home to our own circles. We are all of us here, I suppose, in some relationship of life, in some way or other; husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, brothers or sisters, or children or friends.

Now there is where the subject comes in, when we think of our husbands, or wives, or children, or of our brothers, or sisters, or friends. This is that which imparts to the moment a solemnity, it is not possible to overrate. Yes, that which is the one precious, living, unspeakable comfort of the heart, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, that blessed Savior now in heaven, that terminates all hope for the unsaved, it terminates for them every prospect, but judgment; it shuts the door of mercy for ever upon all in this professing Christian country, who have turned their backs upon that blessed Lord Jesus Christ. And think of what they are left behind for. Left for what? They are left for one of two things. I will ask you to look at two scriptures, because I desire the living mighty word of God should speak to conscience and heart. The first scripture is in Rev. 19:11-16, which is the book of judgment, remember. “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 [diadems]; 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 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.”

That is the judgment of the living, the judgment of the living lost, the judgment of those who are alive, who, having rejected the Lord Jesus Christ in His day of grace, await judgment. If they are alive when He comes, that is what is before them, left behind for judgment, left behind for all the indignation of the fierceness and wrath of God, when judgment will be the rule, as mercy is the rule to-day. It is mercy and grace to-day, and, beloved friends, it is mercy and grace for the last time. Is there an unsaved sinner here tonight in this company? Is there one who is not washed in the precious blood of Christ? Is there one who has not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him? If Christ were to come tonight, think of what awaits you. If Christ were to come tonight, the door of mercy is closed against you for ever; nothing for you but judgment, wrath, eternal banishment from God’s presence, eternal destruction for ever from the presence of God. Mark the words, solemn words, “Who shall be punished,” says the Holy Ghost in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

But there is another issue, if you die now rejecting Christ, if, notwithstanding all the grace, the mercy that is lavished on you, notwithstanding the preaching of the loving-kindness and tenderness, and goodness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ you still despise, and you still refuse, and you still reject, saying, like Felix of old, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee” (not just now, not yet); if, I say, you die in your sins -- oh, think of what awaits you. Think of a man dying in his sins, of a man dying unwashed, of a man dying outside the shelter of the blood of Christ, dying without the acceptance that is, for the vilest sinner, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved friends, I do not like to ring the changes on the awfulness of it, but one is bound to be persuasive, knowing the terror of the Lord. Oh, think of what it would be to be wrapped in a Christless shroud, to be put into a Christless coffin, to be laid in a Christless grave, and to sleep a Christless sleep; and then to wake up for the great white throne, to have part in the resurrection of the damned, to have part in the resurrection of the unjust, to be raised up for judgment, to be raised for banishment.

Oh, mark the words, read them, and may God write them on your consciences (Rev. 20:12-14).

I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another look 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.

Yes, raised for the second death, brought out of your Christless grave for the second death; awaked out of your Christless sleep, for the second death.
O friends, this is what remains for you, if you die rejecting Christ. If you live on, rejecting Christ, until He come, the prospect for you is the 19th chapter; if you die rejecting Christ, no trumpet blast of resurrection shall blow over your grave, the rapture of the saints will not affect you, the opened graves of His own will not affect you -- it will be for them as it was for Christ, a resurrection out from among the dead -- but you will sleep on, if you die out of Christ; your body, I mean, will sleep on in your Christless grave; but oh! when this resurrection comes, when this great white throne is set, and when the dead, small and great, stand before Him there, when the books are opened and men are judged according to their works: oh! that is eternal banishment from God’s presence, that will be everlasting woe.

Oh let me entreat of you tonight, if I speak to one who is not saved in this company, let me point you to that past judgment that I spoke of at the beginning, let me point you to Calvary, let me point you to that blessed One who is upon the throne, but who was there upon the cross, He who bore the judgment of God upon that tree, let me point you to Him. Indeed, everything seems to point to Him; past, present, and future, with one great voice seem to point to Him, and the echo answers from opening graves as it points to Him, the wail of the damned points to Him, and the song of the redeemed points to Him; I point you to Him tonight. He is on the throne, He is there at God’s right hand, having finished the work. He is raised from the dead, and He is in heaven, His face radiant with the glory of God, the face that man spat upon, the visage that was more marred than any man’s, is now glorified; and every ray of that glory that shines from the face of that Savior, speaks of the completeness of that work that He finished on the cross. I do not say to you, Look at Him on the cross, for He is not on the cross; if He were, there were no gospel, no mercy, no hope. There is one thing that my soul revolts from, as a most hateful denial of the truth of God, a denial of the gospel, and that is a crucifix; a crucifix is the most solemn denial of the whole truth of God. Though Protestants in this country would not make a crucifix, and perhaps in their Protestantism would abhor a crucifix, yet if you think of Christ as on the cross, what are you, but in your thoughts cherishing a living crucifix before your eyes? And what is that better than if you had the thing substantially there in tangible shape and form before you? Oh, no, He is on the throne; He was on the cross, He is on the Father’s throne; and very soon, He will come to the air for His own. I point you to Him in heaven; I point you to Him in the fulness and completeness of that work which He finished, the work of Him who was on the cross. The Lord, in His wondrous grace, His infinite grace, His present grace, but grace now acting for the last time, give to every heart here that knows Him not, to look to Him; the Lord give you to see the solemnity of this tonight, and bring it in power before your consciences.

And, beloved brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, one word more, and then we separate. He is coming. We may never meet here again; we shall never meet again as we have been constituted tonight, that is evident; this company will never be repeated here again -- I do not mean to say that there may not be a great many more meetings, but never one as constituted this evening. In future meetings, if He tarry, some here this evening will have passed away, and others have gone to different lands -- but oh, friends, He is coming, and He is coming quickly. Are you ready? Child of God, are you ready? Sinner, are you ready? I address both classes tonight, are you ready? Are you ready in title? Are you ready in affection? Are you watching? Are you waiting?

The Lord, in His grace, bring His coming before all our consciences, all our hearts, in its own living, practical power, and to His name shall be the praise, through Jesus Christ.
Our Pilgrimage
and His Rest:
Notes of Lectures

These addresses were taken down in shorthand by one who heard them, and at his desire the author has, as far as it
was possible, revised them; at the same time he did not think it well to change in any way the style or expression of
extemporary address, which it is well known is so different from what is deliberately written. Many will no doubt
wonder that they should ever appear in print. The author can truly say that no one could ever be as conscious as he
of their feebleness and weakness; but the truth sought thus to be ministered and set forth, will, he trusts, screen from
view the poor vehicle which thus carries it. If the Lord shall be pleased to help or comfort any of His own through
these addresses, and give thus a fresh instance of how He can take up that which is foolish, weak, base, and despised,
to His name shall be all the praise and glory.

Malvern, 1875.

W. T. T.

Chapter 1:
Cleansing and Communion
John 13

There are two subjects, beloved brethren, that are on my heart
to speak of for a little this evening, in the very order in which
you find them in this scripture; not merely the moral order,
but the literal order as well. The subjects are the following:
first, the practical positive cleansing to which we must be
subject in order to have part with Christ; and second, the rest
which follows.

Now, anyone who is a careful observer of the state of the
people of God at the present moment, cannot fail to observe
how little positive rest exists among them. I do not deny for
a moment that there is earnestness, activity, zeal, knowledge,
and intelligence; but you may possess all these together, or
any one of them, and yet be destitute of positive rest, real
repose. The rarest thing, at the present instant, is to find one
who is consecutively restful. Now why is it? Have you ever
asked yourself the question why it is that among the saints,
the contrast to all around us in this respect is so little
observable? My present object is to furnish, if possible, a true
answer to this question.

Now, there are two great things working at the present
moment amongst professing Christians, and each of them is
vying with the other to give rest. One is activity, earnest
incessant activity; occupation of heart with that which is
perfectly good and right in itself, but which does not and
cannot give rest. On the contrary, beloved friends, you will
find it a matter of fact, that very often the amount of the
activity is in consequence of the destitute state of the soul with
reference to rest. You will frequently find that a person who
has not this rest of heart and this repose of soul, is driven into
activity in order to get out of self.

The other popular effort at the present moment, is a kind
of -- I must say it, though with all kindness -- bettering of the
flesh in order to give it rest. That is, to express it simply, it
has been said, and widely accepted too, it has been put forth
and received on every hand, by earnest Christians, true
children of God, that the surrender of your will by the force
of your will gives you rest; that the moment your will gives
up your will (an absurdity it looks on the face of it), the
moment that your will surrenders itself, puts itself to death,
so to speak, the act of doing it gives you rest.

Now, my present earnest desire is, to state positively
what I see in scripture as that which stands in the way of the
soul having this perfect rest which I find here -- a man putting
his head on the bosom of Jesus -- what that rest consists in,
and what the consequences of it are.

Now I believe, beloved friends, that the first and simplest
reason why there is not rest is, that the feet of saints are not
washed. There is practical unfitness for communion with
Christ where He is; because, observe this at the outset, this is
the great truth set before us, I believe, in John 13. It is not
primarily, though that be true in itself, that the blessed Lord
removes the defilement which we contract as we go on from
day to day. I believe that here there is a far deeper thing than
that, namely, fitness of heart for Himself where He is -- a
cleansing in order to have part with Him in glory. It is not, I
repeat, the fact that He washes our feet as we go on from day
to day. I do not deny that, but here is a far deeper thing, even
suitability for common interest, fitness for a part with Christ
where He is. This, I believe, is the great thought in John 13.
I take the liberty, without in the least pretending to be a critic or a scholar, of altering that word, which anyone knows must be an entire mistake, viz., “supper being ended.” There would be no sense in saying so in connection with what followed, but there is every sense in the words “supper being come.” Instead of carrying on the association which He had with them down here in this world, He breaks it, and shows them how He can fit them for another and better one; and hence the passage really reads “the supper being come”; as much as to say, I have had association with you heretofore on your ground, but now I will show you how I can fit and qualify you to have association and communion with Me on My ground, and in the new sphere, and in the new place, into which I am about to go.

Well, beloved friends, you see He takes the basin, and the water, and the towel, and in the conscious sense that He “came from God, and went to God” -- that was God’s side of it, and His own too -- He stoops to perform this act of service for those whom He loved, and there you get the root and spring of all His action towards them. “Having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end.” Oh, what blessed love and wondrous grace of Thyself, Lord Jesus! There was in His heart an affection, in His bosom a love for them, that could live through changing times and circumstances. How blessed it is thus to get simply at the spring of the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ! And how little out hearts really apprehend it that the motives of everything are in Himself! The simple fact stands out in prominence that all the motive-springs which set in action every movement of His grace towards us come simply from His own heart. This, therefore, it is which leads Him to make them as fit morally for His own presence and for communion with Himself in that new sphere that He was about to take as He Himself could make them. Nothing would suit the heart of Christ but that. Have you and I the sense of that in our souls? That nothing would suit the heart of the blessed Lord but to have us as fit for His presence as it is possible for Him to make us? Have you the sense of that in your heart and in your soul? That it was in His heart to make a poor worthless wretch like me as fit to have communion with Himself in that new place that He has gone into, as it is possible for Him to have me? It is not merely a question now of my need, of the deficiencies that are in me, but of the affections of His heart, the motive-springs of His own bosom, that He desires to have me fit for Himself there; and therefore it is that He takes this basin, and the water, and the towel, and begins “to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

Now, beloved friends, let me ask you this: Do you know what that action of Christ is with reference to you? I am speaking of simple things tonight, and I do so purposely; I speak of what perhaps many here know well. But the oldest things are those that need to be revived most in our hearts, as these are they which, although so well known, are most likely to slip through our souls, and all the more because of the busy scene that is around us. I ask you this evening, are you conscious of the blessed Lord having your poor feet in His hand? Do you know what it is to be subjected to that action of the Lord Jesus, so that He removes every bit of soiling influence that could possibly unfit you for communion with Himself, in order that His heart may have a deeper joy in having communion with you, than yours in having communion with Him? Are you conscious of that? And do you submit to it? Do you submit your feet to be washed? Do you allow Him to wash your feet? Do you allow Him to gird Himself in your behalf, so that He may remove by this action of His everything that would unfit you for Himself, as well as for having communion with Himself?

Why do I put those questions? Because I believe that action of Christ’s is most unsparing. You will perceive, if you look at it for a moment, it is an intensely solemn thing; and that it is exactly there lies the deficiency in hearts at the present moment. I do not believe, I say it boldly now, that, as a general rule, we are subjected to the piercing, separating, penetrating, power of that word, so that every single thing that would be unfit for Christ is judged and removed. There is a passage to which I would like to refer for a moment, Heb. 4:12. It will bring out clearly what I want to impress upon you.

For 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Here we have the divine record of the way in which the blessed Lord removes everything that would unfit us for communion with Himself, namely, by the word of God. The word of God is the water; and you will find that nearly everywhere in scripture the word of God is spoken of as water. That water is the purifying power by which everything unsuitable is removed; and when that word is brought in its living, searching efficacy to the conscience and to the soul, they are brought into the presence of God through it, and the judgment of God with reference to all that is there is brought into action through that word. I also refer to it for another reason, that you may see how entirely the Incarnate Word and the written word are placed together in those two verses. Just observe the verse again: “The word of God is quick, [living] and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword . . . Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” “His sight.” Whose sight? God’s sight! But then that which is true of God is true of His word, and the very prerogatives of God, the penetrating, searching power of the blessed God, who reads the thoughts and intents of the heart, are referred to His word. I press it solemnly this evening, beloved friends, because I do not think we have in our souls the sense of the solemnity of that word, or how it would act if allowed to bear upon our consciences; and I
doubt very much -- I say it with all respect, and with all affection -- I doubt greatly, whether the word of God has really in our hearts the place it had in the hearts of saints of God in days gone by. I grant you there is an increase of intelligence to a remarkable degree, and moreover there is an increase of earnestness, but I question as to whether the powerful place which the word of God had over souls fifty years ago, holds good to-day with those who are reaping what others sowed; and I doubt as to whether there is the consciousness that there was One who had gone on high, who loves us with an eternal love, and thinks of us, and knows that there is in us a material to be worked upon, so that distance would come in, and knows exactly when to interpose. What light would shine upon us in many a dark day! Oh! what a blessed sort of love is which not only can stoop to remove the defilement when it is there, but anticipates the working of that evil nature in me, which would introduce distance, and puts a hindrance in the way of it, and gives me the blessedness of learning what the flesh is, in communion with God, instead of learning it in company with the devil: and you must learn it in one of these two ways. If you do not learn what sort of a creature you are, in communion with God, as Paul did, then you will have to learn it in company with the devil as Peter did! How very solemn! There was then, on the apostle’s part, the learning of himself, in communion with God, as you get in 2 Cor. 12; and there was the anticipative love of the blessed Lord. “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh.” Blessed Savior, watchful shepherd, unfailing friend of poor, worthless things like us, but valuable to Thee as thy Father’s gift, and fruit of Thine own unchanging love!

Well, now, let me ask the question again. Do you know what it is to be fitted now? What have we got in our hearts as to the question of this communion with God? Do we know what communion is? I fear we know very little of what real communion is -- and it is wonderful how little it seems to affect us. If I were to ask you what you know according to scripture, of common interest, common thoughts, with Christ in glory, oh, how little we should be compelled to say our hearts know it! A person may say, “I am happy every day.” It is all quite true, but that is not John 13. It is entire fitness for His presence, so that everything that could hinder is removed, everything that could promote reserve completely put away through this washing of our feet by the blessed Lord. There is no hindrance now to my having perfect communion with Him where He is, and having the rest which follows it.

I believe, then, this accounts at once for the restlessness of saints -- they are not cleansed so as to have part with Christ. Their feet are not washed; there is moral distance between them and Him. Is it so with you tonight? Is there moral distance between any of your hearts and Christ? Are you conscious that there is a reserve between you and Christ tonight? Beloved friends, be assured of this, very little will produce it. The smallest thing unfit for Christ brings in moral distance between us and Him -- the very smallest thing! And what is so solemn is this, that I may withdraw my feet from His blessed hand, I may hinder, for the time being, His taking my feet, and so washing them, and applying His word. That is His part and not ours at all. I do not deny our side. I am speaking of Christ’s side tonight. There must be on our part self-judgment, and all the rest, but I am speaking of the
blessed Lord’s side. You may so withdraw your feet from His blessed hand, so thwart and hinder that action of His love, that the distance remains between you and Him, and He has to allow you to learn it in another way. What a wonderful moment it is for poor creatures like us! Oh, the grace of that Lord who stoops to wash our feet from everything unfit for Himself! What a wonderful moment, beloved friends! There is not a single thing, even the most trivial, that He does not remove; and this is the blessedness of His love, that it does not pass over anything. You can see the selfishness in us which passes over things, but His love overlooks nothing. Selfishness travels within its own circle; love sets itself to carry out the good of its object, and devotes itself to the good of its object; it thinks of its object for the best, and allows nothing, no, not the very smallest, to remain upon it, that would be unsuited to the affection. For what purpose? In order that it may gratify itself in having it according to itself! And oh, the joy of His heart -- how can one speak of it! -- how little one knows of it! the joy of His heart in having us where and as we can have communion with Him, and His a deeper joy than any joy of ours. Are you conscious of that? That it gives the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ greater pleasure to have you where He can have communion with you, than it ever could give you to be there with Him? It is this which is at the root of that simple action in John 13, the washing and wiping away of every soil which would not suit His presence and His heart. I press it, because I believe these are days when, with all the activity that is going on outside, and there is much of it -- there is every danger of our forgetting what is due to the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, remember that this is what His heart looks for. I feel it, I am satisfied of it in my soul, that what the heart of Christ longs for, as to testimony in connection with His people in these days, is, to find them here upon earth, not a people that are signalized by doing great things, performing exploits, but a people whom His God and Father can point to, and say, There are hearts that are proofs of the sufficiency and power of My Son to do everything for them. He is looking for specimens of the grace and power and sufficiency of Jesus, so that He can point poor, weary, desolate hearts to such, and say, “My Son can do for you what He has done for them.” Have you got a divine sense within you that God has left you in this world to be specimens of what Christ is able to do for poor things like us; that He is able to take our hearts and fill them to overflowing, to fit them so as to enjoy Himself in that bright place where He is, and to be their eternal satisfaction and rest? The Lord give us grace, not to take ourselves out of His hand, but to be so perfectly before Him with this blessed word of His, searching every motive of our souls, that the full and blessed rest of it may be ours. Do not take your conscience from under the edge of His word! Do not be afraid to subject every thought of your heart and every movement of your soul to its penetrating power! Do not fear to let that word cut you through and through! Be afraid of that which would keep that word from you -- be afraid of all that would hinder you from subjecting yourself to the scrutinizing test of that word, but never be afraid of the word of God. Never fear that love which thinks of nought else, but how it can do its best for you. That is the love of Jesus. The thoughts of His heart are set upon your blessing, His object we are, and how He may have us so that His joy might remain with us, and our joy might be full. Now, you observe, following this, and as a consequence of it, there is rest; because now there is nothing to hinder, the obstacle to it is taken out of the way, and there is rest. I take the fact in the record simply. There you find John putting his head upon the bosom of Jesus. Have you ever put your head upon the bosom of Jesus? Are you conscious that He has taken your feet and washed them, in order that you may rest on His bosom? You cannot rest on His bosom if your feet are not cleansed. If your feet are washed there is nothing to hinder your resting there. What a wonderful thing it is to lay the weary head there! And, beloved, let me say this, there is such largeness, such comprehensiveness in Christ, that there is room for every head of every saint.

Now I am not pressing the thing beyond its proper limit. This is a figure, I know, but I take the fact recorded, and use it as an illustration; and what I mean by putting your head upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus is this -- that you are brought so close to Him, so near to Him, that He is the perfect rest of your heart, and that you find your rest in being near Him. It is not what I get from Him, but Himself is my rest. If there was anything between you and Him, you could not have rest as long as it was there. The thing that your heart would dread, if there was anything between you and Christ, is, that when you got into His presence, there must needs be explanations. Therefore you find, beloved friends, how few there are really who can bear to be alone with Christ and God. You cannot bear to be alone with Him, unless everything is settled between you and Him. That is the reason why people dread being alone. It was when Jacob was left alone there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day. It was when Joseph was alone with his brethren, and no one stood by, that he made himself known unto them.

I doubt not herein is the reason why people seek relief in the ten thousand things around, in order to avoid this solitary hour with Christ or God. But when there is nothing between us and Him, we can be alone, and we can find our rest in His company. His presence, then, is the rest of our hearts. Now that is what I mean by putting your head on His bosom. Do you know what it is? How many of us here tonight can say, “I know what it is to be near Him?”

There are two marks of a true soul. You will find them in Luke 7. One is, I must get near him; and the other is, I must make everything of Him. But when I speak tonight of being near Him, it is being near Him where He is. It is not like what we have all around us. It is not bringing Christ down here to make us comfortable with the world. That is the real effect of all that is going on around. You will find that the consciences of both saints and sinners are getting relieved to go on with the world. Oh, it is not bringing Christ down to us here, into our circumstances, to make us happy in them,
but it is Christ cleansing my feet, and washing me from everything that would be unfit for the presence of God, that there may be no hindrance to my going into Christ's circumstances. And if your heart ever tasted the blessedness of what it is to have company with Christ where Christ is, in those wondrous circumstances of His, you could go back, and say, “I am independent of things here.” The possession of the good would fortify your heart against all the counterfeits that are around you. Another reason why people are taken in, is, they have not possessed the good. If you had the good, you would know the measure of all that is against the good, and you would not desire it. No one can truly tell, or divinely know, what is false, unless he knows what is true. You must have a standard to judge it by, because there is no such thing as knowing anything in the abstract. If you do not know the truth, you cannot know the thing that is inconsistent with it, and neither are you fortified against the error; but if you have the best, you know what is bad, and you do not want it. If I possess this wonderful common interest with Christ, I am brought into His company, His presence being the rest of my soul, and my heart knowing what it is to lie down there, according to the words of Psa. 23, which do not describe any spot in this world. There are no “green pastures” here; I should like to know where they are! You must go to heaven to find such; and, as to “still waters,” here there are none. Ah! no, there is no quiet amid the tumultuous storms of things here. There is neither verdure nor quietness -- nothing but unrest and unreality. But the moment my heart knows that it is in His company, because there is nothing to hinder me from being there, then I can turn my back upon the very best things of earth; and the wares of this poor world, and the counterfeits of Satan, and all his intrigues, are at once unraveled for me. Why? Because I possess the good, and the possession of the good fortifies my heart against all that is inconsistent with it, and nothing else will do.

“Then rest, my long-divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest;
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels’ food to feast?”

Let me point out one thing further. When you are near to Christ -- when your head is on His bosom, when you have that rest -- this necessarily flows from it, we are in the place to receive His communications. Do you know what it is to receive communications from the blessed Lord? Do you know what it is to be sufficiently abstracted from self and its surroundings, the world and its restlessness, and to be in the presence of Jesus, so that Jesus can communicate to you His thoughts? Let us look at it here for a moment, turning to v. 21.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus’ breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

There was confidence, and there was rest, to get the answer of confidence. Now what can be more simple or blessed than that? It was the one that was nearest to Christ to whom was accorded by the others the right of intimacy as a friend. Peter in the distance uses John’s nearness, not only to quiet the doubts of their own minds, but also to get secrets from the heart of Christ. Peter knew well it was the one that was lying on Jesus’ breast who would learn the secrets of His bosom -- the one to whom Christ would communicate. And, beloved friends, here is a matter of the utmost moment; He will not communicate to you in the distance. If you are at a distance from Christ, you can neither know His secrets nor hear His longings. I do not say He does not love you; but what His heart is set upon with reference to you, if you are in distance, is to bring you practically near, so that He may have the joy of communicating to you. This is ever His action. But when you are near, then He can communicate to you. He delights to do so. The others were not near enough to know the secrets of Christ. John was, and moreover he had confidence enough to say, “Lord, who is it?” and he was restful enough to hear Jesus give the answer. There was nearness, confidence, and rest. Do you know what these are? I am assured in my own heart, I feel that we make communications to Him, but how seldom we are sufficiently quiet, and near, and restful for Him to make communications to us. Alas! how seldom it is, and how little we seem to know how suitable to His nature it is, and how it delights His heart, to have us near Him, that He may keep nothing that is in His heart back from us. The Lord gives us that quietness of soul before Him, and that rest of heart, that upturned ear, to catch the communications which His heart delights to make to those who are thus so nigh unto Him!

As we have had one instance of this, I will ask you to look at another, namely, ch. 21 of this gospel, and v. 7, “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord.” There is another effect of being near to Christ, beside what I have spoken of already, namely, that you are able to interpret every action, because you know the Person that does it: and you know the Person who is the author of the action so well, that you can link the action with Him.

But now, beloved friends, let me say this plainly, with reference to these two things. It is not being near Him for that purpose, or on account of that. It is not being near to Christ in order to get communications from Him, or in order to be able to say, “That is Christ,” or “This is Christ”; it is being near Him for His own sake, no other motive in the heart; to put the head upon that bosom, the bosom of One who finds His pleasure in having it there, with no other motive than that which His person inspires.

I feel I have spoken feebly, beloved friends, far more feebly even than I feel; but the Lord give our hearts to have everything so entirely removed, to subject ourselves to Him, to allow Him to take our poor soiled feet in His blessed
hands, and to wash them by His word from everything that would unfit us morally for His presence in glory, and for communion with Himself in that bright scene into which He has entered, so that there may be nothing between us and Him, and in order that we may come simply, and put our heads where He delights to have them. Remember this, there are no favorite children in God’s family. There are no special ones who have that place above or beyond others. Remember that it is open to all, and there is room enough for all. The bosom of Jesus, the heart of Christ, the affections of Christ, are toward all His children, and there is not a single one that is shut out from placing his or her head where John rested his. The Lord give us, beloved friends, in this day of unquiet and activity, and when it is quantity instead of quality that is in men’s minds, the Lord give us to think of what would suit the heart of Christ, of what would suit the affections of Christ, and the Lord give us to rise to the dignity of our calling, and to taste the sweetness of being allowed to minister to them after our little measure, and to be kept, it may be in a solitary path and in a shady place, to be kept with this one simple thought in our soul — my joy is to minister to the affections, and desires, and yearnings, and longings of that heart that spent itself for me!

The Lord add His blessing to His own word, supplying what is deficient, and forgiving what has been said amiss, if He sees it so, for His Son’s sake.

Chapter 2:  
The Garden of Herbs and  
the Cared-for Land  
Psalm 84

There are two great subjects, beloved brethren, that I desire to speak about, as the Lord may help me at this time, namely, the heavenly dwelling-place, and the earthly pilgrimage.

Now one of the peculiar features of Christianity, or rather of a Christian, is, that he combines the experiences which are connected with both of these during the term of his natural life here upon the earth; whereas with a Jew, with an Israelite, they are learned separately. That is, he had the experiences of the wilderness at one particular time in his history, and he had the experiences of the land at another. The experiences which flowed from both of these did not go on at the same moment of his natural life on earth, but they do with us. And that is the reason why it is important to have both of these in their true place; because, observe, the tendency with us all is to be narrower than the thoughts of God in everything. I believe that is the natural proclivity of our hearts, to be taken up with narrower than the thoughts of God in everything. I believe that

Now, I will speak for a little, first of all, of what is unquestionably the lower side of the truth (if you can call one truth lower than another), and that is, the earthly pilgrimage. I repeat it, if you can call one truth lower than another; I am not sure that it is correct so to speak. But I speak of it for a moment as a truth which is certainly better grasped and better understood than the other. Now turn to Deut. 8, which brings this side of our subject prominently forward. The verses (2-5) in that chapter present the history of the pilgrimage, what I have called the earthly pilgrimage; the passage through the world, which has become a wilderness to me. The moment that I have been won over to God and to His truth, I am in the wilderness, and I have a pilgrimage as my journey. This is our proper history, and our proper pathway through these poor scenes. There are two things in that chapter I should like to point out to you. From v. 2 to 5, He brings out these two great facts, that the history of the wilderness was a necessary one to us, and (I say it with reverence) a necessary one to God. Now, we all own, every Christian owns, we cannot deny, that it is necessary to us; but I am not sure, beloved, whether we see, or have received the comfort in our hearts of seeing, that it was necessary to God; that it afforded Him an occasion which His heart looked and longed for, in the very circumstances in which we find ourselves in this world.

Now, with reference to us for a moment; there are two great things that are learned in the pilgrimage, in the wilderness, in our wilderness history, two things that are not natural to us, namely, dependence and submission. Now dependence and subjection are two qualities that never belonged to any man naturally. On the contrary, what pertains to man in nature is independence and insubjection. These are the two great features that mark fallen man as such; they came in in the garden of Eden, they were as early as that. But when we are brought to God, and have a nature suitable to God, the features, the characteristics, the special salient qualities, of the new man, are dependence and subjection; and the circumstances through which we pass in this world are occasions whereby this subjection and dependence are tested, exercised, and brought into play, and that too by means of the difficulties, trials, and temptations of the way. Hence the blessedness of having the wilderness, and its ups and downs, and all the contingencies which happen to us as we pass along through it. If the heart is really exercised before God, and if we are walking in the power of the new man, energized by the Holy Ghost, every circumstance, every part of our history, trials, pressures, difficulties, griefs, the straits that we are brought into, afford us an opportunity for exercising dependence and subjection.

Now, allow me to call your attention to it, because it is exceedingly blessed -- these two features came out most wonderfully in the history of Him who condescended to become a man; you see them in the perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you remember (you can look at it at your leisure), in Luke 4, (I allude to the history of the temptation in the wilderness), the very first feature which was presented by
Him to Satan in that temptation, was this, I stand fast as a dependent man. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." And mark this, He quotes this very Deut. 8 which we are considering tonight. I believe He does so purposely. I believe the Lord had a distinct object and a special reason in quoting from that scripture, namely, because that scripture recounts the history of Israel's wanderings through the wilderness, the purpose in God's heart being to teach them dependence and subjection. He presents the picture of it in His own Son, the perfect man. And I understand that as casting an immense light upon another scripture which sometimes presents a difficulty, namely, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matt. 2:15). What is the meaning of that? Have you ever thought of it? The meaning of that scripture, as I take it, is this, that that blessed One recommenced in His own person the moral history of Israel. Israel, as the people of God, broke down in their trial, in every circumstance in which they were placed; they failed in the wilderness, they failed in the land, and afterwards they failed in successive administrations of God. Wherever they were placed, they failed. Well, He recommences in His own person the history morally of the nation, and in every position in which they failed, He was perfect. He was perfect in the wilderness, perfectly dependent, perfectly subject, and, I need not say, perfect all through. But it is exceedingly blessed to see that God presents in a man One who was very man as well as very God, perfect man. He presents in His person the characteristic features that belong truly to a man before God. He shows them out in Jesus. You must never forget that side of it. Christ showed out in this world what God was towards man, but He was in His own person the very exemplification of what man ought to have been to God, and was not.

There was the manifestation of God to man, but there was also the expression of what a perfect man before God ought to be. And here is the very first feature of it, namely, dependence. And that is the good of straits and difficulties, beloved friends, herein is the blessedness of trial. If you are dependent, they become a matter of exercise with your heart. That is the reason why so many of the saints of God do not know what this dependence is, they have never been in a strait. I pity the person that has never been in a strait. I know it will come, beloved friends, it will surely come! I know the moment will come, because God is too true to us, and to the thoughts of His own heart about us, not to give us an opportunity of knowing the blessedness of having no one but the living God. Here is the good of it, to be brought into this position that I see none before me but the living God. And what a moment that is for each one, I have got no one but the living God! God becomes known to my soul in a way I never knew Him before, now I have tasted what it is to have my dependence exercised. I will tell you what to me it seems like. You have seen, perhaps, a mountain ash growing upon the side of the hill. The more the winds and storms blow upon that little tiny tree, feebly planted on the hillside, if it has got true, genuine roots, the deeper those roots stick. The tempest really strikes the root of that plant deeper down into the soil. That is the blessedness of it. Observe, I am speaking now of where the heart is truly exercised before God, I speak now of one who is walking with God. The effect of straits on one who is not walking with God is, that the straits intervene between the soul and God, and then there is a collapse spiritually. That is the effect of it. It is exactly what is recorded in Num. 13 and 14, namely, when the children of Israel were on the point of entering the land, they got their difficulties between them and God, and what was the result? They lost the sense of subjection. "And they said one to another, Let us make us a captain, and let us return unto Egypt." They murmured and wept, and were insubstantial. But when the heart is really exercised, when the soul is really walking with its eye upon God, the effect of straits is, that God becomes known in a peculiar way, and there is a secret, oh, how can one speak of it! there is a secret understanding between you and God, known to none else. Did you ever know what it was to have such a secret? I believe that is what the apostle meant when he said (Phil. 4), "My God shall supply all your need." He does not say, "Your God." Why? No doubt He was the God of the Philippians just as much as of Paul, but it was because he was speaking of God as he knew Him for himself. It is quite true that Jesus said, "My God and your God"; but if I am speaking of God as I know Him for myself, I can say, There are secrets between God and me. "My God shall supply all your need." Now that is the good of the wilderness, that is one of the blessed effects of our pilgrimage through it, and there we find straits which exercise our dependence on the living God.

Well now, let us look at the other lesson it teaches for a moment, namely, subjection. This is blissfully presented in Christ's history as well. If you remember that magnificent Matt. 11:

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 (Matt. 11:25).

Then we have, I believe, the most wonderful utterance that you have recorded in the whole of the word of God: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." What wondrous words from His lips, the Eternal Son of the Father! Consider; what is the history of that chapter? Why, beloved friends, simply this -- everything in His outward circumstances was a complete desolation to His heart. John doubted Him, the cities where His mightiest works were done had not repented, Israel were like children, they were piped to, and did not dance; they were mourned to, and did not lament; Capernaum, exalted to heaven, should be cast down to hell. "In that hour"; when there was not a solitary star to light up the darkness of things around, what was it that His heart found its solace in? Was it not this? In being perfectly subject to His Father's will. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." He retreats, He retires, into the subjection, the perfect subjection, of a perfect man, and finds His satisfaction there.

And God presents all this in a man! As surely as He presented what genuine dependence was in a man, so He presents what true subjection is in a man. And think of the wonderful grace of presenting it in a man! It is not merely that we have the revelation of it as suited to God, but it was manifested in the person, ways, walk, and circumstances of that blessed One -- God manifest in the flesh. He came down
here into this world -- oh, let us never forget it -- not only to tell out to our poor hearts what was in the heart of God about us, but to manifest, both before God and men, what a perfect man ought to be before God, and in these two great features and characteristics, namely, dependence and subjection.

Now, you will note this little word in Deut. 7:

Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years.

Think of it for a moment. It cost Israel their forty years' pilgrimage. Forty years they wandered through the wilderness, and they were not subject or dependent. Have you learned the lesson? Have not we gone, some of us, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty, years, and the lesson is not learned yet! Now, observe this -- Christ began His history with it as a man, herein is the difference between Him and us. We require the forty, fifty, sixty, or eighty years, as the case may be, and we are not perfected in it. He starts with it. He commences with it, the perfect man, God over all, blessed for evermore: let not our hearts lose the sense of this, who He was that condescended to become as truly man as He was truly God, perfect in the very things that we break down in. It is blessed to get it before our hearts. I feel what a cheer it is to one's poor heart to turn away from all else, and look at Him. The distance is no doubt immeasurably great between Him and us, and hence it is an immense comfort to the heart to see that God has found in a man, His own Eternal Son, all that His heart longed for; and though we have failed to present it to God, God has had it in perfection manifested in Christ. His God and His Father found in that blessed One, in all the perfection of His path, everything that the heart of God desired to find in a man; and that blessed One, in all His perfectness, in His perfect dependence and subjection, is set before us as the pattern, the simple pattern, of what, through His grace, and by His Spirit, God would have us to be. I am not speaking now of the power by which it is accomplished, but of the fact. The Lord give us to use the wilderness for that purpose, not merely as the place where we get our difficulties met, and our trials smoothed and softened, but as the very school where God, in the infinite riches of His grace, is perfecting His own creation in us; and wondrously blessed it is to apprehend that it is His creation that God is carrying on in us, and that He can make the untoward circumstances -- the thorns, briars, griefs, pains, and pressures of the way -- accomplish His own blessed purpose in us, for His own name's sake. It is an immense thing when our hearts are imbued with the sense of it by the Spirit of God.

Having spoken of that, let me refer for a moment to another, and, to me, a more blessed object than our need of the wilderness. You remember I said that God wanted it. There is no question whatever about the fact that we need it. But then (I say it with reverence) God wants it -- God needs it. You say, What do you mean? In what sense can it be that God needs the wilderness for us? It sounds a very strange thing in our ears. I say His affections claim this wilderness as our path, that therein they may attest their reality. Do you say, how? I will tell you, beloved friends. Because it is the only place that gives Him scope to exercise the unchanging love and affections of His bosom. That is the reason why He wants it. When we come to speak of it presently, I will point it out more fully; but you know that in heaven we shall have neither care, nor sorrow, nor tears, nor pressure, nor pain, nor trial. All these things belong to this scene, and they are necessary to the blessed God to display Himself. It is a wonderful thing to occupy thought: divine power waiting on human weakness; human misery arresting divine compassion and divine tenderness: truly, such a world is the very scope wherein God displays the tenderness and care of His heart for His poor tried saints. He draws near to them, He comforts them, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Do you not think that while the apostle Paul had a sense of the power of God, that God had a special delight, and Christ a special delight, in drawing near to him, and saying, "Fear not, Paul?" I am bold to say tonight, that if that circumstance in the apostle's history had been wanting, there would have been some other created by the blessed God, not only on Paul's account, but to show how Christ could draw near to His servant. He would not have been without an opportunity of sustaining the heart of a faithful disciple who was standing fast for Him, and suffering for His name.

That is what I mean by saying that all those circumstances give Him an occasion to come near to us. Think of it, beloved friends. But let us be clear about this point: these things are not the spring of His actions. God has not a motive -- let me say it decidedly tonight; there is not a motive in the heart of God that has not its spring in Himself. He does not get His motives from us. He finds the occasion to manifest His mercy. He finds in our misery the suited time to display the tenderness of His heart; in our sorrows He seeks to unfold His comforts; in our difficulties He displays His inscrutable wisdom, that can carry us through: but the motives are all in His own heart. What a blessed thing to know that -- that God has His affections, and in His heart the motives for everything that He does. All the springs -- every one of them -- are in God Himself; but in the circumstances in which we are placed is revealed what was in His heart already. Oh, the blessedness of this! Oh, the infinite grace that can stoop so low! Have your hearts the sense of that this evening, beloved friends? Am I speaking to any one in sorrow, or trial, or temptation? The blessed resources of God wait upon your circumstances! Oh, if our hearts could only get the sense of that! If our hearts could only get the sense that He waits upon us, and that it delights His heart to draw near to us, and to minister, not according to what we think, but according to the infinite wisdom and deep affection of His own heart, because it is His own heart that guides His hand!

This I know, I do not understand His ways always, where I might and ought, and I see this on every hand, that there is nothing which makes people practically infidels more than judging of God by His ways; multitudes in the world at the present time are caught and stung by infidelity. It is a growing judging of God by His ways; multitudes in the world at the present time are caught and stung by infidelity. It is a growing monster. I know those who have lost their balance through it. They have looked at their circumstances, at the ways they were led in, and they knew enough of God not to separate their ways from Him -- that is, they did not believe in the horrible doctrine that things happen by chance; but they judged of God by His ways with them, and the consequence is they have lost their spiritual balance, they have made shipwreck of faith. He has not made known His ways after that fashion, but I delight
to tell you what He has made known. There is not a secret chamber of His heart that He has not manifested -- not one! I say it with reverence, yet with confidence, there is not a single chamber in the heart of the blessed God that He has not opened; the beloved Son has manifested all the Father’s affections. I know His heart, and what a blessed thing it is for us when we can fall back on that!

As to His ways, there may be clouds and darkness about them, I may not see the end from the beginning, and God may purposely keep it from me, but if I start with this fact -- there is nothing but love in that heart, nothing but infinite goodness in that bosom, “I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly, that God, the highest, mightiest, for ever loveth me.” Then I am measuring His ways by His heart, and not His heart by His ways. I remember hearing of a person once who objected strongly to the truth of the gospel of the grace of God, and the only way by which a sinner can be brought to God. “Well,” said this caviler, “I do not understand that everlasting preaching of blood, blood, blood. What kind of a God must yours be! I hear you always talking of blood and death. What a God must such a God be!” What answer would you give to your own heart if that thought suggested itself to you? Now, it is well that our hearts should be furnished with a reply. Nothing makes a man secure against all the various storms and blasts of the devil that are sweeping this poor world, except thorough settlement in the truth of God. What answer, then, would you give to such a suggestion or thought as I have referred to? I will tell you the answer that was given. It was in the shape of another question, namely, “What was the relationship between the God whom you speak of in those terms, and the Victim whose blood you thus slight? What was the relationship between the Victim and the One who provided Him?” Oh, wondrous grace! the Victim was the Son of His bosom!

“Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love!
Thou maker of new morals to mankind!
The grand morality is love of Thee.
As wise as Socrates -- if such they were;
Nor will they bate of knowledge.
As wise as Socrates, might justly stand
The definition of a modern fool.”

Knowing God’s love settles everything. It meets the sneer of the infidel on the one hand, and it steadies a poor feeble heart, that might be a little affected, on the other. Oh, consider it! He gave His only-begotten Son, His own Son, the Son of His affections, of His love, the Son that was ever in His bosom, and is in the bosom; and even when He was on the earth, we find it still “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.” He never left it. He was from eternity in the bosom of the Father. That Son God gave in the inscrutable, infinite, wonderful, nature of His love, to prove to you and me that He had a heart! Such is the way He proved it. He gave the object that was dearest to His own affections to prove to us that the devil had insinuated a lie into our hearts, in denying that God had any interest in His creatures. And, beloved friends, if we start with that, what a thing it is for us! Then we measure His ways by His affections. We know His love is perfect. Ah, I know well how that gilds trying circumstances. I know well, beloved friends, how that comforts the heart in days of sorrow, in hours of difficulty, in moments of pressure. The soul can retreat into the one heart that is changeless, the unalterable, eternal, affection of the blessed God, who needs these very trials in which we are to manifest that He is everything to us that He delights to be. That is why He wants the wilderness, to show that He can come down to meet us, to sustain and comfort us here.

And, beloved friends, as I have before observed, it is not merely a question of His coming and meeting us in the circumstances where we are, but further still, there is nothing more blessed than to fall back upon a little word in Luke 12. “Your Father knoweth.” He does not say, “Your Father will come in with help,” or, “with sustenance.” Both are true. But He throws their hearts upon His knowledge. “He knoweth.” Is that enough for you? Is it enough for you in every circumstance that He knows, that your Father knows, that your Father has an eye that is never dim, an ear ever open, and an affection that never alters? “He knows.” Is that blessed reality enough to keep you? Can you retire on that? “He knows.” Wondrous blessedness it is! The Lord give our hearts, beloved friends, to get the abundant comfort and the full solace which may be reaped from our wilderness history, from the fact that it is necessary for us to be practiced in dependence and subjection on the one hand, and that it affords the blessed God an opportunity for the display of the affections of His heart to us on the other hand -- to show that He can feel for us in weakness and weariness, and that He will draw nigh to us. Who is there that can draw nigh to us in moments like these but God? Human sympathy is the expression of its own helplessness; surely I have often felt it. It is at best but the expression of its weakness; but when God draws near, how blessed! “The Lord stood by me,” says the apostle; and in another place, “There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.”

The Lord give us, by His Spirit, to taste the sweetness of these exercises as we pass along through this weary land, exercised in full dependence upon Him, and in the conscious sense that it is necessary to His heart to meet us, and to display the affections that are there!

Let us now look at the other side of the truth for a moment, that which I said was not so well understood, namely, the heavenly dwelling-place. I believe that the heavenly dwelling-place as a present thing known to the soul, is far less apprehended than the pilgrimage I have been dwelling on. I know many who understand the first, but who have not the least conception of the second. We ought to know both. The Lord give us to abound in both.

Now the exercises that I have already spoken of will be nothing to your heart if you do not know what I am going to set before you. I must ask you to turn to Deut. 11, because there you have the divine description of the land, the dwelling-place, and its character. Observe those verses for a moment in ch. 11, and you will see the contrasts (I particularly call your attention to it). He contrasts Egypt with the land. This world is to us both Egypt and the wilderness; it is Egypt in its moral character, it is the wilderness in its experimental character. Look at v. 10 for an instant. “For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye
came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven. A land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." What does that mean? I believe the first part of this passage points to the fact that everything you have in the wilderness has trouble connected with it. There is no such thing in this world as a day without clouds. Take, for instance, seed-sowing, or harvest; there is trouble connected with both. The farmer will tell you he has trouble with his crops in every stage and season. He has trouble before he prepares the ground, he has trouble in sowing the seed, and abundance of anxiety and care before harvest comes. It was doubly so in Egypt, because I believe what the Spirit of God alludes to when He speaks of their watering the land with their feet, is this -- that the only source from whence ancient Egypt derived its fruitfulness was the Nile. It was necessary to construct channels for the river, when it overflowed its banks, to run into and irrigate the soil. This was done with the foot. But what trouble and labor all that entailed!

This, therefore, you see, is the first contrast between this scene and that blessed place of which I hope to speak more particularly. Right well many of our hearts here know what sorrow's night is. I am satisfied I am not speaking to a single saint of God within these walls this evening that is not certified in his heart that there is nothing, even the very best thing in this world, that has not trouble connected with it. I care not what it is, be it the costliest treasure your heart delights in here, trouble lies at its root. Take the relationships of life, are they not exposed to trouble, trouble, trouble? “Enlarge them,” as was once said, “and you only make a wider target for death to shoot at.” Ah, that is all. No matter what it is you possess in this world, the costliest jewel of your heart, the very best thing, there is no immunity in regard to it from the common lot of men in a world where death and sorrow both find their natural home. Hence, this is the first contrast. The second is like unto it, namely, that in the best thing here there is a deficiency, a lack, there is scarceness. Therefore He says (ch. 8), speaking of the land, “A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it.” First of all, then, there is trouble with reference to the best things in this world, and secondly, even the best thing is deficient. It is like John 2, the wedding feast, and the wine out! There is no such thing as absence of scarceness, it is all want here.

These are the two great contrasts, beloved brethren. Have not our hearts proved them? Now let me tell you what I regard as a mournful thing. Whilst I admit that hundreds of saints of God freely and fully own that there is trouble and sorrow and difficulty connected with the best thing here, yet they do not know that this of itself will not wean the heart from this scene. I see those who are left like a tree that was blasted by lightning, from its remotest stems to its very roots. I have seen those who are without a solitary green spot; there they are in that state, but they are not satisfied elsewhere. They are scorched by the fire of trial here, but the heart is not invigorated elsewhere. I believe that God works both ways with us. He rolls in death on us here as to our circumstances and as to our history; He makes this very scene where our hearts would fain strike their roots, too hard for us; He makes it to be the corrective of itself. But mark this, whilst He does that on the one side, He holds out an intensely attractive object on the other; and when both these things go together, the heart weaned because it has found an object outside the place where we are, and death being upon the very best thing in it; I say both these things work blessedly, wonderfully, together. I mean that when we have an object outside this world of want and desolation, and, at the same time that we are in the desolation, our hearts are kept from looking at anything but the object outside that satisfies us. I understand the apostle to mean that when he said, “Death worketh in us, but life in you”; that is, the effect of death working in him here, was that there was the manifestation of life going out towards them. There were the two things. Never let us forget that a person may die, or have everything blasted around him for his own sake; or he may die and have everything withered for Christ’s sake. There is a vast difference there. I do not believe that knowing we have everything in Christ will secure us against the blast of death here; but if our hearts are found in this heavenly dwelling-place, with an object that is ineffably precious beyond everything here, then God subjects us to trial here for his sake, for Christ’s sake, for the Gospel’s sake, in order that He may exhibit in us and to others, what He has done, and can do for us: and what He can be to us. This is a higher order of trial that I am speaking of, namely, that we die to exhibit the good of what is in heaven, in place of dying to find out the fading nature of everything on earth. Oh, how great is the difference! Many are obliged to die in order to find out the excellency of that spot where death never enters; but on the other hand, they may begin with that spot first, and come down here into this scene to display it, to be the specimen to which God can point, the canvas as it were on which He can paint the blessedness of that place, on which His eye continuously rests.

Look at this other point a moment, where He contrasts the wilderness and the land. He says (chap. 11), “The land . . . is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven.” It is supplied from its own sources. It is {sic, Is it} not dependent upon anything that is here; its springs are in itself. “It drinketh water of the rain of heaven. The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year.” I ask you tonight, What is the spot where God’s eyes are always detained? Where is it? It is not the one spot where Jesus is? I know no other place upon which His eye rests always save that. That, then, is the place He gives you and me for our home. He gives it to us to be the dwelling-place of our hearts; the land that he careth for is the spot that detains His own affections.

Now, meditate on that for a moment. Think of the blessed condition of that into which He brings us rest -- in the very sphere where His affections have found their perfect delight, and where His eye rests with eternal complacency. “The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it.” Oh, beloved friends, think of what it is to taste it now in any little measure, be it ever so feeble! I grant it is very poor and feeble with us all. May the Lord, by His Spirit, awaken a desire in our hearts to taste it now, to taste the blessedness of living there now; and of living in it, not merely as a refuge from the storm and trials, but as a home; to know the joys of home! There is a great
difference between a shelter and a home. A shelter is not necessarily a home. You can readily perceive a shelter is a place into which you run and hide from the storm, but you may come out again when the storm is past. Home is the place where your affections are detained; and if Christ is only a shelter to you, you will not of necessity abide there. And hence the feebleness of presenting Christ only as a shelter. It does not secure the permanent abiding of the heart with Him; but if He is a home, if there are the joys of home, the delights of home, the comforts of home, the fellowship of home, the affections of home, then I say, let me tarry there, that is the dwelling-place; that is where I am furnished, where I am satisfied, where I am comforted. I have to go through this world in all its varied scenes, yet there is my home.

“High in the Father’s house above
My mansion is prepared;
There is the home, the rest I 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.”

Let me give you an illustration of it. Many of you have been in the mining districts, and you have seen how and where the miners earn their daily bread. They go to their mine and work in the morning, and there they till and labor all the day long; but their home is not down there. Their work, their exercise, is there, but not their rest. There is a quiet spot that each man has, which is consecrated in each heart, under the name of “home,” and he goes forth from thence day by day to fill his allotted niche in the labor of life; and unto that you and I are also called. We are appointed to pass through this world with all the blessed consciousness in our hearts that we have a home. I know it may be said, But we are going on to it; true, yet this does not in the least invalidate the other. I know we shall be there in body by-and-by; but the Lord gives us to have it in faith now, as the sphere where our hearts rest. It is this likewise which will impart a character to us. Be assured, if we walk through this present world with the blessed air of that goodly place about us, it surely imparts a character. A person who has found a home and rest for the heart in heaven is as easily recognized as a person who has not. Activity will not procure it for you. There is no use in deceiving ourselves about it: we may toil and labor all the day long, and be most energetic, but that does not ensure any rest for your heart. Your activity is restless, your service is restless, your work is restless. Everything that you do is colored by what you yourself are. Be assured that being in the company of Christ, makes you like Christ. The company you are in, tell themselves out in everything to which you put your hand.

If you have not the rest of home, and quiet of heart, you may be over-laborious and active, but it is restless. Is has the stamp upon it of un-quiet and unrest. God looks at this present moment for a heart so satisfied, restful, and quiet -- because it has found an anchoring ground, a solid certainty, in the One on whom His own eye rests with ineffable delight -- He looks for those who can go forth here like the sun out of his chamber, and like a strong man refreshed with wine to run his course.

The Lord teach us to possess that place, and to be in the company of His Christ now!

One word further, because the question may arise, and very properly, What occupies us there? That is a very important question. Is there any occupation there? Is there aught to engross, absorb the soul there? Most surely there is. May I ask you to turn to Deut. 26? I believe in that chapter the first-fruits, the place and the priest are all typical of Christ. Christ is the great anti-type of all these things. It is Christ then who occupies me. It is Christ who engages, Christ who absorbs, Christ who rivets my affections, Christ who commands my powers, my tongue, everything. Everything connected with that place is connected with Him, and it is upon Him that my eye adoringly rests, and it is with Him my heart is everlastingly occupied -- what blessedness! what glory!

But remember, you cannot be engaged with Him until you get there. Mark those words -- “It shall be when thou art come in unto the land.” Then it is you are occupied with the One who has brought you there; not with your blessing, but with the blesser -- with Himself, who has won this place for you with His affections, with His Person. When you have come in and possessed the land, and when you have dwelt in it, when it is the home of your heart, the One that has made it so to you is the one that engrosses you in it.

There is a scripture in the NT to which I would desire to refer: you remember that beautiful chapter Col. 3. In ch. 2 the Apostle throws us out of man, and in ch. 3 he puts us in association with the last Adam risen from the dead. You must be somewhere. You are out of man in ch. 2; you have died with Christ. If His death has thus closed all my history as connected with the first Adam, where am I? Surely in association with Christ risen. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

Beloved friends, it is more blessed to see that the apostle does not define what “those things” are. He does not tell you. It is the Person that gives them character. It is the Person of which they are the surroundings which makes them objects of acquisition. If you say to a heart that is set on Christ, “Christ is there,” that answers every question. It is the fact of His presence that secures everything, and explains everything for the devoted one. There is no need to go into details if it is Christ your heart is looking out for, because He it is who makes your heart at home amid such things.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give us to excel in both these exercises; may we know what it is to find this rest, this blessed, wonderful rest, in this heavenly dwelling-place, where, as He says, “The sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.” I take those two birds to be symbols exactly of what our poor hearts are naturally. The sparrow is a worthless bird; it is valueless because it is so plentiful. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?” says the blessed Lord. The swallow is a type of ceaseless activity and unrest; but both sparrow and swallow have found a home. Where? “Thine altars, O Lord of hosts; my King and my God.” Then mark this, “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.” They are
detained, engrossed, occupied “praising thee.”

The Lord give us, beloved friends, to know these truths I have been setting forth, in their divine and proper order in our souls, and so fortify and strengthen us, that we may go forth, in the dignity of our calling, to present in this poor world, where there is not a particle of rest or quiet, a bold front in the midst of all its ceaseless unrest around us. May He give us hearts that can be undisturbed amid its storms, proofs of what being brought into His presence and finding a home there can do for them. He would have us be like ocean steamers, whitened it may be up to the very top of the funnel, by reason of the sea and storm, the severe weather we have encountered, but commanded so well, and guided so skillfully, that all who see us must say, That vessel has weathered all the gales: how well manned and skillfully piloted she must have been! Thus no wave can be too strong, no tempest too crushing -- thus we shall not desire one trial less, or one sorrow mitigated!

Chapter 3:
A Threefold Cord
John 14:16-31

There are three subjects in John 14 to which I will direct my observations this evening, as the Lord may help me. It is a scripture familiar to us all, and thoroughly read and beaten out, one might say, except that it is the word of God, and that in which there is always something fresh. I shall not travel through the chapter, but just glance at three distinct facts -- blessed facts -- which the Lord brings before the hearts of His disciples in the way of comfort. The first which is not recorded in the verses which I have read, but earlier in the chapter, is the blessed truth that the earth no longer affords a resting-place for His disciples -- us, His own. Now this is a truth that we are not so familiar with as we ought to be, at least those of us who understand something, through the grace of God and by the power of His Spirit, of what God has brought out in these last times.

I feel confident I am correct in saying, that side of the truth is not nearly so well understood or known, either outwardly or in the heart, as this, namely, that we have no standing whatever in man, looked at as man in the flesh. I suppose the great majority of those listening to me this evening, however little their hearts may have really grasped the fact for themselves, nevertheless admit this truth, that the history of the first man was closed in the cross of Christ. I will explain that term, because it is well perhaps, not to use expressions that may be up to the very top of the funnel, by reason of the sea and storm, the severe weather we have encountered, but commanded so well, and guided so skillfully, that all who see us must say, That vessel has weathered all the gales: how well manned and skillfully piloted she must have been! Thus no wave can be too strong, no tempest too crushing -- thus we shall not desire one trial less, or one sorrow mitigated!

as standing entirely in a new position in Christ risen from the dead.

Now this truth, beloved friends, through God’s mercy and grace, is brought out and known, however little or feeble the effect may be seen in any of us. It would have an immense power over souls if it were really felt and known in our consciences. Wondrous fact it is, that I have no standing in Adam before God, and that we have a new place altogether in Christ! “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” You could not go back, if that truth had really possession of your soul; and that is a better way to put it than to say, “if you had a hold of it.” If it had a grasp of you, you could not go back to anything that was connected with the first Adam, without doing violence to poor conscience and the truth; and in proportion as you walked with a good conscience before God, your conscience would be kept in exercise, and would be a quick witness to you as to when and how you passed the line.

This, I believe, is where there is a grand mistake. Many of us are a great deal too anxious to get hold of truth, in place of being sufficiently quiet before God, so that it might get a hold of us. If it seizes hold of us, it is the truth that is operative, and not us. Now I know that is a very humbling thing. We naturally do not like it, because we all prefer doing something. We like to be occupied in working on the truth; but what God does is, He takes and places us before Him in the quietness of His presence, so as to secure for the truth simply its own effectual working by the Spirit upon our consciences. I will give you an illustration of it. When Moses went up to the mount to get the tables of testimony the second time, was he working upon anything that was up there before? Did Moses get the color of the glory by any working of his own when he was up in the mount? Moses was quiescent before Jehovah, and the glory of God both left its impress, as well as reflected itself, in Moses’s face; and when he came down, the only man of the company who did not see the glory that was reflected there, was Moses himself. Everyone else saw it -- everyone else witnessed the effect of Moses being in the presence of God. I feel that this is a day, of all others, when there is immense need for that quietness of soul before God; that restfulness of heart, so as to allow the truth to form and fashion us according to itself. The moment you allow your mind to work on the truth, you bring in one of the most effectual hindrances thereto. There is all the difference between the truth of God, wielded by the Holy Ghost, producing certain effects upon our conscience and our mind working upon that truth; because, you perceive, your mind may work upon the truth, and, after all, the devil may get hold of you in a way you little think. I know how Satan might get advantage of a person through the mere fact of the outward intelligence working upon the truth, when the conscience has not been sufficiently exercised before God for the truth to work upon it.

The moment I accept my true place, viz., that I am outside of the first Adam altogether as to standing, and that my place is entirely in Christ risen from the dead -- as soon as ever that has a hold upon my conscience, then everything connected with me, everything concerning me, is to be ordered to suit that. There is an immense difference between trying to make things
suit us, and God fashioning us to suit Himself by the truth. He delights to have us so as to answer to the place He brings us into. It is not ours to order things so as to suit ourselves; we are brought into the most wonderful position before God that it was possible for a human heart to conceive, and God says, Now I am going to have everything about you suited to that position, and therefore everything else must go. And the more my heart is in the affections of the blessed God, the more willing they are that everything else should go.

Now, the other truth is not so well known by any means, either in the outward understanding or in the affections, in the conscience or in the soul; namely, not only do I not belong to the first man at all, but I do not belong to the earth. I know many people here tonight will not like that. Everyone is glad enough to say, “I do not belong to the first man, thank God; I have got a new place in Christ risen from the dead; I belong to glory, to Christ; I am in the risen One”; but the question is, Are you ready to say, “I do not belong to this earth??” I do not say the earth does not belong to you, for it never did. If it did, be good enough to produce your title-deeds to it. God never gave it to you; but there is a deeper truth -- Christians do not belong to it. You will find the two things in Eph. 1 and 2; you can read them at your leisure. You will perceive a Christian is out of man, out of earth. We do not belong to the first man as to standing, and we do not belong to this earth as to place. We are here in the body -- I do not deny that; but then it is an immense thing to know we have no place on this earth. The earth is closed to us. You have not got a place in it, any more than Christ had. Oh, how blessed, yet how solemn! Now here is the truth that falls with such immense power upon a person’s heart that yearningly asks, Where is my home? Where is my place? Tell me where my heart is free to go in and out?

This, then, is the first thing recorded in John 14. He says to His own, I have a place for you outside this ruined earth. There is a definiteness in the words “unto myself.” Is there not likewise definiteness in Col. 3? “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Is that not locality? There is a definiteness about it to a believer’s heart -- it is a distinct place which He has for me, outside all the ruin and wretchedness which is around. That is the first thing -- a positive, distinct place, a mansion. “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, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Now, mark this for a moment, how the two things run closely together -- the truth in Col. 3, and this first truth in John 14. You observe when the apostle is speaking in Colossians, after throwing them out of man in ch. 2, and showing them their new place in ch. 3, then he says, “Seek those things which are above.” To give a distinctness to “those things above,” in their hearts and to their affections, he puts in this little word, “where Christ sitteth.” And, beloved friends, those three little words in Colossians are the same in scope and meaning as the precious three in John 14, “where I am.” They supply everything that is necessary to a heart that is simply set on Christ. I do not desire to adopt the fanciful definitions or descriptions I have heard about heaven. I do not believe in such things; and I am struck with the silence of scripture on this head; it is wonderful how little is said about heaven. I suppose it is natural to us all to indulge in fancies concerning it, but there is hardly anything said about it in scripture. But this is said, that we shall be where Jesus is -- it is the Person that gives character to the place. It is the blessed fact that He will have us with Himself; and the heart that has Christ for its object is satisfied to know that He is there; that is, it is His presence that gives definiteness to it -- this meets every longing affection. With Him, for He is there! Anywhere with Him!

Now I wish to point out another blessed fact. I see this, beloved friends, that, no matter where the presence of Christ is spoken of, that determines our place -- that is, His position, the position of Christ, determines ours. It is impossible for Him to be anywhere where He will not have us. Oh, wondrous glory, to be able to say that! An amazing thing it is to get such a sense of the affections of that heart that delights to have His own eternally with Himself, so that one can boldly say, He would not be satisfied if He had not us where He is! And therefore, the moment I find Christ’s position, I have also found ours. “Where I am, there ye may be also.”

Will you turn with me to another side of this very same truth in Heb. 13? It is presented to my thoughts and heart just at this moment. It will serve as an illustration of the principle I am seeking to press upon you. Verse 12: “Wherefore Jesus also,” (I ask your particular attention to this scripture) “that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Now observe, He tells you He has a place up there in the heavens -- mansions (abodes) -- the very best place conceivable, or that our hearts could possibly desire; and that it is His being there that gives character to it, and definiteness to it, and that He wants to have us there. How one’s heart delights to think of that! But what do you think of this Heb. 13? Let me, beloved friends, exercise your conscience a little. May the Lord be pleased to do it through this Heb. 13? Let me, beloved friends, exercise your conscience a little. May the Lord be pleased to do it through His word tonight! Have you put yourselves into Heb. 13? There is an immensity of sentimentality passing current in minds, and it is difficult, in speaking about the truth of God, to avoid treading on these sentimental thoughts that many have about heaven in these days; I desire to be both faithful and loving in all I say.

But look at Heb. 13. There is a great deal of what is plain and matter-of-fact about that.

Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

And look at the wisdom of the Spirit of God. If you stay inside, you escape the reproach; if you go outside unto Jesus, you will get the reproach. And what sweetens it? This -- that you go forth unto Him! It is not the bare fact that I go outside and that I protest when I get outside against everything that is inside; but I go outside (and I urge this upon you), I go outside as much from affection to Christ as from a divinely-exercised conscience. I go outside, it is true, from a divinely-exercised conscience, because I cannot stay inside, but I am attracted by a living Person outside! I look up into the heavens, and I say, Where is Jesus? Inside there. Then I go in there! Here on earth
He is outside, and I go outside! That fills up the two parts of my history. I go inside to enjoy and share in the delights of home; I go outside to keep company with the One who has made the home for me up there. Do your hearts enter into that, beloved? Does that suit you? And oh, friends, there may be a great many things which this will touch. I have no doubt it is a sword that cuts in a circle. I have no question as to that. Some of us here know how, and when, and where it cuts; but there is this sweeter in it -- not only the fact that He is there, but the point that presses upon my heart is, the moment that the Holy Ghost finds Jesus for you, there is your place, if your heart is true to Him. The moment that He shows you Jesus in the many mansions which He has for you outside this ruined earth, then your heart is at once attracted into that place, and He tells you He has them there for you. Well, can you not bear the break-up of things here now? the withering blasts of sorrow, the rolling waves of trial? It is this which enables one to stand before the piercing arrows of death, and they are shot everywhere this side. There is not a single spot on earth into which they do not penetrate. The insatiable archer fires his darts everywhere in this poor world, and nothing is secure against them. The sunniest region is desolated by these arrows of death. But Jesus goes up there, and says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again." It is not only that He has it for us, it is not only that His presence prepares it -- because that is the force of the passage -- but He will come and receive, and welcome us into it.

I do not believe that the activity of Jesus is exercised in getting that place ready. It is His presence there that prepares it. The activity of Jesus in that place is about us here -- not in connection with the place, but the persons, His own here, upon the earth -- keeping us fit for His presence, as fit for His presence as His blood has made us -- His blood the ground upon which we are in His presence, and His grace the principle upon which we are maintained in fitness for His presence. But His presence in the place gets it ready, and then there is only one thing wanting, and that is, the Person to welcome us into it. He says, "That is the work I must have; I shall not only have a place prepared by being there, and I will not only keep you clean from moral distance from myself whilst you are here and I am there, but the first note of welcome into that prepared spot of my presence shall be from myself!" "If I go away, I will come again and receive you, unto myself."

You observe, it is the person here again. It is not "heaven," or "glory," but "unto myself." Oh, what joy in that! "That where I am, there ye may be also."

Now, beloved friends, before I pass on, let me ask you affectionately tonight, what kind of an influence does that exert, when, where, and how? Does that suit you? I believe all of us live far too much in the spirit of the day -- because that is the force of the passage -- but He will come and receive, and give prosperity and comfort, and who then forgot him. It is, I say, precisely the same. Very well, the effect of that reaches even to us, and I will show you how, namely, in this way: You will find everyone looking for relief -- relief for conscience, or relief for heart; for we are complex creatures. We have consciences, and we have hearts, though some appear as if they had none. A man who has only conscience, and no heart, is only half the sort of man that scripture deals with; and the man that has only a heart, and no conscience, is only half a man, looking the other side of it. The truth is, we have a conscience to be purged, and we have hearts to be satisfied. The blood of Christ sets our conscience at perfect liberty, the person of Christ satisfies the heart's affections. That is the way things are met. This is what I mean by using Christ simply for what He is worth, and then forgetting Him. You will find it even so with regard to the truth that I am speaking of tonight -- the blessed fact that He has a place for us outside this earth, and that our hearts can turn in there when the blasts of death sweep over everything here. When the storm is over, what do you do? Do you come out? That is the result, if Christ and the place where He is are nothing more than a refuge in the storm: you come out when the storm is past.

Now, beloved friends, what Christ says is this: namely, “I have a home for you.” I do not deny it is a refuge, a shelter. It is the only bit of shade in all the withering, blasting, heat that is around; but if it has not to your heart the elements of home about it, the attractiveness, the joys, the blessedness, of home, in company, too, with One who is skilled in putting the heart at ease -- then I say you will come out when the storm is over. You have used Him only as a relief in the difficulty, and when it is gone by, you are found once more outside, where it met you. Now this is what is found in the world around us to-day. There is no thought of having a home with Christ outside this scene: people think this world an uncommonly good home, and they bring down the grace of Christ, the love of Christ, the help of Christ, and the redemption of Christ, in order to make themselves comfortable in it. This, beloved friends, is the spirit of our time.

Now the effect which God intended should follow upon the redemption of Christ, His blood, and His grace, is this -- to unsettle us as regards this world, but to unsettle us here by settling us there. If we are settled in that wondrous place where He is, because we are at home there, we are unsettled here.

Now I will try to make this plain to you by an illustration; and those who are, perhaps, more advanced in these things will bear with me while I speak to many this evening to whom these things are fresh and new. Suppose a man were to drop into this great city tonight from the antipodes: that man does not need to make himself a stranger here, he need not seek to get up the spirit of strangership, nor the temper of a stranger. That man is a stranger here. What makes him so? Simply that he comes from a spot where he is at home. There is a country where he is not a stranger, a place where his heart delights to say that he is at home, where his interests and all his belongings are; he drops into a place which is not that to him, and he is necessarily a stranger in it. The surest mark of a person not really a pilgrim is the effort to be one. You will always see people trying to be what they are not; but if one is genuinely
and really a pilgrim, there is no effort about it -- it is just the simple product of life and nature. There is no effort about the plant, or the herb, or the tree, as it grows in the field. All it wants is heat and light. It wants the light of the sun and the heat of the sun, and with them it grows, and asserts its nature. And it is the same here; there is no effort being a pilgrim on the part of one who is such.

Beloved friends, there are two things you can never do. You can no more acquire the spirit of a stranger than you can fit yourself for the presence of God as a sinner. The one is just as impossible as the other. You cannot, by any possible means in your power, give your conscience a title to be in the presence of God, and you cannot acquire the spirit of strangership; but the moment that your heart is set at rest and at home in Christ, where He is, you are drawn out of the current of things here, and they become strange to you; they cease to be your interests or concern.

There is not one of us here tonight that would not be obliged to confess to God, if He inquired of us, how little awkward we are here in this world. It is not uncongenial to us, as it ought to be. We do not find ourselves out of gear, as it were, in it; we do not find our spirits burdened by all around, as we should if we lived on high. We do not suffer from the uncongenial nature of the atmosphere, as a plant out of its true sphere. Alas, we have become acclimatized! We have lived so much in the spirit of the things around us, that we have become hardened. Is not this the real and true state of the case? We can face this world now, because we have been under its frosts and winters so much, that we have settled down -- are we not settled? are we not dwellers on earth rather than visitors? The Lord make us rather visitors here, by making us dwellers there! If we dwell there, we visit here; and if we dwell here, we are only at best visitors there. I fear this is where most of us are. I fear the history of most of us might be so described and written.

But, beloved friends, is not this the purpose of God, that we should so dwell there, as to find the circle of home joys so attractive to our poor hearts, in connection with the blessed Person who makes them at home in the place which He has opened to us, that we would be only visitors here? and that we should visit here, in all the grace, blessedness, meekness, strength, and power of Christ?

And (let me say this word) you see the same spirit in the way things here are met: people try to fortify themselves in prospect of trouble. They scan the supposed trouble, they measure it, and they try to get themselves prepared. You can never do it! I never saw any try that plan yet, that they were not worsted, when the moment came. You cannot do it: why? Because He gives fresh strength for the need when it arises, according to His riches in glory. It is not accumulative strength. He never gives you anything in store. He gives everything as you want it. Oh! how wise and good He is in this. He knows well if He gave us anything in store, we should use His gifts to become independent. He keeps the thing in His own hands in infinite mercy, and He keeps our hearts dependent upon Him for the things we need. All we have to do, is, to go on with God for to-day: the more we have to do with Christ in that place where He is, and the more our hearts delight themselves in the circle of home joys that are there, the more we meet the things that come up every day simply and naturally, without effort, without trying to fortify ourselves beforehand. Oh! to go on simply in the patience and quietness and joy of Christ to-day, and when trouble comes, to meet it in the grace and power of Christ. It is the way in which we enjoy that blessed place where Christ is that fits us for hardships here. We cannot face these troubles unless we come back from that place and thus meet them. Oh! to come back in all the dignity, the ease, the quietness, and the power of Christ, to face the things here, where we are but heavenly visitors. Oh! to dwell amongst our own people more, and from thence to be militant in an enemy’s country! And remember the grace of Christ is as much manifested in enabling us to tide over the difficulties that are here, as it was manifested in giving us the place with Himself there.

This then is the first point that was on my heart in speaking of John 14. Allow me now to direct your thoughts to our side of it, and I should desire particularly to fix your minds on one verse. I want, if I can, to address your conscience for a moment; look at v. 23. “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my word.” I take the liberty of changing a word here -- it is “word,” not “words.” The meaning of it is, he will keep my revealed counsel: further on, you find the plural, and properly so, “my sayings,” that is, the actual words of Jesus: but here it is in the singular. “If a man love me, he will keep my word.” Are you up to this test of affection for Christ? Observe, it is not working, it is not “If a man love me he will work.” -- this great gospel day in which we live men would fain have it thus. God forbid that I should say a word detrimental in the smallest way; far be it from me to speak so, of anything that God, in His infinite sovereignty and mercy, may be pleased to use as an instrument for His purposes, -- but I must accept the word of the Lord as I find it; and the test to-day is, not how much you can do, but, Are you keeping the word of Jesus? Look at that verse again. “If a man love me, he will keep my word.” May God write that word on your hearts tonight!

It is not the ceaseless activity that runs hither and thither, seeking for some great thing to do; there may be all that, beloved friends, and more even, which I will point out as most solemn in connection with it. There maybe zeal and labor, and yet not one single particle of genuine affection for Christ at the bottom of it! “How extreme!” people will say. “What an extreme statement!” I shall prove it. I will not ask you to take anything that I cannot prove: turn to Rev. 2, at the opening verses. This very same Jesus, who walks in the midst of the candlesticks, with penetrating eyes of fire, and who hears everything, reads everything, detects everything, judges everything -- observe what He says now, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write . . . I know thy works, and thy labor and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored and hast not fainted.” Where could you meet to-day a condition of things that would be as favorable under eyes like a flame of fire? Search Christendom, if you please, and find it if you can.
No, beloved friends, nowhere can such be discovered.

What does He say about it? “Nevertheless,” allowing it all, giving full credit for the labor, and He mentions it first (what He can allow He names first): “I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love!” Now that, beloved friends, we are familiar with; but I am not so sure that we take into account the solemn, most solemn, possibility of doing the works, when the love is not there. Did that ever occur to you? On the face of the thing, it is plain that He valued the affection a great deal more than the works; but it is immensely solemn for all of us to think how possible it is to labor so as to get like credit, even from Him, when the heart is not genuinely true to Himself. Surely it is not a small thing for us to beware lest we are doing the works, when the motive-spring of affection is absent. I take and test things as I find them about me to-day, and I take the simple word of the Lord Jesus. “If a man love me, he will keep my word.” Have you affection for Christ? I speak to you, friends, in the name of the Lord; do you love Him? Is your heart towards Him? Have you expressed your affection for Christ? Do you say, Yes, I love Him? It is a day when people tell out their feelings pretty freely. “If a man love me, he will keep my word,” and if you are not keeping His word, His counsel, His revealed will, is it not vain for you to say you love Him? You remember what Delilah said to Samson. She understood love, poor, wretched, polluted woman though she was; a miserable, guilty woman, yet she understood something of the nature of genuine affection. She said, “how canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?” “If a man love me, he will keep my word.”

Now, in contrast with that for one moment look at Rev. 3. When He looks at Philadelphia, there is not a word about the works except this, that He knew them. And I believe the reason is that nobody else recognized them. I am perfectly satisfied that the “works” of Philadelphia were of that nature that there was no eye that scanned them or understood their character but the eye of Jesus. “I know thy works.” No one else could. They were too insignificant, too much below the surface, too much hidden from the gaze of the world, of too different a character, from too different a motive, with too different an object, to be recognized by any eye but the eye of Christ. “Know thy works.” What else does He say? “Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word”: the same thing as “my counsel,” the very same thing as John 14. “Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” The difference between Philadelphia and the church that comes after -- though I will not speak of it now -- is that, in the one, divine power energizes human weakness; whereas, in the other, there was the power of Satan energizing man. Oh! what a wondrous thought, divine power energizing human weakness; and how immensely solemn to think of the power of the devil acting on man! Then it is most comforting to see that as you get the reward in John 14, so it is in Philadelphia.

I will speak for a moment of the reward as presented in John 14. “If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Now this is the same thing exactly as mansion or dwelling; the Greek word is identically the same as mansion in v. 2. “We will take a mansion (abode) in his heart.” Oh! it is a wonderful thing to say, “He has a mansion {abode} for me up there,” but it is a great deal more wonderful to think He will come down and take a mansion in my poor heart here! Is it not marvelous to think that poor things like us can make a mansion for Jesus and the Father in our hearts? That He will condescend, in the infinite grace of His nature, whilst He waits to take us into the mansion that His heart has for us in glory, to come down and take a mansion in our poor hearts here! Oh! how little is thought of that to-day on every hand! Where are the hearts that covet His presence? Where are the hearts whose delights are that Jesus should have His mansion there? The Father and the Son coming down to make their abode in them! Who could credit a fact of such surpassing wonder, if Christ had not said it -- this poor, little volatile heart, a mansion for the Father and the Son! Oh! friends, what do you think of that? If the first subject we have been dwelling on is the best place, is not this the best company? Do you suppose one would mind being alone, if conscious of such company as that? The best company. Oh, what company! The Father and the Son! The Father and the Son doing what? Visiting? No, but dwelling -- positively taking a mansion in the heart of a poor creature like you and me down here; in a heart too, perhaps, in which the world, or the devil, or the flesh, once reigned triumphant. The Lord, by His Spirit, give us to be exercised, beloved friends, as to whether we really have a desire that they should take up their dwelling-place in us!

Does it give you exercise? Did it ever give you a night’s trouble, or reflection, as to how the word of Jesus is set aside? We talk of our love to Christ, of our affections for Him, of our desires for the word of Jesus; does it, I ask, grieve our hearts well nigh to breaking, to see how consistently and systematically all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ’s?

We talk of our love, of our affection -- it is a poor, wretched, miserable, polluted, selfish thing! If our hearts and minds were genuinely and really in keeping with the affections of Christ, could we take as easily as we seem, the total indifference to His desires? Would it not afflict us to see how lightly esteemed is the longing of His soul, that for which He died, “to gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad,” and for which He desires “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us?” Is that purpose and prayer of Jesus regarded or slighted by professing Christendom? “If any man love me, he will keep my word.”

The last thing I shall speak of in our chapter is (vv. 26-28) the best circumstances. We have been dwelling on the best place and the best company, and now we turn to the best circumstances. I give you the three things together, as it may help you to remember them. The best place in the heavens with Christ the best company, “outside the camp” with Him here, and His taking a dwelling-place in our hearts; and now the best circumstances. What are they? First of all, this double peace. I will only say a few words upon the peace, because I presume most here are familiar with it. The first peace is that which He made by the blood of His cross, and the second is that which He enjoyed as an obedient and dependent man, as Son with His Father. I am not speaking of Him now as the eternal Son. I am
speaking of Him as the Son of God born into this world. The first peace which He leaves, as, I said, the peace made by the blood of His cross. The second is that which He gives us, which He had Himself, which flows from dependence, subjection, and obedience. One passing word upon both. Has every one here this double peace? It is not an uncommon thing to find many who have not peace. It is too common, I grieve to say, to find many amongst the professing people of God who have not peace. Now the first peace, I will tell you in simple words what that is: simply this -- that there is no enemy to show himself. That is the meaning of it. There is no enemy to lift up his head. If you see that every enemy has been disposed of, you have got the peace that Jesus made by the blood of His cross. I put it to you tonight: I speak to any one who has not got it: will you dispute this? Is there an enemy that Jesus has not disposed of? What about sin? “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” What about Satan? He “destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” What about death? He took the sting out of it. “O death, where is thy sting?” What about the grave? He has taken the victory from it. “O grave, where is thy victory?” There is no enemy? Well now, if your heart bows simply in the presence of the blessed One who accomplished all that upon the cross, and rests in Him, you have this peace, and with this peace no enemy can show his head to you.

The second peace, beloved friends, is the peace which comes from simple subjection of heart to Christ -- dependence and subjection. This peace is mine when I take His yoke upon me, and learn of Him. The “yoke” is taken up, generally speaking, for work; but the “yoke” is really taken up there for rest. “Take my yoke upon you,” not to work but for rest. “Ye shall find rest unto your souls.” That is to say, as soon as my heart simply takes this place of owning myself to be thoroughly and completely set aside as to all that I was in the flesh before God, and in everything else: as soon as I own myself to be what I am before God, that is, a dead man -- the will not in exercise: as soon as I reckon myself dead in the power of life in Christ, then it is I get the second peace: as soon as I account myself dead -- when by faith I own the fact, and keep my reckonings with God, then I get the second peace. This I believe is where people are thrown out. They do not keep their reckonings with God. There is the reckoning of faith, as well as the realization of it. If you do not reckon yourself to be dead, your will is governing you, and if your will is not governed, you cannot have the second peace; but if you keep your reckonings with God, your will is kept with the cross upon it, and you have got peace, the second peace, the peace of a dependent, subject man. That which keeps us out of dependence and subjection is this will, and we cannot, beloved brethren -- I say it strongly -- we cannot surrender will by force of will. Can you by your will surrender your will? Did you ever know will to abdicate? There have been sovereigns who have done so, but this never! It never has and never will! There is only one thing that disposes of us altogether, and that is the cross! I have to keep my reckonings with God; God has put an end to me; God has closed up in death all that I was, and it is mine simply to reckon myself “to be dead indeed unto sin.”

One thing more in this John 14, in connection with the best circumstances, which is most beautiful and blessed. “If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.” Oh! beloved friends, how little our hearts seem really to have entered into this! He says, as it were, I have brought you into such perfect association with myself, I have set you down in a place of such complete fulness in myself, that I reckon upon you sharing my joy. I give you to be partakers with me in my joy.” What is that? To forget your own sorrow in my joy! “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.” How little our hearts -- these poor selfish hearts of ours -- these wretched hearts that travel everlastingly within that narrow circle of self, self, self -- how little in His joy we are! How little absorbed we are by occupation with Christ, so as to share His joy, so as to find our joy in the fact that He has His! “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father. For my Father is greater than I.”

I believe, beloved friends, these are vital truths. I have spoken of them feebly, I know. They are truths that God would keep before our hearts in days like these. I know well there is enough of energy for service, but is there rest enough for communion? I am satisfied that none can take their part in the position in which God would have His people in these last times in connection with His truth, except those who are simply restful enough to know communion with His own heart. And we cannot have communion if our heart is not at rest. If we have not rest -- rest of conscience, of course, but I mean rest of heart -- we are not free. And, I believe, as I said last week in this place, that the state in which many of God’s people are found at this moment, is a fruitful one to invite the trial by their hearts of ten thousand things that are around, so as to banish if possible the dreariness that results from not having rest of heart before God.

The Lord give us, in the midst of all that is weak within as well as withering around, so to know this blessed place which Jesus has gone into to give it character to our hearts, that it may be the home of our souls at this present moment; and to know His presence as our company whilst we are here, and the circumstances which He delights to bring us into, the peace and joy which He gives, until we hear His voice, and are caught up to be with Him for ever!

From Our pilgrimage and His Rest: Notes of Lectures, London: Morrish, 1875.
“One Thing”
Mark 10:17-27; Psalm 27:4-6

The connection of these two scriptures is exceedingly interesting, because of the occurrence of the same words in them: “One thing.” Whilst in the young man in Mark 10 there was one thing that was lacking, with the saint, as in the Psalmist, there was, on the other hand, one thing that was commanding his whole moral being. It is of these two things that it is impressed upon my heart to say a word to you this morning.

In Mark the scripture is important to us, in that it comes in in that part of the Lord’s instructions in which He upholds that which God had set up at the beginning, and which the Lord Himself therefore always maintains. The Lord always vindicated everything which God originally formed -- all that which we sometimes say “belongs to the old creation,” whereas we ought to say, I think, more properly, the former creation. Everything that was instituted by God then, was always upheld and honored by the Lord Jesus Christ, as we find it here in respect of the marriage tie and of children. It is beautiful the way in which He, as God’s servant upon earth, upholds all that is of God.

But then the probe comes in: the cross. It is, “Come, take up the cross, and follow me.” He had that which in nature is in itself beautiful; it was not bad things; it was all that was attractive. But -- and I do not know anything more solemn -- it will not go at all with Christ. The best side of man counts for nothing here. Have we all accepted this? The thing that is beautiful, the thing that is excellent, the thing which the Lord did love, which He could fully own and recognize, that thing in its creature excellence, will not go with Christ.

And the instant the cross is brought in, the man is manifested in his true light and colors. “One thing thou lackest,” says the Lord; “go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved.” He was priding himself upon keeping the law; but when the Lord says to him, “Go, sell what thou hast, and come and share my path of shame and scorn and despicability on the earth, and follow me,” he departs sorrowful and disappointed.

The highest way to see the truth is to see it as a revelation from God. To see it in the lives of people on earth is not the same thing. When it comes direct from God, His word carries all its authority and weight to our souls. I may then see the effect of it coming out in different instances, and in the lives of men upon earth, but I have learnt it from God Himself. Still, if you have to do much with souls, you will find often this very same thing. You will find that, whilst there are many who accept Christ’s work as securing them from coming judgment, yet, if you press upon them the cross of Christ, they shrink from it in great dread. This is what marks professing Christianity in the present day, and I think we are all in danger of being ensnared by it. God has opened out to us an immense amount of truth, but the more we know of truth, and the more truth we have, the more the devil seeks to draw us from it. It is not to be wondered at when a person who does not know the truth presents inconsistencies in life and walk, but it is a serious thing when such are found in one who does. Of such it can be said, as it was of Israel long ago, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.”

In marvelous ways I believe God, in the present day, is calling His people back to Christ’s path through this world. It is now a question of abnegating ourselves in every direction. It
is, “One thing thou lackest; sell that thou hast; take up the cross, and follow me.” “Oh, I know that scripture very well,” people say; “but what does it mean?” Well, to my mind, it is the most solemn utterance that can be.

In Luke 12 we find a similar passage. He first brings in God’s care for His people: “Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” And, when He has thus secured the allegiance of the heart for God, He says, “Sell that ye have,” for only now they can afford to do so.

This young man came to ask the Lord what good thing he could do. He believed man was capable of doing a good thing. He saw in Christ all that was excellent, all that was good in a creature; for he did not go beyond the fact of what He saw in Him outwardly; he did not see that He was the Christ of God. He saw the superlative degree of what goodness in man was in Christ; his thought was, Good Master, you are the best specimen of it that I can find upon earth. He was not like the Philippian jailer: he did not want to be saved, he wanted to do some good thing; he had not got to the end of himself; it was creature excellence that was filling his mind, and he thought he possessed that himself. So the Lord takes him on his own ground, and says, “One thing thou lackest.” But to lack that one thing was to lack everything – it was to lack all that can be conceived.

And this is not a question that touches merely one or another of us, I believe it relates to every one of us. That which the Lord states here should be the moving principle in every one of our souls, based on the knowledge of having found treasure in a new region altogether, so that we can afford to let all here go. I do not know anything more wonderful than to see a person who can afford to turn his back entirely on the world. Our hands and our feet may be called to do certain work here, but I say, Is your heart in it? Your hands may be, and your feet may be, but where is your heart? Never was a more solemn instance of it than the one we find here. He could not break with it. If it be a question of getting rid of all this in order to be a follower of Christ, then he could not be one.

I have thought lately that we limit that word “covetousness” in a way that scripture does not. What is covetousness? It is the love of possession, from the smallest desire that can be conceived to the greatest possible thing. I believe covetousness is a very common thing amongst us. And why? I will tell you. It is because we want something here. It is not necessarily money. If I want a place here, a portion here, of any kind, it is covetousness. So this young man. “He had great possessions,” and they clogged his heart.

We are, most of us, little aware of the moral state of the age in which we live, and perhaps it is well for us that so many of us do not know. I may now say it will be found that the whole drift of what is pressed in the popular books of the present time, and in an attractive way too, is the utter breakdown, the practical failure of Christianity in representing the walk of Christ upon earth. And the principle is worked out too in a way that is exceedingly insidious to hearts. The false thing is built up and established by the break-down of the saints of God in walking in Christ’s path upon earth.

As to ourselves, I fear that there has not been a maintenance of the practical thing as a whole, and that is the reason the truth has such a slight hold of our hearts. We have not practiced it. How can I go into the battle, said David, with armor that I have not proved? I do feel that the Lord has a special voice to His people on this point; for, if principle and faith do not characterize us, we are the most contemptible people on the earth. With all the truth we have, the more condemned are we if devotedness to Christ is not there. What a path is Christ’s path! “Follow me.” I repeat it, What a path! Take up your cross, and follow Me. Whom? An outcast! One who was scorned, who was hated, who was despised; who had but a manger at His birth; a cross between two thieves at His death; and a borrowed grave. Followers of Him? And then we say, so readily, we love Him. Love Him? I shrink from saying it.

Natural respectability, natural amiability, natural loveliness, will not do for Christ. So the disciples are astonished out of measure, and ask, “Who, then, can be saved?” And He Himself answers, “With men it is impossible.” Man would never be in heaven by-and-by, nor follow Christ now, if he were left to himself. Here is presented to us the very best sample that could be found of nature. He ran to Him, he kneeled to Him, he called Him “Good Master”; he showed Him the most perfect respect and appreciation. Surely he was a wonderful specimen of man at his best. But he lacked this “one thing,” and his heart was in his possessions and riches.

Now let us turn for a moment to the other scripture that we have read. Here we find another “One thing”; and this is the bright side of it. Thank God there is a bright side to every picture, as well as a dark one. In this Psalm we find in picture the longing desire of a heart that is set free by having tasted in some measure the blessedness of that spot where Christ is.

It is a great thing if any of us can say we have only one desire, one wish. You know Jacob had only one wish: that he might see Joseph’s face, and then he could die. It is a wonderful thing what the power of only one thing in a person’s soul is. It is marvelous what a path of light it leads the saint along in this world. I see the beauty of this scripture more and more every day.

But there is a kind of desire that never comes to anything: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing.” I have known people who had great desires, but who still never came to anything. There was no bottom, as it were, to the soul, no foundation so to say. There was no saying, I will make this the one simple purpose of my life. I think the reason that we know so little of the Lord is because there is so little purpose to know Him. If a man of the world purposes to have a future here, do you think he dreams his life away? In proportion to the earnestness of his desire to attain his object, is the earnestness of his pursuit of it. Why, it is wonderful what a man of the world will do and suffer to attain the object of his heart. And yet the saint, who has a far higher object set before him, an object passing anything that the natural mind can conceive, is too often found lazy, idle, purposeless in his soul. “Seek the Lord while he may be found,” we often say to sinners, but I believe we ought
rather to say it to ourselves. I long to have deeper acquaintance with Him -- to seek Him. As the Psalmist says, “One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after.”

Oh, you say, but that is the Old Testament! Well, do we not get anything like it in the New? In one passage which does not take us as high as seated in the heavens in Christ, it says, “Seek those things which are above.” You are brought into risen blessedness; now seek out the treasures that are your own there.

But you will make souls legal, if you press this, it is said! I can only reply that I do not believe it. And if you call that legality, I must say it would do people great good to have a little more of it. I feel that there has been so much of a dreamy kind of speculation in God’s things, so much unreality, so much of what one cannot grasp. But when you come to the plain, practical thing, to the every-day carrying out of the truth, where is it?

Let us look a little at the details of this Psalm. Of course it is cast in a Jewish mold, as we find in the words,

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.

To “dwell in the house of the Lord” is the desire of the soul. Some are quite satisfied with the thought that they shall be in heaven by-and-by. But do I not want to be there now! The subjective side, too, is what the apostle prays the Ephesian saints might have; “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”; and here we get the same thing in picture as it were. I want to dwell in the house of God all the days of my life. I want to dwell there now, and to have that as the spot from whence I can come out now -- that spot on high where I am privileged to dwell with Christ.

And for what, is this desire to dwell there? “That I may behold the beauty of the Lord.” Oh, how blessed, to desire to be in heaven for the sake of being with Christ! People often say, “How I wish I was delivered out of this scene of trial and difficulty, out of this world of sin and sorrow!” But if you were at home up there now, you would be able to go calmly through all the storms here. You will never know how to live on earth until you have been up there to learn how. I go there to see Him, to behold His beauty. What a charm it is to get even a little sense of this in our souls! There is such a fearful amount of selfishness in every one of our hearts. We say, “He has paid our debt; He has made our peace with God.” Yes, truly, but that is not all. It is far more than that -- it is boundless riches. When the two disciples of John followed him, asking, “Where dwellest thou?” He answered, “Come and see.” There was not a word said as to the place. There is not a doubt it was a humble spot, but there is not a word said about it one way or the other. It was Himself; alone with Him, they wanted [needed] nothing else. It is wonderful what the company of an intimate friend is amid paths of sorrow; and that is what we have. We have His company as we go through this world. He said, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” I do not believe that is by the Holy Ghost; nor do I believe that it is only on the first day of the week. I believe it is the special manifestation of Himself that He gives to His people. He is with them, as in Psa. 23. It is His company, His presence; this alone can light up everything. I want to behold His beauty. That will be our occupation through all eternity. How do you think we shall spend eternity? By being for ever with and beholding the matchless beauty of the Christ. Oh, to begin it now! and thus to find all below distanced to us.

But there is more than this; “And to inquire in his temple.” I believe the force of these words is given to us in the word meditation. One reason why things have such little hold over our hearts is, that we meditate on them so little. If there is to be any real appropriation of truth, there must be the sitting down quietly in private, and meditating on it. I am sure God does meet His people wonderfully in a little passing verse or line of scripture; but this is not like meditation; neither will study make up for meditation. It is meditation that forms the affections of the heart.

And now look at what follows. In the next verse there is a touch of the most exceeding blessedness. “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.” Now tell me anything comparable to this! You desire to dwell in the house of God; trouble comes, and He hides you where you have dwelt! There is not a word about me, or what I do; but He hides me. Where? Where my heart dwelt before!

In some little measure we have witnessed this. We have seen saints going on with God, desiring to learn more of Him, desiring to dwell with Him. Then a stroke of trouble comes, and God hides them, so that they positively pass through, not unfeeling, yet unruffled. There is all the spiritual desire to seek, but when trouble comes there is nothing but quiet repose; then God interferes for us. How many have long had this as the comfort of their soul, that, when their heart makes Christ its object, He makes the trials and difficulties of their life His concern. He does not say you shall not have trouble; but He does say, When it comes I will hide you.

Now these are the two things that were in my heart on which to say a word, for I do feel that we need more to be people of one object. There is a simplicity, an evenness, an unhindered moving on, in the person who has one object. Do you think it would unfit you for things here? I do not believe it. On the contrary, I believe it would fit you marvelously to be for Christ in everything; for instead of doing it for yourselves, you would do it for Christ. I was shocked the other day by hearing it said of a Christian that he did his business for himself, but his religion had to do with Christ; that he did his business as a man of the world, and his religion as a Christian. But I say there is no Christianity in such a thought or statement as this at all. Once a Christian, always a Christian, and never anything else. Once a follower of Christ, always a follower of Christ, and in everything a follower of Christ.

The Lord, in His grace, give our hearts the simple one desire of the Psalmist:

To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple; to find a home there of unspeakable blessedness, in glory with Himself, the firstborn amongst many brethren; while, as to the
earth and all that is below, that may be true of us which is expressed in the lines –

“We are but strangers here, we do not crave
A home on earth which gave Thee but a grave;
Thyself has sever’d ties which bound us here,
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere.”

This is the real truth. Christ our treasure in heaven, and only His cross on earth. The more deeply you search into the subject, the more full you will find it in every way. The glory is the place of our treasure, and the cross defines our path on earth. May our hearts be encouraged to press on; it is only for a little while; the darkest moment is that immediately preceding the dawning of the day. We have, through His grace, two blessed realities to sustain us here: as a present reality we are the objects of the Father’s love even as it rested on Christ; He Himself is the witness to it: “Hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” And then, as to the future, we have the bright and blessed hope of being perfectly like Him:

We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

“His Heart and His Hand”

Numbers 13; Joshua 14

It is most important to understand the moral condition of Israel at this time; otherwise great difficulty must be experienced in seeking to apprehend why Jehovah permitted Moses to send out spies to search the land of Canaan. A careful study of Deut. will very clearly demonstrate the fact that unbelief on the part of Israel was the origin of the mission of the spies, though allowed of God, who can work His sovereign will in spite of all; just as the demand for a king afterwards, though Jehovah acceded to it and allowed it, was a virtual denial of His regal titles and claims over the rebellious nation. There is one important fact which appears to me to place the question of the searching of the land beyond all dispute. In the third chapter of Exodus, where the earliest intimation of His purpose is recorded, there is likewise a description of the character of the land as it existed to His eye – its exceeding goodness, fertility, and beauty are all there delineated and traced. How, then, could it have been possible for God, having cast Israel on the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

But then, immediately, other principles began to work. The goodness of the land was not denied -- how could it, in the presence of the earnest before their eyes? But between them where they were and the possession of this goodly land there were difficulties, and these are all mapped out with the accuracy of unbelief:

Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

And these obstacles and impediments, by occupation with them, obtained such a hold over their hearts, that they were, in their own sight, as well as in the sight of their enemies, but grasshoppers.

Now it is very important to observe how a sight of the land tests them; and, in truth, nothing tests like it. This principle stands true in regard to all God’s ways with His people at all times. As soon as ever He discloses His purpose regarding us, His mind and thoughts for the time present, then it is that all the difficulties standing in our way are presented in full array; and hence it is, at this present time, that those who see what God’s great thought is concerning His beloved Son, have difficulties and opposition that all others are strangers to. If any doubt the application of this principle, they have only to study the history of God’s testimony on the earth, in order to be certified as to its truth. Who, may I ask, are beset with every kind of opposition at this present time? Are they not those who seek to keep the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”? Only give up the truth of Christ’s body on the earth as a practical one, and you will be promoted to great honor; stand out as a unit, and you will be let pass. But connect yourself practically with the great truth -- “There is one body, and one Spirit,” and you are at once subjected to all the opposition of men, and the most malignant hatred of Satan. You are surrounded with difficulties on every side; and if you allow such between you and God, instead of having Him between you and them, your heart will lose confidence, as Israel’s did, and the test will become to you an occasion which Satan will use to turn you away from God, instead of being an opportunity to turn to God. Now observe the consequence of failing before this test. First, there is weeping, next murmuring, then hard thoughts of God; and lastly, they propose crowning self-will --

Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Observe how gradual the nature of their declensions -- of every declension -- is. They had forgotten the living God, and His interest in them as His people; they had preferred the estimate which their foolish hearts had formed of God’s land in the light of the difficulties between them where they were and it; and now the issue is complete -- a captain of their own choosing is their resource. This gradual character of all decline is very solemn, and has a special voice, because of the spurious notion that our falls are immediate, or all at once. Not so, beloved
reader; like everything else, they have their beginnings, and hence the solemnity of the words.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

But now let us turn for a moment and look at a bright side of this dark picture. The dismal dreariness of unbelief serves ends we should little fancy. The crisis not only brings out the man of unbelief, it likewise calls to the front the man of faith; and this scene is no exception. Joshua and Caleb, men for a crisis, are equal to the emergency; and their united testimony at this moment is very beautiful -- “We are well able to overcome,” is the language of the one, and “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us,” is the testimony of both. That is to say, the hand and heart of God are the resources of men of faith in a crisis. Is it not blessed to see a man like Caleb hiding himself behind the power of Jehovah, the arm of God? -- so that forgetting the weakness of Israel, and the strength of both giants and walled cities, he rallies, as it were, the broken ranks of his people with these words --

Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it, because the right hand of Jehovah’s power, which was celebrated on the shores of the Red Sea, as having dashed in pieces the enemy (Ex. 15:6), was before Caleb’s heart and thoughts; he goes back to that wondrous scene in his testimony, and seeks to connect his people thereby with that same Jehovah who always triumphs gloriously.

And their united testimony in Ex. 14 is not less beautiful. The delight of Jehovah in His Israel -- that is, His affections, His heart -- is a sufficient plea that He would surely bring them in, thus in the light of this love, this delight of God, they can say, “the Lord is with us.” Oh, what rich resources of faith a crisis calls forth! It is very striking to see how it is all that is in God they testify unto. The springs of delight in God’s own heart, motives there entirely apart from the objects of His favor, are wondrous topics for faith to rest on. And hence it is that even the acknowledged difficulties become tributary to his own, “the people of the land are bread for us.” Our God delights in difficulties, to show how entirely above and beyond them He is. The faith of God’s elect, these crisis men, look upon them as bread! There is another point of great beauty here. These men of faith are exposed in this crisis to be turned upon by their own --

The congregation bade stone them with stones; then it is the glory of Jehovah appears, to vindicate the witnesses to the power of His hand and His heart:

The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

Now, ere we pass from this part of our subject to pursue the history of the land possessed, let me point out the immense advantage a saint now has over any of God’s people at any previous period, but only to take shame to ourselves that so few of us are crisis men in purpose and heart at this present time.

Most blessed as this testimony of Caleb and Joshua was, as far as they could witness to the ability and delight of God to bring His people into possession of what His heart had in store for them, yet what is it if compared with the witness which a saint now can bear to power and love? Who, for instance, in olden times, knew the power of His right hand, in taking the beloved Son out of death, and seating Him in highest glory? How blessed by faith to be spectators of the glory of the Father visiting the grave of Jesus, raising Him up and claiming Him as his own! How blessed to-day to be witnesses, in the power of the indwelling Spirit, to such glory! Truly we are they who are privileged to know what is the exceeding greatness of his 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, 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: 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}.

Blessed and wondrous vision this is to occupy faith, the Christ of God, the glorious Man, constituting as His point of departure all those things which are termini with us. Principality, power, dominion, names, are the extent to which poor things like us can reach in comprehension; but when we look at Jesus raised and exalted by the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, we behold Him departing only from that which bounds our ken {understanding}. So much for the power of His hand. If again we think of His heart, His affections, when were they proclaimed or known until the beloved Son, ever in His bosom, disclosed them? Joshua could say, “If the Lord delight in us, he will bring us in.” I hesitate not to say that an “if” now, in the light of the cross, and the glory, of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the position of the saint by virtue of union with the beloved Son as man, would be the unbeliever which casts a slur on the love which has disclosed itself in such a manner as to secure confidence in itself. “All the Father’s heart made known” -- marks the wondrous place into which we have, through His sovereign grace, been introduced.

How it speaks to the heart and moves the affections, the thought that this marvelous love of God (His own peculiar love) has been made known in the sorrows of His own Son, His Lamb! The agonies and the blood of Jesus not only measured the distance of ruined creatures from God, they also measured the affections of God. Is it too much to say so? When you and I, beloved, by faith visit that wondrous scene of sorrow and love, when by faith we see His travail and sorrow, do we not also see the heart of God therein expressed as never before; and we, by virtue of the same agony and blood standing, not only to witness such love, but to adore the source and the channel through which it flowed forth so blessedly to us?

It was a wonderful day for the earth and for Moses, when, in response to the desire of his heart to see His glory, Jehovah replied --

Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall
come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

Wonderful sight that for Moses, hid in a cleft of the rock, and covered by Jehovah’s hand; but, let me ask, is that the sight He gives His saints now? Oh, beloved, if the eternal Son of the Father emptied Himself to become a man, and as a man humbled Himself down to those depths of agony and grief, expressing therein God in His nature, as well as glorifying Him in meeting every one of His righteous claims, what could suit either that Son or the Father’s heart, save the exaltation of the One in the highest place in heaven, and the manifestation of the other to poor things like us? It was in keeping with Moses that he should but see His back parts; and it was consonant with Jehovah’s manifestation of Himself at that time to disclose no more, but now His righteousness as well as His love requires the full manifestation of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. I have referred to these facts simply to point out the immense contrast between the testimony of a Caleb or a Joshua, blessed, faithful men though they were, and the witness expected from a saint now.

Let us now look a little at the history of the land possessed by the same Caleb whose testimony is recorded in Josh. 14. Forty-five years of endurance and faith had intervened between this scripture and the one we have already considered, and Caleb is now an old man of eighty-five years, yet with no mark of decay as regards the energy that characterized him at Kadesh. He had turned about and wandered with his nation for forty years in the wilderness, and that for no fault of his. If Israel were the people of God, let them be ever so bad in themselves, that is sufficient to connect them with the affections of the man of faith. But during those forty years of wilderness toil and trouble, he carried in his heart the beauty of that goodly land which his eyes had for a moment beheld. No protracted period of trial or provocation had prevailed to obliterate from his thoughts or affections Jehovah’s land. It is not difficult to conceive how its richness and beauty lived in his heart, and comforted him many a weary day. How blessed to hear him trace up everything to its source in these words --

And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said these forty and five years.

The sense of who He was to whom this aged warrior owed his steadfastness as well as his life, is not absent from his soul. Years only bring out with greater distinctness how completely cast he was upon Jehovah, and how his soul rejoiced in this blessed fact -- the Lord was as good as His word.

Again, observe here the unfading nature of faith, it never wears a gray hair. Though Caleb was now an old man of eighty-five years, he was as fresh and vigorous, as young and as strong, as at forty.

As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.

Then he receives his inheritance and his blessing --

And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became an inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

How blessed to think of the spot which the faith of this crisis man claims and receives! Hebron was the place where David was anointed king (2 Sam. 2:4). It was a place signalized in many ways. Here it was that Sarah died (Gen. 23:2); here likewise Abner was buried (2 Sam. 3:32); but in no respect was it so remarkable as in the first-named instance. In this is there not the sweet and blessed picture of that spot where faith alone can fold her wings? The place that faith gets as its inheritance is where God’s beloved one is crowned; there and there alone it rests, its repose and enchantment are there.

There is one other fact of great beauty in connection with this faithful servant of Jehovah, which I must not pass without notice; it serves to show how faith’s surroundings and associations are ever of a like nature with itself. We are told in Josh. 15 how Caleb’s walk at home was no exception to his testimony abroad; observe how he seeks to surround himself with associations of a like nature with himself. He will give his daughter to one who is not only worthy of Caleb’s daughter, but who is distinguished by the same confidence and faith which made Caleb a crisis man. All this has its voice surely for us, beloved, in these days, when so much of the world, in one way or another, is sought after by those who, by profession at least, declare that they have been crucified to it and it to them.

We have thus examined a little of the history of the searching and possessing of the land of Canaan by these faithful true-hearted witnesses for Jehovah in their day. The Lord grant it may have been with profit, instruction, and encouragement, too, according to the power of His own Spirit who loves to communicate the things of God to the children of His love, the heirs of glory.

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The Servant of the Lord

We are passing through a period which is very distinctly delineated in Scripture as “perilous times” of “the last days,” and for which special instruction is vouchsafed. The rocks and shoals, with which the troubled waters of our time abound, are all divinely marked out for us in that epistle which faith recognizes as its special chart in days like these. The fulness and explicit nature of that revelation is most blessed; nothing is overlooked; the difficulties are neither magnified nor diminished; and the power and presence of God are held out to faith as its sufficiency when the darkness is at its height.

We find, in the Second Epistle of Timothy, most full and minute directions as to how the saints are to carry themselves.
The path of the true-hearted is through persecution, pressure, and trial; evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. One principle of immense importance is found in 2 Tim. 2:19:

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having the seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

Another is, that All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good works (2 Tim. 3:16).

Thus, while there is nothing but failure around, and confusion and evil are on the increase, the resources and provisional care of God are unfolded with a divine precision and accuracy not to be found outside the book of God.

Now it is plain that the servant of the Lord stands in need of peculiar qualities at all times; indeed nothing that has ever been written or conceived by man could overrate, or magnify beyond its importance, the servants place and path. And there never were times in which it was more needful to press that than the present, surrounded as we are by a double fallacy: on the one hand, men taking upon themselves, without any divine right or authority, to make others servants, thereby constituting them servants of men instead of ministers of God. On the other hand, those who in mercy have escaped this delusion, are themselves as ready to fall into another, and to suppose that every one who is a saint is ipso facto a gifted servant or minister of Jesus Christ.

Now it cannot be denied that, if saints are walking with God, He will give them something to do for Him, whereby, in communion with Himself, and by the power of His Spirit, they can serve Him; and in this sense all saints are servants of the Lord, but this in no wise interferes with, or sets aside, the fact, that Christ, ascended on high into glory, gave distinct and special gifts to His church, enumerated in Eph. 4:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now it is the qualities of the one who is called to be a servant of this kind that I am occupied with at this time. I suppose the nature of the day will very greatly indicate the needed graces; and hence it is, I conclude, that, after the Spirit of God had foretold the storm that was then raging, and would rage with greater fury after the apostle’s departure, He also specifies in detail certain qualities which would be indispensable in the servant of the Lord, who would in respect to these be tested to the uttermost.

Now this world has been the scene and platform of the perfect service of One who was the perfect Servant; the gospels, and especially that of Mark, record it. There we follow Him, and track His patient blessed footprints, passing through the earth a stranger, unnoticed and unknown; but, more than that, despised and rejected by Israel, whose Messiah He was, and scorned and hated by poor man whom He came to serve. If we look at Him as Jehovah’s servant, how the heart bows down and adores Him:

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him; he shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets (Matt. 12:18, 19).

Oh, what unobtrusive lowliness and meek retirement thus mark Him!

Again, when we consider Him amid the scenes of sorrow, scorn, and hatred, through which His love led Him; His patience, His meekness, His gentleness, silent when accused, and unchanged even when denied by His own, breaking the heart of Peter by the tender look He cast upon him; do you not wonder and adore in the presence of such qualities, with such demands made upon them by foes and friends? and is it not a satisfaction to your heart to retire from all else, and allow such a Servant as Jesus to fill the vision of your soul?

There is nothing that more marks every one else but Himself, than unevenness; He, and He alone, was a stranger to such, not only in His manhood, but in that which is specially before us, His service. Who was faithful as He? and yet withal tender and patient. The combination of these qualities in Christ is most blessed; the fine flour mingled with oil showed itself in His service, as in His nature. With us, alas! observe the contrast. Some are faithful and others are tender. But what God is looking for in these last times is a servant in his measure after the pattern of His own Son; and hence note that the qualities, or graces, by which the servant of the Lord is to be characterized, according to 2 Tim. 2, are those exactly which shone in perfection in Him who was the perfect Servant as the perfect Man; God, God over all, blessed for ever.

Now observe the qualities which are needed by the servant of the Lord. First of all, full and unhesitating courage and faithfulness. He was to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” If everything has gone, and all have turned away, Christ remains unchanged. What a resource He is at all times, blessed be His name! And what force and power there is in an exhortation of this nature from one who himself could speak of how the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him, when he was abandoned and forsaken by all.

Also he was to “endure hardness,” and not to “entangle himself with the affairs of this life.” That is to say, on the one hand he was to accept, in all its parts, the path through the storm and tempest; and, not only that, but he was to be inured to it. On the other hand, he was to shun and avoid everything of the nature of entanglement. So that we have these three things expected from the servant of the Lord and the minister of Jesus Christ.

First: patient endurance.

Second: distinct separation from all that would be incompatible with his service.

Third: an ardent desire to answer to the wishes of his Master.

Again:
If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

That is, he cannot obtain the prize unless he complies with the regulations. Now these regulations insisted upon systematic discipline and training as indispensable qualifications for entering upon the lists; history furnishes us with the particulars of the training which the competitors in the Greek athletic sports underwent; the diet, exercise, fixed hours, and hard life which were endured in order to obtain a corruptible crown. So the servant of the Lord in these days of ease, affluence, and self-indulgence, is to practice the very contrary on himself, in order that, according to the will of his Lord, he may exercise his ministry and service.

He was also to be as the husbandman, “laboring first,” that he might have the first claim to the profits of the produce of his farm.

Then the first part of the exhortation is closed by that magnificent eighth verse:

Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David, raised from among the dead, according to my glad tidings.

How blessed this is to have the heart and thoughts, by the Holy Ghost, thus fixed on that blessed One, that perfect Servant, who, from the manger to the cross, served through suffering, sorrow, shame, contempt, and is now presented to the adoring gaze of faith as “raised from among the dead!”

By Thine empty grave we worship,

By Thy cross our hearts we bow;

All the memories which pursue us

Waken our affections now.

Lord we follow -- Thou constrainest,

Step by step, and hour by hour;

Object of our hearts in glory;

On the way, our strength and power.

So far we have looked at the qualities -- the indispensable requirements -- of the servant of the Lord in perilous times. As yet we have not touched upon the spirit in which these qualities are to be exercised, the tone and the temper in which the faithful servant is to address himself to his work. But it will be readily granted, that, in proportion to a man’s courage and faithfulness in a time of general declension and spiritual decay, will be the pressure brought to bear upon his spirit. Endurance, tenderness, meekness, will have large demands made upon them; and standing faithful will expose the servant to those rude blasts which will only elicit, if they be there, the qualities I have spoken of.

It is not enough to be faithful in dealing with souls; the manner and method of its display surely has its place. The tone and temper of the servant in the faithful exercise of his gift, surely are important. Very touching are the words of the apostle on this head.

Now I Paul myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Again:

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.

No doubt, in days of declension and unfaithfulness, the true servant must pass through many a sore exercise respecting those whom he seeks to serve, and many a trial and many an anxiety will his heart endure in connection with such; but, while that is fully admitted and felt to the utmost, it cannot but be felt, that a little more of the tone and temper of 2 Tim. 2 would secure the absence of many a pang which true and faithful hearts have inflicted upon themselves; and some we may have thought to drive, instead of leading and instructing, might have been won, when they could not be coerced. Alas! there are too many instances of hearts sad and broken amid the corruptions of the age, retarded on their way, whilst they groped about to find a clean path for their weary feet, as well as grieved and stumbled as they sought to walk therein, by the ungracious and unwise methods adopted towards them. “Feed my lambs”; “Shepherd my sheep”; “Feed my sheep”; are the terms of the blessed Lord’s commission to restored Peter. The shepherd and the nurse are the similitudes employed by the Holy Ghost, when he would set forth the manner of a servant’s fulfilment of his work.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.

If any who read this paper turn away in their mind from what they most likely will regard as common-place truisms, I can only plead as my excuse for introducing the subject here, the great danger of its being overlooked.

No doubt the peculiar character of these days makes large demands on the servant; but be the trials ever so many, and disappointments ever so great, nothing can compensate for the absence of such a spirit as is implied in these words:

And the servant, of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves.

I might have urged the patient, gracious dealings of the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls Himself, as the type and pattern for those whom He has gifted with a view to the leading and helping of His sheep. Or I might have urged the same blessed tender care of Him who is Head of the church, His body, towards His poor members here.

No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church

-- but I forbear.

One other scripture only will I refer to, namely, Ezek. 34:2-6:

Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every hill:
It was the terrible efficiency of stratagem and plan of which he was the master that characterized Peniel on Jacob’s part. God allows him to run to the farthest extreme of what he could do in that way; and then what was most solemn, One whom, with all his planning, he had never reckoned on -- One who, so to speak, was out of his thoughts -- met him and wrestled with him. As has been often said, this One was the blessed God drawing near to him in his solitude and loneliness, there to bring to an end that principle in him which was hindering the blessing of His servant.

Now let each of us look at our own history and see where the deficiency lies. It is our state -- our condition individually -- we have to look at, because it is our condition individually which makes up our corporate condition. Here, then, the blessed God, the only One who could take interest in and care for such an one as Jacob, draws near that He may wither up in His poor servant all that was hindering His own purpose respecting him. What sight more interesting than this? “There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” It was not Jacob wrestling, but God wrestling with Jacob, and at the same time, with the most exceeding tenderness, sustaining him while He withers up what opposed Him. The proof that this wrestling was effective in accomplishing its object; the proof that Jacob’s soul bowed to the sense that the One who touched the hollow of his thigh was his Friend; the proof that Jacob’s heart entered into the consciousness that the One who was crippling him was the only One who could bless him, is shown out in this, that he would not let him go. What a sight! this broken man clinging to the One who was withering everything up in him -- when the trial was at its height still clinging to Him as the only One who could help him.

If in trial I get my mind filled with the instrument that God is using to thus wither me, I lose the sense, not only of the One who is doing it, but also of the thing that He is doing, and the knowledge that He is really my Friend, because He is putting down the thing in me that hindered, and bringing me into blessing according to His own heart. But at the same time that there is this severity on that which opposes, there is tenderness unspeakable in the way that He sustains. The Lord give our hearts the sense of this, for it would be a wonderful encouragement to us. He helps us; but when He comes in to help, He must reduce to the silence of death the thing that lifts up itself against Him.

He can do it in many ways; He can do it by those connected with us; He can do it by sorrow; He can do it by bereavement; He can do it by sickness; but He will do it. And in this second solitude Jacob is blessed as the Israel of God -- as a crippled man. It is the hollow of his thigh that is touched, and that shrinks. Oh, the hollow of that thigh! It is the energy of the man, it is the strength of the man that hinders; and when that is gone, He gives him the blessing as the Israel of God. And is not what follows an interesting thing? He adds,

Thou hast power with God and with men.

You can have no power -- divine power -- but as you get it from God; natural power -- what is the good of that? It is a feeble, worthless thing. But you have no divine power with
man unless you have power with God. And this is just the point
with us. Look at the difficulties that trouble us on every hand.
Why cannot we meet them? It is because we have no power
with God. And how do I get power with God? It is when I am
a poor crippled thing lying at His feet. When I am there He can
bless me, and not leave upon me even so much as the very
name by which I was known as skilled in the energy of the
man.

Another very interesting point we may notice. When the
sun rises Jacob still halts upon this thigh; that is, when the
night is past, when the darkness is over, when the wrestling is
ended, it is most important, he not only halted whilst the
wrestling was going on, but when all was over, and the day
was at its height, Jacob was conscious that he was a crippled
man.

This halting of his is the only instance of his faith that is
spoken of in Hebrews. The feebleness of the man it is that is
recorded.

He worshiped leaning upon the top of his staff.

I know that Jacob passed through further exercises after this,
to which Hebrews alludes; yet this was the beginning of all that
which eventually reduced him to the state of a cripple before
God. He had to cling to God. It is wonderful to see such a man
thus clinging to, thus detained by, the One who overcame him.
A worshiper is one who is outside everything of himself, and
who is engrossed by the One who has cleared the scene to fill
it Himself.

I do not refer to Corinthians in the way of connection, but
rather in the way of contrast. Another thing that has been
spoken of we find here, God not only comes in to help us to
reduce to the silence of death that in us which hinders His
working after His own heart, but He keeps it up. And this is
the difficulty to many of us. I confess honestly that it is not
long since I saw it myself; and that is the reason why I speak
of it, hoping that it may help others. People say, I understand
God coming in, reducing me to nothing, crippling me; but I do
not understand His keeping me in this condition. Now Paul is
an instance to us of God’s thus dealing with us. God dealt with
Jacob so that He might lead him, poor planner that he was, into
the blessing of His own heart for him. But with Paul the thorn
was sent to keep up dependence, and bring out the power of
Christ. Every saint, of course, is “a man in Christ”; but every
man in Christ is not caught up into the third heaven. It is that
man who gets the thorn; and he gets it to be a help from God --
practically to keep the flesh in death.

It is not merely that God comes in to reduce to the silence
of death that active thing in me that hinders His working, but
He lets the storm continue to keep up dependence on Himself
in my heart. Paul wanted to have it taken away. He besought
the Lord Jesus thrice to remove it, but the Lord Jesus answered
him, Do you wish me to place you in circumstances where you
will not need me? I will place you where I myself will keep
you. Paul says, I accept it;

most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power
of Christ may rest upon me.

That is not, I am resigned, but, I am satisfied.

It is wonderful thus to see how God not only takes away
the hindrance, but keeps up dependence, and how our
weakness is the very sphere in which He is able to work.
“When I am weak, then am I strong.” I do not know how to
speak of it. It is the most wonderful thing you can conceive,
the power of that Christ come down and tabernacling in a poor
feeble thing that has been crippled by the hand of God. Death
has been brought in all its efficacy, and now the power of
Christ comes down and tabernacles in me. And I accept it. It
is not only that I say there is no need for the storm, for the
difficulty. No, I accept the difficulty, I accept the thorn,
because it gives Him an opportunity to come down and show
out His strength in my weakness.

Alas, the generality of us are like Jacob. There is the
cultivation of that which hinders; and can you wonder, if you
cultivate and keep up and minister to the thing that is in you,
that it produces and brings forth the fruit that it does?

And it is no use letting things go, saying nothing about it.
If you do not disallow it, you minister to it. He superseded it
1800 years ago. My old man {rather, The old man} was put
out of God’s sight in the cross of Christ, and God must subject
to death practically in me that which He has judicially got rid
of before Him. He says, I must keep the storm up in order that
what is in you may be kept down for my glory and your bless-
ing. We think naturally that everything is against us, but He for
us; God is for us.

The Lord give us distinctly to see it, for His names sake.
Amen.

“My Earnest Expectation”
Phil 1:23-25; 3:17-21

May I say just one word about this question of the body, in
reference to the place that it was intended of God to fill, as the
vessel for the display of Christ’s power at this present moment.

I would inquire, How far are we intelligently with God in
the actings of His grace through our bodies now, and the place
that they will have in the day when they shall be changed and
made like unto His glorious body? He will show us, in that day,
how He can change and fashion them; but in this day, I think we
do not give sufficient weight to the fact that it is in our body
God intends that Christ should now be magnified. We constantly
are prone to think that it is only in our minds, our souls, our
affections, or what does not show outside, that Christ’s power
is to be seen; but that is not at all what we have here.

There is only one other place in the New Testament, as far
as I know, where the word here used occurs, and that is in
Rom. 8:19. “Earnest expectation.” It means, literally, that the
thing longed for keeps up expectation until the time is
exhausted. The thought is, that one distinct thing is before the
soul, and after that I eagerly stretch out my neck. And what is
that? That Christ -- all that He is in His excellency, fullness,
blessedness -- should come out in my body: not that it should
come out in my spirit, but that this body, and all that relates to
it, and in connection with it, and every circumstance and scene that it belongs to, should be the platform on which Christ should be expressed, in life or death. As has been said, Stephen was the expression of the one, and Paul of the other, because Paul lived on here in this world after he had seen that blessed One in glory; and everything here was distanced by that sight.

The body is that in which all the malignity of Satan has been displayed; it bears the marks of it. Where does all the sickness and weariness around us come from? It came in consequence of sin, and it is expressed in the body. In Mark 5 the Lord meets a man possessed of the devil {a demon}: all the malignity of Satan was expressed in his condition; but he is made an instance of the delivering power of Christ, and his body becomes the vessel for its display; wonderful Deliverer! The result, then, of this deliverance on him was, that the One who had cleared everything out of the way now filled the whole scene with Himself, and therefore the effect on the man was that he wanted to be with Him. This desire is the simplest and first principle in a soul that has found distinct deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be with the One to whom I owe everything. The apostle says, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.” There was not a single thing now detaining him here. There is no doubt that he was once detained. Jerusalem detained him at one time, but it was not so now. If even the interests of Christ, and the things of Christ, come in to take the place that Christ Himself should have in the heart, we are not clear to go to Him. I believe many a saint is detained here by the things of Christ, rather than attracted to Himself.

I do not think the coming of the Lord tests us in the same way as this: Am I ready to go to Him now at this moment? Of course it is a blessed hope, the looking forward to our being all called up together; but it is an immensely testing thing whether or not I am able to say, There is not a single thing that keeps me back here; I do desire to depart and be with Christ. We are really only qualified to stay when we are ready to depart. Then Christ is before me, and I am possessed by Christ.

It is a wonderful thought that, just as that man had been possessed by Satan {rather, a demon} -- the scene of his mischief and confusion being his poor body -- so now he was possessed by Christ. All that Christ is comes out in my body, whether I live or die. There was the intelligent communion of the man’s heart in it. I see he is a man who has got intelligence with the mind and thought of God in that which was once the vessel in which Satan displayed his malignity and dislike to Christ.

Ought not I to be exercised as to what my body is witnessing to? I do not think the saints are exercised enough as to this. Just as an illustration, before I pass on, I would mention what may be seen -- a poor, weak, feeble creature, tossing to and fro on a bed of pain; and such an one saying, “What use am I? a trial to myself, a tax to others, no good to anybody.” Why, that poor sufferer, with a body full of pain, with everything that would go to make him just the contrary of this by nature, may, by the power of Christ, be so in communion with Him, that his body, instead of being full of murmurings and discontent, displays how the soul is filled with joy and peace, controlled by His presence, and satisfied with Himself. And as you look at this you do not say, What a wondrous creature is there; but, What a Christ is that which can be shown out in such a poor, weak house of clay as this is!

Every break in the vessel only brings out in it the more, the preciousness of the treasure that is inside; every crack and chink only lets it shine out the more brightly. Paul was not expecting to see the sun go down in ease and retirement; he was looking out for martyrdom.

The Lord give us to see the place that our bodies have. As I have said, it is not our hearts, or minds, or feelings, that are in question; it is the earthly tabernacle, or tent, this body in which He is to be magnified.

And now one word on the third chapter. It is a wonderful thing, and a most sanctifying thing, too, the thought that God has got, in His own presence in glory, the pattern of what He is going to have all His people like. God is working with us morally in different ways, that no one but Christ should be seen in us even now. It is Christ that is filling His eyes and affections always. There is a day coming when He will take these very bodies -- which have been the witnesses of Him in their humiliation in this scene of the terrible hatred of Satan against Christ, and the witnesses, too, of the ruin of the first man -- He will take them and transform them into the likeness of His own. Not only will He do that by-and-by, but meanwhile He desires to have you and me intelligently entering into His thought about it -- our necks eagerly stretched out after one object -- that we might be magnifying Him.

**Divine Affections and Their Object**

There are many true and earnest souls at the present time sorely perplexed and tried because of the absence in them of those qualities which they really long for, as suitable to Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. In proportion to their reality, and uprightness of conscience, is their sorrow and perplexity. They have tasted what earth and the things around cannot impart to them, yet it has been but a taste; the longings and yearnings are there unsatisfied, and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. They see a brightness which they do not possess, a portion which is not theirs. They are like Mary at the tomb; affection unmet is in them; this world is but a grave to them at best; they can tell you with broken heart and weeping eyes, “I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not”;

and often they say, “Oh, that I knew where I could find him!”

Now all this imparts to the soul in such a state a perturbation, a disquietude, an unrest, which is very marked; -- like the bee in quest of honey, which will inflict its bitterest sting on all who seek to oppose it in its pursuit.

These satisfied affections so longed for, so very earnestly desired, Christ living (domiciled) in the heart, eternal life exhibited here below -- all these, and much more akin to them, are results, consequences, effects, not the producing power. I will state presently what that power is.

I need not delay to demonstrate the truth, that produced
effects or consequences cannot either create themselves or exist even apart from that which alone can create them. You will generally find that if the mind or thought dwell much on the absence or possession of these things, the soul is correspondingly depressed or elated. It is surely good to be convicted, but dwelling much on our shortness of stature in divine fellowship, or on our leanness in realization, leads to self-occupation of a very insidious nature; and what comfort can there be in seeing certain qualities and joys which we know we ought to possess, but which we have not? This is to us really what Pisgah was to Moses -- sight without possession; and hence in a manner we are tantalized and chafed in spirit.

Let me try to state simply, as far as I know it myself, that which alone can awaken, sustain, and satisfy divine affections in the soul.

- There must be an object, as the spring or source, sustainment, and satisfaction of them; hence these affections which rise, live, and set in this object must be of the same nature with it. Christ is the object, and the affections He alone awakens, sustains, and satisfies must be divine.

- There must be, through faith, conscious union by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to Christ our object, the glorified Man at the right hand of God. Wonderful, blessed fact; we are united to Him in glory! It is accepted in faith; and in the measure of our faith is our realization, communion, and joy.

- He to whom we are united is in glory; and the whole glory of God, that is God's satisfaction according to His attributes, shines in His blessed face! It is from thence every ray of light that has reached us has shone. It is there we by faith see Him, know Him, have intercourse with Him.

In having to do with the Lord Jesus, it must be where He is; then, as it is so, as He Himself in glory engages and engrosses the soul, the affections, tastes, desires so ardently longed for are produced in us, and satisfied too.

This is all most important to bear in mind, because there is often a great deal of beholding afar off; a great deal of mere administration without its being untrue; the view from Pisgah captivating the heart, the land that Jehovah our God cares for, and on which His eyes continually rest, viewed but not entered or dwelt in; seen in such a way as to spoil all else, but to give nothing better in actual possession. Such display dissatisfaction and disappointment at every turn of their path; they have no moral superiority or power.

Nor would this, in any way, exclude that diligence and purpose of heart which there must ever be on our part most surely, yet not in any wise in the direction of what is produced in us, as if we could secure these, but that diligence and purpose of heart which is expressed in the words “looked up steadfastly into heaven”; for it is as we are detained by Christ Himself in glory, that those fruits are imparted to us which are seen and observed by men. Again I repeat it, nothing can produce results corresponding to heaven, but occupation with Christ who is there. We are transformed into His image, I mean in our measure here, as we are impressed by Him there. Oh, the glory of his grace that shines into us, as Himself, the beloved of the Father, fills the entire vision of the soul, thus shaping and forming us in moral assimilation to Himself.

Thus, too, it is that the heart is secured against the danger of valuing the occupation because of the effect and consequences seen in others as resulting from it, rather than for the joy and satisfaction of being in the company of Christ. Not that any true saint would desire to allow the thought, yet we know ourselves but little if we have but little fear in this direction; and be assured of it, when the effects of having to do with Christ are prominent in the soul, Christ is valued rather in relation to these than for what He is in Himself, and His company is not sought or kept because of the simple satisfaction of being with Him.

With us it ought to be Canaan first and then the lessons of the wilderness. These have a very different character when this is the order. Yet I am assured it is the divine order for us. Working to heaven, and living from heaven, are two very different conditions of soul. It is true we are going on to heaven through the wilderness, and yet it is also true that we have started from it; and this does not make the wilderness of this world less the wilderness than it is; but if we traversing it as from glory, all about it would be gilded, the clear and blessed light of heaven would soften the hardness and cheer the dreariness of its wilds.

It was after Moses had been in the mount with God that his face shone; the effects were witnessed by Israel when he descended from the mount. Stephen, we are told, being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly into heaven. He saw Jesus in the glory of God; he saw that which no man before him was competent to look at -- the glory of God; and he saw in that glory Him who was scorned, hated, and rejected by man on this earth. Wonderful sight to faith! It had been no new thing for the heavens to open on the earth when there was One there who was worthy; but He had died out of it, and the heavens were closed as it were; they did not open to look down upon the earth, nor did they open for any one on earth to look into them. But now the heavens open to Stephen, and he, by the Holy Ghost, looks up, and sees Jesus in the glory of God; and in the power of that sight which was food and strength to his soul, he bears his testimony, seals it with his blood, and follows Christ even to death.

If we look at Paul, it is the same heavenly story (Phil. 3). The Man in glory had formed in the vessel the affections and tastes suited to Himself, but He had also satisfied those affections. Thirty years of continuous trial and unceasing labor had passed between the day that Jesus in glory met him on the road to Damascus and the time the Epistle to the Philippians was written; the dungeon of Nero might exclude the natural sun, but the light from heaven, above its brightness, shone as brightly as ever, and the only change in Paul is that now he counts all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Even in the things of time and sense, it would not be possible to overrate the power of an object; how much more when that object is the eternal Son of the Father, the glorified One!

Do we really know that we are one with Him in glory? Do we seek His company for the simple satisfaction of being with
Him? Remember, you can never be for Christ in any little measure, save as you know, possess, and dwell with Him in heaven.

There cannot be too much purpose of heart, too great fixedness of gaze as we look up steadfastly into heaven; yet these are neither the object of the heart, nor do they produce or promote likeness to Him. Christ, and Christ alone, is the object. The Holy Ghost, by whom we are one with Him, occupies the soul with Him, and the effect is seen by those around in the quiet restful superiority with which all our path here is trodden. We see it in Paul; we see the race of a heavenly man -- goal, prize and mark before him: he presses on; he stands fast when no one stood by him, but all forsook him; amid general weakness and abounding declension, he pursues his onward upward advance. He can “rejoice in the Lord greatly” amid sorrow upon sorrow; he can be careful for nothing amid ceaseless anxieties and disquietudes, casting them on Him who can bear them, and not feel their weight, and receiving instead the peace of God which passeth every understanding; he can let things go here because he possesses an eternal portion in Christ in that place where He is, who “is at hand”; he can occupy his heart with what is good amid abounding evil, and find God the peace of peace with him: he can be abased and yet not disheartened, can abound and yet be not elated; because Christ is his sufficiency in the dark day, and better than the best in the bright day. Nothing is able to stand before the heavenly man all the days of his life; nothing daunts him; seated on the power of Christ, he can do all things; though he has nothing, yet he possesses all; though empty, yet he is full; he has a source, supply, measure, and channel equal to the heart of God, hence he can say, “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Such, then, are the sources, maintenance, and satisfaction of those divine affections and yearnings which never can exist apart from their object, Christ, the glorified One at God’s right hand. May the Lord, by His Spirit, so turn and keep the faith of His beloved saints fixed there, that in them may be witnessed at this present time a more quiet, restful, and satisfied course through this present evil world, for His own name’s sake.

The Ensnaring Effects of the Visible

It is solemn to reflect, in this day, on how the visible and the human are being used to supplant the invisible and the spiritual. Every art of the enemy, his profound skill and dexterity, his many-sided and deeply laid plots, are all in requisition at this moment to destroy, if it were possible, and in any case, alas! to deteriorate and tarnish, every testimony to the reality and power of things not seen.

It is very instructive to note how, even in days when “sight” and “nature” were the ground on which man walked before God, as tested and proved by Him, God had His own independent witnesses to the only path suited to Himself in a world where everything is in revolt, and manifesting the consequences of departure from God. Faith not sight, is that great principle, as we find from Heb. 11; and this line of life and power was maintained by these worthies amid trials and sorrows of no ordinary kind.

The earliest departure from this divine path of faith is recorded in Gen. 12, in the very same scripture which tells us of the call of Abram “out” from country, kindred, and father’s house. Set free by “death” (see Acts 7:2-4), “glory” had its full weight with Abram; and very blessedly did he rise and go forth from every visible thing as expressed by country, kindred, and father’s house,

into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance . . . not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looketh for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

As thus brought forward by glory and death, to walk the invisible path of faith, the visible for a time ensnares him. The famine, that was seen, took a firmer hold upon him than the “God of glory,” who appeared to him in Mesopotamia, and afterwards when he was in the land of Canaan. Being thus deceived he sought for help in Egypt, and found Hagar! which “answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children” (Gal. 4:25). Note well, in this scripture, the contrast between “Jerusalem which now is,” and “Jerusalem which is above.”

Another instance of the seductive power of the visible, is recorded in Gen. 48. Most blessed is it to see faith, the invisible power, triumphing in Jacob over all that marked his previous checkered history, as we behold him rising superior to nature and its claims, when he laid his hands on the head of Ephraim, the younger of Joseph’s two sons “guiding his hands wittingly”; yet equally distinct is the snare of the visible, seen in Joseph’s displeasure and dissatisfaction thus expressed: “Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.”

There is likewise a very solemn coincidence between this break-down of faith in Joseph, when being invested with the forfeited portion of Reuben (1 Chron. 5), and the actings of the same Reuben afterwards in Israel’s history, when, in conjunction with Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, he erected “a great altar to see to” (Josh. 22:10). But of this more further on.

How blessed and encouraging to see in the last moments of the patriarch on which we are dwelling, the fruit of the patient, gracious ways of God with him! How cheering to see a man whose sight and sense controlled in no ordinary degree, now in faith the witness for God, intelligent, subdued, and elevated:

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

And equally comforting is it to hear one who was continually contravening the ways of God by the visible and natural, thus accept death for himself upon it all: “Behold I die; but God shall be with you.”
Another striking instance of the perverting power of the visible is presented in Moses, when called of God to be the deliverer of Israel. Solemn it is to reflect on what little stay his soul derived from the promised “Certainly I will be with thee,” of the “I am that I am” (Ex. 3). Observe how the absence of the visible and the human, “I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue,” are his pleading to be excluded; and this in the presence of the most marked display of the superhuman. (See Ex. 4:2-7). This was not that faith which characterized him at the first, when he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Then the visible was of no account to him; but he has drooped in soul, as it were, since then, and now, as Abraham went into Egypt for help and got Hagar there, so Moses turns to the same quarter and gets Aaron, his trial and affliction afterwards. Very solemn it is to contemplate how this same Aaron, given to Moses in the day when he craved for the outward and the visible, as we have seen, was the very man who ministered to the people in their idolatrous craving after the visible, when they “saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount” (Ex. 32:1); and the same Aaron of whom it is said, with respect to the molten calf which he himself had made, “and when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it.”

In the same manner afterwards, in their history in the wilderness, did they crave for “a captain” (Num. 14:4), in order that they might return into Egypt, where Abraham went in the famine, and where alas! many a child of God now turns in like circumstances, in order to find some visible countenance or support. Both “calf” and “captain,” the one made and the other desired, are but the ensnaring meshes of the visible and human. We know that “these things were our examples,” that is, types (τύποι) (1 Cor. 10:6). The Lord give us to study them, and take it to heart, as to how far we, as His saints today, have not dropped down a thousand-fold more than they, into the perverting line of sight and nature.

It is very solemn to note the moral order in which the apostle in the above scripture, refers to the circumstances in Israel’s history, on some of which we have been dwelling. The spring of all was the insufficiency of the unseen, the craving for the visible; then, having obtained the lusted-after object, it becomes their idol; next follows unholy alliance with Moab (fornication); and lastly, the captain is desired, as the calf had been made. This moral, not historical, order is very solemn, as setting forth the course of the professing church of God up to Laodicea, which is the great boaster of the visible (Rev. 3:17), and which, when full blown, will be spued out, and then carried by the beast — Satan’s great visible power on earth (Rev. 17:7).

But we must turn to Israel’s history in the land for a little, to see how this terrible principle ensnared them in all their course. Alas, even when they were in type a dead and risen people (across Jordan), and in the land of Canaan, their first failure was from this very principle we are considering. First, observe what a testimony Jehovah gave to His thoughts and ways, in the manner in which Jericho was surrounded and captured. There was the entire absence of any visible display in power, but there was to be that which is the invariable concomitant of real power, namely noiseless equanimity (Josh. 6:10).

Has not all this its own special voice for His saints of this day, who professedly occupy the ground on which Israel stood typically when in Canaan? Has it not a double voice as well? Does it not distinctly tell us what the mind and thoughts of the Lord are, as to the real power of that which is invisible and supernatural? But does it not also very clearly indicate our true place as across Jordan, namely, that we are dead men, and helpless in every human point of view? The Lord give us to ponder the weighty instruction which is here conveyed to faith.

Now the very next chapter is the record of how the visible ensnares, for we read of Achan making confession of his sin in these words:

When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them (Josh. 7:21).

How solemn the rise, progress, and issue of the bewitching effects of the visible!

We will turn now to another striking exemplification of our subject: it is supplied to us in the history of Reuben’s great altar, “TO SEE TO” (Josh. 22:10). This act of the two and a half tribes was in perfect moral accord with the position they had taken. That position is thus sorrowfully expressed, “Bring us not over Jordan” (Num. 32:5). They were under the power of the visible, they possessed “a very great multitude of cattle.” What could be more natural than that they should seek the spot most suitable to their circumstances? And if in that day there were to be found men of such narrow and extreme thoughts as to press the fact that the other side of Jordan was the true possession of God’s Israel, and that taking it this side, or looking for it this side, is abandoning the call and purpose of God, how would not Reuben and his associates resent all such Visionary and transcendental notions as these? And is it not Satan’s great object in this day as in that day, to hinder the people of God, and keep them out of their true and rich blessing, by despising and scorning the unseen land beyond the river, and presenting some visible Jazer and Gilead instead? May the Lord give to His saints in this time of sifting, the wing of faith to rise beyond the snares and nets abounding in the land of sight!

But mark the beginning of this great altar. We read:

When THEY SAW the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that behold, the place was a place for cattle.

It was the same principle exactly that operated in Lot, who lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar (Gen. 13:10).

The sight-principle confounds the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt. Just think of these two put together: “Egypt,” and “the garden of the Lord!” What a contrast! The one is above and unseen; the other is below and visible. Jordan separates them. And alas! there are not a few to-day who have lifted up their eyes like Lot, and like Reuben, and seen well-
watered plains and places for cattle, and are settling down, or are settled down, on this side of Jordan. It is thus evident that there can be no security whatever from the ensnaring effects of the things seen, save as the soul is consciously kept in the light of what is unseen; and that cannot be, if the other side of Jordan is abandoned, as the only sphere for faith to rest in.

Thus to return to this history of the two and a half tribes, we find that their "great altar to see to" was in perfect keeping with their choice of what they had seen this side Jordan; it was a craving after the visible. It was a subtle wile too. They did not mean or intend to abandon the worship of the God of Israel; but having made a false choice in settling down in Jazer and Gilead, their human expedient is the erection of the great altar to see to, something visibly great, somewhat that appealed to the eye; an attempt in reality to bring God to man's ground, instead of man to God's. How solemn! It is not necessary to pursue the history further, or to point out how the other tribes resented this act of Reuben. My one object in dwelling on it so far, has been to point out the principle involved, and how deceiving and ensnaring the visible is.

It is very instructive also to observe how, in the close of Joshua (ch. 23), the people are warned in the most solemn way against the inevitable consequences of being ensnared by visible worship (v. 7), and association in a natural way (that is, yielding to what is seen) with the people of the world (v. 12); and this is precisely what came to pass. How solemn! They were in the true standing, yet incompetent to maintain it. Then in Josh. 24 it is the same line of the most solemn prophetic exhortations. They had been worshipers of the visible (idolaters), and the snare would be to return to it. All being finished, Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us.

I shall now turn to one more instance of the power of the visible and its consequences upon Israel, and that is, the way in which it acted upon them so as to hinder the observance of the Sabbatical year. In this instance it is all the more remarkable and solemn how the visible turned them aside, inasmuch as there was a special provision made by Jehovah to meet the case (see Lev. 25:20, 21). The desire of His heart was that the land should keep a sabbath unto the Lord:

The seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord.

Nothing could be more distinct, or beautiful in its import and typical bearings. Did Israel observe and cleave to the mind of Jehovah as to this? Observe the solemn warning of Lev. 26:43: "The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them"; as well as vv. 33, 34:

And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

Such were the prophetic warnings which follow immediately the ordinance of Jehovah as to the sabbatical year, yet how lost upon the nation, ruled by the visible, as it is clear they were, in refusing to keep it! In vain, as far as they were concerned, did Jehovah promise,

I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years (Lev. 25:21).

The visible work of man's hands, their sowing and reaping, was greater and better to them than His blessing. Thus they lost their highest favor, and 2 Chron. 36:20, 21 records the execution of the predicted sentence in those solemn words:

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him [the king of the Chaldees] and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

How solemn all this; yet how blessed to see that when they were in Babylon and all visible means of help gone from them, and entirely in the hands of their oppressors, then those, who were really faithful to the Lord, found out where alone their real resources were -- even in God Himself.

May His saints to-day have grace to ponder and weigh in His presence, the weighty lessons which the history affords, that, amid the increasing tendency to turn away from the line of life and faith, grace may either preserve or recover a true remnant for the Lord, broken-hearted ones who, amid sorrow and pressure, cleave to Himself, whom, having not seen, they still love.
Manasseh and Ephraim

Genesis 12:51, 52

The names of Joseph’s sons, born to him in the land of his exile, are full of the deepest interest and significance; his own history, remarkable and checkered as it was, I do not here refer to further than to notice, how it sets forth in figure and in type the varied exercises and trials to which a servant of God is subjected, in order that he may be a suitable vessel for the Master’s use.

We do not find that either of these names was given without a special reason and intent; yet they were not, as is so commonly found, names which served to connect the child with some great members of the family, distinguished either by title or possession; on the contrary, this devoted servant of God will have the children born to him in a strange land, even in their names, witnesses of how entirely apart from “his father’s house” he was, and how in it he was only left to be fruitful to God amid affliction and trial on every hand. How truly did Joseph, personally and typically, answer to Jacob his father’s words of prophetic import: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him: but this bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)” (Gen. 49:22-24; see also Moses’ blessing as recorded in Deut. 33:13-17).

Now the meaning of Manasseh is forgetting, and of Ephraim, fruitful, and these are two great features which the revelation of God’s mind and will for the present moment, when received in faith, produce in our hearts! No one can truly say that he forgets “his father’s house,” until his heart has found a treasure in a brighter scene; then where he is in body, becomes the land of exile to him, yet he has no desire to return to the past, he forgets it; what derives from him bears the confession of it in even the name; his toil and his father’s house alike are faded from his remembrance. It is truly a wonderful emancipation to a man, when what he has found and possessed in heaven throws into shade and obscurity and oblivion all that natural pride of birth and pedigree which are connected with our “father’s house.”

Yet it is never the case, save as the heart has been won and satisfied by Christ in glory; it is only Christ in heaven that can displace “all things,” leading us to count them loss for the excellency of His knowledge. How sorrowful it is to see so little distinguished by this Manasseh character of testimony; although the doctrine as to it is accepted, at least outwardly, the conformity of the ways in practice is often so glaringly inconsistent, as to raise the question how far terms and language are understood, or how far it is the antinomianism of the heart manifesting itself.

It is sorrowful and solemn to reflect upon the feeble connection which seems to exist in many souls between truth and its maintenance; the highest character of testimony may be held doctrinally, along with the most evident self-seeking and worldliness. How is this? is often asked. I shall give the only answer that satisfies my own heart. Truth is sought after or held in the mind instead of Christ personally domiciling in the heart; I know I shall be met by some with -- “But Christ is the truth.” I reply, Quite true; but it is possible to separate Christ from truth, for what is the human heart not capable of? And it is a serious question how far more importance has been attached to natural quickness of apprehension than is its due, even to the slighting of some, who, though slow in apprehension, were far more solid in soul, and more conscientious in their handling of the truth because deeply impressed with the sense of its claims upon those who profess to receive it.

How blessed it is when in heart we can really walk through the world as in a foreign land! Christ in glory having so possessed us, that we are but vessels here at His disposal and pleasure. I say, vessels, in contrast with either agents or actors; as I understand it, a vessel is simply to contain and display what is set therein; we are set in this world as vessels to contain and display Christ, thus forgetting all our toil, and all our father’s house.

When the eye is single, that is when Christ alone is filling its vision, all is lost sight of; not only our toil and father’s house, but even our progress in pressing on to Christ in glory; hence says the apostle “forgetting those things which are behind,” from the same word as is found in Genesis 46 (see Septuagint). What a wonderful and surpassing power which, by its own excellence and blessedness, turns out every claimant or rival, that Christ alone may rule and reign there! Reader, have
you so found and known Him in this land of exile and strangership, that you can inscribe on all as your motto in part, Manasses!

But another son was born to Joseph at this time also, to whom he gives the name of Ephraim, that is, fruitful.

Now this sets forth another and second testimony, which the blessed Lord has called His own to render for Him in the midst of this hostile scene. We are left in a world with which we ought to have nothing in common, to be fruitful for Christ, and that too where there is absolutely nothing to succor, but on the contrary where everything, even the best here, draws away from the only source of fruitfulness and blessing. Happy is the saint who has so learned to fear the baneful influences of this world’s atmosphere, as to keep nigh to the one spot from whence vigor and freshness flow, and thus to be on earth like a tree reversed, the roots in heaven, the branches here; not only satisfied, but in some little measure displaying it in fruitfulness for Christ. Alas, how few there are who seem to be awake to the immense favor of God, in leaving us for Christ in such a world and time as this!

There is another point of great interest in this history, which finds its antitype in the Lord’s ways with His saints at the present time. It required both the pit and the prison to develop and mature this testimony of Joseph. And is it not so with His saints now? Can there be either forgetfulness or fruitfulness, save as death practically works in us? Is it not as we bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, and as we who owe our all; by it He has set us free from the moral pit and prison in which we were hopelessly undone; but while almost every saint would glory in this, how few there are who have as yet accepted the solemn reality, that it is only through death, we can, as free, follow Him; and it is only as death practically works in us, we are either forgetting or fruitful.

May the Lord awaken us all to a more serious estimate of such a calling, so as to set forth in a scene of moral death and darkness, the land of the exile and stranger-ship, the beautiful simplicity of those whose father’s house and toil are all to us things of the past, to be no more remembered or resumed connection with, and we, though in a foreign land, fruitful trees of the Lord’s culture, even “planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

The Power of Weakness

Genesis 32

It is well for us that the blessed God never abandons His purpose to bless His people, and well for us too that He blesses after the thoughts of His own heart; this being so, what limit can we put to the blessing?

It is both instructive and interesting to observe the way and method of God’s sovereign goodness to His people; it is thus, the wise “understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”

In Jacob’s history, which I think furnishes a striking illustration of this principle, every dealing of God with him was in view of making good the sovereign goodness revealed to him at the outset. If we turn to Gen. 28, which may be termed the start, what do we find? Why, a poor outcast wanderer from his father’s house and home, overtaken by night, lying down to sleep on the stones for pillows. It were hardly possible to find circumstances more untoward or gloomy; yet here it is God can be; for while man’s falsely boasted independence repels Him, man’s need and misery become occasions to Him, blessed be His name, as the most suited platform upon which to display that sovereign goodness which delights to bless the weary and the outcast.

Jacob dreams, and God speaks! and wondrous utterances they are: “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land wherein thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed; and thou shalt spread abroad to the east, and to the west, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, 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.” Oh, what grace, what sovereign goodness on God’s part! No wonder that this spot, the witness of it, should be called Bethel, that is, the house of God.

Now this manifestation of sovereign grace and goodness on God’s part, contained within it the full scope of blessing for His poor servant. Many and various were the ways of God with him in bringing it all about, and making it good in him, yet nothing was bestowed in the end which was not unfolded in promise at the first. How faithfully He keeps His word with us, as He kept it with Jacob! To the latter He said, “I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of,” and He never did leave him, His hand was never withdrawn, in accomplishing the purpose and plans of His heart: stroke after stroke, blow upon blow, witnessed how true God was to His purpose and His word.

The circumstances in which Jacob is found are remarkable, but ever, I believe, those in which sovereign grace asserts itself and acts; let us name the circumstances as recorded in this chapter.

1. The threat of his injured brother Esau (ch. 27:41) placed him in the condition of a banished man from his home and father’s house; as such he fled.

2. Overtaken by the darkness of night, without shelter or friend, the stones of the earth are his only pillow.

3. In the above circumstances he sleeps, and dreams, and the Lord draws near, and gives him to hear His voice.

Now this last fact, namely, his sleeping, is the time when the blessed God acts, for sleep is the type of nature’s inactivity and expressed helplessness. I say expressed, because though
nature is always a weak helpless thing, yet sleep is in the fullest way its expression; when nature is thus silenced, as it were in type, and subdued, the power of the man being in abeyance, God speaks and acts.

Let me cite another instance of this type. If we turn to 1 Kings 3:5-15, we shall find it. “In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”

This scene, beautiful and striking as it is, presents the other side of the truth which is sought to be illustrated: we have seen how, when nature is inactive, the blessed God draws near and speaks; here we may equally see in type how that, in nature’s inactivity in God’s people, divine thoughts take the place of all that is merely human. Solomon asked for wisdom, “And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.” Surely we never please Him in what we ask or do, save as nature’s claims are disallowed, and to this end sleep sets forth its inactivity, and fasting the denial of its claims in its activities. When it is so, the blessed God stands at the top of the mystic ladder, heaven is then not far off, or wisdom is asked as the thing most pleasing to Him. To us, this is Christ, God’s wisdom and God’s power.

I turn now to Gen. 32. A long and trying period intervenes between ch. 28 and ch. 32. Suffice it to say, that Jacob departs from Laban, full and not empty; at Bethel he had but the stones of the earth for his pillows, but now he is rich; as he said himself he had “oxen and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women servants”; he has now, as we may say, a stake in the world. During those twenty years he had been with Laban, amid trial and vexation, he had been gathering around himself all the materials for the discipline which awaited him; the approach of Esau brings on a crisis-moment in Jacob’s history. He lets out his natural character to its full extent in view of meeting his enraged brother; he plans, and prays, and plans again; he makes every provision, and then is “left alone.” How like man as man! But this solitude, while on the one hand it was Jacob’s folly and selfishness, was God’s moment of blessing; “There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” Who was the mysterious, unlooked-for, unexpected stranger? No doubt it was God Himself; and He is here to deal with and put down dependence in self; and hence, as the picture of this, what was touched and shrank was the known sign of man’s strength. Yet while this power of nature was being withered, Jacob himself was sustained; the same hand that dried up, as it were, the sources of natural strength, imparted new power from above; and so it is, he enters upon a new day, gets a new name, Israel, and is blessed as a crippled man; and not only this, but when the sun rose upon him, that is, when the influences of the day are around him, he is in the expression of weakness; “he halted upon his thigh.”

I think there can be but little doubt, that this scene in the patriarch’s history is that to which the apostle alludes in Gal. 6:15, 16. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walked according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” What is this rule?” Is it not for us the new order of things into which through grace we are introduced? and was not Jacob after the night of Peniel, the picture of one who, having been delivered through the cross of Christ, has learned now the power practically of the death of Jesus in his mortal flesh?

Let us consider well the excellency of such weakness as this; for it is not the mere inability of one who is powerless, but it is the case of one who, having been in the full flow of natural energy, was met and contended with by Him who knew how to put out of joint the spring of creature strength; it is therefore divinely wrought weakness. How blessed to go halting and limping all one’s life after this fashion! to be so indebted to Him for lack of nature-power, that His strength becomes our ability, as Himself becomes our solace and stay. “I will not let thee go,” though the utterance of a vanquished man is the announcement of victory.

Now similar to this in many respects, is the case of the apostle in 2 Cor. 12. He could boast and glory in that which made little of him before men, because thereby the power of Christ rested upon (lit., pitched its tent over) him; thus it was he knew that, by being weak, he was strong; paradox it may seem, yet who that knows the deep blessedness of the secret would have it otherwise? On the contrary, may we not justly and truly say, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness”?

There is this difference in the two cases just touched upon, that whereas with Jacob it was the breaking down and withering up the seat of energy of one strong-willed and unsubdued, in the case of the apostle of the Gentiles it was the preventive grace of God, in order to cut off the resources of nature; in Jacob it was the subjugation of natural force and power of death, practically withering and setting aside the influences of the day are around him, he is in the expression of weakness; “he halted upon his thigh.”

This weakness, which is really our strength, is the moral power of death, practically withering and setting aside the man in the saint, in order that the plant of renown in each one of us may spread forth its roots, and produce its fruit, even the life of Jesus, in our mortal bodies. Blessed it is, if in any measure we have learned to be in subjection to our Father’s heart and ways, even in that which is naturally death to us; but no language can convey the blessedness of being so in communion with Him as to be able to say, “I take pleasure” in them.
A vessel in the power of weakness is a sight for angels truly; yet this is what God delights in; but how little any of us seem to have the sense of being simply vessels! There is too much of that which tells of our being actors or agents, but a vessel is distinct from both, and is simply to retain and manifest the treasure placed in it. In Gideon’s army we read of (Judg. 7) three hundred tried and proved ones, who were retained because they had manifested a reality of devotedness to which the ten thousand that had remained were strangers; it is this vessel-character which marks them; they are at the disposal of another, they were those pre-eminently to whom their chief could say, “Look on me; as I do, so shall ye do.” It is this very three hundred that carried “empty pitchers,” and lamps within them; at a given signal and moment they brake the pitchers, and this was the hour of their victory. What moral beauty there is in all this; surely it speaks in its typical import of that greater victory which is announced as won in these words, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8).

It need not surprise us that such are the ways of our God with His own; nothing could set aside man in his badness or goodness, but death. Why should we shrink from it? We brought death into this world; solemn thought for us all. The Son of the Father goes through death, that the man who brought death into this world; solemn thought for us all. The Son of the Father goes through death, that the man who brought death into this world; solemn thought for us all.

**“My Thoughts are not Your Thoughts”**

**2 Corinthians 12:1-10**

It is an interesting fact that there are three instances in scripture, two in the Old Testament and one in the New, of saints making requests to God earnestly, which God did not answer; three distinct instances of unanswered prayers; and these too, as I say, offered by His own beloved servants.

But, while He did not answer them in their way, He gave them, as He ever does, that which was better for them, and at the same time infinitely glorified Himself; and that is far beyond merely meeting our need. So that, whether it be desires of the heart that are expressed in His hearing, or unexpressed longings, His thought for us is to bless us according to the measure of His own glory and His affection for us -- the children of His love; and if He bless us according to this measure, are we not blessed? If God gives, He gives as God. It is not only One who hears and answers, but One who meets me after the desires of His own heart; and the love in which He has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ is the spring from which it all flows.

Let us look at the three instances to which I refer. The first is Deut. 3:23-27. “I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O, Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.”

“I besought the Lord”: it is very remarkable; almost the very same words as those used by the apostle in the Epistle to the Corinthians. But his earnest prayer was not granted; the only answer was, “Speak no more unto me of this matter.” There was a double reason, no doubt, why His servant Moses should not cross the Jordan and enter the land of Canaan. Dispensationally the law could never bring the people of God, such as they were, into the rest of God; it remained for Joshua, the type of Christ in resurrection, to do this. And the moral reason, of course, every one is acquainted with; “he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” You may ask, How did God do a better thing for him than giving him his request, when He took him up to the top of Pisgah, instead of letting him go into the land, allowing him to see it all, which could only tantalize him? But do you not remember how in the New Testament, we read, that when the Lord Jesus Christ was seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses was seen there with Him; there he stood in the land; he saw it in company with Christ in glory, and was not that far better than if in Israel’s days he had crossed the Jordan? He did not say one word about it now; he could only speak about Christ. He got a far better thing than his heart could have conceived or his lips uttered. And it is just the same principle with God and His people now.

The second instance is in 1 Kings 19. “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a to-morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a to-morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a

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the testimony of the Lord, and give way before them. It is these that bring out the true strength of the heart. We can meet our own personal difficulties in the strength and power of God, but these try the heart in an *extraordinary* way. Whilst all was smooth with Elijah -- whilst he could call for drought at one time and plenty at another -- all went well; but if a Jezebel come in and threaten to put the iron heel of oppression on him, why, then he goes to God and says, as many a man has done since, Take away my life; I cannot go on. What a contrast is Elijah in chapter 19, to what he is in 18! in the one, he is a man remarkably above his circumstances; he has neither chariot nor driver, but he has God, and everything under his feet in the power of God. In the other, he is like a disappointed child; he goes under a juniper tree and prays that he may die. And does he die? God takes him up by a whirlwind into heaven -- a chariot of fire and horses of fire! Nothing had ever entered into his heart like that! And when Moses stands on the mount with the Lord Jesus, Elijah is there too. He, too, is in the land, and that in the scene of the glory of Christ, when He reaches the highest point that it is possible for a man to reach on earth. Thus both these petitions were set aside, and far more than that which was asked was given; they were answered according to God's thoughts about them.

And now in this passage of Corinthians, that we have read, God does not take the thorn away. Let us look at the chapter for a moment; there is in it a point or two most important for our souls. The first thing we find is, what is true of every Christian; every Christian is "a man in Christ." There is no such thing as a Christian not being a man in Christ; the moment I can say of one that he is a Christian, in the sense in which it is spoken of here, there is a man in Christ -- a man who, as to his standing, has entirely parted company with man in the flesh. Flesh and spirit are contrasts; if I am in the flesh, I am not in Christ; if I am in Christ, I am not in the flesh. Of course if I be not watchful, and self-judged always, the flesh will get power over me; but there is a great difference between being what is called overtaken by the flesh, and being a man in the flesh. As a man in Christ I am in a new place altogether.

It is often treated in this way as if the cross of Christ does something to elevate the man. What a delusion! So far from the old nature being improved, the moment a person enters into the blessed relationship of a child of God the virulence of his old nature is ready to show itself. Who are those most worried by Satan? No doubt Christians are, and that because they are in a place where they are out of his grasp, and where all he can do is to worry. Those who are in his power he ministers unto, so that instead of anything like a diminution of the virulence of that which is opposed to God in a Christian, Satan seeks by it more than ever to worry him just because he is out of his power. We must see the difference between standing in the old thing, and standing before God in a new condition in Christ. He refers to the time when they were in the flesh: "When we were in the flesh"; but now he says, "Ye are in the Spirit." So it is "I know a man in Christ" -- not I knew. Observe he does not speak of himself as Paul; this is very blessed. If he has anything humiliating to say of himself, he speaks of Paul; he will say, "through a window in a basket I was let down by the wall": there was nothing very elevating to a man in that; it was a humiliating position; so he says "I." But the moment he comes to speak of that which is elevating, it is no more "I," it is "a man in Christ" -- that which is true of every Christian. "I know a man in Christ."

After this, he speaks of that which is not true of every Christian. Every Christian is a man in Christ, but every Christian is not "caught up into paradise." The first is the *real* status of every Christian, the last is the *possible* state of a Christian. None of us have been caught up as Paul was; it was a distinct thing peculiar to himself. And then he heard "words not possible for a man to utter." "Possible" is the word, rather than "lawful." He means to say, that as soon as he returned to the consciousness of being in the body, he found that he had no vehicle of communication so as to express the greatness of the things that he had witnessed. And so it is, the deeper a thing is in our souls even the greater the difficulty we find in speaking of it; we cannot convey to another the sense, the impression, of that which we have got for ourselves. How difficult it is when we have received anything from God Himself to convey to another anything like what it is to our own heart!

This is one thing. And then comes another which brings out the watchful care of God for His servant, and is most solemn to see. The blessed God, knowing that the flesh in Paul was just the same as before -- his having been in the third heaven did not alter it in the least, it was there ready to rise on the first opportunity, anticipates the working of it. I do not know anything in scripture which gives a greater idea of the preventive watchfulness of God. We all know that He restores our souls when we fail, but do we enough think of all the little things that occur in our daily life that He has prepared and arranged to the end we may *not* fail? It is "lest I should be exalted above measure," not bringing me back after failure, but preventing its occurrence. It was a grievous thing for Paul; a messenger of the devil. Who but the blessed God could use Satan against Satan? This very thorn, this messenger of Satan, took away from Satan the power to work upon Paul’s flesh. Is it not a blessed thing to think that God can do it? We are very prone to use the language of infidelity and say, This or that *happened* to me. Would it not be much more blessed to say, God sent me this or that? Is there not a sweetness about anything, however grievous, when I can say, My Father’s hand in watchful love brought me this thorn? “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh”; it was not a crushing trial that happened to me; it was a *given mercy*.

Now the first thought with the apostle was, Could not I get out of this difficulty? Saints think if they could only get out of their circumstances. But do you not know that, if you did, you would take with you the nature that makes the circumstances in which you are so trying to you? That which makes your present ones so trying would soon make just as much difficulty in the new ones. Here the apostle goes to God to change his circumstances; we often change them for
ourselves. He said, Take it away, Lord, three times. What a contrast between the thrice repeated prayer of the blessed One to His Father, ending with, “Not my will, but thine be done.” It was the perfection of Christ to shrink from drinking that cup. Paul imperfect, feeble, prayed: Lord, change my circumstances. The answer came in this: Do you want me to put you in circumstances where you will not need my power? “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

To any pressed one here I would say, Would you take from God occasion for displaying His power in your weakness, and from yourself all opportunity for turning to and leaning upon that power? This is really the answer of God here. He says, I will not take away the thorn, but I will give you my power. It is not merely relief; it is that I am positively put in the place of power at His own side. “My grace is sufficient”; weakness is the platform on which it displays itself: the thorn becomes the blessed occasion for Christ to show how His strength comes in. What a wonderful thing to move through the world leaning on the power of Christ! Such a poor wretched creature, if I go on at all, people can but say, What wonderful power to take such a one through! When did Jacob get the blessing? When he was crippled. He prepared for Esau, he prepared for every one save the mysterious One he was to meet, and who touched him in the hollow of his thigh, in the very place of his natural strength. And then he would not let Him go. I cling to the One who has withered me up, crippled me, so that He might have His place in my heart. Then it shows that it has done its work. He says, I glory in being crippled, I glory in being made nothing of, I glory in being broken down, I glory in my weakness. Why? “That the power of Christ may rest upon me” -- may tabernacle over me.

Thus we get in the apostle an instance of the two great parts of Christianity; a man in Christ, man taken out of his old standing altogether, and then Christ in him manifested before the world. I, in Christ before God up there where He is, and Christ in me down here before the world.

Is it so with us? Or are we struggling against God’s guidance? We often pray God to make us what He would have us, and then when He begins to answer we draw back. I do not think there is anything more unreal than we are in our prayers. We pray to be made like Christ, and then are afraid of the way He will take to do it. I know it is so often said, If I were to say such things, God would take everything away from me: He would strip me like a tree from branch to root. Is that the thought you have of God? I tell you that He would not take away a single thing from you that would be good for you. It is in His heart to give you everything that He sees best. I know that I must get my motives, my springs, my ability from God. But God says, If you want to get spring, power, ability, everything from Me, then I must set aside that which is contrary to it in your heart. The antidote to Christ in us is our own will, and God helps us practically to get rid of that. What a wonderful thing, that poor creatures such as we are, should be left here that the grace of Christ may be shown out in us as we pass through this world!

The Lord grant that His own Son may be displayed in us according to the power of His blessed Spirit for His Name’s sake.

This Side Jordan and Beyond

It is solemn to reflect on the various ways in which the enemy of the truth of God and of His people is at work to set aside His purpose in their blessing. The variety of means resorted to, in order to discredit the prime thought of God for the time being, proves two things, namely, the malice and hatred of the god and prince of this world, and the infinite blessedness and unspeakable value of the thoughts of God in the testimony revived in these last times.

It is very striking to trace in the scriptures this decided character of opposition; it is seen, or may be recognized, in all times, taking, no doubt, diverse methods of expression, as well as employing various kinds of instruments, and from time to time, in the skillfulness of wile, changing the tactics of his warfare, and varying the method of his assault; yet to faith it is more than evident, that, whatever is for the moment the thought of God about His people, that is the point assailed by Satan with malignant energy. Now the history of Israel in the past will be found, as we examine it, to furnish us with a striking illustration of this deadly hostility of the wicked one.

I need not long delay in showing that Canaan, the country beyond Jordan, was the land of Jehovah’s choice and purpose for that nation. A reference to Ex. 3 and 15 will clearly show the earliest intimation of this purpose to Moses, while the people were still in the house of bondage, even in Egypt, as well as how fully afterwards they entered into this mind of Jehovah, singing as never before; not only celebrating their deliverance and praising their Deliverer, Jehovah their salvation, but connecting the full height of His purpose with the beginning of their blessing in these words: “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; the sanctuary O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever” (Ex. 15:17, 18). Very blessed is it to see a delivered people, in the first joys of their new found liberty, reaching on in faith and hope beyond their immediate or present portion, blessed though it were, to the full height of Jehovah’s purposes respecting them.

Now even in this, as well as in an earlier stage of their history, the malice of Satan shows itself; for Pharaoh was Satan opposing redemption, the first step towards Canaan, as Amalek was Satan opposing the march of dependence through the wilderness on the way still to Canaan. I do not doubt for a moment the satisfaction of Satan in holding Israel, through Pharaoh’s instrumentality, in the thraldom and bondage of Egypt; nor do I question a like pleasure in opposing, by means of Amalek, their dependent march through the desert, to the mountain of Jehovah’s inheritance; yet, inasmuch as at the very outset the purpose of Jehovah had been made known in the touching language of Ex. 3:7, 8, to Moses, I can have
no question, but that it was this definitely avowed intention of Jehovah that Satan set himself directly to thwart, whether in Egypt by Pharaoh, or past the Red Sea by Amalek; and, I may say, this seems to be strengthened and maintained by the fact so often pressed and referred to, namely, that the wilderness was no part of Jehovah’s purpose, though it came in in connection with His ways with that people. How solemn then to think that, even at this early period of their history, the opposition of the enemy clearly declares itself, and that in relation to the full purpose of Jehovah’s heart, even the land beyond Jordan!

In order to guard against any misconception on this head, I add a word further with respect to the opposition of the enemy. It is quite clear that as to conflict, in the Christian sense of the term, there was none until Israel entered Canaan: the trials of the wilderness, its murmurs and its Marahs, were not Canaan conflict; neither was the fight with Amalek like conflict in the land; the great thought seems to be the testing of the people, yet in grace, the circumstances and sorrows of the way intended of Jehovah to cast them upon Himself, used by Satan to oppose and hinder, by creating, through their means, murmuring and discontent, the very opposite to dependence and confidence; and that dependence, and not fighting, properly so called, won the battle in the wilderness, Ex. 17:11, 12, clearly proves; for what do we find there? Success depended on Moses’ hands being lifted up. Yet how clearly marked is the opposition of the enemy to the people of Jehovah, set free from Egypt, and on their road through the desert to Jehovah’s land!

But now, passing over most of their history in the desert, following that which we have touched upon, I would turn to another scene, in order to trace this opposition of Satan to the mind of God. In turning to the record of the searching of the land, permitted and allowed though it was, there are the clearest indications of the satanic energy which was at work by means of it, acting upon the weakness and unbelief of the ten spies, so as to discredit the goodliness of the land of promise in their eyes and that of all Israel (cp. Deut. 1 and Num. 13), and succeeding for the time in awakening the worst fears and passions of unbelief, until they finally burst into open murmuring and almost rebellion. How solemn such words as these: “Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into the land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? . . . Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” But it is specially noted here, as a proof of our present theme, namely, the various ways in which at the outset of their history, as well as here in its after course, satanic hatred assailed the purpose of God.

Very blessed is it to see how in that day, as now, God will have His witnesses to the excellency of His purpose and thought, as well as His delight and ability to make them good; hence satanic energy here calls to the forefront the testimony of faith and faithfulness in Joshua and Caleb. And may we not learn a lesson in these days from the loyalty of these devoted men of God and servants of the Lord? Does not their simple yet mighty appeal rebuke the fears and faint-heartedness of many at this present time? “The land is an exceeding good land” was faith’s simple rejoinder then to all Satan’s hindrances, and is it different to-day? Surely the spirit of Num. 14 is working sadly at the present moment. Not only are there the faint-hearted and fearful, who are ever ready to parade the anti-types of the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites, as these formerly were; but there are not wanting those who never miss an opportunity of heaping terms of scorn and contempt upon the truth which sets forth the Christian’s present heavenly standing as in Christ in heaven, ridiculing it as transcendentalism, or mere shibboleth, and trading for the purpose of opposition, upon the failures and inconsistencies of those who, feeble though they be, yet have their heart’s desires set on the present mind and purpose of God about His saints.

It needs but little perception to discover in all this hatred of and opposition to the truth, the malice of Satan, the god and prince of this world; and, moreover, those who oppose in this manner are for the most part worldly and earthly minded themselves, and thus betray the real secret of their dislike. Alas! that they should show themselves to be the representatives of like characters in the past, and that the history of the searching of the land should be thus sadly repeated. The Lord grant His saints of to-day faith in His present purpose and mind respecting them, as well as faith in His heart and His hand to make that purpose good.

The next instance of satanic opposition is furnished by the history of the two tribes and a half; the record of their sorrowful choice and inducing second causes, is contained in Num. 32, as well as Josh. 22. I say second cause, because the instigation was in the first instance satanic, as was the case in the previous history of the nation. Now let me recur to the purpose of God again, in order to show the opposition of Satan, expressed in the history of these tribes. His purpose was Canaan, which is beyond Jordan; the place of their choice was not Egypt, it was beyond the Red Sea, this side Euphrates, but not Canaan; the inducing causes were their numerous cattle, and the land of Gilead and Jazer afforded wonderful opportunities for this. Thus blinded and losing sight of the call of God, their choice is expressed in these mournful words: “Bring us not over Jordan.” Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots and tribes of Israel to settle in them to their loss. Such was their history; for in after days, when Israel’s sin and weakness left them the ready prey of their foes -- the enemies of God, the lovely country this side Jordan was the first that passed into the enemies’ hands.

Has not all this a solemn voice for saints in the present time? Are there not those who have made a similar choice, having taken their place this side Jordan, that is, this side death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God? Is it asked, what can that mean? There can be no question, it is worldly Christianity on this side of death and resurrection. How many of the saints have cast in their lot here, settling down in the place of wandering, the heart clinging to what is this side death and resurrection; short of the purpose and mind of God about His saints at this time!
It is striking to observe the resemblance between these tribes and some now-a-days; they did not desire or intend to give up being Israelites: by no means; but they would be Israelites this side Jordan; and is it not so at the present time? Are there not saints who, from one supposed cause or another, stop short of the call of God? They are not lacking in either zeal or earnestness, but some, through fear and timidity, others from dislike and distaste, yet both equally, say: “Bring us not over Jordan.”

A counterpart to all this is found in 2 Tim. 4. Were not all that forsook the apostle, as well as Demas, practically the two and a half tribes of that day? They did not either in fact or intention give up Christ, any more than Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, the altar of Shiloh, or the position of the Israel of God; yet who can fail to see that “loving this present world” is taking possession this side death and resurrection? And what is forsaking the apostle, the heavenly man in the wilderness, but a practical denial of the truth that “our common wealth has its existence in the heavens”? Thus we see how the antagonism of satanic power was and is directed to defeat the purpose of God respecting His saints, whether past or present; and, of this, the history of the two tribes and a half, as well as those who like Demas, deserted the apostle Paul, are melancholy instances. The Lord make His saints of to-day divinely watchful as to this.

The next instance of satanic opposition is that furnished by the sorrowful history of Israel in the land, and of this Josh. 23, compared with the book of Judges, is the mournful record. They failed as grievously in Canaan as they did in apprehending Jehovah’s purposes respecting them ere they reached the goodly land itself. We have seen how, in various ways, satanic opposition displayed itself in keeping them short of Jehovah’s purpose and revealed mind; and now we have briefly to trace like enmity and opposition in making them inconsistent with that purpose whilst seemingly answering to it.

In Josh. 23:6-12, they are warned in the most earnest manner by Joshua himself; his advanced years and his “going the way of all the earth” lending peculiar solemnity to his charge. Observe these three points here:

1. Courage to obey and cleave to the Lord.
2. He warns them as to false worship.
3. He warns them as to false associations.

In other words, he tells them their snare would be in the religious and social directions. I need not detail the manner in which this solemn charge was lost upon guilty Israel, nor the various steps downward taken with all the gradual characteristics that mark decline, until Gilgal is exchanged for Bochim.

The history suggests many a solemn thought as to his saints of to-day, and the various depths of Satan in opposing the purpose of God. To those who judge after a human method or standing it is preferable to be short of the mind of God than to be inconsistent with it; that is to say, it is better to be the two and a half tribes this side Jordan than the tribes the other side. But I plead that the man of faith would never so judge. On the contrary, he, sorrowful, convicted yet confiding, turns to the Lord in earnest longing to be preserved from the failure of both; timid it may be, yet full of trust, he is possessed by the purpose and mind of God to have him in heaven in spirit now, as in body presently, and to maintain him on the earth true in practice to what he is in standing and position, namely, a heavenly man, one who belongs to “the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus and do not trust in flesh.” As such, he seeks grace to walk becomingly; he seeks preservation from all that which practically is a blot upon testimony, either on the side of God or his own side; he cultivates an unworldly spirit, because he belongs to heaven, and as the true security against worldly ways in his business and his home; having a home in heaven he lives there, but from it addresses himself in true stranger-ship to all he is called to undertake on earth. This, I very earnestly plead, would mark the man of faith; he would avoid being short of the mind of God, as of being inconsistent with it, while waiting and looking from heaven for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord, in His grace, preserve His truth to His saints in these last days, and defeat the devices of Satan, who seeks to set aside His purpose, and so rob them of their portion and blessing.
These addresses were part of a book:

Occasional Lectures,

Vol. 3

The Person in The Place

Acts 26:13-18; Philippians 3:7-21

I would add one word, beloved brethren: and in doing so turn to these particular scriptures, because they furnish us with the divine instance of a man who apprehended what has been so blessedly set before us this morning.

We must each, I am assured, bow to the fact, that it is the change of place that tests us all; this is really the point, I may say, where the rub comes; I am confident it is the change of place that tests us all. And we may mark, if we trace the history of the people of God through scripture, that it was always so. This is strikingly seen in the two great parts of Israel’s history; in what followed their passage through the Red Sea, as well as what followed the crossing of Jordan. The desert followed the one, the land the other; in both cases there was change of place, and it was that which tested them: and though they had been the subjects of God’s power in such a wonderful way in their deliverance from Egypt, when they reach the wilderness we find them saying to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” Again, when they crossed the Red Sea, and came to Marah, they murmured against Moses; and again, when the land was before them, it was the sight of that land through the report of the spies that tested them.

There is one thing in passing I would remark upon, and that is, I feel we ought to take to heart our proneness to dissociate ourselves from the state of the whole church of God. We must see and own, that we should be more answering to the mind of God, and of Christ, if we were in the habit of looking at it in its entirety: how the whole is affected by what is passing. If we look around, how unmistakable it is that a low and earthly character of position has laid hold upon the saints as a whole. If you came in contact with them as some do, not only those connected with national religion and dissent, but those also who are, so to speak, unattached, you would see the utterly earthly nature of the thing they are in. It is with them a Savior for earth; what they possess and support is entirely on the level of things down here. If this were apprehended in its force, we should the more readily see the truth of the words of our brother this morning. It is the condition the church is in, the low ground the church is on. We cannot dissociate ourselves from the effects of it. May we take it to heart, and in exercise and brokenness of spirit, come within the range of God’s voice here to-day.

One thing further came before me whilst listening to the remarks that have been made, that I am sure should be of immense comfort to us, and must be, if we are in the full power of it: and that is in reference to the Person who is in that new place to which we are brought. In these two scriptures which I have read, both Acts and Philippians, this is the grand reality which comes out so prominently and blessedly. In the former, the apostle relates the wonderful appearing of Jesus to him, what He said, and how he was commissioned by Him to be a minister to the Gentiles. In the latter (Phil. 3) we find the great practical effects of what took place in the apostle’s soul. The moment when this marvelous display of grace is made, is the very moment when the full rage and hate of Saul had reached its height. He had gone to the fullest extent to which it is possible for a man to go in the hatred of his heart to the Savior. In that moment the light came from the place -- from heaven! What made the whole change with such rapidity? It was this: as he journeyed on the way to Damascus, a light shone from heaven above the brightness of the sun; far above all created or earthly light; and that heavenly voice addresses Saul in those words, “Why persecutest thou me?” And all this transpires at the very time when we could least expect it. What a wonderful reality it is that heaven comes in when you least look for it! At the darkest stage in that man’s history, this heavenly light, and this voice from heaven, comes in to assert the love of God’s own heart to claim that vessel for Himself. Saul of Tarsus is His chosen vessel, and he is fitted and displayed as such, by the revelation in him of this heavenly Savior. The light and the voice both come from heaven, and the effect and consequence of this is, that ever afterwards he is closely and distinctly connected with heaven, manifestly linked up with that spot from whence the light came. This is the simple history.

But there is another point of great beauty here, of which I would now speak. It is blessed and comforting to notice when it was that the apostle got back his natural sight. Under the effect of this heavenly vision he loses it, but he is brought
into acquaintance with Jesus in glory. He was the pattern man “to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”; and therefore, there was a speciality in the display of God’s grace to him. The effect of the heavenly vision was that he lost his sight. When we think of his losing his natural sight under such circumstances to reach such immense gain, we are ready to say, how good a thing it would be for us to lose our natural sight! How often are souls balked and hindered in their perception and enjoyment of heavenly things by what the eye sees here! The attractions, the allurements and sweets of earth. How often earthly things are the real difficulty to heavenly progress! How true it is that there is a marked difference between earth and the world! Numbers are clear of the world -- the age, the maxims and ways of the age; but it is the earth that turns them aside. Many a saint would shun the actual pleasures of the world, but for all that, have the heart detained by what is earthly; the natural eye and inward affections are so easily affected by objects down here, and often with an immense loss to the soul.

The apostle lost the power of sight for three days, “and neither did eat nor drink.” But that which is so blessed is the fact, that he gets back his natural sight, in connection with his reception of that heavenly power; the same moment that he gets the Holy Ghost, he receives his sight. What could be a more distinct intimation to him, as it were, from heaven, that, henceforth, Christ and His place were to be his all engrossing object and delight? Ananias comes to him, and in all the tenderness of the grace of the message that had reached his ear, he addresses him, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way that thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 9:17). What a word for Saul! Everything here passed from him! That blessed power which came down from heaven connected him with heaven where it came from, and with the One in heaven.

How true it was in Saul’s case, as expressed in the hymn: --

“And heavenly light makes all things bright,
   Seen in that blissful gaze.”

That blessed power, the Holy Ghost Himself, had come down to dwell in him, and unite him to the Savior in glory; and so consciously was his soul ever after filled with the sense of these wondrous realities, that we find from those verses we have read in Phil. 3, that he had counted, and did count, all things loss for Christ. That living Person in glory had so found His way into that man’s soul and affections, that everything else was turned out; all the things he had grasped, up to that time, he let them go. He is severed from the power and attractions of everything here: counts it all dross and dung. Everything now that he has got is in heaven. Manifestly his whole condition and state is there, and he only waits with longing and expectant heart to be brought there. Oh! how truly he looked for the Savior, a heavenly Savior. Saul had known Christ after the flesh, but now, henceforth, he knows Him as such no more, the whole thing is changed, the old things are passed away. Beloved brethren! I would say, are we thus watching for the return of a heavenly Savior? Not only correct as to waiting, but, in true affection, watching?

I may just mention, that a short time since, in listening to a beloved brother, speaking of the Lord’s coming, he related a conversation that he had with an aged sister, who was one of the few now left of the little company, whose hearts God had opened to see the true position of the church, as separated, and watching for the One who is coming. She remembered well when these and kindred truths of God’s word were recovered to the saints of God, of course, as found in the blessed Scriptures; how, when they first dawned upon souls in their living power and reality, such was their effect, so really did they look for Christ, that they did not like to take a house even for a year! The positive daily expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus so filled the heart, that the thought of settling down here had no place. It was no mere acceptance of a doctrine, but such a reality, such a living hope, which laid hold of their hearts with such power, that the coming of the Lord Himself was directly before the soul.

Would to God that that truth, and what has been before us this morning, may lay hold of our souls in that living way to-day. Oh! that He may lead our hearts into a truer apprehension of our new place, and of our blessed Savior in that place, by the power of His Spirit down here. True enough it is, our hearts are too large (however much they may cling to things here) to find their satisfaction, rest, or joy here. Things here are all too little to fill our hearts, as the hymn says --

“No earthly songs can joy afford
   Like heavenly melody.”

May God, by His grace and power, give the truth a firm grasp and hold of our hearts for His blessed Son’s sake.

From *Occasional Lectures*, (June, 1888) 3:18-25

**The New Power and the Condition to Receive It**

*Acts 1:1-14; 26:16-19*

My thought, beloved friends, is, to say a few words on one part of what our brother has brought before us, and this is with regard to the “new power” on this earth. When we think of the vastness and magnificence of the subject that we have been listening to, that is, “the interests of Christ,” we must necessarily feel that nothing short of a new and divine power could possibly energize us to take any true part in those interests. Only let our thoughts turn to them in all their greatness and blessedness, apart from the remembrance of the fact that that new power is here, we should certainly be cast down. When we think of the One whose interests they are, and how little those interests seem to command us, how little we move in relation to them, it is of immense comfort to know, that there is a new power come down from the glorified Man, and that this same power is with us still, and will be with us to the end. The Holy Ghost having come down from the blessed One in glory, from Himself that
glorified and exalted Man, has come to bear testimony to His exaltation -- to the effect of it; He is the power by which our hearts enter into the interests of our glorified Savior, and by whom we are energized and maintained in them.

Luke 24 was previous to the Lord’s exaltation, and we have there an account of the interview that took place between Him and His disciples, which is very blessed, and the words He speaks to them are very touching (v. 49): “And, behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” “Power from on high!” What a wonderful reality! The simple way in which these words, “power from on high,” are brought out is very blessed; there is an intimation too in the words which is precious, and is an intimation too in the words which is precious, and “power from on high” are brought out is very blessed; there is an immensity in the fact, that it is from the glorified Man that the power comes. Man (in the Person of Jesus) has reached the highest place in glory; God now has Man, in the Person of His Son, in His own presence, according to His own heart. As Man He is there in the highest place of exaltation; God now has Man, in the Person of His Son, in His own presence, according to His counsels and purposes, and according to all the desires of His own heart. As Man He is there in the highest place of exaltation. Man has gone up, just as truly as in incarnation. There is an immensity in the fact, that it is from the glorified Man that the power comes. Man (in the Person of Jesus) has reached the highest place in glory; God now has Man, in the Person of His Son, in His own presence, according to His counsels and purposes, and according to all the desires of His own heart. As Man He is there in the highest place of exaltation. Man has gone up, just as truly as in incarnation.

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and body; it is brought out exactly in the same order; that is, “when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.” In Psa. 68:18 (margin) it is, “Thou hast ascended on high -- thou hast received gifts in the Man.” “In the Man” -- in His human nature exalted. It is all in connection with His exaltation on high He bestows these gifts, that is, persons; and they are bestowed in all the rights and glories of Himself, the exalted Lord. The very vessels in whom the power of Satan had once wrought, and used against Christ, are now used by this new power against the power which once held them.

The Lord is making known to His disciples in Luke 24, concerning this coming power, and these intimations are so full of interest to the heart that knows His love. Another little word I would notice as showing that we must be in the right place to get these intimations -- “He led them out.” Surely it is a great thing to be in this outside spot to get such intimations. “He led them out as far as to Bethany.” Bethany was the only place down here where He had found a home -- where He was understood; the only spot on this earth that was congenial to Him, the alone shelter that this world afforded Him; and that is the platform from which He departs out of this scene, from which He ascended to heaven. Now He says, You have not yet got power, you must wait (v. 49). That connects itself with Acts 1, where there is a further intimation as to their testimony, in these words: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” It is wonderful the intercourse which passed between the risen Lord and His disciples during those forty days in which He was with them on the earth. When He leaves them here during that space between His going up and the Holy Ghost’s coming down, they were just simply waiting and looking. Has not their attitude a special voice for us? Because we are not yet taken up. We are waiting to be caught up together. We are not waiting for the Spirit. He has come; but we are waiting to be taken up. Is not that company a sample of what we should be? They are a lovely picture; so completely outside the world, in an upper room. Who knew them or cared anything about them? They were gathered, a poor, feeble, waiting, expecting people. They were distinctly marked as a little outside company. What had they to do with the world or its line of things? How truly a separated people they were, a poor, feeble band of men and women, bound together with one Object, together manifesting their weakness and dependence in giving themselves to prayer: and Mary, the mother of Jesus, of whom we have here the last mention in Scripture, is sharing with them their dependent attitude, and they have only one thing to do: to look and to wait and to pray. They were the very expression of dependence. That is the condition in which the power comes; the simple condition that is ever concurrent with it; hence it is found in this little company who are here shown to us, as tarrying according to the Lord’s own words, until they were endued with power from on high. Observe, too, they are occupied with Christ, as well as waiting for the promise of the Father; they expect its fulfilment, and prayerfully await the coming One -- the Holy Ghost. Should there not be in us a moral state corresponding to theirs? We are looking and waiting, not, it is true, for the Spirit; but for God’s Son from heaven. Would to God, that the simplicity, and separateens, and dependence that marked them in their day marked us in our day.

Alas! that it is not so we have to admit; but why not? Why should not the interests of Christ so fill our hearts as to detain us, and thus produce in us a moral likeness to these
waiting and watching saints? Is not the power for which they waited, but which we possess, able to thus form and fashion us? Surely He is, and it is not possible to exaggerate the power; it is true there is weakness on our part, failure, sorrowful failure: we cannot but own our weakness to-day; would to God we were bowed and broken-hearted about it. But there is no diminution of the power; that Holy Person is still here as truly as ever He was; and with the humbling confession of our low state, there is no ground for desponding, though every ground for humiliation. The same power that came down at the first, and wrought such marvelous effects in the church, is with us still in the same undiminished fulness, though we have sadly grieved and hindered Him in His operations. That brings in our responsibility. There is an immensity to own before God, along with the fact that this power is here, and effectual to work for the interests of Christ. In speaking thus we do not desire to cast saints in upon themselves; in being occupied with ourselves we shall find nothing to comfort, and no desire to cast saints in upon themselves; in being occupied with Christ by the energy of the Spirit, that it can be engrossed with His interests.

There is another point I would allude to, in connection with this Scripture; and that is, the extent of the testimony to which the disciples were called. “And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” “Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Observe how the Person and the power go together. We have here three things; the Person, the place, and the power. The Person where He is, the glorified Man at the right hand of God, and the power here, where He is not, but where we are; not only to make everything real to our souls, but to make us witnesses here -- to carry us out into those interests. “Ye shall be witnesses unto me.” Mark further the extent of the testimony in contrast with what had existed previously. It was closed up to one people, one nation; but now we have displayed the largeness of the grace that is brought out in all its grandeur and magnificence; it could no longer be bound within the narrow limits of Judaism, but must be world-wide. Jerusalem, the place where the greatest malignity and hatred to Christ had been shown, is to receive first the wondrous message of grace; Judea, the region of religion after the flesh, is to be blest by it; next, comes Samaria, the defiled region; and, lastly, to the uttermost parts of the earth, the sound goes out.

There is a word in Acts 26 which I would just refer to in connection with this subject, where the Lord appears to Paul, and says: “But rise and stand upon thy feet.” It was not like the case of Stephen who looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus; there it was a preparation for Stephen’s impending dissolution. Having rendered his martyr testimony, he was to pass from the earth to heaven.

Here the Lord appears to Paul to make him both a “minister and a witness” in the very scene where He had been rejected. May we all take in what our brother has said about servants being ensamples. We are all servants, though not all ministers. Paul was to be both a minister and a witness. “Witness” is a larger and a wider term than “minister.” A minister is one who dispenses what God gives him; a witness is one who bears testimony in his own person, who has to go through an opposing scene, tried on every side, baffled, tested, if by any means some loophole can be found, to spoil the integrity of his witness. And there is one thing which should be particularly marked in connection with this call to Paul, and that is, his testimony and ministry were to partake specially of the character of the place from whence “the power” and commission came; it was to be, in one word, *heavenly*. “Taking thee out from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee.” It should not be “delivering,” but “taking thee out.” The translation as it stands does not give at all the true force of the words of the blessed Lord.

In Paul we have a man who is made the special object of God’s grace, and also of the power of the Holy Ghost; and the Lord says -- I am about to separate you to Myself from everything on earth. We have, I believe, in this setting apart of Paul, a forecast of the church. The church was to be altogether distinct and apart from all that was earthly and had its origin here -- neither Jew nor Gentile; it was to have no connection whatever with nationality; but to be a peculiar, unique thing in this world. “Taking thee out from . . . unto whom I now send thee.” I separate you entirely -- I will fill you with the power and then send you back. That is the way in which the power acts, it separates the vessel entirely, and sends it back to what it is separated from, in all the power of that which has separated it. So Paul was taken out of everything in this scene, set entirely apart, connected with heaven; filled with this heavenly power, and sent back into the world, where he once had associations and links, and to which he once belonged, to be a testimony and witness to that glorified Man at the right hand of God; and to make known the gospel of that glory which had been brought so nigh to him.

The Lord said to him, You are to “open their eyes.” What could do this but heavenly light and power? Who but God could open the eyes of the blind? And yet He thus charges His appointed vessel; God is behind the vessel; and does not that raise a question of the state and condition of that vessel? Go, and open their eyes, and turn them from “darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” Here we
have the whole thing set forth in this wonderful commission from the Lord in glory, to a man whom glory arrested, broke down, emptied, and then filled.

The apostle was the vessel charged with this testimony by the Person, filled with the power, and he was to go forth with regard to all these new interests, as a minister and witness to the Gentiles, besides being a minister of the church, as we read: "Who 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 church, whereof I am made a minister," &c.

It is not only a great comfort to know that “the power” is here with us still, but that what power can do for us, and with us. At the same time it is right to remember what we can do; that is, we can hinder that power; we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and then there is not the effect, there is not the flowing out, and the wonderful accomplishment of God’s own purposes by the vessel. May the Lord give us to take it to heart, and thus lead us into all that divine sensitiveness with regard to everything in and about us, which would grieve and wound that blessed Comforter and Spirit of God.

May He give us so to live and walk in this power, that we may truly live for the interests and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, while we at the same time wait for Him.

From Occasional Lectures, (June, 1888) 3:80-91.

**The Holy Ghost and Faith**

Ephesians 3:14-21

One feels in reading verses like these that they convey so distinctly in the words of God Himself the great truths that He has Himself revealed in them, that one has a kind of consciousness that saying anything about them spoils them. I confess this morning I have that feeling; and yet there are two words that have a very large place here, and come out in such a peculiar and striking way; our beloved brother has already touched upon them: still I would in confidence cast myself on the Lord in trying to say a few words further about them.

The Holy Ghost and faith are the two great subjects which here occupy a large place in the apostle’s heart-longings and prayer for the saints. Both these are distinctly brought in here in his desire, his prayer, namely, that they might undergo a special action of the Spirit, and that “Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith.”

I would place before you a suggestion, beloved friends, namely, that the thought of "dwelling" is taken up here and carried on from the close of ch. 2. There does assuredly seem to be some similarity of thought with regard to dwelling, though brought out in a very different way. He speaks of the dwelling of God; the word “habitation” employed in Eph. 2:22 is the same word used when he prays that Christ might have a habitation, and thus dwell in their hearts by faith. If there be any connection or analogy (as I am disposed to think there is) between God’s habitation, which is collective in ch. 2, and another habitation in the heart, the seat of the affections of God’s people individually, the subject passes from the collective thought, down to the individual aspect. I must realize the fact individually. He speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart by faith; he has the personality of individuals in his mind, though not of course excluding the corporate, because the ultimate effect is to “comprehend with all saints the length and breadth, depth and height.” Thus you have all aspects brought together here in a very remarkable way.

Eph. 3 is, we know, the wonderful parenthesis of the New Testament, and where the mystery, that wonderful, unique reality, is unfolded; then it is he falls as it were upon his knees, and supplicates for these wonderful things to which I would call your attention for a moment.

Beloved friends, when we speak to one another, as surely we ought to do, of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, it is an amazing theme! There is something surpassingly blessed in the very expression of it, the very thought of it, that Christ who dwells on high, that blessed One who is in glory, the exalted Man at God’s right hand -- think of Him having a home in a poor heart like yours and mine in this world. The very thought of it must cause to spring up in our souls real, divine, spiritual longings.

This leads me to the point that is pressing upon my heart. In order that this might be true to us, that we might know it, there is a special action, or ministry if you please, of His Spirit spoken of here, in the inner man (v. 16), “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” That is the thing that has such an immensity in it for the apostle. He prays for each that they might be the subject of this strengthening of the Spirit deep down within in the inner man, for that is, I believe, the force of the word in the original; it is not merely an illuminating process by which the understanding gets the right color of things from God, though there must be that without doubt, but this is an internal action of God the Holy Ghost, what He is pleased to call here, a strengthening process of power according to the riches of His glory by His Spirit in the inner man. That must take place as the preparing of the ground of the heart as it were for this precious entering into it of Christ to dwell; this strengthening is in order that Christ may domicile in the heart. There must be room made there by God the Holy Ghost, that He may plant this plant of renown as it were deep down in our hearts. This is a point of great moment for us all. How often is it not true that with right desires, true desires, and so forth, yet there is no room for Him? What He desires is room, space for Himself. Now this is one of the most wonderful things in connection with this passage, this blessed internal action of His Spirit. It is, you will observe, the subjective side of things here, as to how the soul enters into communion, even as the prayer in ch. 1 is the objective side: there we see the exalted Man set above all principality and power, and might, and dominion; the apostle prays that the eyes of their heart might be opened to know the hope of their calling. Here his prayer is all in relation to communion. Eph. 1 is the
accomplishment of counsels; ch. 3 is the soul’s intelligent communion, the apprehending the effects produced by the reality of Christ’s blessed presence -- His being in us thus; verily, it is an unlimited extent of blessing. Thus it is a question of soul apprehension. It is not strengthened with all might in the head, or in the mere intelligence, but oh, how much there is implied in these words, “into the inner man.” Let us think of the practical inward power by the Holy Ghost set forth in them. We need this strengthening operation of His Spirit, that Christ may have His home in our hearts by faith. It is indeed here a question of actual state, of the affections having Christ enthroned in them, and thus being, as is said, rooted and grounded in love, we may be thoroughly able (εξισιωσητε) to know that which is indeed measureless. How blessed, beloved brethren, the infinity into which we are thus brought; but how much more blessed is that set forth in these precious words, “and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.”

Let me now call your attention to the purport and object of this strengthening. It is that Christ may enter and dwell. The tense is definite, and implies, I judge, an act of entrance and permanent abiding, that Christ might dwell, that He might have, not a temporary resting-place, but a fixed habitation.

I was thinking just now of a passage by way of contrast. In Jer. 14:8, which we may take morally, we read, “O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble”; assuredly we may apply to ourselves in our feebleness such words, at least in a moral way. If Jehovah was that to Israel, surely Jesus is all that and more beside to us. “Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?” I take this wonderful verse in Ephesians, in all its sublime and blessed contrast to that. It is not a wayfaring man, not a stranger, “who turns aside to tarry for a night,” blessed as that may be, but that Christ may definitely enter and have an abiding place, a fixed home, take up His residence fixedly and definitely in the heart.

Oh, beloved brethren, what a wonderful reality to our souls! What a wonderful moment to Him! What a wonderful moment for us! Now let us note this well, that the heart does not rest itself upon the preparatory process, if I may so say, which, I suppose, would occupy it more or less with itself, but when the end of that process is reached, even the mighty power of the Spirit having made room for Christ, so that He should have His fixed abode in the heart, then there is rest abidingly, then you forget all your surroundings. The guest that has come in has all the space. He dwells in the heart by faith. It reminds me of the widow in the days of Elijah, who, out of poverty, was elevated into influence when she had the prophet dwelling in her house; all her poverty, all her anxiety and distress were forgotten in the presence of the new guest that filled her home!

It is very blessed to see how the Spirit of God sets nothing before the heart but Christ. The true ministry of the Holy Ghost is the ministry of Christ; He is filling your soul with Christ. You will get the power, but the power is so intimately connected with the Object that it sets that before your heart and mind. It is all Christ; whether it is Christ as He was, as we have seen in John 14, or Christ in heaven, as in ch. 15, it is the One who comes from Him who only knows Him as He is in heaven. The twelve bore witness of Him on earth, but who can tell of Him in heaven? Only the One who came from heaven, the heavenly Comforter who came from Him on high, He alone can set Christ as He is in heaven, before us. Let me ask, how much are we the subjects of this ministry? Whether I find it in witness and testimony, or in unfolding the glories of Christ, it is always the glories of Him who is the object that the Spirit opens out and sets before the soul. If we know Him in heaven, nothing less than this can meet our hearts.

I would now call your attention to what I may term the instrumentality. The Holy Ghost is the divine Operator, faith is the instrument; hence it is said, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Now, beloved friends, it is of all moment to remember that the condition of the soul must answer to the place into which it has been brought. We know that Christ is in us and we in Him, but is it possible that we can be satisfied without the consciousness of enjoying Him? The instrument then is “by faith,” so that we have the power and energy of the Spirit, and we also have the means through which all is effected.

Let us now look at the consequence, the effect. “In order that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, and depth and height.” It is wonderful where the corporate was, so to speak, the leading and ruling subject, how entirely the apostle was individual in his dealings with the saints. Though he was the one who brought out what was corporate, he was ever thoughtful of the individuals who compose it. It is striking how the personality of individuals is here set forth. It is the Person in the heart. It is not the Spirit, as an object, dwelling in the heart; He dwells as power in the body. We want the power in our bodies; we want the Object in our hearts; the heart is the seat of the affections, the center of the whole being -- of the man. Christ, supreme and enthroned there, secures all for Himself. What a different kind of people we would be if Christ were only there! What a different sort of testimony! What a different character of path! What a different manifestation of Christ, if that blessed One was only enshrined in the power of the Spirit in our hearts’ affections.

Then observe how he brings in the corporate. You are blessed as an individual, but it is that you may be able to comprehend with all saints. It is wonderful how the ministry of the Spirit takes this turn, energizes with this in view, even to comprehend with all saints, the length and breadth, and depth and height, and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ in order that ye “might be filled unto all the fulness of God.”

The Lord grant it unto each of us for His name sake!

From Occasional Lectures, (May 1890) 3:17-25
Listening, Beholding, Following

The first thing needful, in order to walk with God, is to have the conscience perfectly at rest; the blood of Christ alone can secure this to us. If the conscience is not at rest, having no sense of being so perfectly purged that it is fit for the presence of God, there is no liberty in respect to it; and all things are regarded in the light of its felt need, and, as yet, unsatisfied demands. A conscience enlightened by the word of life will not rest, and cannot rest, short of full and uncondemning quietness in the presence of God, where He dwells. How blessedly perfect, then, must that work be, which, on the one hand, has so perfectly glorified God, down to the very lowest depths of humiliation and judgment, where the eternal Son of the Father, who humbled Himself to become a man, went and lay for us, and, on the other hand, so Divinely and completely settled the question of sin, in its guilt and power, as regards our consciences, that the believer in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, is both relieved and delivered in regard to his conscience; and blessed up to the full height of that glory where Christ is, in whose once marred, but most blessed face, the whole glory of God now shines.

My reader, have you got such a conscience before God? -- until you have, it is vain to speak of other things.

Allow me to show you, as far as I am able, and with God’s help, how this blessed redemption-work of the Lord Jesus thus acts upon the conscience. As born of the first Adam, every man by nature is lost and guilty; the first, or “lost,” is common to all men alike as born into this world. The other, “guilty,” relates to conduct or acts; and hence, each man has his own guilt, or sins, to account for to God. Now, this twofold pressure on the conscience, is blessedly met by the death of Christ. Scripture declares that “the worshiper once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Heb. 10:2). Observe carefully the expression, “conscience of sins”: what does it mean? Why, simply, that there is nothing between me and God; that God has no controversy with me in respect of sins; they are, for me, completely put away, and my conscience is perfectly purged. Now, mark, consciousness of sin, which means that I know I have an evil nature in me, is a different thing altogether from “no more conscience of sins.” Knowing that I have an evil nature in me, need not, and ought not to give me a bad conscience. Yielding to that evil nature, indulging it, or giving way to it, will surely soil my conscience, and make it bad practically, so that I cannot stand against the wiles of the devil.

But I can well suppose some one of my readers, to whom all this is quite new, (and it is for such I write), earnestly asking this question, “How can I ever get that liberty from this evil nature, which I am conscious is in me, and under the dominion of which, I fear, I really am at this moment?” Well, there are few questions more important; and if the answer is not known in the soul, its history is the monotonous circle of self, self, self: the blessed fact is, that, not only are the sins of the believer all put away, that his conscience may be perfectly purged, so that there should be nothing between him and God; but his old man, i.e., his evil nature, has been crucified with Christ on the cross; and God does not regard the believer now as in that nature at all, but in Christ risen from the dead, in whose death that old man was judged and condemned -- “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). “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” (Rom. 8:3).

Now I quite admit there is a difference in the way in which these truths reach the conscience, and I will endeavor to point it out here.

With respect to the first, namely the question of my sins, believing on the Son of God, I have the testimony of God, in the word, to my conscience, that all my sins are forgiven, never to be remembered any more. This is not, in any sense, feeling or experience. No doubt such will flow from it, and the more so in proportion as faith is simple; but in no sense do I believe because I experience or feel it; but, on the contrary, I feel it as I believe it. The pillars of my faith are the atoning death of the Son of God on the one side; and the blessed witness of the Holy Ghost on the other. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:15, 17).

There are three great objects on which the eye of faith rests.

- 1st. The cross, and the garden with its new sepulcher, hewn out of the rock, wherein the blessed One was laid, and out of
which He was raised and glorified.

- 2nd. The Father’s throne in the heavens, on which He who bore my sins, is now seated -- soon to be on His own throne.
- 3rd. The blessed witness of the Holy Ghost, the record, the testimony of the living God, which endureth for ever.

With regard to the other truth, viz., how we are delivered from the dominion of sin, experience has every place, i.e., it has to be learned by experience; and this process leads to discovering these three things: --

- 1st. That in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing.
- 2nd. That there is in us a new nature as well as (yet quite distinct from) the old.
- 3rd. That, notwithstanding this, the old is too strong for us, and deliverance from it is looked for outside of self altogether, and from another: this issues in, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”; it is the song of the prisoner bird, now liberated -- it is its first note as it flies; it is not its highest, nor its every note; it is the starting-post of the soul, not its goal or prize. Perhaps many souls have recently found this new liberty and life -- if so, the Lord be praised; but do not, dear reader, allow yourself to suppose for a moment, that it is anything more than the normal state of a Christian. It is not, I suppose, to be wondered at, that those who considered it a necessary thing to be tied and bound with the chain of their sins, for so many years, should regard their newly found liberty (if they have found it) as something wonderfully beyond what any one else had ever known, -- and the highest and greatest good.

There is one further point, and when I have touched on it, I feel I shall have cleared the way for my subject.

Have you ever looked at two scriptures, to which I shall now allude? viz., {first} Rom. 6:9-11, “Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now what does that mean? Why, simply this, that faith accepts this wondrous fact, that our old man is crucified with Christ, and the believer accordingly recognizes himself to be dead -- the Lord give us thus simply to keep in the silence of death, sin, that was in him. Oh, how one’s soul ought to adore in the presence of such wondrous liberty and power, secured through the precious death of Him who was God over all blessed for evermore. This, then, is the realization of faith, as the other is the recognition of faith. The Lord give us to be established in these times that we may be free to listen.

Listening

That we may listen to His voice we must be in possession of both liberty and rest. If you have not repose, you cannot give him an audience. I do not mean to deny for a moment that there is a previous exercise connected with the silencing of nature, the fading of other sounds which were wont to fill the ear of the soul; but this is the dying of what intrudes, in order that the disengaged ear may be turned without distraction to Him instead of a morbid heart that wastes a weary, restless life away by feeding on itself.

There is a repose in one who listens well, that is very blessed to witness -- there was something of it at least in Mary, when she sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word. Her very attitude was restful; she sat, and heard.

I do not deny the activity of life, either in its earnestness to obtain, or its readiness to surrender; but I contend it ought to be restful activity -- an activity which is kept alive and sustained by an object outside itself.

“As ground, when parched with summer heat,
Gladly drinks in the welcome shower;
So would we, listening at His feet,
Receive His words, and feel His power.”

I shall here note one or two results of listening in this spirit.

First, there is abstractedness of soul. Other sounds which otherwise might influence, now fail to interest. The ear is turned to catch every note of the voice of the Charmer; and, oh, what a voice that is! His enemies, even, declared that never man spake like Him.

The bride (when the day of union had not as yet dawned and whose affection is restless) is spell-bound as she listens in the twilight, and announces with rapture “the voice of my beloved” . . . “my beloved spake” -- her whole soul turns to hear what the bridegroom of her heart has to say.

Next to abstraction is absorption, entire occupation of soul; the ear, not only bent to hear, but filled with the sound of His voice; and that, too, not as one who is apart from me, but One to Whom I am united.

‘Tis His voice that chains my heart;
‘Tis His hand that draws apart;
‘Tis the music that I hear.
Rivets, presses me more near;
Every other sound has gone;
‘Float I down the stream alone:
All the universe above,
Like a mirror for His love.”

Beholding

The eye of the soul is exercised as well as the ear: the voice of the object delights and engages the ear; the Person Himself delights the eye, the vision of the soul. It is a wonderful thing to know that the heavens are opened to the faith of a believer now, and Jesus in glory {is} pointed out by the indwelling Holy Ghost to the one who looks up with steadfast gaze. Oh, it is everything to have the eye on the object. What distinguishes Christianity from what went before it is an object outside of us,
and power in us: Jesus in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost, Who dwells in us.

If the eye of the soul is turned in, the object is not seen. Failure will necessitate this, but self-judgment will clear the way out of it; so that the object may again fill the eye: self-judgment will hinder self-occupation, and promote earnestness and purpose of heart. Self-judgment is not an act, once for all performed, but a continuous habit of soul. Oh, what a blessed sight for faith, that transcendent Person, that glorified Man, that mighty Savior! Well may we pray,

“Oh fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee.”

Let me again impress upon you the fact that we do not behold the Savior in glory as apart from Him, but as those who are united to Him, one with Him. How very blessed to know I am one with my object. I shall only touch upon one or two consequences of beholding.

First, as we behold we are transformed into the same image (2 Cor, 3:18); i.e. as we are occupied with Christ, where He is, we become like Him; the moral features of Him Who is our object are transferred to those who, by the Spirit, behold Him in glory. Stephen is a beautiful instance of this; he acted like Christ in the midst of the most trying circumstances, (see Acts 7).

Next, we find that the Object in glory forms the affections suited to Itself. Herein lies the difference between Christian affection and heart-longing, and that which is found in the Song of Songs; in the latter, the bride does not possess the profound repose and sweetness of affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known and fully appreciated. Previous to the day of union, the relationship sought for was the consequence of the state of the heart, but now that the day has dawned, the state of the heart, the affections, are the consequence of the relationship. The same is observable in the Psalms; yearning, panting after God, are all to be found there; and the earnestness might well put us to shame: but the relationship, as well as the object of faith, and the power to enjoy the one, and behold the other, are wanting. In the Song of Songs, the bride is not united to the bridegroom; and in the Psalms, the Remnant, whose experience is so blessedly depicted in various scenes and circumstances, is as yet outside of all that which will, ere long, crown their hopes, aspirations, and yearnings.

**Following**

The feet pursue the path marked out by His blessed footsteps, Who has gone before. For this divine energy is needed. The blessed apostle, who knew Christ in glory, heard His voice speak to him from glory, and had seen Him in glory, follows Him -- "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The mark denoted the spot, as it were, whither he pressed; the prize was that for which he ran. He did not think of his eye, or his feet. That on which his eye rested, and for which his feet pressed on, was everything to him: purpose of heart, earnestness, energy, there must be, as well as self-abnegation, every step of the course; diligence of soul and vigilance of heart too; -- but if Christ, seen in glory, and known in glory, does not form and maintain these in the heart, I know of no other motive or power. The Lord keep us hearing, and beholding, and following His own Son; that the tastes, suited to Christ, may be both formed and kept alive in us; and we ourselves, thus divinely strengthened to refuse everything of the first man, because we are so satisfied with the Second Man; and that we may show forth His virtues, and glories, and excellencies, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights (heavenly bodies) in the world, holding forth the Word of life.

**Under Fire**

*Luke 12:22-34*

There are two great principles here that are dealt with by the Lord in a two-fold way; and which will, I trust, be profitable to our souls to contemplate a little. I speak of what I believe few are strangers to, namely, care and fear -- two of the commonest influences that are at work to weigh down the hearts of the saints of God. You will find that the two are closely allied to each other; that is to say, whatever causes you anxiety is that concerning which you are likely to have the most fear; whatever it is that settles upon your heart, and becomes a pressure or a weight, this produces dread in connection with it. I do not speak of care about that which is wrong, but I speak of it in the largest possible sense. There is a care which it is right to have -- a godly, proper, prayerful concern, which, if we were devoid of, we should be simply like inanimate things.

I speak now of that which becomes so settled in the soul that it is between us and God; and there is a mighty difference between having God and my Father’s interest between me and legitimate anxieties, if I may so speak, and having these anxieties between me and Him.

I do not know anything more destructive of true, real, spiritual growth in the soul than having distracting care (μεριμνα) resting upon it. If I have God between me and them, then they only become fresh opportunities for dependence on God; fresh opportunities for me to lean on Him; new reasons for my turning to Him. It was somewhat in that sense that the Lord used that word, when He said, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

Trial is a thing that comes sooner or later to us all; in one sense we are never truly proved till we have been under fire. The Lord’s charge to His disciples was this: “Pray that ye enter not into temptation”; that is, when the moment of trial comes, let it be an occasion for you to turn to God, instead of turning away from Him. We know well that is the moment when hundreds have turned away from Him; it was the test that showed what was in them. It has been said that testing is the harvest-time of faith.” The moment the test comes, we shall reap the harvest of faith. This is the good of having God between us and lawful cares that would oppress us here. Do we each know what it is to have this for ourselves?

Verse 30. “And your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” Think of what that is! He says, Do not you trouble yourself; you do not need to let these things weigh down your heart. Oh what a resource! “Your Father knoweth.”
He knows it all from beginning to end.

And while I delight to own the fact that He knows all, that He is conscious of the need of His child, yet let me point out a danger. I sometimes think, in our anxiety to have our need met with the supply there is in God, we are making that need the measure -- I do not say of the supply -- but of the affections of His heart. There is a tendency in us to do so. Never let us forget this, that our Father God has a father’s heart; that He has the affections that are peculiar to Him as a father. He did not want servants, He did desire to have sons, it was His pleasure to have such; but I speak now of what is more intimate than sons -- of children; there is a distinction between the terms son and child. Just for a moment to illustrate it, you have doubtless heard of acts of benevolence; how the mighty of the earth, moved with compassion, have taken some poor, forlorn little creature, some little waif, and have brought it into their family; have educated it and given it all it was in their power to supply. But all the power and all the love that person had could never make it a child. Such an one might adopt him and make him a son, for that does not of necessity imply a birth-tie; but when we speak of children, we speak of that which John 1:12, 13, speaks of, and therefore it implies a much more intimate relationship to say that I am a child, than a son. We are both, blessed be God! and hence we can say, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God”; and also, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

Do you think God acts the part of a patron to us? Never; it might suit us, but it would not suit Him. What God does is this, He has children born of Him, in His own family, with the relationship and position of children given them by Himself, and towards whom He delights to do a Father’s part.

Whilst I fully own how graciously He knows and meets all our need, yet I remember that there are motives and springs in Him apart from every question of our need, but of which our need becomes the occasion of display.

It is amazing how few there are who walk in the knowledge of this relationship. I find there are comparatively few who live in the enjoyment of what God has brought them into. What a wonderful place it is! And yet we actually see this love for me? It is the Lord's good pleasure to do a father's part to you, and to give you the kingdom; and the consciousness of that takes away the fear. So far this affects us in that which is negative; but there is a positive side as well. He says (v. 33), “sell that ye have.” He means, Let things here go. Beloved friends, are we up to that? Many would be glad to say, “Thank God, I need not have any fear”; but are you willing to let things go? What I mean is simply this, that the sense of the goodness of His nature, that He, in suiting those feelings of His, so gratifies His own heart that I want no more, and so I can afford to let things go.

But if we were to lose everything? Well, we would have the less to burden us. There is not a thing on this earth that does not entail trouble. Even the possession of lawful things brings trouble, that is the character of all here. Remember, I am not speaking of things which are wrong in themselves, but of what is perfectly lawful. Take, for instance, the God-given relationships of life, as that of father, mother, husband, wife, sister, brother, child. All we can say is, they are God-given relationships, and the man that despises them, despises that which is of God.

But look, for instance, at a mother and her child. You see how she loves it, nurtures, cares for it; but is there any fear in her heart about it? Is she not afraid she may lose it, that it will die? The best thing we can see in this world, there is the moth and the thief to seize upon it. There is death, the thief that enters into every house, and no bars can keep him out. Well, if we have not any of these things, we have the less to promote anxiety and fear.

Or to come down to what is a great deal lower than these -- earthly possessions, the same thing holds good. Suppose you were to enlarge the circle of these blessings, to widen the area; would you not only have a wider target for death to shoot at? How wonderful to have something that death cannot touch, something beyond his dart!

First of all, what is your treasure? I believe with all of us, there is a great deal too much tendency to make Christ the
servant of our need. I know He is that. I know He is the willing servant of our need; but too many are satisfied with that, and He is not the treasure of their heart. The question is, where is your treasure? For where that is, there will your heart be also; it is that which must control all the affections.

I feel we are all glad to have heaven as a sort of relief from the storms and trials of the way, but, alas, how little we know of it as our home, the home of our hearts now?

We know it as a shelter from the things that distress us here; and when everything else is gone, then we turn our thoughts there. And that blessed One is ready to receive us, even though we value Him only as a shelter from the storm. He never refuses any who come to Him. But He desires that the affections of our hearts be set on Himself.

He will not deny us, though we only come when everything has failed here. But it is another thing to say, “Whither thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge . . . where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” There is an attractiveness about the person of Christ for the heart, that can lead it above everything, so that even when things are bright around us, we can say there is a brighter thing still that detains all our affections: and this would flow from it -- in place of being visitors there, and dwellers here, we should be visitors here, and dwellers there.

You can never know what it is to be for God, unless you know what it is to be from Him.

The Lord give us to be able to say, I am of God, I am from Him, and now I desire to be for Him.

Verse 36. Here is the second aspect of preparedness of heart; this refers to Christ’s coming. There is the sense of His absence: I do not think any of us feel the absence of Christ as an affliction to our hearts. I may feel the terrible nature of the world through which we are passing, but do I feel that He is absent? I know He is here in one sense, that is true; but I am not speaking of that now, but of the sense that He is not here, and that it is only His presence that can fill up the void His absence creates. And this will lead us to watch and wait; to watch for His coming every moment. Is there not a heartless deficiency about us in this respect?

“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for your lord.” This is the proper demeanor of the Christian; so that the world might read in our very ways that we are strangers here -- waiting for our absent Lord. The world does not understand this; it cannot comprehend doctrines; but the world can understand whether the people who hold these doctrines practice them or not.

Has the world seen this in us? I fear that we have given a poor testimony to it. I fear that the church of God has not backed up as it were the gospel as it ought. The gospel in its entirety is as clear and distinct as can possibly be; but here are people who profess to have believed it and own it; and yet there is not the practical testimony which ought to flow from it.

It is a solemn thing to think that the poor world, that lies in the arms of the wicked one, can turn round and say, I hear all this that you tell us; but I do not see it carried out in practice; in other words, I do not see any who look like men “waiting for their Lord.”

The Lord give us exercised consciences and hearts; may His own word find such a place in our souls, that we may arise and shake ourselves from the dust and soiling influences of the age, to meet and welcome Him who saith, “Surely, I come quickly.”

** Note: This article appeared as “Cares and Fears” in Occasional Helps, vol. 1, but in this article named “Under Fire,” the wording “Cares and Fears” was improved and therefore is substituted here.

Salvation, Liberty, Food and Safety

John 10

This beautiful Scripture brings before us, first, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; next His actions in grace. It is a great thing to know who He is, and what He is, who laid down His life for the sheep, and has put them for security in His hand. This, then, is what we learn in the commencement of John 10; Christ simply declares Himself here to be the true Messiah of Israel, the One who should come. He it was who entered by the door into the sheepfold -- that is, He came by Divine appointment and sanction to be the Shepherd of Israel, who were the people of God’s pasture, and the shepherd of His hand. He did not climb up some other way, as all the false shepherds did; they were at best but thieves and robbers, claiming unlawfully that to which they had no right. Not so Christ. He came in by the door, submitting to every rule and ordinance appointed by the owner of the flock -- the Jehovah of Israel. Beloved reader, how blessed to think of Him, the eternal Son of God as He was, yet He comes down and humbles Himself to become a man, and as a man submits Himself perfectly! But Israel would not have Him; they slighted, despised, and rejected Him. So He leaves. He goes outside the fold of Israel, the enclosure which was peculiar to them. This is what is meant by, “He goeth before them” -- as rejected and despised of His own people, He Himself goes first, and then it is said, He puts forth His own sheep, and they follow Him, for they know His voice. This was exactly the case of the blind man in the 9th chapter, who was cast out, and had been found by Jesus. What a blessed Shepherd by whom to be led and fed! How good to be under His care, outside all men’s religion and the whole array of those ordinances which belonged to Israel!

Having thus set Himself forth in this way -- His person the only ground of connection with God -- He then opens out most blessedly what it is that replaces the old Jewish thing, Himself the foundation and accomplisher of it.

First -- There is salvation. “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” -- He now presents Himself as the door. He, and He alone, is the door; to enter in by that door was to be saved. He had laid down His life, costly and precious as it
was. His blood was shed. It was His own voluntary act to shed His blood, lay down His life; no one had taken it from Him. As to necessity, there was none on His side, save indeed that blessed love of His, which would remove every barrier to its full expression.

Again, think of Him in contrast with an hireling. The hour of danger or difficulty would find the latter thinking of himself; Jesus thinks of His sheep. If He then interposes, if He lays down His life, sheds His blood, the first thing that meets us at the door is, salvation. “By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

Again, there is also liberty. “He shall go in and out.” Slavery and bondage is the birthright of every child of Adam. He is born into the world a lost slave. The moment he has to do with Christ, he is met with salvation and liberty -- he is liberated, he is set free; and there is also food -- “shall find pasture.” Oh for ability to describe the richness of the food! Saved, liberated, brought into a region where want is unknown -- “I shall not want.” Not only this, but filled, satisfied; and hence it is, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” And observe, it is, “if any man enter in.” It is not only now the children of Abraham, the nation of Israel; the door of grace in Himself is wide open to all. Will you say, reader, if you know what it is to be blessed in this way under this gracious Shepherd Lord? Have you had to do with Him? It must be with Him; for it is, “by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Oh, what a contrast to all our purely natural thoughts of God and His Christ! What a contrast to all that was to be found in the law or ordinances! Neither the one nor the other could meet the first need to a poor outcast, either of Jew or Gentile. The law required, not saved -- the law brought in death, not life -- but “By Me, if any man enter in he shall be saved.”

Or, what a contrast to all our purely natural thoughts of God and His Christ! What a contrast to all that was to be found in the law or ordinances! Neither the one nor the other could meet the first need to a poor outcast, either of Jew or Gentile. The law required, not saved -- the law brought in death, not life -- but “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

There is something very remarkable in the place in which we find these well-known verses, and there is a great contrast between what the blessed Lord proposes to the soul in them and His own circumstances at that moment. Indeed it is this, I feel certain, that clothes them with the beauty that surrounds them. The Lord called around Himself His twelve disciples, and instructed them in view of all that lay before them in their path. This occupies ch. 10. As soon as He had finished, He Himself departed to teach and preach, for He was, while on earth, not only the faithful servant of Jehovah, but the unwearied servant of men, ministering to all the needy around Him.

“Rest . . . Rest”
Matt. 11:28-30

John the Baptist, Christ’s messenger, who was in prison, heard of His works; and, forgetting that it was not the day of Christ’s power as yet, but the day of His grace, he allows a doubt to cross his heart. Can this be the Messiah of Israel after all? “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” The Lord, in sending His answer, refers John to the works, which were those which only the Messiah could do; but it must have been a grief to the heart of Christ to find the confidence of His forerunner and messenger thus shaken.

Next, the state of the nation of Israel, His own people, passed before His heart and grieved Him. He compares them to “children sitting in the market, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, ‘We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.’” Israel would not have the ministry of either John the Baptist or Christ -- they cast the one into prison, and in the end they crucified Christ. John the Baptist came and preached law, and they refused him; Christ came and preached grace, and they cast Him out. What a picture of the heart of man!

Then there were places on earth which witnessed Christ’s mighty works -- places where His glory shone out in a remarkable way -- Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum. His thoughts turn with sadness to such, as He announces the woe which rests on abused and despised privilege; the heaven-exalted Capernaum should become the hell-doomed city. Reader, I entreat you to ponder such deeply solemn words as these, uttered by the sorrowing Savior, in regard to slighted opportunities and despised long-suffering. Never was there a period like this in the history of Christ as a man on earth, when
His labor seemed so in vain -- doubted by John, refused by Israel, despised in the scenes of His mightiest works. Yet at this moment, it is, He rises in the perfection of a man whose meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and He says, “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. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” And then it is, having let us, as it were, into the secret of His resources, He comes out with His returns, in the well-known precious words which have fallen as healing balm upon many a troubled heart since, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.” He Himself stands here as the only One in whom there is a place for the sole of the foot to rest on; and, looking out over all time since, and poor breaking hearts in it, He says, “Come to me.” The invitation is world-wide; those to whom it is addressed are found everywhere -- “Ye that labor and are heavy laden.” He knew what that was, and He alone could meet it. Reader, does it not suit you? You cannot deny it -- however you may despise or refuse, you cannot say it does not suit you. I would here seek to meet one who says, “Well, what you say is very true; but I am greatly troubled by another little word of Christ which I would here meet you? He who spoke those words knew what man was, what the world was, what the most privileged were. He knew that in a scene in which God was not, where His name had been dishonored and His grace refused, there was weariness enough and burdens enough, but rest there was none. He Himself stands here as the only One in whom there is a place for the sole of the foot to rest on; and, looking out over all time since, and poor breaking hearts in it, He says, “Come to me.”

The second rest is a further and needed thing too. It is perfect man, are manifested by the blessed Lord in connection with the second rest, viz., submission and subjection. “I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” is perfect submission; “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” is perfect subjection. Observe this second rest is connected with taking Christ’s yoke and learning of Him; here the yoke is taken not for service but for rest.

It is, beloved reader, a question either of submission or self-will; where there is subjection to the Father’s will, there is a path of quietness and peace. Christ was meek and lowly in heart, satisfied to be in the lowest place at the will of His God; and nothing can possibly molest or overthrow one who is there. “We wonder at Thy lowly mind, And fain would like Thee be, And all our rest and pleasure find, In learning, Lord, of Thee.”

No! No!

John 6:37

It is said that the celebrated Bishop Butler was very uneasy when dying, and in moments of special uneasiness and restlessness, thus expressed himself: “Though I have tried to avoid sin and to please God to the utmost of my power, yet from being conscious of my constant weakness, I am afraid to die.” “My lord,” said his chaplain, “you forget that Jesus Christ is a Savior.” True, replied the Bishop, “but how shall I know that He is a Savior for me?” The chaplain replied, “It is written, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’” “True,” said the Bishop, “and I have read that Scripture a thousand times, but I never felt its full value till this moment. Stop there, for now I die happy.” It is blessed to see how Scripture bears testimony to the person of Christ, and the completeness of His work. Its testimony is to the Christ who is in the glory of God, having by His death settled the question of sin. It is a never-to-be-forgotten moment in the soul’s history, when for the first time the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ; from that same blessed face, once more marred when for the first time the glory of God is seen in the face of sin. It is a never-to-be-forgotten moment in the soul’s history, when for the first time the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ; from that same blessed face, once more marred than any man’s, and His form more than the sons of men, the whole glory of God shines! And I, a poor weak thing in myself, see it; and like to look at it, saying, “Let me see every ray of that glory, for it is in the face of Him who bore my sin upon the cross.”

**Note:** This article appeared under the title “No Wise Cast Out” in Help in Things Concerning Himself.

A New Well -- Springing up into Everlasting Life

A circumstance, which aptly illustrates the great truth of Christianity, happened not long since in a small village on the west coast of Scotland.

The sewerage of the place needed improvement and cleansing; and in the progress of the work one of the principal wells in the town, from which pure water had been supplied to families in the vicinity, became polluted by contact with the
sewer. As soon as the cause of the disaster was discovered, remedial measures were set a-going, in the hope of restoring the now foul spring to its original purity. Every effort which skill and ingenuity could suggest was taken into consideration but to no purpose. It was thought possible to clean and wash out the old well as far as it could be seen, but this was abandoned as useless. It was next suggested that if the old building of the well, sand, stones, &c., were removed and a new well built instead thereof, the desired object would be attained. Many conflicting opinions prevailed as to the possibility of success. Should this plan be put into execution? Some were for, others against; but at last it was resolved to call in a man whose occupation had been that of a constructor of wells, and whose experience justified the expectation that his counsel would lead to a proper decision. Nor did he disappoint this hope, for when called and questioned, his reply was, unequivocally, “It is not possible to procure pure and sweet water from a spring polluted as this is by sewerage, either by cleansing it out as far as you can see, or by removing the old building and constructing a new one. You must build a new well, with new stones, new sand, and in an entirely new place.

“I happened to walk in as these facts were being told, and when I heard them, it struck me what a picture of Christianity that is! and it also struck me how little known or understood Christianity is! And now, do you not see, dear reader, how that is! and it also struck me how little known or understood Christianity is! And now, do you not see, dear reader, how that is! and it also struck me how little known or understood Christianity is! And now, do you not see, dear reader, how that is!

May the Lord the Spirit open hearts to see the great salvation of God, how He has settled the question of the old well with its corrupt spring, and what a magnificent well He has opened in His Son risen from the dead, the second man, the last Adam, who has ended in His death the first man, and is now risen head of the New Creation!

**Note: This article appeared in *Helps in Things Concerning Himself* under the title “Old Things are Passed Away.”**

**Conviction and Confidence**

*Lev. 13:38-46; 14:1-7*

Nothing can be more wonderful than that a poor sinner should be able to confide in perfect peace, here on earth, in the midst of his leprosy and misery, in the very One who is on the throne of God in the heavens. Wondrous grace, that such a One up there in glory should have a heart full of pity for guilty, daring rebels! Just conceive, if possible, for a moment, what such tidings would be to a poor, friendless, hopeless, homeless rebel, whose sins and sorrows had reached to such a height that nothing but despair was left; for him to hear that any one thinks of him, or cares for him, is good news so wonderful that he almost fears it is too good to be true. A Savior in glory, who died for rebels on the earth, are contrasts indeed, and yet such is the testimony of God at this moment — a testimony to be repeated wherever there is a sinner, a guilty, lost one, on the face of the whole earth.

In writing a little concerning the Scriptures above quoted, my object is to point out, as simply as I can, the *place* the Word of God has in *convicting* and *assuring* the soul. I greatly desire to press upon the conscience the all-important fact, that the discovery of our misery, or of the only One who has heart and power to meet us in it, are in no way consequent upon our feeling or sense, but upon the unchanging Word of the living God. I have heard the question asked, “Do you feel you are a sinner?” Yet I humbly submit it is not the first question. It would be felt, no doubt, if the testimony of God about man as a child of Adam were believed. We may be well assured that the testimony of God is as clear and distinct as can be. By nature man is a leper before God — without Christ, without hope, without God in the world; an unclean rebel, with a mind and will set against God. Hear His Word,

> There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become
unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10-18).

Nothing could be more decisive or convicting. It is the great antitype of the leper, who is convicted and shut out of the camp of Israel by the word of the priest. It was not a question of his feeling his leprosy; the question was, what the priest had said -- what was his word who knew the fatal plague spot? The leper in Israel, with rent clothes, his head bare, a covering upon his upper lip, crying “Unclean, unclean!” must go outside the camp; that is, he must take the position the priest of Israel by his word placed him in. What a solemn picture of the condition of man as a child of Adam now! God has shut every man’s mouth, has pronounced man unclean, unfit for his presence; but along with this (of which no adequate picture could be given), that same blessed God assures man that there are in Himself springs of compassion and mercy, of which He has the heart to make guilty, polluted, loathsome lepers, the object. This, God has announced to sinners, has demonstrated in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and bestows now wherever there is the faith that casts itself on Him. How wonderful to know that I have a Savior in glory! A Savior who came to earth and died for me, rose again from the dead, having, in death, closed my history as a leper before God; and because of who He was, as well as having righteousetly met all the claims of the throne of God, took His seat on high in glory, from whence He lets His voice be heard and His light seen, from whence all that I need comes, and to which glory it is the purpose of His heart to bring me. It is the word of God that convicts me of my condition, as seen and judged by Him in righteousness, and it is the same word that bids me take comfort, because He who shuts my mouth, if I may so say, opens His to tell me of the grace and mercy that is in Himself for me, as well as the full provision He has made through the agonies and the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, to take such as us out of the state in which, by nature, we are, at a distance from Him, and to bring us unto Himself. What a message to be put in trust with to poor man in this world, declaring to him in his leprosy and ruin, a love so wonderful, that it rests satisfied with nothing short of his complete deliverance from condemnation and death, and his full satisfaction in the place where God would have him, justified from all things, accepted in the Beloved, and united by the Holy Ghost to Christ in heaven. Oh! how wonderful this is, God’s own joy, accomplished in and through His own Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again, let me press it upon my reader, all this is on the testimony of God, borne in the word of God to man’s ruin and God’s love; the picture of the former being the leper in Israel placed outside the camp by the word of the priest.

I turn now to look at the second Scripture, and there we shall find the same in principle. The leper being cleansed is once again to be brought back; but how?

Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds, alive and clean, and cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water; as for the living bird he shall take it, and the cedar-wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water; and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field (vv. 4-7).

In the above verses, which describe the cleansing of the leper, we have a striking picture of the principle on which God now justifies the ungodly, namely, on the ground of the death of Christ, by which sin is condemned and righteousness established, and the resurrection of Christ, which proclaims God’s satisfaction and our justification.

The bird killed in an earthen vessel, over running water, is, in picture, Christ crucified, and the living bird let loose, Christ risen and glorified, and all this the result of that which was in God’s heart respecting poor sinners on earth, helpless and hopeless in their ruin. What a comfort to be able to show all this to poor sinners as God’s testimony, that the word which silences him on his side opens the door of hope on God’s side. Wonderful message! yet more wonderful messenger, He, the beloved Son, who came from heaven to make it all good in His death and resurrection for us.

One point more, and I close. We have seen, I trust, that it is God’s testimony to man’s ruin, not man’s feelings or thoughts about his ruin, that is the question; and that God has likewise given testimony to all that was in His heart in the gift, death, resurrection, and glory, of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. There is another point of testimony to which I would direct attention: how did the leper know he was cleansed? On the same authority as that which convicted him of leprosy. As at first he was pronounced unclean by the priest, so now being cleansed, he is “pronounced clean.” As at first, on the word of the priest, he took his place outside, so now, on the word of the priest, he takes his place inside; in both cases it was the word of the priest. How important, how blessed is this! Many a soul perplexes itself from want of simply taking God at His word, which is the true source and spring of all known enjoyment, as it is written, “The God of hope fill you with all joy, and peace in believing.” And on the other hand, many a soul is blinded and deceived, judging the state they are in by their own apprehension of it, or their own feeling about themselves; they consequently fail to see the complete ruin they are in, and the wonderful provision God has in perfect suitability to Himself made in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to meet them where they are.

Another point of great beauty is the fact, that from the same spot whence trouble came, comfort likewise comes; and this is seen constantly in scripture. If we look at Isa. 6 we find it -- the glory of Jehovah’s presence convicts Isaiah; the throne with all its holiness and majesty penetrates the depths of the prophet’s conscience, and he is as the leper in Israel; the light of the throne is too much for him, he is compelled to write the sentence of death on himself, and that he does so the following words sufficiently attest --

Woe is me, for 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.

It is very solemn to see that the presence of God and the Word of God have like power over the conscience and the heart. In the New Testament, viz., Heb. 4:12-13, both are spoken of as if one.

Now, observe, when the prophet’s trouble was, as it were, at its height; comfort is ministered to him from the very same place whence that which produced his unhappiness flowed:

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.

The rapidity with which the comfort flows is worthy of note, it is like His heart whose mission it was in person, and now by the Holy Ghost, “to bind up the broken-hearted.” It is like Him of whom it is said, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”

How very blessed it is to see that from this moment the prophet dates his commission; his ear was open when his heart was healed!

“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.”

It is a wondrous sight this; the heart healed, the ear opened, and the feet swift to run in Jehovah’s service -- “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast enlarged my heart.” Again, we shall find the very same thing in the New Testament; turn to Luke 5, and who can deny it was a leading moment in Peter’s history and life? What else can that moment be to any of us, in which the sense of what we are is present to us in His light who makes manifest the secrets of the heart? Such was this scene in Luke 5. The beloved Son had met Satan in the wilderness, and driven him away by the obedience and dependence of a perfect man, in ch. 4; and here, in ch. 5, He is as perfectly God on the lake of Gennesaret as He was perfectly man in the wilderness; by His power He commands the treasures of the deep into Peter’s net, and at the same moment commanded the light of His own glory to shine around Peter’s soul; and in His presence what could Peter say but “I am a sinful man, O Lord?” And mark it well, as in Isa. 6, so here in Luke 5, “Fear not,” comes from His lips whose glory produced that state which nothing but His “Fear not” could meet. Blessed, blessed Lord, perfect everywhere!

“Lord Jesus, to tell of Thy love, Our souls shall for ever delight; And sing of Thy glory above In praises by day and by night! Wherever we follow Thee Lord, Admiring, adoring, we see That love which was stronger than death Flow out without limit and free!”

And mark it well, how all is here forsaken and left to follow Him who that day won Peter’s heart for Himself, and though Peter grievously failed after this, and was restored again, yet a link was forged between him and the blessed Lord on the Lake of Gennesaret which nothing ever could break. May our hearts be sensible of His convicting power, that we only confide in Him. -- Amen.

Doing Truth

Matt. 15:10-28

In this beautiful Scripture the Lord unfolds to us in a striking way what is in the heart of man, in contrast with what is in His own heart. There is nothing but badness in the one, and nothing but goodness in the other.

Men in general, like the Pharisees here, are occupied about what is outside; the washing of hands before eating bread, the washing of cups, the traditions of the elders have the first place in their thoughts. With what amazing power must these words of the Lord Jesus have fallen on their ears:

Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies -- these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

What a picture of man’s heart! the seat of all wickedness and folly; the cage of every unclean bird; a filthy, polluted swamp, out of which issue the streams of sorrow and death! My reader, there is your heart! Have you owned it, bowed to it, submitted yourself to the judgment of God so expressed? so much so, that to you it is a comfort past description to turn away from yourself to Him -- that Blessed One, whose heart, full of goodness, is towards you, and whose word to you is -- “I cannot trust you; you may trust Me.” Have you? It is not a little remarkable that immediately after exposing the heart of man, the Lord left the place of boasted privilege for the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, which were outside the region of earthly blessing, and the people in covenant relationship with God. And here in the defiled place, as it were, He manifests the heart of God as fully as previously in the place of outward privilege He had exposed the heart of man. The boasted goodness of the land of Israel could not change the heart of man, and the known wretchedness and contempt connected with Tyre and Sidon could not take away from what was in the heart of God. A woman of Canaan, belonging to a cursed race, a descendant of Ham, in her distress cries after Him -- “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” He who was tenderness itself answers her not a word. What can it be? Is there no pity in Him?

His disciples, in the selfishness of their nature, say to Him -- “Send her away” -- i.e., “give her what she wants”; “she crieth after us”; she is a trouble to us; or, it is distressing to hear her. He who alone was the Servant of the various needs of men, was also Jehovah’s Servant; and as she without right claims from Him as Son of David, He replies -- “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

She will not give Him up, though. He is silent to her; and again she comes, worshiping Him, and saying, “Lord, help me!” What will He say to this? As Jehovah’s Servant, He will
not only own the rights of Jehovah, but will have all do likewise. Hence He replies, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread (i.e., what belongs to Israel) and to cast it to dogs” (i.e., to Gentiles). What will she say to this? Is she content to be blessed as a dog, as an unclean, outside one? She replies, “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” She is satisfied to be a dog, and she is satisfied to receive a crumb. He had it in His heart to bless her according to His heart. Is that not like Him? His best and nothing less is all that is in His heart for her. Gently and graciously, yet truly, did He lead her on, step by step, first away from false ground that she had taken in the wildness of her distress (for as Son of David she had no claim upon Him), and then He brings her on to the full acknowledgment that even a dog in the house of such a Master was not forgotten; and that to be such to Him, and to receive from such an one as Himself a crumb even, was all her poor heart longed for. Wonderful grace! Wonderful Lord in whom it was, producing in her, a needy descendent of Ham, the degraded one, such confidence, such confidence, such trust!

There are two points of great beauty here. First, observe how suitable it is to the heart of Jesus, as well as to the truth of God’s nature, that a needy one should be before Him, not only in the sense of need, but with the sense of having no claim upon Him. It is a wonderful moment for a poor heart when it stands before Jesus, in the full assurance that no one can meet it save Him, and yet with the equally full acknowledgment that it has no claim whatever on His mercy. Where this position is taken, there His eye discerns what He Himself designates as “great faith.” Now, in what consisted her faith? Was it some great feeling in her which found its solace in Him? Not for a moment; but it was the goodness in Him which created confidence in her. It is very blessed to see her in the light, with the expression of it in her heart and on her lips -- “Truth Lord.” She knew what it was to do truth, which is simply the acknowledgment of the conscience and the soul that there is nothing in us, and no reason why we should receive anything from God. Destitute and unclean, as well as without claim or title, was what she meant when she said “Truth Lord.” And this is faith: she had God’s opinion of Christ, and no opinion of herself. And observe how this faith of hers is met by Him whose perfect goodness caused it to spring up in her soul: it is faith: she had God’s opinion of Christ, and no opinion of herself, and that no hand but God’s could rend it. He declares that He does this is faith: she had God’s opinion of Christ, and no opinion of herself, and that no hand but God’s could rend it. He declares that He does.

These verses relate what took place when the Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost. The blessed Lord died, laid down the life which He had, and which none had title or power to take from Him. “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.” Such are His own blessed words. The moment that was done, results followed which nothing else could accomplish -- which all His own blessed and beautiful life, as God incarnate, could never have produced. But the giving up of His life, His surrendering Himself as a willing victim to death, as the just judgment of God due to sin, as well as yielded by the power of Satan, is followed by the veil of the temple being rent in twain from the top to the bottom, by the earth quaking, the rocks rending, the graves opening, and many bodies of the saints which slept coming forth out of the graves after his resurrection. Heaven, earth, and hell, felt a power they had never owned before.

The “Holy of Holies” was separated from the rest of the temple by a veil, made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen work; it signified the distance of man as a sinner from God, and set forth the impossibility on the part of God of having any intercourse with man in his sins. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest: God could not come out, and man could not go in. But now all is reversed. The veil was rent -- that veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, typifying the spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus. It must be rent before the full moral glory of God can come out, and before we can go in. The new and living way was consecrated for us “through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.”

It is most blessedly significant, too, the manner in which it was rent -- viz., “from the top to the bottom”; thus declaring that no hand but God’s could rend it. He declares that He does
not wish the distance, which up to this moment existed, any longer to continue; and not only so, but undertakes Himself to remove it, and in such a way as to display all the righteousness, holiness, truth, and love of His nature. The life of Jesus, beautiful, and perfect, and blessed, as it was, His services to man, His obedience to God, could never have rent the veil or opened the graves. If there were no Savior who died, whose blessed body was given, and whose blood was shed, God were still concealed behind that veil. Man, even at his best, was still at a distance, hell unconquered, and he that held the power of death still unsubdued. But, blessed be God, it is not so, now that Christ has died. All of God has come out, sin in its root has been judged, the way into the holiest has now been made manifest. The Christ who died is risen and glorified, and in His face shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Two facts of immense importance stand connected with the precious death of the Lord Jesus Christ -- first, everything on God’s side is manifested and declared; secondly, everything on man’s side is exposed and judged. By the rending of the veil not only is God set free to act in righteous love toward guilty rebels like us, but the affections of His nature, His heart, are disclosed in such a wondrous way, leaving us absolutely nothing to do in the presence of such favor but to adore and worship. Wonderful it is to think that there are no secrets in God’s heart now; the sorrows of the beloved Son have told the secrets of the Father’s bosom. Jesus, who was the only-begotten Son, ever in His bosom, declared Him, and never more truly than when God forsook Him, when His heart was broken by reproach, when He looked for some to take pity, and there was none, and for comforters, and found none. It is very blessed to see that on God’s side both His heart and the new place in which He would set us in His Christ, according to His heart, are both made known at the same time that everything on our side is exposed and judged. What tidings would this latter be to our hearts without the former? How could one ever face such a scene if the heart had not the knowledge of a home with Him who is the “brightness of eternal glory?” I am sure we are feeble in our apprehension of the terribleness of judgment, Divine judgment, as expressed in the cross of Christ; but (not to anticipate on that head) we are as feeble in apprehending the beauty of that Divine circle now thrown wide open to us, that spot, that unique region on God’s side, where not only all His secrets are divulged, but where His heart finds its own satisfaction in disclosing its treasures to us! The earliest secrets are divulged, but where His heart finds its own spot, that unique region on God’s side, where not only all His beauty of that Divine circle now thrown wide open to us, that place in which He would set us in His Christ, according to His heart, are permitted to enter, poor hearts like ours are entitled to be perfectly and always at home.

“All is perfectness above.”

Then, secondly, at the same time that all on God’s side is opened, all here on man’s side is both exposed and judged; the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves were opened: now it was that destruction and death felt the power of Him whose fame they had heard with their ears. If our hearts only entered a little more into the wonderful extent of this judgment, we should never desire to revert to anything so judged here, the emancipation would be wonderful to us. If we understood the cross better, the Lord’s Supper would be our continual attitude of soul; positive delight to connect ourselves with Him in His death, and remember Him in it, because through that death the circle of God’s festivities was opened to us, and because in His death the love of Jesus, as well as of His Father, was expressed to us. It would, moreover, fortify our hearts against crushing disappointment, for how could we expect anything but death here, if our hearts were in the continual remembrance of His precious death for us?

“Remember Thee and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me;
Yea while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.”

**Note:** This also appeared in *Helps in things Concerning Himself*, vol. 3.

### The Blood-Sprinkled Lintel

**Exod. 12:22, 23**

The Gospel is God’s own answer to the question He Himself has raised about man and his sin. None could raise the question, and none could answer the question but Himself; that answer is Christ, given by God freely in His love -- Christ lifted up upon the cross as a sacrifice for sin -- Christ raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, and Christ ascended into the heavens.

Now Ex. 12 speaks about a lamb, whose blood, shed and sprinkled upon the houses of the children of Israel, secured them when God passed in judgment through the land of Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ is the great substance of which the lamb of Ex. 12 was only the dim shadow. What a blessed, wonderful spring is imparted to the soul when this is believed, that the Lamb, whose blood must be shed as an atonement for sin, is the only begotten Son of God, provided, given, sent, by God into the world for this very purpose. As it is written, “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.” There is one point of great value and importance in Ex. 12 -- everything is done under the hand of God. He provides all, so to speak, and then assures by His Word; this is most blessed to apprehend. The security of an Israelite in that night consisted in his being in a house whose lintel was marked with the blood of the appointed lamb, previously shed in death; the sense of his security, or the known enjoyment of it, consisted
in his simply believing God’s testimony -- “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” I would say a little about the **security**. Nothing less than that mysterious mark on the lintel would suffice, and nothing more was required; the blood shed told of atonement made: “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). It was no question as to what an Israelite was, or what he felt; what God looked for as He passed through the land that night was the lintel sprinkled with the blood of the appointed lamb; wherever there was such before His eyes God was **satisfied**, and they were **secure**.

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” proclaimed both the one and the other. So is it now, the **security** consists in my having to do with Christ, who went down into death to put away sin; nothing less would meet our dreadful case than the blood-shedding of Christ. He bore the judgment in His own body on the cross -- He gave up His life -- in His death we can say, “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Every righteous claim of God has been met by the death of Christ; all that was contrary to God has been for the believer put away for ever. How **secure** is the soul in such an answer!

Now, in order to bring this out more clearly, allow me to put a case. We will suppose an Israelite, who has followed out, in every particular, the direction of God as to the lamb, and also as to the sprinkling of the blood upon the lintel; he retires into his house, and passes that terrible night in fear and anxiety. Whether he will be the next to fall under the judgment he knows not; if he could, he would go outside the door of his house, and satisfy himself by gazing on the blood. But this he cannot do, and follow out the direction of God, and so he passes a wretched night, comfortless and miserable. But I take another case, that of an Israelite who, equally with the former, has followed out the commands of God as to the lamb and its blood; he, having also sprinkled the lintel, retires, restful, quiet, happy, and assured -- the thought of judgment awakens no alarm in his breast. Which of the two is safest? The latter, do you say? If so, you make the **security** to consist in something else beside the blood being on the lintel. But do you not see that, because in both cases the blood was there, both were equally **safe**, equally **secure**? Both were not equally **happy**, both were not equally certain of their security. And why? Simply because both did not equally credit the testimony or word of God. The blood outside made both equally secure, but the testimony of God, carried inside and believed, was needed to make both equally assured -- when I say equally assured, I mean as far as any could be at that time. Thus I trust we have seen that testimony to our ruin as sinners is borne by the word of God equally with testimony to our safety, “if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead.”

**“O Death, Where is Thy Sting?”**

The following derives all its interest from the remarkable leading of God’s Spirit in bringing the writer and subject of this paper together a very few days before the Lord took the latter home to Himself. She was a child of sorrow and suffering, indeed; the mother of a family, all of whom had fallen under death’s hand, leaving herself and her partner a solitary couple. The weight of her sorrow pressed her down, and disease of a trying nature began to develop itself. Living now next door to her, and seeing the frequent visits of the medical attendant, and occasionally the clergyman of the parish, I felt a deep interest and a yearning anxiety, which they only know who have had it, as to her **true** state and condition. Did she know a Savior’s love? -- Was she looking to Him? -- Was the prospect before her dark or bright? were often-weighed questions in my mind; and many a time did I speak to the Lord about her, and find my only solace and comfort there; for I should say this pressure on my spirit about one of whom I had known nothing personally, and whom I had never seen, was **new** to me; for I am not an evangelist in the true sense of the word, but greatly desire to have a deeper interest in, and concern for, immortal souls.

Thus matters went on for weeks, until at last, on my return home one afternoon, I heard she was much worse, and that death was evidently very near. After looking to the Lord, I sat down and wrote a very few lines to her husband, asking after her, expressing my deep sympathy with him, and also the earnest hope that she knew the Savior, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; adding, that I myself, as a poor needy one, had known what it was to trust Him. I had occasion to make a call a little way from the house, and on my return found that she had meanwhile sent a message to me, requesting me to call and see her. I hastened to her bedside, and, as I took her hand, she said with great earnestness, “Ah, I have been longing for some weeks to see you, and now I feel so thankful the Lord has sent you to help me on my way.” As it was advanced in the evening, and she was very weak, I did not remain long with her. When leaving, she requested me to see her again next morning. I did so, and again the same evening, and so on, almost each day until she fell asleep.

From the first evening I saw her I found out that she was a soul awakened to a sense of her need of Christ, and His sufficiency for the deepest need. I have since found out that the gracious Lord wrought this in her in various ways, mostly, perhaps, through sorrow and family bereavement, of which she had no small share. I was in no wise instrumental in this; but I had the joy of seeing in her the power of God’s delivering grace in many ways, and the blessedness of His Word in quieting her **natural** fear of death. One little circumstance of this kind I may record. She expressed on one occasion to me her fear, in prospect of death -- not, she said most decidedly, as to her acceptance in any way, but she had a shrinking from death and the suffering of it. The nature of her disease, too, was very likely to lead to such suffering. I read her part of Josh. 3, calling her attention to the fact, that when the children of Israel were crossing Jordan, it was on the ark, not on the waters of the river, their eyes and thoughts were to be fixed. “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place and go after it.” As soon as I had finished, she said with great earnestness, “That ark is Christ.”

I said, “Thank God, it is so.” She never lost sight of that, and it comforted her many a time afterwards. The last time I was with her she had all her family around her bedside. It was the last time they saw her. She herself wished and arranged it
so. Her simple acknowledgment of perfect confidence in Christ, and rest in Him, was very sweet. And then she asked for the hymn –

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear.
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.”

And the earnest way in which she sang it, weak though she was, and exhausted, was very touching. This was my last visit to her. I called as usual next day, but she was unable to see me; and that evening, without the struggle she at first dreaded, peacefully and calmly she fell asleep, so quietly, so gently, that “they thought her dying when she slept, and sleeping when she died.”

It is the living power of the Word of God in quieting fear, and fixing, through the Holy Ghost, the eye of the soul on Jesus, that is so blessedly set forth in this case; and it is recorded to His praise and glory who went before His beloved people through the dark waters of death, measured them all Himself, taking every sting out of them, and leaving nothing behind save gain for them; thus enabling them to say -- “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

Perfected Forever
Hebrews 10:14

In the ninth chapter of this epistle is set forth, in the most complete argument, the manner in which sins are put away by the one offering of Jesus Christ; whereas in this chapter, the subject is, how this is applied to the conscience, so purging it, that no dread of God’s judging because of sins any longer remains. This is the meaning of “no more conscience of sins.” So full, perfect, and sufficient is Christ’s offering, that by Him all who believe are not only justified from all things, but are entitled to be within the Holiest, and to know it. Could anything be more wonderful or excellent? -- inside the veil, where of old only one man, of one tribe, of one nation, on one day of the year, could enter; there, too, not by sufferance, but by right and title, and suited for such a place, having a conscience so purged that it is fit for the presence of God. I may just observe in passing, that Hebrews shows the two-fold position of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As regards heaven, he is, as in this chapter, within the Holiest now; as regards this world, his place is outside the camp, as in ch. 13. On this latter I do not now enlarge; it does not come within my present purpose.

Let us look a little at the foundation of this great salvation. First, as we have it in v. 10, “By the which will we are sanctified.” God willed not, and had no pleasure in the death of a sinner, nor had He pleasure in the sacrifices offered by the law, which could never make the worshiper perfect. In these repeated sacrifices there was a remembrance of sin every year: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could 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 to do Thy will, O God.” Thus we are let into the secrets that passed between the Father and the Son in the council chamber of eternity before the foundation of the world. It was the will of God, and the Son sets Himsel to do that will, “A body hast Thou prepared Me.” Oh, how different from man’s natural thoughts of God! How eclipsed, even the very best thoughts about His character and love! He willed it, and what His heart conceived, the Son of his love will undertake to accomplish. Will you, beloved reader, say what are your thoughts about God? Whoever could have stooped so low in a love that removed out of the way all that hindered its expression, and that too at the cost of all that was dear to itself! Such, then, was His will, which is the great source and spring of this wonderful display of grace.

Second, we have the person and work by which it has been accomplished. The person, the Lord Jesus, the Eternal Son of the Father, He it was who took a body prepared for Him by God, and in it glorified Him, as well as established a righteous ground upon which God can be “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” “Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” “I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” He was the One who shed His blood. The righteousness of God demanded the blood of such a victim, so perfect and so blessed. Sin could be put away by nothing less; and for the purging of the conscience there was nothing wanted more. He it was who, by the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God (and only He could); and now that very same righteousness of God raises Him up from the dead, from the very death by which He glorified God, and sets Him in glory, and likewise rends the veil from the top to the bottom. Could anything be more wonderful? “This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down (that is, sat down in perpetuity) on the right hand of God . . . for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” This one offering accomplished what the blood of bulls and of goats, shed from the beginning of the world, could never do. This one offering needed no repetition, so there remaineth no more offering for sin.

Lastly, we have the way by which it is known and enjoyed, in those words -- “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Oh, how blessed to have the knowledge and enjoyment of this! Could there be anything equal to the blessed certainty in the soul, founded on God’s will, Christ’s offering, and the Holy Ghost’s testimony? The Holy Ghost could not have come down until Jesus was glorified; but Christ being glorified out of the very judgment by which He for ever put away sin, the Holy Ghost comes down. Wherever I look I see infinite power and infinite love -- the love that gave Christ, and brought Him down to the grave, and the power that raised Him up and set Him at the right hand of glory.

**Note: This also appeared in Helps in Things Concerning Himself, vol. 3.**
Deliverance and Service

Notes of a Lecture

Jonah 3, 4

I do not propose to look at the subject which the book of Jonah brings before us either in its historical or its dispensational, but in its moral aspect; and taking the history of the prophet as an illustration simply of a double kind of exercise, through which you will find souls pass some time or other: and, in fact, without such exercise, it would be impossible for us to know what are the resources to be found in God for every one when brought into the circumstances here detailed. Now you will find a simple illustration of the first exercise in ch. 2 -- that is, the way in which God dealt with the conscience of the prophet -- the exercise through which he passed -- before he knew what real deliverance from God was. This is a very common kind of exercise to find amongst those who really are the Lord’s. I do not raise the question now for a moment as to the many who understand perfectly what it is to have the forgiveness of their sins. I allow that to be an established fact -- I raise no question about that. There are many who know this, but who, notwithstanding, do not know what it is to be delivered. They have not got deliverance, they have got relief. Now relief is a blessed thing to have; it is the first thing that meets one, in that sense. You have your conscience burdened with the sense of guilt, and relief is absolutely necessary to free you of that, to take the weight from off your conscience; but many who have got that are not in the position of delivered people. You will find that God allows a person to pass through exercise before deliverance is found. I will point that out to you in the NT; I am simply going to the Old Testament for the illustration. I do not expect to find the doctrine in the Old Testament, but in the New. My statement then is this: that persons in their consciences are subjected to all the painful throes and agonies of exercise, until they are brought to a condition of absolute powerlessness before God. Then deliverance waits that moment. Allow me to repeat it, deliverance from God waits the moment in which the soul is in the position of absolute powerlessness before God.

Now if you will turn with me for a moment to that well-known scripture, and often read, Rom. 7, I will point out to you the exercise there. I see three things distinctly in that chapter -- though there are many more. If I were asked, as far as I know it myself, to state what are the characteristics, the salient points of the exercise which is unfolded in Rom. 7, I should say they were these: First of all the fact is learned, namely, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (v. 18). That is the first thing; and, beloved friends, many a day passes over our heads, before we come to the acknowledgment of that in our souls before God. I know that all say, “There is nothing good in me,” but when it comes to the practical abnegation of self, it is another thing. Many a one who is holding it with his lips is denying it practically. But it is an immense thing when the soul has really reached that point, “I know that in me dwelleth no good thing” -- to have acknowledged that the death of Christ, which has purged my conscience from all the stains of guilt that attached to it, has not altered, in the smallest degree, the question of what I am by nature -- that my nature remains the same, that it is not changed, not ameliorated.

I know very well many a one has a secret lurking suspicion in his soul -- “Well, there is some little change that has passed over me; at any rate I am not so bad as I was.” Many think so, and it is not that they are insincere about it, but there is sincerity mixed with ignorance. This is a thing that you cannot learn doctrinally. No person ever discovered what his nature was, doctrinally. It must be learned practically. Forgiveness of sins is known when your heart rests upon the testimony of God outside yourself altogether; knowledge of yourself is reached only by practical experience. A person who wants to get the forgiveness of his sins has the testimony of God that comes to him, and his faith resting upon that, he is entitled to know that his sins are all forgiven. But, beloved friends, when it comes to the question of finding out what sort of a person I am in nature, I must taste practically what that nature is. That is the first thing that is reached in Rom. 7.

The exercise I have referred to leads to the second, namely, to the discovery of a nature entirely distinct from the old nature. In Rom. 7:19 you find these words:

The good that I would do, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Then in Rom. 7:22,

I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

There you find a nature, which is entirely distinct, totally apart, from the old nature which goes out after the things that belong to it; a new nature which “delights in the law of God.”

Now the third thing is (and I ask your attention specially to it, because it is the point connected with which there is the greatest difficulty), that that new nature (creature of God though it is) has no power to hold down the old. That is the point where many are hindered. They think, “I have got a new nature, and I will keep down the old in the power of the new.” This is a total mistake, as I shall presently show.

Going over the three points again: first, there is nothing good in us naturally; secondly, there is a creature of God in us that is distinct from the old nature; and thirdly, that new nature, that creature of God in us, has no power over the old. Well, when a person comes to that last point, then I say, deliverance is at hand. In v. 24 of the chapter, (“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”) the exercise comes to its climax.
There is the three-fold discovery made, and the moment that the third point is reached, namely, that although I have a new nature within me, altogether apart from the flesh, yet I have no power over the old nature -- then a person says "I can do nothing." That is the moment of deliverance; because, the instant that the soul expresses itself before God in the acknowledgment of its total powerlessness in the condition in which it is, it has looked out of itself, and that is the simple secret of it. One may speak, and preach, and lecture, and if one is a pastor, one may watch and seek to help people, but no person has ever got out of that exercise until he has thoroughly gone through it from beginning to end, and, beloved friends, it would be positive injury to souls if he could do so. It could not be really effected, but there may be a sort of attempt made to get people out of it -- and if it were possible, it would be at the expense of true blessing to them. The only illustration that I can find to convey my meaning is that of a medical man who stands by watching the course of a fever -- he may help the constitution and so on, but the thing has to run its course, and there is utter powerlessness until it has. So it is with regard to Rom. 7. The question is, who will take me out of this terrible condition of absolute powerlessness? -- not simply where I do the thing that is wrong, but where I own I have no power to do what is right, than which nothing is more humiliating. Every one says, "I do what is wrong," but the thing is, when you can say, "I cannot do what is right." All who have gone through it know what that moment is -- it is a wonderful moment in the history of each of us; that moment when, having passed through that tremendous exercise, we have come to the acknowledgment of this fact, "Here I am, and though I have got a creature of God in me distinct from the evil nature which I derived from the first Adam, I have not got the power to do the thing which I know to be right." This is the moment when a person loses everything like self-respect; and no one is able to walk steadily as a Christian until that moment is reached in the history of the soul. I believe the reason why so many unstable people are found every day is, that they have never had thorough establishment through this process. It enhances the value of Christ to a person when he can say, "I was lying in the bottom of a deep quagmire, out of which I had no power to extricate myself. The more I floundered, the deeper I got; the more effort I made, the more helpless I became; until at last I lifted mine eyes to heaven and said, I cannot get out of this! Who will deliver me?" Then you "thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25) which is the expression of a person who is delivered.

Beloved friends, let me ask you this simple question -- then I will point out why I read the chapters in Jonah -- Have you learned that? How many of us here tonight have learned this? How many of us know it deep down in our souls? How many of us are the manifestation of these facts before God -- that it was nothing in us, no good in us, and that we had not power in ourselves (with the new nature and all) over the old, but when we came practically to know and own this before God, and looked out of self, then He delivered us.

The simple reason of all the misery witnessed, beloved friends, in many true souls, is this, there is not deliverance, and that is also the secret of much of the half-heartedness and want of devotedness to Christ on every side of us. People are not delivered, there is no motive outside of self, no liberty. What a wonderful thing it is when I can say, "This is my deliverer, who took me out of the quagmire," and take up the words of the Psalmist, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa. 119:32). Look at the alacrity of his heart, the liberty, the freedom he is enjoying!

The reason of the unevenness in Christian character, and unsteadiness in Christian walk is in this simple fact, souls have never thoroughly stood outside the old man, and rested on Christ, and known Him as their deliverer. The Lord give our hearts to know what a wonderful thing it is to be taken by Him out of that condition, so that we can feel we have done with it -- that we do not expect to better our flesh, to improve it in any shape, but that we have got a clean deliverance out of it.

If you turn back to Jonah you will find the illustration of all these things in ch. 2, the figure of a man who was delivered from all the consequences of his sin. Taking Jonah as a type of a sinner, you will find in ch. 1 of his history independence, indifference, distance, disobedience, death, all those in connection with Jonah's history in ch. 1. Is not that the history of man? First, independance, then disobedience, then distance, then indifference, then death.

Jonah is cast out of the ship, and God in mercy intervenes and delivers him by that which is really a type of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. God prepared a great fish which swallowed Jonah. Jonah owes his safety from the consequence of his sin to that fish, he is saved in the life of another. But mark, it is in that condition that he is exercised. It is as a safe man that he is exercised, not as one unsafe. If he had not been swallowed, he would simply have gone to the bottom and been lost -- but God comes in and saves him. In ch. 2, you will find how he is exercised. Let us look at it, because it is interesting to see the exercise he is passed through. In v. 4 Jonah says, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Now that is all the man himself, "I will look toward thy holy temple." That does not bring him deliverance; he is not delivered because he says that, because that is the man, that is Jonah, Jonah looking towards God's holy temple.

If you will cast your eyes a little further down, you will see he says in v. 9, "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that I have vowed." That is Jonah still; that is the man still going through this exercise as to himself, and he gets no deliverance for that. But when you come to the last part of this verse, you find this escapes his lips: "Salvation is of the Lord." He has given up himself now, and he is delivered. God spoke to the fish, and Jonah is vomited forth upon dry ground. "Salvation is of the Lord" is exactly the counterpart of, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" "Salvation is of the Lord," out of the lips of the prophet in the belly of the fish, corresponds exactly with the cry that comes up from many an exercised heart, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Deliverance, I repeat, waits on that cry; God spake to the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon dry ground.

Now I have referred to this history, because I have found it often helps us if we search out these illustrations in the Old Testament. Let no one think I am finding any doctrine in the history; that is in the NT, quite clear and distinct; but I do find in the history of the prophet, and in what he passes through in his outward circumstances, a remarkable illustration of the exercise that souls pass through inwardly in order to discover to them what sort of a nature that is out of which, in God's mercy, they have been delivered through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here lies the secret of the misery of so many. It is simply because they have never said, "Salvation is of the Lord," in their soul, I mean. They have never stood practically outside of every single thing that belongs to them, as pertaining to the flesh, and nakedly before God with the confession, "Lord, everything must come from you now; it is all closed up on my side, every avenue and every entrance and every egress is closed up on my side, but, Lord, there are doors on your side." "Salvation is of the Lord."

There is another consequence that follows besides deliverance. Look for a moment and you will find that the prophet is spoken to
by God. See the beginning of Jonah 3. The word of the Lord, after all that exercise, “came to 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.” The man is free to go now. Will you look at another scripture in the Old Testament as a further illustration of this point? That is in Isa. 6. You will find that it was the same with Isaiah as it was with Jonah. It was no question of Isaiah being a prophet, or a servant of God, or being the one whom God wanted to send. There never was such a question as that raised by God with him. On the contrary, you will find in ch. 2 that he knows the message of God -- and yet he cannot run, he cannot go upon the business that God sends him. Why? Because he has not learned himself, beloved friends! That is the reason why -- and I say it boldly, that of all persons least fitted in any shape to be a messenger of God is the one who has not learned his status; every one must, but it is indispensable in a messenger. Trace the history in the sixth of Isaiah. It begins with Isaiah’s acknowledgment of the greatness of God (v. 1). He was “high and lifted up.” The moment Isaiah views himself in the light of God’s glory and of His holiness (v. 3) he judges himself and cries (v. 5) “woe is me, for I am undone.” When he finds his status, what do you see? It is very beautiful. “Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (v. 8). Who answers? The man who has learned himself! “Here am I, send me.” He could not go before -- but now God sends him out with the most solemn message that was ever committed to any man to carry -- and that was to go to announce God’s judicial sentence upon a blinded nation, a disobedient people -- and he rises in the force and power of deliverance to carry it.

Just in passing -- look at one other scripture on the same subject in the NT. See Luke 5. The very same thing occurs with the apostle Peter. Peter learns himself to be a sinful man. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (v. 8). Not that he had done wrong things, or said wrong things, but he was “a sinful man.” That was the testimony of his conscience, brought home to him in the light of that glory, which shone through the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ commands the treasures of the deep into Peter’s boat. Who could do that but the Lord of glory? Who could influence the fishes of the sea and bring them into Peter’s net but the Lord? When Peter sees it, he says, “I am in the presence of God” -- “I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Now I believe the normal character of God’s work in souls is this -- they find out that God is Light, before they discover that God is Love. Love has provided the blood which removes whatever the Light detects. The Light detects and exposes to you what you are in your own presence -- and then you find that the Love has provided what will take away all that is unsuitable to itself. No matter where I turn in scripture, I see it. When we have found out that God is Light, and that He has penetrated down and shown us in that Light the nature that we have received from the first Adam, and in which we stood as men before Him -- then, I say, the love which has completely taken me out of it, stands out vividly before my adoring gaze.

Look again at Peter -- we find that the moment he makes the discovery of his own condition, he forsook all and followed Christ. In the history of Jonah I find the same thing. Jonah now runs his errand, he is now free. He rises as a delivered man who has passed through death, and goes to Nineveh.

And now I come to another exercise, through which you find that souls are passing. I will not dwell long on it, because the other has been upon my mind most, and is most needed. I will say only a few words about it. It is an exercise, not of conscience, but of heart. Souls pass through both. It is interesting just for one moment to see how Jonah passed through this. We find it in Jonah 4. The exercise was in Jonah’s word being set aside apparently -- that is, as to his testimony that God would overthrow Nineveh -- by reason of the repentance of the guilty city. The Ninevites, from the king down to the very beasts, were clothed in sackcloth -- God’s title is owned, and God is not going to destroy the city. Jonah is so grieved, so wounded, that his word should be, so to speak, set aside by God’s having compassion on the guilty city, that he sits down in a suilk. Now I am struck with the fact that, where conscience is in the ascendency, there is a great tendency in the direction of righteous severity. Where there is much conscience, and the heart has not been correspondingly exercised to know what the compassions of God are, there is a temptation to undue severity. You see it in Jonah. He is positively angry with God because Nineveh is not overthrown. No one disputes the fact that Nineveh deserved to be overthrown; yet so rigorous is Jonah, and so demanding is his conscience, and so righteous severe is he with reference to this, that, because the city was to be spared, he sits down and prefers to die, rather than be left in the world with his word, as it were, set aside. How does God bring him to his bearings as to this? It is very interesting and very blessed. God prepares that which was agreeable to Jonah in his circumstances -- that is, He makes his outward circumstances to soothe him -- to soften the grief he had in his heart because his ministry was set aside. God prepared a gourd, and under this gourd Jonah sits down and finds shelter. It soothed him. Do you not know what it is to sit down under a gourd that has soothed you? It was not something that you made for yourself, but that God prepared for you.

But God equally prepares that which deprives Jonah of the shelter; and oh, beloved brethren, if we had the sense of it in our hearts! the same hand that raised the gourd, raised the worm that smote it. The same hand that sent the one sent the other. God prepared a worm which smote the gourd, and it withered; and then what does God do? He allows the whole pressure of outward circumstances suddenly to bear upon His servant the prophet just when he is deprived of that which really suited him in them. And there is the east wind, and the burning sun, and the pressure of everything upon him, and he lies down and faints and is ready to die. What does God say to him? “Look at you -- you never labored for the gourd, you never toiled for it, it came up in a night, and perished in a night; and you have compassion on it. Will you not allow me to have compassions? Am I not to have a heart? Am I not to have affections? Am I not to exercise them?”

That, beloved friends, is the wonderful lesson that Jonah learns in his second exercise -- what the sympathies of the heart of God are. He learns what deliverance from God is, in Jonah 2, and what the blessed sympathies of the heart of God are in ch. 4. He finds an exit out of his troubles in ch. 2 by the delivering hand of God -- and he finds solace amid the agonies of a broken heart in ch. 4 in the fact that God has sympathies that no one could fathom or comprehend. I often think of that beautiful word, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Beloved friends, what a wonderful thing it is to know Him as our deliverer -- to be able to lift up our heart and say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Lord give you to know Him also in the other character -- as your solace when everything fails around you. There is a worm at the root of all you prize in this world, then where can you turn? There is only one spot where your heart can find solace in the break-up of everything, and that is in the affections of God Himself. That is where I get comfort, and a wonderful thing it is to find it. I feel that we all want to know it more fully, that God has got a heart (I say it with all reverence), that He has got affections. It is the very thing
that was denied in Eden. His power was not called in question there; Satan never challenged the power of God, and the man or woman did not fail in connection with the power of God. But what was insinuated into their minds in Eden, and what has passed down to every generation of man since, is that God has not got affections or love for man or interest in him.

The Lord lead our hearts by His mighty power, and by His Spirit, to know what it is to pass through these exercises. We shall all know it some time. Perhaps I am speaking to somebody tonight who says, “I am a witness to the withering of gourds, and to the break-up of things that are round about me.” If so, the Lord give you to know where there is solace, unbounded confidence and consolation.


The Family of God
1 John 2:12-29

12. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.

13. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.

15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. 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. 17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it and that no lie is of the truth. 22. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. 23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also. 24. Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

28. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

I should just like to remark, in order that it may be more simply understood in speaking of it afterwards, that the word in the latter clause of v. 13, translated “little children,” should be rendered “babes.” It is quite a distinct expression from “little children,” in v. 12. I will explain the difference presently.

You observe there are three classes in v. 13, fathers, young men, and babes, and “little children,” in v. 12, includes all of them. I do not say anything about the “fathers” now, because that is not our subject. I will only speak of the two classes which I suppose will take in every soul in this room. I suppose every one here stands under one of these heads -- babes, or young men. Of course, I need not explain that a “young man” does not mean simply young in years, but the Spirit of God is pleased to borrow these terms from the ordinary use which we make of them, and to apply them to spiritual things. It is a “babe” and a “young man” spiritually, not naturally. And you will remember that I only speak to these tonight. I do not regard in the least the presence of any others.

Now there is one remark I desire to make at the start, one thing I have definitely upon my mind tonight, and that is, I shall seek to show you (the Lord helping) what is the foundation, the grand and blessed foundation, upon which God, in His mercy, sets us, so as to secure the practice that His own heart looks for from His children, even the very youngest, in these last times; because it is impossible to have true practice, real Christian practice, or Christian testimony, if there is not an understanding of Christian position. When I say that, I do not mean merely understanding it in your head, but in your conscience; and mark this, there is no way by which the Spirit of God imparts a divine understanding of anything, except through the conscience; and if the conscience is not reached, and is not, in the first instance, worked upon by what God is pleased to communicate to me from His word, all I may gather up is worse than useless. It is positive mischief, because there is nothing more injurious than to assent to the truth, and yet not to be affected by it. It is a total setting aside of every principle of God, if I take any portion of God’s word, and study it as I study history, or an interesting book. I am studying, let me tell you, God’s revelation of His mind, and my conscience is to be acted upon by it, and that is an all-important thing at the present moment, and for no one more than for young Christians. Oh, beloved, let me say this tonight -- do cultivate an exercised, tender conscience. It is a wonderful thing, when I read this blessed book of God, to think that there I have something from God that deals with my conscience, and brings me into His presence. That is the blessedness of the word of
God. The scriptures are intended by God to act thus upon us, and that is very solemn! See what a different thing that is from my mere intellect or understanding working upon certain things. I may take up the most wonderful truth of God, and my understanding may work upon it, and my mind may act upon it, and the result will be simply nothing, but if I understand truly and really what this blessed book is, that it is the veritable, positive voice of God, written down by the Holy Ghost, it brings me directly into God’s presence, and then I have to deal with God as to what He is pleased to speak.

Now, the first thing that is spoken of here, which is true of the youngest as well as of the oldest, is, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1 John 2:12). That takes in all the classes, as I have already explained. There is no question, and we do not raise any question now, as to the fact of the forgiveness of our sins. I trust that is a settled question with every one of you here tonight, a distinct, settled fact and reality in your soul, that all your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. Because, remember, if you are not clear as to that, if there is the smallest lurking doubt in your soul as to that, how can you really walk as a forgiven person? It makes a vast difference. A person who really knows he is forgiven has motives, reasons, for acting, which, under other circumstances, he could not have. You cannot have really right motives, unless you know that. I am not speaking now, remember, as to the question of the forgiveness of your sins, but in reference to what I propose to take up next week, and I may say in passing, that 1 am speaking tonight a great deal of our trials and anxieties, your moments of heaviness, your present condition, but I speak tonight of what gives all its power to that which is practical, and I say, unless you know these great foundation-truths, these blessed facts of scripture, in your own soul and conscience, it will be impossible for you to have the motives that spring from them. Therefore the apostle starts with that as a settled thing, “I write unto you, little children,” that is, the whole family of God, taking in fathers, young men, and babes, “because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.”

Now we come to the classes. We will begin with what scripture speaks of as the very lowest class, the first class, that is, the “babes.” Mark what is said about the babes in v. 13. “I write unto you, babes, because ye have known,” not the forgiveness of your sins, not because you have known your acceptance, but, “because ye have known the Father.” Now, beloved friends, you may think this a very elementary thing I am speaking upon you tonight; but, oh, I know so well how very little there is known about the effect, the blessed, Wonderful power of a Father’s love realized in the soul, and how few there are, alas! that really do know it. I do not raise any question about the forgiveness of your sins, I take that for granted, but do you know the Father? and have you the sense in your soul that you are a child of the Father? Not simply that you are pardoned, but that you are positively a child of the Father. I believe there are many that really do not know that; and they have not the motives which should characterize a child of the Father, because they have not the thing that gives spring and force to them. Because, suppose I do not possess the sense of the Father’s love in my heart, if I am ignorant that I am a child of the Father, and that I have a Father up there whose eye is ever upon me, and to whom I am an object, well, then, I have no motive to live and act for the One to whom I am an object. That is the effect of it, and that is the reason why people go into the world. What are they looking for there? They are looking to find a satisfaction for their desolate hearts, which the knowledge of the Father would be to them, if they had it. If you had that, and knew it, you would not go into the world.

It is this that makes so many young Christians unsteady in their course, in their Christian path; what makes them dissatisfied in their hearts, is, that they have not found an object for their affections. That is the reason of it. They are not conscious that they are objects of the Father’s love. It is a wonderful thing to think of. Do you mean to tell me that you would not walk about this great city in a different way, if you had the sense in your heart, “I am the Father’s child, I am an object to Him, and His eye is upon me, and He is thinking of me, and caring for me, and doing His best for me”? What wonderful motives! And that is not an advanced state. Some might think it wonderfully so, but it is the infantine condition, the very simplest, the very first, truth that the blessed God would have known in His family, that there is not a babe there but is supposed to know the Father’s love. “I write unto you, babes, because you have known the Father,” that is, not merely the relationship, but the knowledge of it. There is all the sense that, from having been outside the family of God, a poor, wandering prodigal, away from His affection and His heart, He has brought me back to Himself, to know the Father’s love. I ask you tonight, Have you the sense that you have been kissed? Have you the sense in your soul that you have been greeted by your Father, that He has kissed you, that you know what the affection of your Father’s heart is? I do not turn to the world. Why? Because I have a Father in heaven. I do not turn to an arm of flesh. Why? Because I have a Father in heaven. Think of the wonderful, the immense motive which is connected with that. I have a Father up there, and He cares for me, and thinks of me, and I am His object. A most wonderful thing even to think of. It is the most blessed fact that could be announced, that a poor creature, a poor, weak, feeble, failing creature on this earth, could be an object of interest, and an object of affection, to the blessed God -- the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But so it is, and, beloved, it is not a mere matter of information, but a divine revelation, and it is given to us with immediate reference to the temptations of the world, as we see from a verse later on (26th), where the apostle says, “These things write I unto you concerning them that seduce you.” The holy Ghost had that in His thought. He had all the seductions of the devil before His mind, and it was in view of these, as well as of the weakness and feebleness of the poor things into whom God had put this “treasure,” it was in view of the dangers and of the besetments that we find ourselves confronted with at the present moment, that the Spirit of God gives us this wondrous revelation.

What is the security for a “babe”? That he has “known the Father.” And in your cares, for I suppose some of you have your trials and anxieties, your moments of heaviness, your
griefs, what is your solace? Where do you go to be soothed? Where do you turn for cheer in pressure and difficulty? Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be able to look up, and say, “There is my Father!” I could not describe to you the blessed, wonderful glory of that divine reality for a soul, “I have a Father, I am His child, I am in relationship with Him, and know His love. He is doing His best for me. There is nothing He would not give me, if it were good for me. He withholds nothing that would be for my blessing. If there was one thing that would minister to the real blessing and prosperity of His child, my Father would give it me. He keeps back nothing from me that is not according to His infinite wisdom and the love of His heart.” What a thing that is! How it steadies one’s heart! I am not cast down because I am in the presence of difficulty or trial, and I am not intrigued away by Satan for some wretched, miserable thing in this world. Why? Because I have my Father, and His heart, His hand, His love, His solace, His cheer, His smile, all sustain me now, and I shall be in His home above. What a blessed thing that is!

You may say, all this is very simple, but it is these simple things that souls really are ignorant of. Let me ask you, Are you clear as to your heart’s acceptance of all this? Do not be disheartened because you find the little, feeble answer in your heart as to the fact, but allow the fact its due place, and your sense of it will be wonderfully increased. If you begin with your sense of it, you can never work yourself up to the fact, but begin with, the fact itself, and it will tell wonderfully in the way of realization in your soul. It is this fact of the Father’s love, and the relationship into which He has brought me to Himself in His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that enables me to give a bold front to all Satan’s opposition. God says to me that He has brought me into that relationship, and that is enough; and, remember, it is not as a pardoned criminal. I am pardoned, and yet I am not a pardoned criminal. This is the idea that people entertain, and I have no doubt there are some here tonight who have never got beyond it. They are pardoned, they have it free, but they are going out into the world just as a man who has been a criminal in Newgate {prison}: he has a free pardon, but if he goes out, and walks the world, branded as a man who has been in prison, nothing, not even his pardon, were it ever so plenary, could efface that brand. But God has not so pardoned us. It is true, blessed be His name, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” but the same death that atoned for the criminality, if I may so say, is the basis upon which we are taken out of the position in which we were as criminals, and brought positively into a new place, even His family; and it is on that ground that you and I tonight, yea, every babe here, is a child of God, born into His family, in relationship with Him, in the very same relationship before Him that His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is; for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our God and Father, and, I tell you more than that, loved after that measure too! Do you believe that? Oh, beloved friends, do you believe that you are positively loved after the measure of the love of God to His Son? “Hast loved them as thou hast loved me,” are the words of the blessed Lord Himself. If you had the sense of that in your soul, would you condescend to take up anything out of this poor world? Tell me, would a man who was a millionaire stoop to pick up a penny off the dirty pavement? What God has done for us is this -- not only has He paid our debts -- He has done that, blessed be his name -- but by that which paid our debts we are brought into the very same position that His own Son occupies before Himself, to be the objects of His love, and loved after the measure of His love to Christ.

I say this is for a “babe.” It is not an advanced state, it is the “babe’s” position. It is wonderful how people think it an advanced state. The reason is, Christians have dropped so fearfully low, and so far beneath God’s thoughts about these things. They think that the beginning is the finish, because they have such a feeble sense of Christianity. I know what it is myself very well. I can remember well enough what it was to me when it first burst upon me, that I was a child of the Father. And I knew many a thing before that. I knew that my sins were forgiven me, and preached it too, preached the forgiveness of sins, and never knew what it was to be a child of the Father! Never knew what it was to be in relationship with the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet so it is. It is like a new day, if I may so say; and when it enters the person’s soul in the power of the Spirit, it is like the dawning of the day. It is the opening of a new era to a person when first of all he gets the wonderful sense in his heart, “He is my Father, I am His child;” and we can never please Him better than when we are living out that relationship before Him, giving Him His place of Father to us, and seeking to walk as His children. You can never please the blessed God so much as when you give Him credit for being what nothing but His love could make Him be to you. This is the infantine state, this is for a “babe,” for the very feeblest. Supposing you were only converted yesterday, if God, in His mercy, picked you up only an hour since, you are entitled to know not only that your sins are forgiven, but that you are a child of the Father. It is not a question of intelligence. A person may not understand the prophecies, or the dispensations of scripture, or the wonderful purposes of God that are unfolded in scripture, and yet have the conscious relationship known in the soul by the Holy Ghost. The expression of that relationship is “Abba, Father,” and the manifestation of it in the path, is, “I renounce everything that is not of the Father.” Thus we see there are two expressions of this infantine condition: the one is confession, “Abba, Father” -- the very language of the Lord Jesus Christ; not only the position of the Lord Jesus Christ -- “joint-heirs with him,” as the apostle says in Rom. 8, but His language, “Abba, Father.” His own relationship, His own expressions; and there is another testimony besides the confession of the mouth, there is the life testimony. And what is that? With Christ it was this, “I do always those things that please him.” That was the expression of the life of the perfect Man in His relationship of a Son with His Father. He was, we know, from all eternity the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, the Son of the Father before all time and worlds, but He was also Son of God, as born in time. With Him, in His blessed path, it was
always the Father. It was the delight of His heart, His life, He
retreated into the Father, He walked with the Father, He lived
with the Father. That is what God intends for us, beloved, in
our measure.

Let me say a little about the practice as to this, without
departing from the line we are taking this evening. A person
may say, “Well, now, supposing I had the full sense of all
that in my heart, how would it act upon my conduct?” I will
tell you. In everything you did, in every thought, in every
action, in every undertaking, you would consult your Father’s
pleasure. That is the way it would tell upon you. Let me be
affectonately personal with you this evening; do you consult
your Father’s pleasure in everything? Do you raise that
question with your own heart about all your undertakings,
path, ways, conduct? Would you be afraid to bring everything
to the test of that tonight? Is there anything in your heart
inside, or your ways outside, that you would not like to bring
to such a test as this: “Would it please my Father, is it after
the pattern and fashion of Him who said, “I do always those
things that please him?” What a solemn test that is! What a
searching of hearts it raises!

How many things are laid bare by it! What a light it casts
into one’s inmost soul before God! Does it not search us? I
feel it searches me as I speak of it. I feel my own heart
searched to the very quick as I think of it. Is it my Father’s
pleasure, my Father’s will, His way, that is before me at this
hour?

The Lord help you just to apply the truth to your own
hearts. That is the way to read the scriptures, to walk through
this world bringing everything, the very smallest thing, into
the full, searching light of the truth. Take, for instance, your
relationships in life, your home. Some of you have a difficult
home, and, oh, do let me say this to you, beloved friends,
you have, perhaps, a home where there are many eyes upon
you, and perhaps you are the only one belonging to God in
that home, the only one standing outside of everything in that
home. That is a critical place for any one. It is a solemn and
responsible place for any child of God to be located, but let
me say this, there is a divine fulness, and a divine resource,
in this truth that I am pressing upon you tonight, that will
meet all that. You will never fulfill your home responsibilities,
or your home duties, or your home relationships, so well as
when you are studying your Father’s pleasure. There would
be no unevenness then. I have often seen young people in
whom, perhaps, there may have been a great deal of energy,
but not inward
confidence,
clingingness, if I may use the
analogy. He says, “You are strong, there is divine
energy, divine power, divine ability; and how is that ability
shown? You have mastered Satan, you have overcome the
wicked one.” The divine energy and power of faith cha-

Well, now, I pass on to the next class, where we shall
find also an immensity of truth brought out. The resources of
a “babe” are the Father’s love and the Father’s care, His
heart, His hand. All these are for a “babe,” therefore the
apostle says, “I write unto you, babes, because you have
known the Father.” Going to the next class, we find a
difference, we have a little advance, a class beyond the
“babes.” “I write unto you, young men, because ye have
overcome the wicked one,” and then, in 1 John 2:14, “I have
written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the
word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the
wicked one.” The divine energy and power of faith charac-
terizes a “young man.” You know perfectly well the
difference naturally between the babe and the young man.
What the difference is naturally, so it is spiritually. I do not
look for energy in a babe, I look for confidence. What marks
the infantine state is confidence, clingingness, if I may use the
word; but what marks manhood is energy, strength, power.
And so it is in spiritual things; and the Holy Ghost Himself
suggests the analogy. He says, “You are strong, there is divine
energy, divine power, divine ability; and how is that ability
shown? You have mastered Satan, you have overcome the
wicked one.”

I should like to say a word about that. There is no way to
overcome Satan, and no way in which divine ability and
power is more shown than in keeping the sentence of death upon yourself. Now I do not speak of that to "babes." What they need, and what I have been endeavoring to speak of, is that full confidence in the Father which befits a "babe." But now we have another class before us, and I have no doubt that there are many in the position of "young men" here. There are many such here tonight, perhaps more that answer to the description of "young men" than to that of "babes." Do you know what it is to keep the sentence of death -- the death of Christ -- upon yourself, to apply that death to yourself? I will try to say a little as to that, because it is important to us all.

Many, when they speak of keeping the sentence of death -- the cross -- upon themselves, think of it as if it were something that they have to die to, in their own hearts. It is not that at all. It is not my dying. Very often people say, "I do not feel that I have died; I have all this desire after the world, and all this longing after the things of the world; I feel all that in me. I feel I am uncommonly alive and sensitive to it, just as much as ever I was." But that is not what the Holy Ghost speaks of at all. What He is speaking of is the practical application of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ to myself; that is, everything that Christ died to is to be disowned by me. That is applying the sentence of death to myself. That is simple, yet solemn. Everything that He died to, I am to disown, though it be at cost and loss to myself. That is the meaning of keeping the sentence of death upon myself, disowning everything within me and outside of me that Christ died to. That is, I disallow self and sin because Christ died for me, and I disallow the world because Christ died to deliver me from it. There is a line or two in one of our hymns which expresses this:

"From sin, the world, and Satan,
We're ransomed by Thy blood."

Just because I am ransomed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ from sin, the world, and Satan, I disallow all these things. I disallow sin, although I find it here in me; I do not allow it, I am under no obligation to yield to sin, I am under every obligation not to yield to it. Then, as to the world, He has taken me out of it, and I am under every obligation not to yield to it. I am under no obligation to Satan, but to Him who broke the power of Satan. You constantly read the words, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." That is, you disallow every thing that Christ died to, and you do it in faith because He died to it. It is not a question of your dying; you will never die -- that is, you will never really be out of circumstances of temptation -- until you leave this body; but you are entitled and privileged to hold yourself to be dead simply because Christ died. That is the reason, and I disallow all these things in faith, because Christ died to them.

There must be this to overcome the devil. You can never get the mastery over Satan unless you keep the sentence of death upon yourself. And remember, that this is not an act that a person jumps into once and for ever. It is a daily, hourly, momentary thing. Do you remember what the Lord said to the young man in Mark 10? He says, "Take up the cross, and follow me." And elsewhere we get the taking up of the cross daily. It is a solemn thing for us, yet blessed, seeing that we owe everything that we have, and everything that we are, and everything that we shall be, to that blessed One who died upon that cross. This is what gives the motive-power to it. I will tell you the effect of all this. When the devil meets one who keeps the cross on himself, or a dead man, he has no power, because then the platform upon which the devil acts is taken away. You cut off occasion for his acting. That is the secret of it. And, beloved, it is a wonderful thing to remember it was by death the Lord Jesus destroyed Satan. He broke the power of Satan in His death; He won the victory through death; and Satan now is become a worsted foe, a beaten enemy, and that which puts the child of God, a "young man," in the position of a conqueror of Satan is this, that he uses the cross, where his power was broken, to take away the occasion of the flesh in him for Satan to act upon. Christ broke Satan's power in death, and that death, when it is applied to myself, takes away occasion for Satan to deceive me, which he could otherwise do, on account of the weakness of the flesh.

There is another word here that is very important with reference to this. You can conceive how a person might imagine, "Well, if I have overcome Satan, the evil one, the wicked one, then it is all over, now I have no more to fear." But observe, to the very people that overcame the wicked one, to those who have got power over Satan, the Apostle says, "Love not the world," that is one thing, "neither the things of the world," that is another. That is very solemn, beloved friends. I cannot go into it this evening, as it would be departing a little from the line I am taking. I will explain to you next week, as far as I can, what the world is, and how it affects us. I will only now just call your attention to this -- that though I have the mastery over Satan, though I have overcome the wicked one, still, I am in danger from the world. This world is a reality, with all its snares, allurements, deceits, set by Satan, of course, who is the god and prince of it, the god of it religiously, and the prince of it politically; there it is, with all those things in it which make it attractive, which Satan uses to beguile those who have already got the mastery over him. And therefore it is that the apostle gives this warning.

Let me ask you this, plainly and yet affectionately -- Do you love the world, or the things that are in it? Hearken to what follows: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Nothing could be more definite than that which the Spirit of God gives us here, and all this is said to a "young man," to one who has spiritual power and energy, and spiritual mastery over Satan, even to one of whom it was said, "ye have overcome the wicked one." Notwithstanding all that, he is in danger of this awful, ensnaring, entrapping world, with all those things in it that minister to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye. I will speak of that, if the Lord will, more particularly next week. I believe many have fallen under the power of it to a very solemn extent. Young people, of course, are especially prone to it; yet not only young people, but old people as well. We are all wonderfully little sensitive as to that one thing -- the thing your eye lusts after, the thing your flesh lusts after, and
that the natural pride of your heart craves for, it is of the world, and not of the Father. It belongs to this evil scene, that would not have the Christ of God, nor the God that gave that Christ. So you see how solemn it is to get such a word as this from the Spirit of God.

I will only now, in finishing for this evening, press these two things upon you: first, what it is to have the Father’s love, the sense of the Father’s love; to be in the confidence of a child, to study the Father’s pleasure, and to have it before you in everything, no matter how small or trifling it might be. What a different path ours would be if it were so! How different it would be with many of us tonight, if we studied our Father’s will in what we did, and where we went, and what we had, and if that were the gauge of our whole conduct! Supposing that it brought us into suffering, into a little bit of self-denial, is He worthy of it? Is He worthy of any little trial of our poor hearts? He who gave up the costliest jewel of His own heart’s affections, that we might be children before Him -- is He worthy? See what a wonderful motive that is for you; and it is not only that, but there is this along with it (the Lord give you to prove it), the blessed, holy joy of being allowed to please Him. The very thought that I am allowed to please my Father, contains in it that which takes away everything like the sense of loss, and, after all, what I seem to give up is only a miserable bit of pleasure, or folly, or pride, that I am a positive gainer in surrendering. But the greatest thing of all, is, the sense that in taking a certain course, I am of one mind with my Father. Who could ever fully tell what that is? The blessedness of being actually of one mind with our Father about things; to think that I am allowed to have the same mind as He about the little things that relate to me down here. I say that is compensation at once, and instead of speaking of the suffering, it is all gain, no loss at all, all real gain, gain to me to be allowed to be of the same mind, to be on terms of such wonderful intimacy with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord bring these things, in all their importance, before your hearts tonight. All I ask is, as you go to your homes, take what I have presented to you -- take it before the Lord tonight, and let your consciences and hearts be under the power of it. Do not let any one tempt you to turn off the edge of it, but let it bring you into the presence of God, there to search your own hearts as to all this blessed, wonderful reality, and as to how far you have in your soul the sense of your relationship, and whether you have walked out the sense of it in this world.

The Lord command His blessing, and thus may He secure more childlike confidence and divine energy in our hearts for Him, and for His Son, in these last times, to the praise of His glory!

Part 2

We have been looking at the three classes which the Spirit of God brings before us in this chapter, passing over the first class, which does not concern our present object or purpose. We will now look a little further at what is said here about the two classes, “babes” and “young men,” these terms being understood (as I explained before) spiritually, not naturally. Just as there are babes, young men, and fathers, in an earthly family, so there are in God’s family. I should like, before we proceed, very briefly to bring to your remembrance the speciality of each of these two classes, and what belongs to each.

A “babe,” which is the lowest class, the infantine state, “knows the Father.” “I write unto you, babes, because ye have known the Father” (v. 13). It is a most important thing to be assured in our souls, no matter how feeble we may be, or how short the time since we knew the forgiveness of our sins, through faith in His blood, that the blessed work which has secured the forgiveness of our sins for us, has likewise brought us into God’s family. I have a Father, and a blessed thing it is to know, to be assured of the fact, that I have One to whom I can tell my troubles, to whom I can go with my griefs, to whom I can pour out my sorrows, under whose wings I take refuge in difficulty and temptation. This is part of the blessedness of it -- the sure sense of the Father’s love; and there is not merely comfort in it, but immense practical power as well. For I do not find, as a rule, that those who are ignorant of the Father’s love have the security, the solace, the stay, the stability, which keeps them from the world. What can keep a “babe” from the world is the knowledge of the Father’s love; and, beloved friends, let me assure you, that, if you know the Father, you do not turn to the world for help. To have some one to whom we are an object, is inseparable almost from our very nature. This is what we long for; and whoever makes an object of us, we make our object. The two things are closely connected together, and I doubt not, if you have not the sense in your heart that there is One up there in heaven to whom you are an object, you will be looking for some one on the earth to fill up the deficiency, the blank. Thus it is a “babe” is enticed into the world. Now the knowledge of the Father provides against that. Suppose I have difficulties, or wants, or cares, or troubles, I do not go to the world to help me out of them, or to get solace in my sorrows. I have a Father. And that is the simplest thing the soul knows. I have a Father who knows all about me.

Do you know in your hearts what that is? Can you who are “babes” in Christ here say, “I know the sweet, unspeakable blessedness of being able to say, My Father knows”? You will remember how the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples; and I suppose the state in which they were at the time would correspond very much to this infantine state we are speaking of. He says to them, “Fear not, little flock.” Why? “It is your Father’s good pleasure” to be a Father to you, for that is the meaning of “to give you the kingdom.” That is what takes the fear out of one’s heart. I am not afraid of want or care. Why? Because I have my Father, and, more than that, my Father knows. I may not, and do not, know what is before me, but He does. People say, “If I do that, if I adopt such a narrow path as that, I do not know the difficulties I shall be in, and the troubles, and trials, and losses. How can I ever meet them all?” Just this -- “your
Father knoweth.” Now that is the infantine condition.

One thing more: a person may pass from that condition of infancy into the next stage, or even into the highest condition, that of a “father.” But the blessedness of the infantine state is not lost, though he may be, as I say, even a “father,” though he may know “him that is from the beginning.” And that is the very highest thing. The highest knowledge in the things of God is the knowledge of Christ. It is not the knowledge of things about Christ, but of Christ Himself. And the most excellent of all sciences is the knowledge of Christ. There is no science like it.

Well, the person who knows “Him who is from the beginning” is a “father,” but such a one has not lost the sense of the Father’s love. You do not lose anything that you ever learned; but it remains still true that the characteristic of a “babe” is confidence in the Father’s love, the characteristic of a “father” is knowledge of “Him who is from the beginning,” and the characteristic of a “young man” (what I shall now speak of) is divine strength, power, and vigor to overcome Satan. That is the characteristic of this second class in God’s family, and perhaps represented more than any other class in this room this evening. I suppose that though there are many who come under the designation of “babes,” yet there are many more who, in some little measure, answer to “young men.”

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). Note those three things. Now, you perceive a “babe” is not exposed to meeting the devil in this form. Such a one is sheltered in a way just as in our earthly homes. The law of love in our Father’s home above is that which ought to exist in our homes on earth. The infantine state is protected by the love that occupies itself with the very infirmities and feebleness, and exposure and inability, so to speak, that are found in infancy. A little infant, in any of our families, is the object of the parents’ special consideration and care. But when you come to manhood, there you have to meet and encounter the positive obstacles of life; and in God’s family, the first thing that meets a person when he gets into this manhood state is the devil -- Satan.

The question of meeting Satan is a solemn one for every one of us. It is most important to look at it well, because it brings up the question of temptation. Now the great point presented here is, that “the word of God abideth in you.” I do not know anything that is more important for young Christians than that -- to have the word of God abiding in them; because, let me assure you, if that is not the case, you will not be able to use that word against the devil as occasion demands.

The real secret of being able to use the word of God against the devil is this, that the word of God is keeping your own soul. If your own soul is not commanded by the word of God, if it is not abiding in you, you cannot use it offensively against Satan. Now, how is it with you? Does that word govern your ways, your affections, your hearts? Do you ever prayerfully say, “I must search and see what the word of God, as the expression of His mind, says about this or that?” If you do not, how can you meet Satan? Satan will deceive you, because he is wily. He knows exactly how to dress up counterfeits, and I will tell you one of the greatest counterfeits of the devil now. You may often hear it said, “I do not feel that so-and-so is wrong; I do not see that there is any harm in this or that.” Now, where did they get that thought? What guided them as to that feeling? Where did it come from? You say, “Well, my conscience does not reprove me. Neither did Saul’s conscience, when he was persecuting the church on earth, and hating Jesus in heaven. Oh, believe it, there is nothing at this present time that is a greater counterfeit, and a more dangerous power of Satan than this, that he makes what people call their conscience the guide of their actions. If you make conscience the umpire to which everything is subjected as to your ways, you will fall into the snare of the devil. There is nothing that can pilot us according to the mind of God, except this blessed book, which is the revelation of His mind: conscience is a witness, that which keeps the record, so to speak, as to how far this word acts on me. It is a witness; a true witness, if it is divinely informed, a false witness if it is not. It is thus all the more dangerous. Why is that? Because, to speak of a person’s conscience not condemning this or that, sounds exceedingly fair and good, and it is because of this it is to be so carefully guarded and watched. There is nothing so dangerous now as the thing that wears the appearance of truth, but is not the truth; because Satan knows quite well that it is by that saints are most easily caught -- the perversion of that which is right in its place. And I say it is a thorough perversion of conscience, and of the place God intended it to occupy, to make it the standard of my actions.

It is this word that is to be the guide in everything; and I commend it to you tonight, and I can speak of it, thank God, as knowing a little of the blessedness of it for myself. And that, you know, is the only ground upon which we ought to speak, “I believe, and therefore have I spoken.” David said of Saul’s armor, that he had not “proved” it, and so he had it taken off him. It is the thing you have proved that you can speak of for a certainty; and how blessed it is that when you come to divine things, it is, “we know,” “we believe, and we know.” The one is the objective power of faith, and the other the conscious knowledge in the soul by the Spirit.

But, as I was saying, there is nothing like making that word the test of everything, subjecting all to that word. It does not matter what it is: my position in this world, my occupation, in fact everything. And the question is not what I may do, or may not do, but, “What saith the scripture?” Because the scripture is the embodiment in writing of the mind of God. If the word of God abide in you, you are strong; there is the energy of faith, and you have overcome the wicked one.

Now, beloved friends, I trust you see the blessedness of the word abiding in us, it makes us subject to God; and when the devil meets a person that is subject, he meets a person that he has no power over. The secret of getting power over Satan, of overcoming Satan, is, that we are, in all our affec-
tions and ways, governed by the word, *subject* to it. You have a perfect instance of it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, there was nothing in Him that answered to the temptations of Satan outwardly, as there is in us, because we have a fallen nature, but see how He acted with Satan. Satan came and said, “If you are the Son of God, and have power as the Son of God, take yourself, by the exercise of that power, out of the place of dependence.” You see Satan allowed a certain amount of truth for his purpose. But the Lord Jesus Christ *kept* the word, and He used it: “It is written”; and we can never use it, unless we *keep* it. I think we often forget these two things in the account of the temptation. It was not only the amount of truth for his purpose. But the Lord Jesus Christ was the person who was most safe.

What is Satan’s great power now? Have you ever thought what the peculiar characteristic of Satanic power is now? Is it not this -- *in concealing* himself, and acting in such a way that you do not know He is present? If he can persuade you, by keeping behind, so that you do not see that it is Satan, He will get the mastery over you. The power of a saint -- of a “young man” -- over Satan now, is being able to say, through this word abiding in him, “That is the devil.” The moment you are able to say, “That is Satan,” you have the victory, you have mastered him; but until you can say that, you are in danger. That is the character of the warfare at this moment. I note it for you, because it is important. Supposing a person is tempted; well, if his conscience says, “I do not disapprove of that, I do not think there is any great harm in keeping that company, or going to that place, I do not see that harm that can do to me”; that is the devil, beloved friends, concealing himself, and working through that which makes something of you, because it exalts your conscience. That is a terrible wile, it exalts something in you, putting your conscience in the place that the word of God ought to have over your soul; and the consequence is, you fall under the snare. I know many who have fallen in that way. They have made their prosperity, the touchstone of their conduct, and their conscience the guide of their ways, consequently they have fallen.

Now, what scripture proposes, in contradistinction to this, is, the pleasure of Christ, the touchstone of what we ought to call for, and the word of God the chart to guide us along. Those are the two things. If I say, “I think this will do me no harm,” I make myself the measure of my conduct, and my conscience the guide of what I ought to do. But it is a totally different thing if I kept this before me -- “Would this please God? Would this minister to the pleasure of Christ? Would this suit Christ? Would it give Him delight? What does the word of God say?” This brings in true motives and a divine object, and, I say it distinctly tonight, our only security at this time is in having the incarnate Word as our object, and the written word as our chart. The man who has the incarnate Word as the one object of his affections, and the written word as the chart of his conduct, is able to unmask the wiles of Satan.

I shall not dwell on that longer, but I turn now to the point that I did not touch upon much last week, which is very important. As I observed then, there is another danger even to those of whom the apostle writes, that they have “overcome the wicked one.” From whence is that danger? From the world. Now, what is the world? That question is constantly asked. Well, I believe it is a far more insidious, a larger, and more diversified thing than many of us have the least conception of. I will give you a general definition, as far as I understand scripture, of what the world is, and you must apply it for yourselves. I cannot give you details. “Happy is the man that feareth always”; the person who is most afraid is the person who is most safe.

The world, then, or age, as the scriptures speak of it, is that ordered system of things around us, not the *literal* world, that, of course, God made. There is a great difference between the world that God made and what He calls “the age of this world.” (See Eph. 2:2). God did *not* make the world in this sense. He made the literal world; there is not a tree, or a leaf, or a creature, on the literal world that He did not make. But He did not make the *age*, that is, this ordered system that is called “the world.” That is what the apostle is speaking of here. Who is the author of it? The devil is the author of this age, this “evil age.” What is it made out of? This age is made out of man’s rejection of God’s Christ! Just as Cain went out from the presence of God, and manufactured his world, after he had killed Abel. There was no world of Cain until after Abel was killed; and the man that slew his brother went out from the presence of God, and became the father of every one who was prominent in the things that characterized Cain’s world, and which made it comfortable, and all without God. It is just the same now. Do you know this, that Satan is “the prince of this world”? He was displayed in that character when he had driven on man to crucify Christ. Then the world was manifested as it is, and Satan was displayed as its prince. Where is Christ? Did you ever think that? I ask you, because it is a solemn question for every one of us. How is it that He has gone out of this world? I read in the scriptures the account of His death and resurrection, and I know He died as the Lamb of God, but let us never forget that He also died as a martyr at the hands of man. He was murdered. Who murdered Him? The world, the age, and that which goes to make up this world morally is not one whit better now than the world of that day, which crucified the Lord of glory. They would crucify Him just as much now. There is just as much hatred, enmity, bitterness, dislike of Christ and God today, expressed in a different way, it may be, but the elements, the principles, the seeds of it are just the same. Now this is the world, and I ask you, is it not a solemn thing to think that we are left in this very scene, the world that hated Christ, scorned and rejected Him? What is the object of everything in it? The three things you find here -- “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” There is nothing in this world that has any other motive than one of those three things. Point out to me, if you can, one thing in this world that has any other motive. All that
which goes to make something out of man -- something to elevate man -- something to please his senses, his flesh, his pride, where does it come from? “It is not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passeth away, and the last thereof.” That is the divine answer.

Well, now, the reason why the apostle puts this in here is this -- because those who are “young men” (in God’s family, I mean) are especially prone, and especially tempted in that direction, and that notwithstanding the energy, vigor, and power which they possess. And you know very well there are attractions in the world still -- I mean for young Christians. There is something about all these things which addresses, and appeals to, and suits our nature. I remember, not long ago, a person said to me, “I can go here or there, and none of it addresses itself to me.” Now I say that person is in great danger; because there is nothing in this world, and the world passeth away, and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride, where does it come from? “It is not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passeth away, and the last thereof.” That is the divine answer.

But many will say, “I do not love the world.” Do you love anything in it? -- that is the question. Let me say a word about that. I purposely omit going very much into details about it, and I will tell you why. Because what I find, is, that souls are a great deal more alive to how a thing bears upon the heart, “I fear to grieve the One that loves me with such a love.” That is proper fear. I am afraid. Why? Because I am in the midst of a world that is full of pitfalls and snares. If you see a man walking through a place full of traps, and snares, and gins, and pitfalls, you find him walking cautiously, circumspectly: he would be alive to the dangers. We ought to walk like that, without, however, getting into any kind of bondage about it. I fear the mode in which many have been converted in these days does not secure this holy fear. I tell you why. Because deliverance from this present evil age is not preached, as well as forgiveness of sins; and the consequence is, people are not taken out of it. The character of the testimony that has reached them has not taken them out of the world. They have not the sense of the Father’s love, and the consequence is that too many have their consciences made easy to go on with the world. I speak of it, because I have seen it. I am giving facts. I know young Christians -- I have such before my mind now -- who, whilst their consciences were not relieved, were timid, careful, watchful, vigilant, afraid lest they should be tripped up. There was in them a zeal, an earnestness, a desire to answer to the mind of God, although, as yet, in bondage. And what then? Why, a kind of testimony reached them which took their consciences out of the power of bondage, but did not bring them consciously into a new position, with a new object before them; and the consequence was, that the burden being involved, having a large and increasing debt, or liability, the consequence is, people are not taken out of it. The mere fact of the forgiveness of sins, though relief, is not in itself power.

I will give an illustration of it. Suppose a man to be involved, having a large and increasing debt, or liability, hanging over him, which he cannot discharge. Some one comes in, in large-hearted benevolence, and pays the debt. That debtor is relieved from the pressure of his debt, but he has nothing to live upon. The mere fact of his having his debt paid will not keep him.

Thus you see, beloved friends, the importance of the very youngest of us knowing not only that our consciences are relieved, but that we are positively brought into a place where there are divine resources, and that we have a new object before us in that blessed Christ who has done all this for us. We have now One to please. Have you the sense of that in your heart, that you have One to please up there in heaven?
Do you say, “I have relief in my conscience, I have my sins forgiven me”? Then, I ask, what are you doing? Do you say, “God has given me everything here to enjoy, and I am enjoying myself now. I have this world, and I am to enjoy the world. I am, of course, to keep myself from the grossly evil things in it. I would not go to the theater, or to the opera, or to a hall, or a concert, or anything of that kind”? But do you think, that, because you have obsequiously abstained from all that, and have kept away from those gross things, you are out of the world? Oh, be not deceived. You may have abstained from those things because they offended your conscience, but you are not necessarily apart from the world, because all that is in the world, that comes under either of these three heads, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

I trust you see what an important thing it is to have this brought before you, that it is Christ, and not yourselves, that you have to study. If you act upon that before God, honestly and in faith, you will find it a wonderful help for your soul in every detail. Suppose you were tempted to do something, or there were some company you would like to keep, or some association you would like to get into, and you were to sit down, and say, “Would this please Christ? would this suit Christ?” Oh, how different the result would be! Surely it is a knife that cuts all round, it cuts in a circle. “Would this please or suit Christ? He has left me here on this earth to be His representative. Would this be a representation of Him? Would this be giving a true character of Christ, a true expression of Him?” Now, beloved friends, do you know anything of such exercise of soul? Does your heart ever go through that testing process before God? That alone can keep a person from the world. That alone can give you a holy horror of this age, with all its defilements and snares. Perhaps you say, “I like to look into the shop windows as I pass along.” Yes, one’s nature likes it, but do you ever see anything there that makes Christ in heaven more precious to your heart? On the contrary, there is a great deal that takes your thoughts and affections away from Him. There is no use in denying it, beloved friends, there is nothing in the world itself that helps a person spiritually; but, on the contrary, everything tends to hinder. The things that you see as you pass along affect you in this way, if you yield to them, that you lose your taste for what is spiritual. Your taste becomes soiled. If a person lies amongst the pots, does he not get blackened? If you touch pitch, will you not be defiled? Or can you live in a place, the atmosphere of which is entirely saturated with impurity, and not suffer from it? Oh, yes, a great deal more than you think. We are not aware of the soiling influences which this world has upon us. All the things that are in it tend to drag and keep us down. They are not of the Father. The Father is against the world, the Son is against the devil, and the Holy Ghost is against the flesh.

“The world passeth away.” Do you know what will become of this world? It is very solemn. This “age” will receive the devil’s man. That very world that people like so much, that very world will receive Antichrist -- will welcome Antichrist. Is that the world you love? Is that the world you want to have your pleasure in, or your recreation, or your gain in -- the world that hated Christ, and that will receive Antichrist?

Now just look at 1 John 2:18, which goes further into this point. I do not offer any apology at all for specially dwelling upon this. The apostle addresses himself again to the “babes,” to the infantile state, to the lowest class. “Babes, it is the last hour.” Now, beloved friends, how important it is, even for the youngest, to know the time we are in! Many might say, “Why do you speak to babes about that? Why do you talk to them about the character of the days?” I answer, Because God does so. He does not address Himself to “fathers”; that struck me very much when I looked at it first, or to “young men,” but to “babes”; because He would have all His children, all His family, every member of it, the infant as well as the old and the middle-aged, to know that it is “the last hour.” To my mind that is very solemn. Oh, eternity will never give us back this moment. You will never get in eternity the opportunity you have now. To me, when I reflect, it is a most wonderful thing, the most wonderful favor and grace conceivable, to be allowed to live for Christ in a day like this. You will never have it in eternity. You will never get the opportunity then of showing that your heart appreciates the love of Christ. You will never get the opportunity then of standing out in the presence of the haters of Christ, and saying, “He is my Savior and my Lord.” Now this makes this hour very solemn. It is the only opportunity that God will give us of casting in our lot with His own Son, who is hated and rejected by this world. Are you casting in your lot with Him, rejected as He is? Is Christ worthy of it at your hands? Is He worthy of your life, of every power of your heart? Is He worthy of your every affection? Suppose you had a thousand worlds, and could lay them all down at His feet, would even that be an adequate expression of what He is worthy of from you? Suppose you had a thousand lives, and could spend them all for Christ, would that be an adequate expression of what He is worthy of? Oh, beloved friends, how I wish I could awaken your hearts to a sense of what it is to be allowed to live in such a day as this! How blessed it would be, if only one soul, as a result of these two evenings we have had together, could say, “Well, I have a greater sense of the wonderful nature of the place I am in, and what it is to live for Christ before men, and to be for Christ, and to study His pleasure.”

Yes, it is “the last hour,” and “it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed; the night is far spent.” We are, as it were, in the passing of the last grains of sand out of the great hour-glass of time. We are in the last hour, and it is not the beginning of the last hour, no, nor the middle of it, but the closing seconds of it. Let me urge upon you, on the very youngest here tonight, the feeblest and most youthful, here we are, in the very close of the last days, on the very eve of the archangel’s voice, and the trump of God!

One word about this, and then we separate for the present. Let me ask you, what is the state of your heart as regards the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? I ask, if you were informed by an angel from God, that before midnight the Lord Jesus would come, that He would come before midnight tonight, if such a positive, distinct intimation
reached you, what would you do? I ask you affectionately, would that create a tremendous revolution in your hearts? Would you listen to such a statement as that, unmoved? Are there not some hearts here that are challenged even by the thought? Would you not say, “I should like to be free from this; I should like to be done with that; I should like to put that on one side; I should like to sever all connection between this and what I am in, in order that I might, with joy, and with freedom, and with undivided affection, go forth to meet Him”? Now go, and get free at once! If there is anything in any of your consciences or hearts that His coming rebukes, if you have lost the sense of His own blessed presence and love, and of the worthiness of His Person; may God use the coming of that blessed One to kindle this afresh in your hearts! There is everything in God’s word to point to the fact that there is nothing to hinder Him coming at once, and if this is so, whatever in your hearts prevents your living in perfect comfort in prospect of it, go and put it away this very evening! Sever yourself from every connection with it, that you may go forth free, that you may be able to go out with affection of heart, and say, “There is nothing now to hinder me, now I can say with joy, Come, Lord Jesus! and whilst I wait for Him, it is my delight to be in circumstances that minister to His pleasure. I have now but One, and One only, to please.” Thus you can take up the words of the hymn we minister to His pleasure. I have now but One, and One only, to please. The liberty of being free from all else! The greatest liberty of that! The liberty of only having Christ to be committed to minister to his own pleasure. It is an immense stay to the heart in such a scene to know God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Then he comes down to what is wondrous liberty to have only Christ, to live for Christ, to walk with Christ, to serve Him, to please Him, in this world.

Oh, the liberty of that! The liberty of only having Christ to please! The liberty of being free from all else! The greatest bondage, the greatest slavery, that ever a man lived in, was to be committed to minister to his own pleasure. It is wondrous liberty to have only Christ, to live for Christ, to walk with Christ, to serve Him, to please Him, in this world.

May God, by His Spirit, whatever your condition in His family be, whether a “babe” or a “young man,” teach you the value, the blessedness, the preciousness of His own Son; that Christ being so consciously your treasure, you may not think anything too great a sacrifice to express what a treasure He is to you, for His own blessed name’s sake!


**Human and Divine Circumstances**

*(2 Corinthians 1 and 12)*

The contrast between Paul’s circumstances in this chapter and in chapter 12 of this epistle is very striking. Here he is, we may say, in human circumstances, surrounded by straits, difficulties and dangers, which came upon him from without, and to which no doubt he was subjected in a peculiar way because of his service. But in chapter 12 he is seen altogether in Gods circumstances, if I may so say, taken up into the third heavens, into Paradise, the subject, as he tells us, of abundance of the revelations,” or “exceeding greatness of the revelations” -- and then, and as a consequence, crippled by a thorn in the flesh given him, and sent back into this world to go through it as a poor, broken, shattered vessel: yet never so efficient for God’s purpose as when in this cripplement, so much so that when his first thoughts are set aside by communion, he bows to the stroke and says, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” This was when he reached the sanctuary, as it were. It is marvelous to see clearly how this alters everything with us all; even a Paul is changed from beseeching the Lord thrice that it might depart from him, to not only accepting it, but taking pleasure in it -- glorying in it!

But to return to our chapter (observe v. 3), it is striking how he begins in the very opposite way to that which marks us generally. It is natural to us to start with our own troubles and pressure, and then perhaps to go on to tell of the comfort and consolation ministered by God to us; but the apostle begins with the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies”; thus beginning, not at the stream, but the blessed fountain head Himself. Then he comes down to the stream, “that we may be able to comfort,” &c. It was not a going up to God from that, but from God Himself, he comes down to the comfort ministered. It makes an immense difference at what end we begin. This poor world has ever been the place wherein to find broken hearts and weeping eyes; who can dry those tears or bind up those hearts but God Himself! Still, the human need, however great, is no measure of His comfort.

It is an immense stay to the heart in such a scene to know God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; it is in very truth exactly the title that suits a poor tempest tossed pilgrim on his way to glory; it suits, too, the one who is reduced by this God-sent-and-given weakness. It is blessed, amid all that we meet with in the wilderness, to know there was One, but only One, who tasted unmeasured trouble and sorrow; in our case it is all measured, and oh, with what skill and care too. He does not place on the vessel any weight beyond what it can bear: He knows exactly its capacity as to this, He allots the weight, and He gives also His power, His strength, to sustain. All goes on under His hands; no amount even of God-given consolation in the midst of the troubles here could ever be the measure of His heart.

Observe how the apostle rises to the source here: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.” He is the spring and source of every mercy -- it is all mercy every step of the way; every trouble even is in mercy, all His blessed way with us is mercy; Paul starts from the source of all, even from the blessed God Himself, in whom is perfect fullness and divine sufficiency. Then he comes down to what is ministered from this source through vessels of sovereign choice; that which he himself had passed through was the needed preparation for this ministry through him. What a
ministry! Exercises of heart within, pressure and difficulty without, all made tributary to its discharge.

But, further, see how the Corinthians were in the mind of the blessed God, hence the servant is afflicted, is passed through heights and depths of trial, through every variety of circumstance (2 Cor. 11), in order that in him thus, there might be displayed the power of the Christ, and that the very same power might go out through him and reach them. A true servant is ready for everything: stands as an ox between the altar and the plough -- ready for either! How different from the world's, and our own natural thoughts; to be bowed down to, made something of, applauded, is what the flesh craves and the world accords; but to SUFFER for His blessed name's sake, is the divine way, and full of present and eternal glory.

Thus, too, the servant himself learns what God is to him in such moments, both what the Lord can and do. So the apostle -- “at my first answer no man stood with me,” he was forsaken by all; not a hard thought rested in his breast, “I pray God it may not be laid to their charge” -- but then, mark well what follows, “nevertheless the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.” How blessed but His presence comes first -- “the Lord stood with me” -- afterwards what the Lord did for His servant: “and strengthened me.”

Then, besides, there is a reason, a needs be for all these afflictions and conflicts. First, on our side, it is “that we should not trust in ourselves”; this is a great point, those who know their own hearts, -- know the deep-seated confidence in self which lies rooted there. Oh, nothing but the displacing power of death can get rid of that; then that very death removes the hindrances to confidence in Him, “in God which raiseth the dead.” What an issue! What meat from the eater! We must go into the gloomy night, into the darkness of the grave, be invested, as it were, with the shroud, and pass into the tomb, that we may come forth in the bloom and beauty of resurrection. Thus we sow in tears to reap in joy, heaviness endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Then, further, there is a needs be on God's side for all these sittings and trials, they are His opportunities or occasions to display Himself in the love that never overlooks or forgets His own. He draws near at such moments and makes Himself known as “the God of all comfort”; as “God who comforteth those that are cast down”; “as one whom His mother comforteth so will I comfort you” -- these are His own gracious words in a past day, not less true to-day. Thus He turns the sorrows and afflictions of these poor scenes to His own account, displaying in them a tenderness and a compassion that overlooks none. He delights to show how He can heal a broken heart, as well as sustain a weak body. The first is not beyond Him, the second is not beneath Him.

You will, no doubt, call to mind the touching scene in the history of Joseph and his brethren, how when their father Jacob was dead, they doubted Joseph and gave him no credit for any affection beyond that which connection with Jacob might secure to them; his brethren reasoned thus: “they said Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him” -- their thoughts of him were governed by what was in their own hearts -- they credited him with feelings and motives which would have actuated them in like circumstances. How does Joseph meet this? Does he resent it in any wise? “Joseph wept when they spake to him” -- his heart was broken; and then listen to his gracious words: “I will nourish you and your little ones, and he comforted them and spake kindly unto them,” or as in the margin “spake to their hearts.” How it brings to mind the scene in the future when the words of Hosea 2:14 will be made good:

I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Thus we see how that as death literally will be Jehovah's way of dealing with Israel in the future, so it is the way of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints morally now. And thus it is that we are educated and trained in God's school, in order that as servants and vessels of His own, we may be fit for His use. Everything must be fully tested and proved. If we are walking with God in the secret life of our souls within, we must be conscious how little we are able to help one another, it is painful to observe how well able we appear to be to find out the weak points in one another, the halting and blemishes which alas abound; but the ability through grace to remove these is another thing, and to do it in all the tenderness of one who as “a nurse cherisheth her children,” being affectionately desirous of them and willing to impart also our own souls, because they are dear unto us. How blessed the service which has such an object and is rendered in such a spirit; and so it is that, whatever be the call or demand, whether what we have spoken of, or whether comfort or consolation, all alike flows in the grace of Christ, from him who has learned it in God's school, from one who has as it were walked the great hospital of suffering which this present world is, and having tasted the balm of consolation himself which the Father of mercies and God of all comfort has ministered to him, is able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God: thus and thus alone out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong sweetness. May our hearts, by His Spirit's power be divinely receptive of such blessed ways of our Father God for Christ's sake.

Kadesh and Hor

(Numbers 20)

It is of great moment to seize the divine connection between scriptures, and to observe their intimate bearing the one upon the other. Now it would hardly be possible to find, in all the word of God, a chapter which presents more vividly what the true nature and character of the wilderness is, than the one which heads this paper.
It is most striking to see how plainly this is stamped upon Num. 20. It is a chapter of death, it begins with it, and it closes with it; and more remarkable still, it is death in the same family, for in the opening of the chapter, Miriam (the sister of Aaron) closes her eyes in death, and in the end of it, Aaron the priest, the brother of Miriam, lays aside his priestly robes, and closes his eyes in death. Thus it is a perfect chapter of wilderness experience; it is indeed the very beginning and the end of the wilderness, opening with death, closing with death. How touching to see the sweet singer of Israel’s triumph on the shores of the Red Sea, drop her timbrel to take it up no more; she led the song in those palmy days of Jehovah’s victory, for His people, now, death seals her lips in a silence which cannot be broken: and as it was with the prophetess at the commencement of the chapter, so it is with the priest at the close of it, where we see Aaron, the brother of Miriam, laying aside his priestly robes, and bowing to death. It is very solemn to hear Jehovah’s words to him at this time,

And the Lord spake to Moses and to Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land, which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up into Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there.

Thank God, our great high priest shall never die, continuing ever, He hath an intransmissible priesthood, wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost (that is, to carry right through to the end) them that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But to return to our chapter in Numbers, we read that Miriam died, and there was no water for the congregation, and the people did chide with Moses; death and dearth and dissatisfaction are all found in it on man’s side, to him a scene of resourcelessness is in itself an “evil place,” Egypt is pre-eminently such a scene, “it is no place of seed or of figs, or of vineyards or of pomegranates,” such is the language of resourcelessness, that brings in the glory of the Lord, “The glory of the Lord appeared unto them,” how blessed! glory appearing for weakness and expressed nothingness: then follows the acting of grace toward the murmuring camp on God’s part, and the actings, alas, of flesh and nature on Moses and Aaron’s part. Oh what poor things at best we are, how little continuity we have, how soon we can pass from the spot where nature and flesh are silenced, to the place where they are in full activity; these, beloved, are sad and solemn considerations for us to-day, divine beacons and danger signals, which our God and Father would have us ponder and weigh well before Him. It seems to me that nothing manifests where we are in the state of our souls before the Lord, as evil and departure from Him in His saints; and it does so in a two-fold way, first, in the way of discernment of what the evil is, the ability to “put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:10). Next is the power to deal with it in grace according to the way of the Lord. It is evident if there is no discernment there can be no dealing with it, but it is also to be kept in mind that too often the action towards the evil discerned, takes the character of that of Moses and Aaron here, not priestly service in grace, but a judicial process than which nothing is more hateful to God; it was this false representation of God here, which brought forth from Him the solemn words,

Because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Now observe, beloved, wherein their not having sanctified Jehovah in the eyes of the children of Israel consisted. Let us trace the narrative a little, and we shall see. The words of the Lord were, “Take the rod ... and speak ye unto the rock.” The history of “The Rod” is found in chapter 17, and a most blessed history it is. “The Rod” was prepared, as it were, ere the needs be for its service arose; it was the rod of Aaron, it was laid up before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness, and on the morrow it was found budded, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds; it set forth, in the most precious figure, victorious priesthood, founded on death and resurrection; it was by this the murmurs of a guilty people could alone be taken away, and in the power of this alone could they be carried through the wilderness, it was this rod then, that Jehovah pointed to when Moses is commanded to take “The Rod,” further, he was to speak to “The Rock.” Now contrary to all this, the action of Moses and Aaron here, was an entirely false representation of God to Israel. Jehovah had said, “Take the Rod ... and speak ye to the Rock,” but Moses instead, takes his own rod, the rod, not of priestly grace, but of judgment, that with which he had smitten the river, and he smote the rock twice; thus he misrepresented Jehovah in every way, both in smiting the rock twice, and in speaking to Israel as he did; in very truth he stood before guilty rebellious Israel, the very contrast to that character in which God was dealing with them. May we lay this to heart in all our ways and mode of acting, so that through His grace we may be enabled to give a true and proper representation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His present acting in grace.

Let us now dwell a little on a scripture in Deuteronomy, which records for us the government of God toward His servant Moses, in respect of this very sin. This 34 {34th
chapter] of Deuteronomy is full of the deepest instruction for our souls, as well as most touching in all its details. It is of great importance that we should clearly understand that grace and government are found all throughout the word of God, and they never interfere the one with the other; moreover we may often find these presented to us in the same event or incident, so it is as to the very scene before us in Deut. 34. It was government that closed the gates as it were of the promised land on Moses, because of his action at Meribah, yet it was grace, most blessed grace on Jehovah’s part, to lead him to the top of Pisgah, and there to trace out with his own hand for Moses, the pleasant land; to map it all out, as it were, for His poor servant, so that with those very eyes, so soon to be closed in death, he might take in the view. What blessed grace of God! accordingly we read here, “I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.” Mark it well, beloved reader, in the one verse are set before us both grace and government. This is most deeply instructive for all our souls, may we largely profit by it for His glory. How touching too, to see the aged servant, one hundred and twenty years of an eventful life, upon him, it for His glory. How touching too, to see the aged servant, one hundred and twenty years of an eventful life, upon him, ascending Nebo to die! And yet there was no faltering in those steps, no dimness in those eyes, no abating of his natural force. Jehovah was his guide, as on the summit of Pisgah he surveyed that goodly mountain and Lebanon; there he died, and there he was buried by the Lord Himself; no marble marked that spot, “and no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day.” What a finish of an eventful life! I would here quote the beautiful words of another in relation to it:

Provoked by the rebellion of Israel, and wearied with caring for the people, instead of exalting God in the eyes of Israel, he exalted himself. He made use of the gift of God for that purpose; he did not sanctify Jehovah in the eyes of the people; he did not give Him His place. God does not become weary in His goodness; and thus acting in discipline, for the good of His people according to His majesty, He can always fall back upon those ways of direct blessing, which flow from His unfailing grace. Man, wearied with the evil that vexes him, tries to exalt himself, to put himself above the evil, and to shelter himself from it because he is not above it. He no longer glorifies God; he exalts himself and is abased.

If Moses, instead of acting according to the flesh, had remembered, that it was not he or his glory which was in question (and how often had he himself told them so!) but God, he would have felt that the people could not touch the glory of God; and this unfailing glory would have sustained him, looking only at that glory which ever maintains itself; so that if we only seek to maintain it, we may rest upon it. But he lacked faith, and was forbidden to enter into that which only the perfection of glory could open to men; and, indeed, what could lead Israel safely through the desert, and into the land of Canaan? Pure grace alone. Moses was not able to apprehend the height of the grace that conquers everything. It was according to that grace, as we have seen that God acted at Meribah . . . Moses dies, and buried by Jehovah, does not serve as an object of carnal veneration to a people at all times ready to fall into this sin, when his name gave them honor according to the flesh; just as they continually opposed him, when his presence according to God thwarted the flesh. He was a man honored of God, who scarcely had his equal (He of course excepted who had none); but nevertheless he was man, and man is but vanity.

“Man’s life is as the grass, 
Or like the morning flower, 
If one sharp blast sweeps o’er the field, 
It withers in an hour.

But Thy compassions, Lord, 
To endless years endure, 
And all Thy people ever find, 
Thy word of promise sure.”

The Attractive Power of Christ Crucified

The Separating Power of Christ at His Coming

(John 3:11-17; 12:20-38; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

The history of man has been failure and ruin throughout, and Scripture is not silent in its testimony as to this, either in the Old or New Testament. The second chapter of John furnishes a striking proof of this statement; whether that scripture be regarded from a moral or a dispensational point of view, the same solemn reality is inscribed upon it. Let us examine for a little the concluding verses of that chapter.

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.

Here, then, is a fact of the deepest moment, and one specially necessary to remember in these days, when human ingenuity is taxed to its utmost, to produce an effect on man as he is; if his feelings can be wrought upon in any way, then it is expected a lever power has been placed underneath him, whereby mighty results may show forth themselves in him. This being the case pre-eminently just now, it is well to have God’s estimate of the value of all such efforts. It is said that in the feast day at Jerusalem many believed in His name, seeing the miracles Jesus did; yet that unto such Jesus did not commit Himself, knowing man, and what was in man. Does any one enquire what point or force has such an utterance with respect to the subject in hand? Much every way, but specially that in the next chapter, Jesus declares to the master in Israel, the positive necessity for a new man; the fact is, there must be a new nature, a creature of God, born of water and the Spirit - the old can neither be trusted nor improved; no power in heaven or on earth can ameliorate man; he may be convinced as to mind, he may be reformed as to outward habits, as we may have seen the once cold and negative sceptic, changed into the respectable citizen who gives an outward credence to all the great facts of Christianity; or as we may see the drunkard and profligate man, outwardly turned into the sober and steady man; but all this touches not
the springs within, these are left in their nature and sources corrupt and irreparably bad.

Now herein lies the moral beauty and magnificence of the cross of Christ, that no one in heaven or earth could conceive as the blessed God did, or accomplish as the eternal Son did, that and that alone which could meet the desperate nature of the case. So perfectly has God been glorified about sin, that not only are the saved constituted the righteousness of God in Christ, but believers in Him are blessed up to the very heights of that glory where God’s right hand has exalted our Savior and our Lord. There are two sides in this wonderful economy of grace, God’s side and man’s side; as to the latter, the word is unmistakable, “ye must be born again.” “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” As to the former, the word is equally significant, “the Son of man must be lifted up.” How completely these two sides of truth, with their respective aspects, combine in winding up man’s history as such; without a spark of goodness in himself he had not even the appreciation of it in another; if it had been there the blessed Son of God would have drawn it forth; but, alas! we know too well that it was in the presence of manifested goodness as seen in Jesus, that the badness and hatred of man toward all that was lovely and divine were most witnessed. The historical fact recorded in the Old Testament, with which John 3 is associated, is very instructive. We are carried back to Num. 21, which describes a scene in the thirty-ninth year of Israel’s wilderness pilgrimage. Rebellion of such a character sprang up in the camp, as to bring down upon the people the punishment of death, and death too of such a nature, even the poisonous venom of fiery serpents! This marked change in the ways of God with Israel calls for notice on our part. Let it be observed how up to this point every curative process had been resorted unto and tried; but now as it were in the very close, the last year of wilderness wandering, the blessed God exposes man in his true light, as one whom no curative process could reach, and introduces that which pointed on to other days, which pre-figured that redemption which was no after-thought with God -- that which was nothing less than the introduction of life into the midst of death. If in the midst of life we are in death, how very blessed to know that in the midst of death there is life; and oh, what life! No less a life than that which has gained the victory over death, and him who had the power of death.

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.

Observe, there is no thought whatever of setting aside the judgment of God. Where would be righteousness in that? And if, on the other hand, it were all righteousness, in peremptory destruction, where were the love?

Herein then shines out God’s wisdom, in that He provides an answer commensurate with His own nature to His moral claims. God ever sustains His relations with us, not only according to His own nature, but also after a manner which carries security and confidence to us. This, the serpent of brass put upon a pole, was to Israel, and this the Son of man lifted up upon the cross is to poor sinners to-day. The death of Christ was, historically, “in the end of the age.” Every trial had only brought out the solemn fact that hope alone was in God; and then it was that He, in whose nature all the springs of love and mercy were, came forth to show Himself able not only to vindicate His righteous attributes in the face of rebellion and revolt, but able at the same time, and as well, to save the guilty rebel, and to give him the place of a son and heir -- an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. Marvelous grace of our God, who is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

Now, observe how the Son of Man lifted up on the cross is set forth as the resource and attractive object of poor hearts, all whose hopes and joys had departed and fled; just as the serpent of brass lifted up on the pole, in the midst of Israel’s misery and distress, was the one point whither dying ones were attracted and blessed. In the eyes of man, what could be more futile or contemptible? So Christ crucified, the Son of man lifted up, writes scorn on all the wisdom of man, and is scorned thereby; that which was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek, is God’s wisdom and God’s power, and is, as well, the one spot where weary hearts overburdened with sin find shelter and rest. We shall find the same blessed facts brought out in John 12. Let us turn to the scripture for a little. It was a wonderful moment for Jesus; Mary with affection and sympathy entering into its peculiarity, anoints His body for the burying; the kingdom is present before His eyes and thoughts; for Israel welcomed Him, at least for the moment, and the Greeks want to “see Jesus.” Is there any reason why He should die in order to take it? Does not every affection of your heart resent the impious thought? But does not your soul bow down and worship in His presence who could have claimed the kingdom as His own, but would not without dying, in order that God might be glorified, and that He Himself in His love might associate with Himself in the glory of God poor things like us?

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};

and then there opens out before the Savior’s eyes the value, import, and glory of His work.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.

Being thus lifted up from the earth, He became the attractive object for weary souls in a world that had departed from God; as another has blessedly expressed it, “By death, He morally and judicially destroyed him who had the power of death. It was the total and entire annihilation of all the rights of the enemy, over whomsoever and whatsoever it might be, when the Son of God and Son of man bore the judgment of God, as man, in obedience unto death. All the rights that Satan possessed through man’s disobedience, and the judgment of God upon it, were only rights in virtue of the claims of God upon man, and come back to Christ alone. And being lifted up between God and the world in obedience on the cross,
bearing that which was due to sin, Christ became the point of attraction for all men living, that through Him they might draw nigh to God. While living, Christ ought to have been owned as the Messiah; lifted up from the earth as a victim before God, being no longer of the earth as living upon it, He was the point of attraction towards God for all those who, living on earth, were alienated from God, as we have seen, that they might come to Him there (by grace), and have life through the Savior's death. Wondrous spot this, which thus forms a meeting-place between God and ruined sinners! And how must it not have stood out before His soul at this moment, when the great constituent parts of the kingdom, in which He is to be glorified, had passed before the Lord? And is it too much to say that the "much fruit" which His precious death was to bring forth, both as regards His Father's counsels and glory, and us, the children of His love, was beyond everything to His heart?

There is another point of peculiar beauty here. Let us observe it well. It is a festive scene; all are, as it were, in the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles; but Jesus is solitary and alone -- death is before His Spirit, and not the kingdom with its honors and joys. But this solitariness of Jesus here is only in keeping with all His blessed path on earth; He was ever in life the solitary man, His heart looking on to the time when He should enter into the deepest and most profound loneliness, to leave it behind Him for ever. Do our hearts, beloved, grasp the moral magnificence of these words -- "much fruit"? Have we the divine appreciation of such result of the Savior's death? Do we carry in our bosoms the overpowering fact that we are part of that much fruit? Is it a small thing to know that a Christian is a man of a different generation from the first Adam? Blessed it is surely to receive through His name present pardon and peace, a full and final discharge from all our sins on the merits of His death; but to think that I am part of the fruit of the Savior's death, part of that company whom He has brought through His death to stand in His own place before His Father and God, of that assembly in the midst of which He prays, part of that family that He confesses as His brethren -- not ashamed to do so -- "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." All this, and much more, is past all human thought, and silent adoration is the only proper attitude of the soul introduced into the presence of such grace and glory.

I turn now to the other branch of our subject; viz., "The separating power of Christ at His coming." The scripture which unfolds this in detail is 1 Thess. 4. It is important to remark one or two points of great interest in connection with the taking up of the saints ere we examine the subject in detail. First of all, it was to the apostle of the Church that a special revelation in connection with this, its hope, was vouchsafed. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," signalizes what comes after as something special; it was suitable every way, that what related to its finish, at least as regards the earth, should be communicated after the same manner, as well as through the same channel, as that which marks "the revelation of the mystery," and also the symbol of its unity here below. (See Eph. 3:1-3; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 10:16, 17.) The Lord's Supper and the rapture of the saints raised or changed were subjects then concerning which Paul the apostle of the Church received those special communications and revelations already alluded to. It is evident that this special revelation touching the coming of the Lord to the air had both a general and a special aspect. With regard to the first, it is made known as the true and proper hope of the Church; it is not death, but the coming of the Lord. With respect to the latter, it is plain that the uneasiness regarding the position of those who had fallen asleep in Christ at Thessalonica was met by the apostle through this special revelation of God. The Thessalonian saints did not sorrow for their dead as if any uncertainty rested on their minds with regard to them, but they were perplexed as to the part or position of these sleeping ones in view of the coming of the Lord. Hence we say this revelation to Paul has a particular as well as a universal bearing. This "gathering together unto Him" is the great crisis for which we wait; and it is as well, blessed for ever be His name and grace, the one thing for which He the Lord Jesus Christ waits. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive" (take) "you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also." What wonderful grace! He reckons that nothing could be so comforting to us as that He should come and receive us to Himself, not merely to heaven, but to Himself. What a moment that will be for Jesus when He comes to the air and welcomes to Himself those whom He has loved, and whose affections He died to win! How shall not our hearts overflow with joy when we throng around Him, the true center of His own.

Let us meditate a little on the order of the rapture as it is unfolded in this scripture. The first fact communicated was intended to tell upon the sorrow of the saints at Thessalonica. Those who are alive at the moment of the rapture shall not take precedence of those who have fallen asleep. This was designed by the Lord to meet the perplexity of their hearts, as to the supposed place of inferiority which sleeping in Christ assigned to any who had passed away. They suffer in nowise in this respect -- they slept in Christ; they were waiting there, as we who are alive are waiting here; but more than that, they first are the subjects of His quickening power, who is the resurrection and the life. Is it not like Himself the Lord, to put forth His power on the weakest first? In them is displayed the glory of Him who said to the sorrowing sister, "I am the resurrection and the life." Thus would Jesus wipe the tears of the sorrowful and bereaved. "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." His glory as "the life" is displayed in these, as that of "the resurrection" is displayed in those. A virtue will go forth from Him which will entirely obliterate all trace of mortality; then shall what is mortal be swallowed up by life; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." It is very blessed to notice how it is said, we "shall be caught up together." Time and years, circumstances, death and sin, may have severed us from each other until then; but now there shall be no more mention made of divided or severed interests. We shall be caught up
together -- attracted, drawn by a common object, abundantly able now to win and claim and satisfy these worthless hearts of ours, even as He Himself is the perfect delight of His Father’s heart.

There are two things in connection with being caught up -- we shall see Him, and we shall be like Him. Wonderful realities! What a consideration for us all; and yet how few of us that have our hearts under the power of these divine realities -- “We shall see Him as He is!” We are predestinated to this. (See Rom. 8:29.) Blessed invigorating hope to cheer the heart amid the trials and sorrows that intervene. Oh, when we look into that blessed face, how will not the heart find its abundant compensation for all its waiting and watching for Him!

“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.”

But it is also said “we shall be like Him.” This, too, is wonderful; we, so little like Him now, then to be perfectly like Him, and as we have borne the image of the earthly, to bear the image of the heavenly. How blessed to think that God has before Himself, in the One who adorns His throne in the heavens, the type, the pattern, the sample of what the fruit of the death of Jesus is to be. When Israel entered the land of promise, and reaped the harvest of Canaan, they were directed by Jehovah to bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of their harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath” (i.e., on the first day of the week) “the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day, when ye wave the sheaf, an he lamb without blemish of the first year, for a burnt-offering unto the Lord. And the meat-offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor: and the drink-offering thereof shall be of wine, fourth part of an hin. And, ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, in all your dwellings. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave leaves, of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the first-fruits unto the Lord. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish, the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt-offering unto the Lord, with their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the Lord. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits, for a wave-offering before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest” (Lev. 23:11-20).

Now Christ risen from the dead on the morrow after the Sabbath, that is, on the first day of the week, is the great antitype of the sheaf of first-fruits; and the same relation which existed between that sheaf and the harvest of Canaan, exists likewise through grace between Christ and His own. Is it not blessed to think of this? His saints, His own, are the antitype of the new meat-offering. Observe how leaven was allowed in this. Because it was intended to represent the saints of God, they are the fruit of His death; as He said Himself, “If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

When the blessed Lord walked as a man on earth, wonderful and beautiful as was His path, He walked therein absolutely alone. He was solitary in life, solitary in death. Truly we may say, “Of the people there were none with Him.” His life of perfect obedience, precious as it was under the eye of God, never brought one soul to stand with Him where He Himself stood; but His death produced fruit. “If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” And in that bright day which is approaching, His saints, the fruit of His death, shall be perfectly like Himself. The attractive power of Christ at His coming is what we look for; we expect to be caught away, snatched away, as it were. How little, alas! are our souls under the formative power of such a hope.

It is interesting to observe the different ways in which the coming of the Lord is treated in Philippians and Thessalonians. In the former it is brought in at chapter 3, and it is to the soul what home, suddenly breaking on the vision, is to the jaded, foot-sore traveler. He had pressed on amid heat, and dust, and fog, and suddenly, as it were, home greets him, and the satisfaction of the heart is expressed at meeting Christ Himself. But in Thessalonians there is energy and power of the Lord, suited to the weakness of His own, well as the finishing touch, so to speak, put upon the revelation of the truth through Paul. If this be reality, as assuredly it is, what kind of people ought we to be who profess to hold it as the hope of our hearts? The Lord grant, in His rich mercy that our conversation may be in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Conscience in the Light”

(Luke 5:1-11)

I read those verses simply to suggest a subject for consideration, if the Lord should put it into the hearts of others to take it up; and that subject is, How the Conscience is really brought into the light of God’s presence.

I suppose there are none of us who would question the importance of such a truth as the conscience in the light of the presence of God; because it makes little matter how extensive our knowledge of the things of God may be if the conscience is not right. Let me note one thing before I enter a little more into it, and I throw it out simply in the way of anxiety as to the subject, and that is the tendency of all our hearts to judge
of things from what is outside. I believe that herein consists a great deal of the deficiency of spiritual discrimination or judgment with respect to ourselves, or with respect to anything else whereon we may be called upon to discriminate or judge. When we look at things in the fruits, rather than the root, from which these fruits come, we are almost certain to err. It is only, I believe in my soul before God, as anything is seen in the light with God, where God is, in all the manifested light which His presence sheds upon it, that we have a proper and correct judgment, and understanding either of ourselves, as to motives or springs of action, or anything else of that character.

Let me illustrate it for a moment. Occupation of the heart with self, although there may be the greatest diligence in that respect, never gives the soul a sense of what it is. You see people occupied with wrong in themselves; but there is never a divine judgment as far as I see with respect to what is truly of God, through mere occupation of heart with evil. Take any person who goes through that process of constant occupation with the evil they find in themselves; they never have a correct judgment or divine intelligence, as to the nature of that evil, by simply looking at it. I do not question for a moment that the knowledge of oneself is acquired, if I may use the expression, through a process which entails a most painful exercise of that order; but I am not speaking exactly of that, I am speaking of the divine judgment we arrive at with reference to what is within, not by looking at the fruits that it produces outside. All outside may be commendable and unquestionable; but the entire root and spring of our whole moral well-being can alone be exposed in the light of God’s presence, while perhaps there is no action at all that would lead you to form an unfavorable judgment concerning it. There was no action on the part of Peter, as narrated in the fifth chapter of Luke, which any one could reason from, as to the fact which God forced home upon his conscience in the light of His presence, that he was a sinful man. There was no outward blot; on the contrary, everything was externally favorable at the time to Peter. These outward actions were correct so far; but when he was brought into the very light of God’s presence, because Jesus was God -- and that is exactly the point as it seems to me in the fifth chapter of Luke -- his conscience is divinely illuminated as to all that he was in himself; and he gives the verdict which that light created in his heart, “I am a sinful man.”

I feel there is an amount of solemnity connected with all this, and an importance due to this subject, and I only touch upon it because of the necessity at the present moment pressed upon my own heart, by reason of the increase of intelligence and understanding all around, as well as amongst ourselves, that the conscience should be in a condition in which Satan could not get the advantage of us.

There is nothing so terrible as to see a conscience that is not in the light of the presence of God handling the things of God. Do you not feel it in your own heart? Do you not shrink from it? The whole edge, and force, and power of divine truth are taken away, no matter how intelligently you receive it outwardly into the understanding, if the conscience is not in the light of the presence of God. And when I say, “is not in the light of the presence of God,” I do not mean to say that there is not a particular moment -- such as we find in the fifth chapter of Luke -- in a person’s history, when they enter that presence, so to speak, for the first time; but I maintain that the moral judgment which is produced at that moment is kept up in the soul. It is not that a person gets into the thing once and for all, and there it is left. I quite own there is a moment when we reach the sanctuary, that is, the presence of God, the place where we must see things as God sees them, in the divine light of His presence; and unless that is kept up in the soul, Satan has a loophole through which he gets advantage over us with respect to conscience, and that is the first step down with every one.

It is a wonderfully solemn thing for the conscience to be in the light of the presence of God. I ask myself, and humbly and affectionately you, the question, Do you know what it is to walk with your conscience in the light of God’s presence? Do you feel the light of God penetrating down to the very deepest depths of your whole moral being, reflecting God’s judgment as to all that is within, exposing and detecting everything in a way you could never know by simply looking at the results and fruits of things outside? There is another remark I would make, and that is, that I believe nothing tends to break the confidence, the natural confidence, of our hearts in ourselves like this, the habitual maintenance of conscience in the light of God’s presence. Peter was a man into whose heart the truth had reached, I apprehend, a long time before the incident narrated in the fifth chapter of Luke; that is to say, that was not the occasion of Peter’s conversion, but there was at that time this further action on Peter, that he learned not merely the springs that were in himself -- and that is the point that was on my mind -- but the natural confidence of his heart, in measure at least, was broken. Because the moment this light reaches him, the moment his conscience is introduced into this penetrating light, he was obliged to give a verdict of all he felt himself to be as under it. Then it was that Peter learned to confide in the One that convicted him; and faith knows very well how to put these two things together, that you never really confide in Christ or in God -- you never have real genuine confidence in Christ and in God -- until Christ has taken the confidence in self from you. And how does He do that? By showing you what you are in the light of God’s presence. Because the very blessed word that comes immediately afterwards comes from the same place as this convicting power -- “Fear not.”

Where did that come from? It came from His lips who caused a little ray of the glory that belonged to Him to shine around Peter’s heart when He commanded the treasure of the deep into Peter’s net. He commanded, as the mighty God, the treasure of the deep into Peter’s net, and He commanded the light of His presence to shine into Peter’s heart; and when He gives Peter the sense of it, He breaks in that way in measure the confidence Peter had in himself, then He ministers this blessed comfort to him, “Fear not.” I do not believe there can be any real devotedness to Christ, after the order and pattern and fashion that God looks for, until the confidence of the
heart is broken in ourselves.

Turn with me for a moment and glance at the sixth chapter of Isaiah; it is a scripture of the Old Testament, but it is interesting to see the moral principle the same there.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 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. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 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 seraphim 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.

What renders this scripture interesting and instructive to the heart is, that here was a real genuine prophet of God, which Isaiah was, for he was called before, and had a vision too, as we find in the second chapter, and yet he was not free to go. He does not run before this moment, because he has not measured himself. And, oh! beloved friends, would God that our hearts had a sense of the greatness of it; may God, in some measure, give your hearts a sense of the importance of what I am feebly trying to bring before you, the wonderful blessedness of measuring oneself by contrast. Think of it for an instant. It is not measuring yourself with the badness of your past history, but by the contrast of all that you know in yourself, and in your own mind, with the perfect, exquisite blessedness and purity of the goodness of God in His own nature; this gives a sense of the horrible iniquity and badness of the springs of our moral being. That was what it was to the prophet here. He sees all this glory, and the moment he sees it, he says, “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.” And from the very spot where all that glory of God reached his conscience, when he is detected and exposed, comes the coal from off the altar, that removes everything that God detects. Is not that blessed? Is it not blessed to have the light of God shining into the inmost recesses of conscience, in order that we may know the love that takes away everything the light makes manifest? You will never get a divine sense of what the love is until you know what the light is. And these are the two very things spoken of as to what God is in His nature.

In the New Testament God is light and God is love; and is not that the order -- the moral order -- in which we are really brought to know those things in our souls when God is dealing with us. I feel the word spoken yesterday in respect to conscience, that it is ever the case that the intelligence is reached through conscience. I feel in my heart the power of that word, that God reaches our souls through the avenue of the conscience -- that conscience is the avenue of the soul; and if the understanding in an intellectual way grasps anything of God apart from the conscience, there is a person in a terrible exposed state. I feel it. I feel the power of that word in my own soul and heart. And you see that order everywhere through scripture, that it is the conscience that is reached -- that the conscience is brought out before God and set in the light of His presence; that confidence is correspondingly created in the heart, because it is broken in self, and that you never trust in God, you never trust in Christ, as you trust in Him when He has broken the ground for confidence in your heart. I simply refer to this, and throw it out as a subject for inquiry before the Lord, as to the blessedness of really having our consciences maintained in the light where God is, of having His judgment and His verdict according to His own blessed light, and power made known to us there, so that we may really trust and confide in Him and have the ground of the confidence, which I suppose is natural to all of us, broken as to ourselves, and have greater confidence than ever in God, and more thorough distrust of every single thing except what is in Him. May the Lord keep us in these days when Satan is looking for loopholes and advantages to seek to thrust us down from where God would have us. Lord, keep us with consciences thoroughly maintained in the light, that we may be free to go where Thou wouldst have us to go, according to Thy own wisdom.

**A Feast Prepared for Christ**


These scriptures record in detail two notable instances in the New Testament of a feast prepared for the blessed Lord; true, the scenes and occasions are different, yet there are certain great moral features in both which link them on, in a way, the one to the other.

In Luke 5, Levi is called by the blessed Lord in these words, “Follow me.” Who was this Levi? Why, none other than a publican, the detested exacter of the Roman tribute, which was itself the standing memorial of the sin of Israel as a nation, for else why were they bound under the yoke of this tax? Levi, a Jew, a publican! Such were hated by the people and were disreputable in the last degree, hence publicans are classed with sinners, as the very outcasts of society: such was the man Levi among men whom the Lord Jesus thus calls. Moreover, at the time of the call, he was prosecuting his hated avocation, sitting at the receipt of custom; thus everything was so arranged as to make the grace of God prominent at this moment. The call of the Lord was absolute and distinct: “Follow me.” None but Himself could so command, none but Himself could secure the allegiance of the heart, causing it to respond in His own way -- namely, even to Levi, *leaving all*, rising up, and following *him* -- just observe the separating power of the call -- Levi, we are told, “left all.” How blessed this is! His call took Levi out of all former detention, as really as, “I that speak unto thee am he” took the poor Samaritan away from all that previously
controlled her heart. In that call to Levi, was there not something more than a mere claim so to speak from One who, though Man, was God?

I believe the call communicated what it claimed. I am assured that there was conveyed to Levi’s heart, at that moment, some taste, however feeble, of what was in the heart of God, which was manifested and witnessed in Him who was the only-begotten of the Father, God manifested in flesh. This and this alone accounts for Levi’s feast; he spreads it and furnishes his table, as it were, in the power of the revelation which had visited him, a very day-spring from on high, surely.

Now observe who it is and what they are who here entertain the Lord of glory: “a great company of publicans,” and sinners -- it was “a great feast” -- for great was the motive power which had entered his heart who spread the table; further it was “a great feast,” for great was the lift out of everything which Levi’s heart had received and taken in, for he rose up and left all. Beloved readers, have we risen up, as it were, and left all to follow Jesus? Alas! how little, He knows, who appreciates, ever so little, of that which is the fruit of His own love. And, further still, it was a great feast, for great was the company who were gathered by Levi to entertain the Lord of life and glory. What a scene it is, whatever way we view it, whether we look at the host or the guests, or Himself who was invited there, and who sat there amidst publicans and sinners. It is beyond all expression blessed, when our hearts are in accord with the heart and this -- it is the rock on which it splits. Hence we read of this -- it is the rock on which it splits. Hence we read of this occasion and its feast, has its own characteristics which was beyond all blessing on earth, even Jesus Himself; the living water into her heart, understood there was that moment, some taste, however feeble, of what was in the heart of God, which was manifested and witnessed in Him who was the only-begotten of the Father, God manifested in flesh. This and this alone accounts for Levi’s feast; he spreads it and furnishes his table, as it were, in the power of the revelation which had visited him, a very day-spring from on high, surely.

Then He shows how impossible it was to fasten Christianity on to Judaism, flesh and the law combined; but there is no power that can make grace and the law to amalgamate: it is not possible to put the new wine of the Spirit, into the old bottles of Judaism. The Old and the New cannot be made into a fusion, such would be destructive to one side or another, the new wine must be put in new bottles!

Observe what we have here, namely, old wine, old bottles, new wine, new bottles, these are great contrasts; in the present day we find, on the one hand, some endeavoring to put the new wine into old bottles, others actually asserting that the old things are they which have become new! For such the old is not ended and the new is not introduced; thank God, it is not so, sad though it be, that the human mind should work on the things of God as to weave out theories and notions of this kind. It is not even as good as an attempt to patch up the old, for it is not even putting a piece of new garment on the old. The truth is there is a “new bottle” and there is “new wine.”

Then comes a word of a very practical nature in v. 39. May the Lord give us to lay it to heart: if we indulge in the old, we have no divine relish, no taste, for the new; we then say, “the old is better.” Alas! how we see on every side a decided preference for that which is old, the forms of man after the flesh, and not the energy of that which came from God.

Now the second occasion to which I have alluded will take us to John 12, we read, “there they made him a supper” -- and this occasion and its feast, has its own characteristics as well as the other. First, it is at Bethany -- that one sequestered spot on earth where Jesus was at home -- there was Martha, who we are told served; Lazarus who sat at the table; and Mary who anointed His feet with very costly ointment and wiped His feet with her hair. How blessed to be permitted to view this scene, and, by faith, to enter into it! All is in such divine and perfect order here, whether Martha serving, or Lazarus sitting, or Mary anointing; what a blessed family, where His heart found what was congenial to it! Still, remember, we are privileged also to be divinely intelligent as to that which most of all served him, and met Him, on this occasion, for this it was which so fully gave its character to Mary’s part in this feast; she understood Him, and entered into the circumstances through which He was about to pass, and this was grateful to His heart, this really entertained Him; on Mary’s part it was intelligent sympathy. He was about to enter into an inconceivable solitude, the solitude of death; her heart and affection in true and genuine sympathy, traversed with Him the dreary, lonely path, as well as by her act, marks her sense of the utter worthlessness of all around in view of His death; on the one hand, she intelligently, having taken in the living water into her heart, understood there was that which was beyond all blessing on earth, even Jesus Himself;
on the other hand, declaring that his tomb should bury out of her sight all else valuable on earth! For her, if Jesus dies, He carries all of hers down into the grave with Himself. That “pound of ointment of spikenard very costly,” answered to all that was around Jesus, in the hatred and malignity of man in that hour. Very blessed to see Him sit there to be thus served; to see Him accepting and vindicating the affection and sympathy which His own Person had created and called forth; to see her, too, fruit as she was of His grace, expending on Him to whom she owed her all -- that all, as another has touchingly and blessedly expressed it, Mary, as it were, says by this action of hers, “While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”

There is another point of solemn interest in the very affecting scene, namely, how opposite the thoughts of men are to what suits the mind of God and His Christ. The most that could be said concerning Mary’s act was, that it was waste that was stamped upon it in their eyes. Oh, how little was He in their estimation who measured the service His blessed Person called forth at this worth! For it is the Person to whom the service is rendered that is the true measure of its value. Jesus the eternal Son of the Father; Jesus the spotless and perfect Son of God; Jesus the willing and ready Friend of need and want and sorrow, stood so low in their estimation as to call forth the expression of waste in regard to that which was thus voluntarily expended upon Him. It is the same today -- the present is but the continuance of the past; the family character, as it were, is not wanting in the present generation, namely, a growing indifference to Christ -- no sense of who He is or what He is -- marks each succeeding generation; and that of to-day, with all its boasted light and advancement in science and knowledge and arts, uses even these things to manifest how little it thinks of, or cares for Him. (See Eccl. 9:15.)

There is one bright spot here in this dark background, as it were, on which let us turn our eyes for a moment. Jesus understood her action and appreciates it, and vindicates her. How blessed! Was it not enough for her? Let me say, Far more than enough and hence He lets all know what He felt and received in that act of hers. “Let her alone” were blessed words for her, “against the day of my burying hath she kept this,” was all her heart could desire. Oh the joy of being vindicated by Christ, and the satisfaction of knowing, that however feebly, we have truly and really ministered to the longings of his heart!

The Lord impart this devoted intelligence to us all in such days as these, that more genuine affection for, and true sympathy with Him, may mark us, and that nothing may be able to divert our hearts from Him, nothing may engage our powers but Him, and satisfy our affections but Himself.

“From Heaven”

(Acts 26:17)

It is of peculiar moment rightly to apprehend the force of the expression, “delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.” It would come painfully short of the intention of the blessed Lord in these words, if it were not clearly understood that He means by them an entirely new and heavenly mission; “delivering thee,” &c., signifies really a taking him out from either Jew or Gentile as to nationality, or country, and then sending him to them as one who had come forth from on high, from a heavenly Savior, with whom He was now united by the Holy Ghost whom he had received at the moment when, through the instrumentality of Ananias, his natural vision was restored to him. (See Acts 9:17.) Observe, the Savior in glory was revealed IN him, this the apostle himself tells us in Gal. 1:16. In that expression, “to reveal his Son IN me,” lies the distinctive character of his apostleship and mission; Peter, for instance, could have spoken of how the Father had revealed the Son to him; Paul could say “IN me.” This great reality is connected with the truth of which the great apostle of the Gentiles was the chosen minister and witness; it is connected with the truth of the union of Christ and the church, this very truth having been intimated at his conversion -- “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me.” How wonderful and how blessed this inward revelation of the glory of the Savior in Paul; herein consists the true source of all his witness and ministry. It has been truly said, that Israel had cast the heir of the vineyard out, and that a new testimony was therefore now to go forth, a testimony which, while it proclaimed the loss of the hopes, both of Israel and the earth, as clearly announced the call out of the earth of a heavenly people; of this, in surprising grace, Saul the persecutor, is made the special bearer. Let us dwell with adoring praise on the rich grace displayed by the Lord in choosing Saul to be the vessel of this heavenly treasure; all connected with him at that moment illustrates that grace; viz., it was when his enmity against God and His anointed had reached its highest point; it was when the witnesses whose hands had been first upon Stephen, had laid down at his feet their clothes, now such is the abounding grace and goodness of the Lord, that at that moment, and in such a man, the heavenly glory of the heavenly Savior is revealed. I would use the words of another in setting forth this grace, namely,

Before this, man’s fullest enmity had been met by God’s love; for the cross was at the same moment the witness of both, as the witness of Saul now is. The soldier’s spear, as one has observed, drew forth the blood and water -- sin has drawn forth grace. And now, as we may say, Saul’s journey to Damascus was the spear making its way a second time into the side of Christ, for he was now going with commission and slaughter against the flock of God. But it was on this journey that the light from heaven arrested him. The blood of Jesus thus again met the soldier’s cruel spear, and Saul is a pattern of all long-suffering. The sovereign grace that saves the church was thus displayed in Saul. But the heavenly glory that is reserved for the church was also displayed to him, for he sees Jesus in it. And by these things his future ministry is formed.

It has been said, and I think with great correctness, that at the time of calling out new ministries there have been characteristic exhibitions of Christ; striking illustrations of
this will be found in the histories of Moses and David and other worthies of old, yet was it reserved for this _heavenly ministry_ to be connected with the most blessed exhibition of all; the Lord Jesus having ascended into heaven, and being there head over all things to the church which is His body, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus from that glory, and in him appoints a ministry _formed upon the principle of this manifestation_. Thus it is that heaven was the birth-place of the apostleship of the Gentiles, and according to this, as in the scripture before us, he is sent from heaven to gather out and raise up a new and heavenly company, which should not only be _for_ heaven, but _from_ heaven as well.

The apostle tells us himself that he was “one born out of due time” but we are now seeing, I trust, how that it was _out of due place_, for it did not come from Jerusalem, as in fact it arose after the number of the twelve had been perfected by the appointment of Matthias. Nothing therefore can be more certain than that his call, mission and endowment were all characterized by heaven and glory. If we contemplate the subject of his witness and testimony, this will be further emphasized; for he comes out with this witness, that Christ and the church were one, that heaven was their common inheritance, and the gospel committed to him was “the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

Another point of great interest here is that spoken of in Gal. 1, how that “he conferred not with flesh and blood” -- he did not go to any of the twelve, nor to Jerusalem, Why? Because his office and mission _were from heaven_. Was such an one as he, who had been ordained, as men speak, by glory, and commissioned from heaven, to get himself sanctioned or in anywise accredited by or from earth? Further, the gospel he preached he did not learn from the twelve, or at Jerusalem, neither was he taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The previous pillars could not be used to support his ministry. Further, as has been so truly said, he was sent so positively from heaven, and for that which is essentially heavenly, that he says, “Christ sent me _not to baptize_.” Why was this? Evidently because there was now to be no _gathering point_ on earth; in that sense, Christ was the center, but then, and mark it well, _He was in heaven_. The economy committed to Paul was heavenly, its source of power and its home was heaven. “For our citizenship is in heaven” sets forth clearly; the state to which we belong has its existence in the heavens; for “for our citizenship is in heaven” sets that forth clearly; the was heavenly, its source of power and its home was heaven.

I feel assured that our God is in an especial way, at this present juncture, raising questions with us as to how far in our souls we have by faith _apprehended_ the deep significance of the apostle’s ministry and mission, and as to how far in faith we have _submitted_ ourselves to it in the power of the Holy Ghost, so as to be _formed_ and fashioned in the heavenly manners and ways suited to such a ministry and mission. If I may venture to say so to my beloved brethren in the Lord, I would say that of late His voice has sounded a very solemn and arresting challenge to us as to this. The apostle himself could say to his son Timothy in forecasting days that have now arrived, that he, Timothy, had “fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,” -- these were the heavenly clusters as it were which grew upon the heavenly tree; these manners and ways of heaven, could not be _formed_ in any other place; these were the fruits of the true Canaan, _but they grew there_. It is quite true that the great apostle has passed away and left no successor: but the _ministry_ survives the _vessel_ of it. How far have we in faith and by the Spirit, drunk in the ministry? This is a question that may well challenge conscience and heart, where there is such to be challenged. I do not now speak of _information_ about truth, nor do I raise any question as to _experience_ in any way, but I do ask my beloved brethren to challenge their hearts as to _faith_; I am assured before the Lord that in His presence we shall find how little it has been faith, and how much it has been little more than _credence_, by which I mean a _reliance of the mind_ on facts derived from other sources than personal knowledge. It may be objected that in thus writing I leave myself open to the charge of turning souls in on themselves; my reply to this is, that in order to produce exercise of conscience and self judgment it must be so; “go call thy husband and come hither,” is the great example of it; it was thus the avenue of her soul was opened up. I am profoundly convinced that the great need of the present amongst us is an _exercise of conscience_ as to how far we have but received into our minds information, true and correct in itself, _but without faith_. How easy it is both to speak and write, the Lord knows, but it is another thing entirely to be a man _from heaven_ in this earthly scene, exhibiting in a foreign land, fruits and graces, which both grew and ripened in their own heavenly sunlight; _from heaven_ and therefore a stranger in a strange land, passing on through it as still _from heaven_, and therefore a pilgrim of faith; I am free to confess as I dwell upon it, and contemplate it, I am overwhelmed with the greatness of the calling; as well as the little measure in which it is _taken up in faith_. I know well nothing calls forth the anger of the devil or his most vigorous assaults, than such a ministry and testimony; and in proportion to the desire to exhibit the fruits of such a ministry among men, is the opposition and attack so skillfully delivered by the enemy. Alas! I also know how failure in various ways, supplies the _exposed spot_, which a keen and watchful foe soon discovers; and further, I do know how it is said by those around in a sort of Galleo spirit, “well it is true, these men are very intelligent in scripture, have cast off all the old superstitions, are wonderfully correct as to their creed and information, but in other respects they are pretty much like all others, if anything a little worse, they live luxuriously, are keen in worldly matters, deepen their interests and enlarge their borders in this world.”

Alas, how true is this unfriendly witness! Lord awaken all Thy saints to a true acceptance in faith of the Christian calling, that they may be, while here on earth, like Thy servant of old, _from heaven_ both in their mission, witness, works, words and ways, for Thy blessed Son’s sake.
“God with Us”

(Matthew 2)

It is a very significant fact, that the test of every one and everything is Christ: doctrines do not test in the same way as the Person to whom, no doubt, all the doctrines of scripture relate.

The great question now, as in the days when the Lord Jesus was here, is, “What think ye of Christ?” Thus it is that here where we have the record of His advent into this world, all classes are manifested in their true character in relation to Him. In this Gospel He is presented as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Messiah the King: hence it is that in this connection all through this Gospel we ever find Him, and the presentation of the truths found in the gospel are ever set forth in this connection. There was a spot on earth -- the place of privilege and blessing -- a favored place, the city of the great King. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion.” Now it was to that spot every eye was turned, wherever expectation was alive in any true heart, it was from thence its hope sprung; hence it is that we find these wise men coming from the far East to Jerusalem, with the language of affection and earnestness, saying, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him.” Thus were their hearts moved by His birth, it is the King of Israel they come to seek, all about Him has a claim upon them, they leave their own and distant country, guided by His star, if only they can reach Him; this is the first class or company whom His advent into this world brings as it were to the front. It is a lovely picture this for faith to look upon, oh how Christ can engross heart and mind! Does He command ours? How much would we go through if only we might reach Him? Then observe their attitude on arriving at the place where He was -- “they fell down and worshiped him” --

“Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power divine” --

is in reality the language of their willing hearts; how blessed to see faith at its goal, enjoying the prize! Is it not lovely to see how His Person having won their affections, commanded their adoration, and opened their treasures! They had nothing too costly to withhold from Him, precious as were their gifts -- “gold and frankincense and myrrh” -- He was far more precious still. Oh what a sight for faith, child though He was here, an infant of days as to His humanity, yet He as such was their all! He had but just come, yet it was Himself who had come and was there before them. It is lovely to trace in the scriptures how His Person ever addressed the faith and affection of which He was the object; here it was in the first moments of His birth; later on, as we know, in the close of His days on earth, and in the face of the hostility and hatred which beset Him, there was found a Mary who would expend on Him what the Holy Ghost was pleased to call “very costly” -- and as she placed it on His body, perfumed the house with its odor. Oh, how at the beginning and at the end Christ was all to faith, whether in the Magi or in a Mary, it found in Him its satisfying portion, and the hatred and violence which marked both the scenes to which we have called attention, could not hinder it in its devotion and affection to Him. Is it so, may I ask affectionately, with us?

I would not leave this beautiful scene without a word on another subject -- truly the center of all we have had before us. Let me ask you to think who is this wonderful child, whose advent seems to touch and test all hearts? Who but Emmanuel, God with us! He was none less than God manifest in flesh; the mighty God was there. Oh what grace and love, that He who was “in the beginning with God,” was God, should thus come down to become man; most affecting it is to dwell in thought on circumstances in which He is here found as having become Man: a little child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger -- lowliness, poverty, and rejection, are all found in His birth: well may we sing

“Rich in glory, Thou didst stoop,
Thence is all Thy people’s hope
Thou wast poor, that we might be
Rich in glory, Lord, with Thee.”

Again, it is striking to note how from the first moment of His advent He was a sufferer; in different ways and at different times He was such. Oh how it does appeal to and attract the heart! it is a suffering, sorrowing Christ which does this; in His humiliation He wins, in His glory He satisfies; His humiliation and His glory are the two great powers which work upon our hearts. Then see how Israel suffers too in connection with Him. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not” -- oh what an expression of suffering and death, “they are not”! What a sense of desolation these words carry with them!

Thus we have looked at, in this first class, the faith and affection which found its all in Himself, and expended it all on Him, and we have also looked at who He was, the Object of such faith and love.

We must now look at the second class we find here, whom His Person and presence brings out. We find then a striking contrast to the Magi in the king (Herod) and all Jerusalem with him; Herod is a sad character full of pride, vanity, and worldly lust; besides he is a foreign king who is here seen usurping the allegiance of Messiah’s people, while He the true king, owned by the Gentiles as represented by these wise men, is cast out and refused, His own people being entirely indifferent to Him. Oh what a sight is here presented in the distress and trouble which His advent brought upon Herod and all Jerusalem! I need hardly dwell upon the moral state here presented: may I ask you how far you suppose things and people now are changed? Is there any more heart now than then for Christ? Alas! the answer is but too distinctly stamped upon the vast scene of profession around, where there is no more room for Jesus now than on the morning of His birth.

But suffer me to bring this question nearer to our own doors, and to ask, How is it with us in relation to Him? Another has so truly said, that what marked the man who then had possession of the throne of Jerusalem, was “victorious
love of the world.” Now how far are we free from a like influence? Is it not this we have to watch against on every side? Oh the inroads and encroachments it has made in our midst; we are looking at a moment when Christ was “an exile in Egypt and then a Nazarene in the earth”; what is He now, may I ask? And what are we in relation to Him and as His disciples in this world that thus hated and rejected Him, and that hates and rejects Him still? Oh, be assured, this is the question of questions, now as then Christ determines everything. How much there is in that name Emmanuel, and what power there is in it to set aside present things: these are surely some of the thoughts the Holy Ghost would press on our souls as we dwell upon this precious page in His history upon earth.

But there is another class represented here, to which I would earnestly call your attention for a little. These scribes are a miserable company; they were conversant with the prophetic scriptures which told of Messiah’s birth, when appealed to, they reply at once, but having said this, we have said all information they had, but no more; they could tell of His coming who was Jehovah’s Shepherd King, to come out of Bethlehem, the house of bread, but their hearts had no interest whatever in Himself. Oh what a picture of a heart unmoved were they, no cravings and longings and yearnings were theirs, which nothing and no one but Jesus could meet and satisfy; no desire to see or hear this wondrous stranger-child had they; if they wished for a reputation for clearness as to the prophetic word, it was theirs; if they desired to make capital out of their knowledge of the sacred writings, none could dispute their claims; but no more than this could be said of them -- “like lifeless finger-boards they point along a road in which they neither lead nor follow”; the place of the birth of Jesus, and the character of Him who was coming, they can announce, and then settle down into an indifference in which Christ is unnoticed and unknown. Alas! these scribes of other days are but the prototypes and precursors of those of a like class in this day -- hearts where there is neither welcome nor room for Christ, any more than in the inn at Bethlehem.

Oh how all this speaks to our heart this day! I press it earnestly on every conscience and heart; let us each take it to ourselves, as to how we stand in respect of Christ. What is He to us? What is He worth? These and such like, as to Himself, are the questions of the moment.

There is one word of very deep and precious blessedness in the first chapter of this Gospel, and having looked at it a little we shall close our meditations for the present: the word to which I refer is “Emmanuel,” which being interpreted is “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). What an announcement for any who had heart for it is in such words; and what an unfolding of the heart of God too! Oh the living grace that would indeed come down and tabernacle among men, so that they should know in very truth “God with is”; and not only this, but God among men in the circumstances we have already had before us, and meeting with such a reception at their hands, coming to His own and His own receiving Him not. Oh what grace and goodness! Then again, think of the power of that name Emmanuel, think of its displacing power; has it such with us? We who know it now in all the endearment which the name of Jesus brings with it to our poor hearts? If, indeed, we have heard His blessed voice, is He not able and worthy to make room for Himself, whoever and whatever else would have to stand aside? May the Lord, by His Spirit, so minister Christ to each one of us that nothing else will be of any value comparatively in our eyes, testimony in word and act may be as to Him, the true wisdom in these words.

It cannot be gotten for gold, shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

May this be our testimony both in word and deed for His sake.

The House of Dates


I desire to trace a little some striking incidents connected with this place, and some blessed practical realities which flow out of them.

Bethany was a spot which had a peculiar place in the heart of the blessed Lord, while journeying through this earth. He is presented in Scripture as the perfect stranger in this world, particularly in John, where is set forth the fact of His rejection from the outset. He was Light in the midst of darkness, Life in the midst of death; a stranger out of sight and out of mind. At Bethany only did He find that which met His heart. There He was understood and appreciated, at least by one, and here He often loved to retire. Truly it is a spot where alone He found that which was congenial to His spirit. There are three distinct namings of it in the New Testament, for I cannot connect the scene of Luke 7 with it. I do not see any warrant for saying the woman in the seventh of Luke was Mary, or that it was at Bethany. Scripture lays stress on the fact that Martha received Him into her house, in all the love of her heart. Every service to Him found its full value in His eyes, who never overlooked anything yet it was nothing compared to the ministry of Mary. The treasures of Martha’s house were at His feet; but Mary gives Him her heart, her affections, and this is what the Lord looks for. And may I not say as He looks around now on every side He sees no lack of service -- service abundant on every hand? And does His heart fully value all that is done for Him? It surely has its place, and far be it from me to lessen it; but with all the activity and energy, and zeal which have “the poor” for their object, what the Lord is looking for is -- those who will minister to His pleasure. The Lord appreciated the care of Martha; but when she sought to make a deprecating contrast between herself and Mary, His judgment and thoughts express themselves. And solemn it is to think, that though many may...
be serving after their own way and thoughts, there are but few who really enter into His mind and mission. Mary turned her ear to Him as she sat at His feet, in order that He might relate to her waiting heart what He delights to tell. This is what He looks for now, as then; but, oh, how few of His beloved people understand the mind and ways of their Lord. There is nothing He so values as the listening ear turned to Him -- nothing that meets Him like one that waits on His fullness. Mary is thus the vessel into which His fullness is emptying its treasures. Do we know this blessed attitude? Oh for that abstractedness of heart that has leisure from all around, and as well from all within, so as to sit and listen! “She sat at His feet.” The Christ, His person and moral glory, so attracted her that it brought her into restfulness. We never can hear aright till we are restful, and we must be restful ere we can profit by what we hear. The Word is the voice of God to me. Till the heart is brought into a position of complete abstraction from things around, to wait in the presence of and give Him the ear, there is no profit. Would to God our hearts had a deep sense of it! The Word is the communication He makes from Himself to us today; but in order to receive it, the heart must be at leisure, and the soul at rest and the ear pre-occupied by Christ.

“Martha was cumbered about much serving.” There is a tendency to distraction in all service, blessed though it be in its place. All of us have some service given us to do for Christ -- it would be sad indeed if we were in a position that we had nothing to do for Him -- the great point is the way it is done. What is needed is the quietness of communion so as to go out from Himself, and then to return to Himself. There are those who work, thinking thereby to get into communion. They can never know or enjoy it this way. All real service must flow from communion: there it is Christ and Christ’s thoughts. It is a wonderfully blessed thing to get outside the influences of the world, as well as our own hearts, into His thoughts. Nothing is so terribly soul-devastating as influence of “the age of this world”; we must be abstracted from the atmosphere through which we are passing, in order to have rest and power. Mary ministered to the heart of Christ, because she was in His secret. It is a blessed thing to be in the secret of Christ’s heart, secret of His love, and thus to be in communion with Him. Mary was as much in His secret when she sat and heard His word, as when she anointed Him with the ointment. When she sat and listened, He was molding her into His own mind and thoughts. Do we know how to be exercised as to whether we are in the secrets of Christ or not? Do we know what His desires, His longings are? What His heart is set on? We have a beautiful illustration of this in 2 Sam. 23:15. There was no command or direction here, no expressed desire; but there was a longing utterance of David’s heart. “Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!” David knew Bethlehem well; his heart pined for drafts from the waters of its well; he knew what was to be found there. Are we near enough to Christ, so abstracted from around, as to wait at His feet with attentive ear, and upturned eye, and outstretched neck, to catch the desires of His heart? Are we studying His pleasure so as to do His will -- not taking our thoughts, but His thoughts, as to what would suit Him? In Mary we find one in the world who was in His secret as to His mission in it. She opened as it were a sanctuary for Him. She was but a poor thing in herself, but her ear was opened to catch the sounds of His voice so as to receive what He was so ready to communicate. The Lord give us to know what it is to be drawn aside by the excellency and beauty of this blessed One, thus to sit before Him and study the secret of His heart and pleasure.

Now turn to John 11. We get here the same town of Bethany, but devastated by death: it is a scene of every-day life in this world’s history. The sisters are the same Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, but death has come in. Blessed spot though it was, Bethany was no exception to the tale of sorrow that marks this world. As soon as death had come, we have Mary in the presence of Jesus uttering her need. There is the greatest difference between complaint and need. The need that waits upon His fullness is precious to Him. We find complaint in Martha, need in Mary, and she expresses it. In v. 32 we find her at the spot that was familiar to her heart -- “she fell down at His feet.” It was a well-known spot to Mary. Is it so with us? It is these little incidents that make the place where He meets with us, and we with Him, such familiar and blessed places to our souls. If you have burdens, or difficulties, or anxieties resting on your heart, do you know a spot so familiar to you, where you can come and leave them? She does not come complaining, but casts herself at His feet, and spreads her sorrow in the presence of divine fullness -- a broken heart in the presence of the Healer of hearts.

What a scene! If we look at it on His part, we see how He enters into everything as to what had caused the sorrow as well as the sorrow itself. He bore it in His spirit before God. Human sympathy is only the expression of our helplessness and weakness; it is all we can do; but we find Christ meeting everything, groaning, weeping, carrying all in His spirit before God -- thus bearing it before Him in a way none other could do. Do you know how to study the groans and the tears of Jesus? He weeps at the grave; bears in His spirit the death that sin had brought in, though He was about to remove it by His power as Son of God, the quickener of the dead; yet this did not in any wise hinder His going underneath it all in His spirit. His tears and His groans were not His sorrow for the family, not like human grief for the loss of a common loved friend; He was there as the Lord of life and glory, the quickener of the dead, to raise him up; but He first, as I have said, carries all in His own spirit before God. Am I speaking to some who are no strangers to need and sorrow? What do you do with those sorrows? What do you do with your cares? Blessed are the sorrows and cares that become opportunities of bringing us into the presence of the only One who is able to meet our every need. In this scene of John 11 we get not only the power of Christ, but Mary expressing her need in His blessed presence, and finding the expression of it enough.

John 12. Here we have Mary again in the secret of Christ. She takes that which is most costly to her, and anoints the feet of Jesus. Two things are very striking here. First, she felt the enmity of man towards Christ; secondly, the
expression of how she appreciated Him, when all hated Him, and when He was about to die. She felt the enmity and hatred of both Israel and the Gentiles towards Christ. We are all naturally selfish, engrossed with our own things. Oh, how little are we at leisure from self to be of like mind with Him! Her heart was free enough to think of the enmity of man towards Him, and she as well expresses her own love and appreciation of Him, and therefore she takes what is costly and valuable to her, and anoints His body for the burying, and by this action she as it were declares that if He dies everything in this world has lost its charm for her. She is in His secret; she knows He is about to die; consequently everything she has is as nothing to her; she buries her world with Him, all must go into His tomb. How much have our hearts laid hold of the glory of His person, of the blessedness of that Christ, the eternal Son, ever in the Father’s bosom? Has He such a place in our hearts, that everything is esteemed and valued in relation to Him? Is He the simple measure of the value we set on all, even the best below? Here is a poor weak woman, ready to face the enmity of the people, because she enters into God’s thoughts about His Son, when the thoughts of nearly all were very distant from His mind. There are hardly any who are independent enough to act simply, in reference to Christ; if you do, you must stand alone. If you are merely a benefactor of man, your labors will be noted. If Christ is simply before you, filling the vision of your soul, if all you do is in reference to Him, if you are ministering to the pleasure of Christ, all the world will consider it “waste”; and, alas! many of God’s own children.

What was it when she was blamed kept her heart? Three things. First, the blessed Lord understood her. How comforting to know that Christ understands me! It is wonderful comfort. Secondly, He vindicated her. Thirdly, He appreciated her. This kept her in the midst of the non-recognition of those who were half-hearted. There was no heart there to enter into what she was doing but Himself; no tongue to vindicate her but His. But He was enough! We want more of that holy boldness that is satisfied with Christ’s vindication, more of that holy satisfaction which Christ’s pleasure imparts, to take our stand on that platform of holy elevation -- the Lord knows. His smile is enough, His vindication sufficient for me. Thus we find Him communicating to Mary in Luke 10; His fullness waiting on her need in John 11; and in chap. 12 she was in sympathy with Him as to what was then before his soul. We find in Luke 24 He ascends out of this world from Bethany, the spot with which He was most linked in all its varied memories; it was to Him, as it were, the brightest spot on earth, an oasis in a howling wilderness; there and there alone this blessed perfect Man had turned and found solace; but this is the spot from whence He departed when He left the earth. Think of the character this fixes upon the earth; if He left it from the place that was to Him the brightest spot upon it, if any place could be called bright, it marks this earth at once. Its best had become but the platform of His departure out of it. What a sight this, the risen, glorious Man, who has triumphed over everything, going down under the ocean of judgment, forsaken of His God on the cross, now risen out of those depths into which His undying love had led Him. What a sight for faith! Himself leading His disciples to the place that was familiar to His heart, the only spot where He had ever found refreshment as the weary stranger on earth, and to gaze at Him as He ascends from thence and is carried up into heaven. But first, how blessed to hear Himself pronounce their peace, thus quieting their fears, answering their troubled hearts (vv. 36-40); then the very hands that were pierced and nailed to the cross were lifted up in blessing, and from those uplifted hands showers of blessing dropped upon them. Blessed it is to think that His very last act was blessing. The last they saw of Him was commanding the shower to flow from Himself. Have we hearts free enough to follow the departing One through such scenes? And as we follow, do we find ourselves carried up and away to heaven with Him who has gone from this earth? Thank God, though He is not here, we know Him in heaven. Are our hearts familiar with Him there? Can we say, “I have gained Him in heaven if I have lost Him on earth, I am one with Him there”? Thus it is you miss Him here, thus alone His absence makes the earth a desert to you. There are two ways of looking at this poor earth. First, because of what is in it -- sorrow, difficulty, and trouble of every kind; but secondly, and mostly, because of His absence. This makes it a far more real desert scene to the heart that knows and loves Him. If He is our object, we must miss Him where He is not, as we move on through time; but if we know Him in heaven, the world is a dreary, desolate spot to us, because He is gone out of it. I know it is said, What is meant by missing Christ in this world? I reply, Affection for Him understands it, but not reasoning or caviling. If He has left it from the very place where He alone found any response to His heart and affections, what sort of a world must it be with this appraising of it? May the Lord by His Spirit give us to hear Him speaking “peace” through His risen lips, and likewise to know the blessing that drops from His outstretched hands, so that we may know what it is to be in the secret of His heart, by having every affection of ours centered in Him.

Ije-Abarim

Numbers 21:11

It was here that Israel pitched soon as they “set forward.” It was a great thing that they were able to “set forward”; it is the very opposite to lagging behind or looking back, not to speak of going back; but what was that which imparted to them both liberty and vigor? In the beginning of the chapter they are in bondage to discouragement and murmuring: the way tried them, its thorns and briars tested them, and in the end they “spake against God.” This led to the judgment of the fiery serpents, and the dying of much people of Israel; Moses cries to God, and He interposes, as we know, in a way suitable to Himself, not removing the judgment, but in type and figure, removing in judgment the offending thing which necessitated the bringing in of the judgment.

The serpent of brass set upon the pole, was not only an ending judicially before God, in type I mean, of that which
was proved irremediable, but it was the bringing in of a new thing entirely. “Shall live.” Observe further, this blessed deliverance was not found anywhere on earth; it was “lifted up,” even as the Son of man “must be lifted up” (see John 3) on the cross; Christ is not on the earth, but lifted up from it, rejected ignominiously by man, but withal through this, presented as a Victim on the altar to God. How solemn this as an exposition of man’s condition before God, the divine testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself being rejected by man, was the evidence that man as he was here, was not capable of receiving blessing from heaven: it was necessary that man should be treated according to the truth of his own condition before God, as well as according to God’s own righteous character.

Now herein was found their liberty to “set forward” -- as set free, extricated, they can march on. It is so too, thank God, in a far higher way with Christians: the cross of Christ is morally the end of man’s history, the beginning of God’s; that is the root of all Christian setting forward, until thus liberated, the true prospect for faith is not before the soul. The position of this Ije-Abarim, or heaps of Abarim, has moreover its own voice of instruction and comfort for our souls; we are told it was “in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sun rising” -- observe those last words, for they are most blessed.

The rising sun is especially and peculiarly the hope of the nation, after their long night of sorrow and weeping they are destined to enjoy the light and heat of the rays of the sun; for us who believe, ere the Sun of Righteousness arises, a hope of a brighter nature remains: we wait for Him who now has Himself spoken to us as the “bright morning star”; He, and He alone, is our Ije-Abarim. It is towards Him we “set forward” -- a heavenly Savior, in whom is centered all our blessedness; we are told it was “in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sun rising” -- observe those last words, for they are most blessed.

But there is a deep moral lesson, too, in the fact that liberated Israel set forward and pitched at Ije-Abarim; for the morning has been ever the prospect, whether of the earthly or the heavenly company. The world rejoices in the night, it is to it, the moment of its pleasures and pursuits, and in these it sleeps an intoxicated sleep, and so it is written, “for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they be drunken are drunken in the night” (1 Thess. 5:7). What a picture of a drunken world! But now observe the contrast; “Let us who are of the day be sober”; -- again, “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness.” What a character this gives the saint of God, a child of light, a child of the day, and that too, observe, while passing through the world’s night, the far spent night; night all around him, but he in conscience and heart in the day.

I am here constrained to pause, and ask, Is it really so with us? Is it so in relation to all that we have to say to, and do with? Are we plainly declaring that we, having our citizenship in heaven, wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ? Let us court the reflection of the coming morn and day upon every circle with which we are related. How does our home and family circle appear in the light of it? Is that a witness to the fact of our sunrise being at hand? How, next, as to our business and occupation in life? Is that a witness to the reality of the coming light? Do we conduct our business “like men who wait for the Lord”? Do we conduct our business as those who are not of the night, not of the world? I may be told this is impossible. I have been told it is transcendental and seeking to walk with one’s head in the clouds. To all such I reply thus: Not so, beloved brethren, unless indeed Christianity consists in a correct creed which was never intended or designed to have any bearing, either formative or corrective, upon the details of everyday life; unless such descriptions as, “not of the world,” “not of the night,” have no bearing whatever on our ways. Let us not be deceived by such siren words, or taunts, or sneers, rather let us set forward, openly, plainly, manifestly and pitch our tent toward our Ije-Abarim -- “toward the sun rising.” I cannot conceive any words that could more forcibly express a Christian’s present attitude and hope, than “set forward” -- “pitched” -- “toward the sun rising.” Here it is set forth in striking type, the pressing on of pilgrims toward their prospect. The Lord grant that it may be ours through His grace.

No doubt there is much outside in the world, and within, amongst the saints, to account for the absence of that decided strangerness which surely becomes those who profess to expect at any moment to be caught away, and who in heart and affection, and therefore in their ways, have set forward and pitched their pilgrim tent toward the sun rising; still there is far more in Christ Himself, to make one wonder and ashamed, that anything but Himself is worthy of even a passing thought. One other reflection will bring these thoughts to a close.

In this world everything is going toward the sun setting -- everything is passing away, and will soon be gone. What a solemn reflection for any Lot of the present day, or world-borderer, into whose hands this little paper should come! All here is going down, “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” “The fashion of this world passeth away.” In every city and great town, the west is the commanding quarter; there the fashion of the world and its lusts are to be found at home; all goes toward the west, the unpurposed witness of this solemn reality, namely, that all on earth is rapidly going down, its sun will soon have set. On the other hand, all that is really bright and beautiful is coming up with day dawn. The children of light and of the day, can see the morning star, the dawn along its edge, and they can say to each other in heavenly anticipation, “the morning cometh.”

“There’s nothing left to fix the gaze
But this one blessed orb of light;
And oh, how purely beam its rays
Aethwart the dark and wintry night.
“A little while! and ere the day
In all its splendor shall be shown,
Thy vigil-keepers rapt away
Shall find Thy glory, Lord, their own.”
In Christ and Christ in Us
(Romans 5:1-12; 7: 8:1-8)

There is a vast difference between an innocent creature and a purged conscience; and the distinction is important. The knowledge of good and evil came in when man departed from God. In connection with Christianity a believer has an uncondemning conscience, a conscience fit for the presence of God in the light where God dwells, a conscience which the light suits. I would ask you, reader, Have you a conscience fit for the presence of God, where God is? This lies at the root of all practical Christianity. If it is not a settled question with you, you are not free to serve God; you must be occupied about yourself. There is a great difference between the consciousness of indwelling sin, or an evil nature, and “no more conscience of sins.” We could not speak of no more consciousness of sin, i.e. of sin not being in us; but with reference to the conscience before God, through the work, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, a believer is brought into the presence of God, in the light where God is, without a single stain or spot, though he has still the evil principle of sin in him. The carnal mind “is enmity” (not at enmity) “against God”; i.e. the nature of the flesh is in its essence “enmity against God”; but how blessed the fact, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” The principle of Christianity consists in not only the fruits of the evil nature being gone, but that sin itself has been condemned in the cross of Christ. The believer knows that Christ has met every question, taken all condemnation and fear away, and that, as another has blessedly expressed it, “there is nothing between him and the bright throne of God, where Christ sits, but the love that put all his sins away.” The wonderful transaction took place between God and Christ. Our acceptance is according to the infinite efficacy of the blood of Christ as God sees it, and as God measures it, and the infinite perfection of the One who did the work. It is not a question of you, or of what you think or you feel, or anything in connection with you, or your apprehension of it -- it all rests on God’s estimate of the infinite preciousness and value of Christ’s work as He estimates it. Take an illustration. If an Israelite obeyed the word of Jehovah, and sprinkled the lintel and door-post of his house, and accepted the word of Jehovah, he went in with the sense of security, because the blood was there. God had said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over.” Another Israelite also sprinkles the blood on the lintel and door-posts; goes in, and trembles and fears all night lest the destroying angel should not pass over. Which do you think is the most secure? And trembles and fears all night lest the destroying angel should not pass over. Which do you think is the most secure? The reason is because they are bringing into it what God never intended should be brought into it; i.e. experience. Many a soul has doubts and fears and misgivings as to the question of peace, because they have mixed up the experience they have, or they think they ought to have, with the simple recognition of and faith in the testimony of the blessed God. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Many a one who is quickened has not the peace of Rom. 5:1. What is peace? It is peace with God as God is, in all the unflinching holiness of His character, peace without one of His attributes being violated. That is peace, when there is not one single enemy left, not one solitary foe who could dispute our title to serenity in the presence of God. If a battle has been fought, and the victory gained, this is not peace; for after many a well-gained victory there is war again. A truce, however honorable or long, is not peace; it supposes impending hostilities. But if every enemy had been demolished, and there was not a foe left, there would be peace. “The Lord Jesus was delivered for our offences, raised again for our justification.” At His death every enemy, the whole array of Satan’s power; was let loose, was met by Him and vanquished -- sin, Satan, death, hell, the grave.

“His be the victor’s name
Who fought the fight alone.”

Through His death He has brought the believer on the same platform as He stands Himself; and faith connects us with it. What is faith? It is simply the hand stretched out to receive what God delights to give. Faith is not feeling, or experience, or anything that goes on within. Faith gives God credit for being what He is, and accepts what He gives. “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” The Christian is not a pardoned criminal. He is pardoned; but he is more. We are in the very favor of God, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have peace behind, favor under our feet, and glory before us. This is not experience, but possession.

Rom. 5, 7 and 8: We find three things in each of these chapters; three distinct facts are stated in each.

In Rom. 5 we get, first, justification on the principle of faith, and “peace with God” the consequence; second, introduction by faith into present favor with God, the very favor that rests on Christ; third, rejoicing in hope; and there is a fourth thing in the chapter (though this is not on my mind just now), we joy in God.

Rom. 7 describes the condition of a quickened soul under law, the searching power of the law. Three great facts are discovered experimentally, because now we get experience, realization, and feeling.

The soul learns first that in the flesh there is nothing that is good. “In me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing.” This is an humbling but real thing to learn. All are on the same platform here, all are in one plight, all are of one
stock. Second, that we have another “I” in us, another principle, which is not the sinful flesh. Third, that this new “I” (if I may call it so), has not power of itself over the old; that the old nature is too strong for it; therefore the soul must look for a deliverer “who shall deliver me?”

In Rom. 8 we also find three things: First, the believer has life in the Spirit; second, the Holy Ghost is dwelling in him; third, God is for him. Different states of soul are touched by each of these truths.

I would before going on say again, I trust every one is clear as to the question of the forgiveness of sins that Christ will do all the out to examine the sky and the stars, are you occupied with believing look at what is above you. The simple acceptance of God your eye? If you are, you will never see the stars. You simply look at what is above you. The simple acceptance of God’s testimony carries the benefit to the soul. What is wanted is simplicity. It is marvelous how simple people are in every thing but in the things of God. When God makes the most blessed communications to us, we begin to reason and to question about them. In chap. 4 we get another thing; viz., what answers to the scapegoat. When speaking of the way any poor sinner may come to God, it is unlimited, as wide as the world. Any one may come; the blood is on the mercy-seat. “God is just, and yet the justifier.” There is a full, free, perfect forgiveness for every one who believes. But in Rom. 4 it is a different thing; viz., “Who was delivered for OUR offences.” We find in the account of the scapegoat that the sins of a definite company were confessed over his head. When substitution is spoken of, it is in connection with those for whom He was a substitute. If we speak of propitiation, it has the widest sense. Christ has offered His blood to God, God has accepted it; there is a full, free forgiveness for all who will come. The testimony on God’s side is in raising Him from the dead, and we, being justified by faith, “have peace with God” in the integrity of His being as a God of truth, holiness, and righteousness. The question of sin was settled on the cross. Everything that could interfere with the holiness of God, has been there disposed of. The believer is brought into nearness to God, and stands in divine favor. Again I would say, this is not experience. You may say you do not feel it; but do you believe it? Faith carries me into what I am before God and as seen by Him. Do we believe the testimony? How many are always occupied with their frames and feelings! and this is what they feed on, and hence so little divine power. It is a question of simple faith in the testimony of the living God. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” (“witness” and “testimony” are the same words all through) . . . “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar” (1 John 5:9, 10). This is more serious than our losing blessing.

We will now turn to the different states of soul I have already touched on in chap. 7. Most of the difficulties people have is because they are not delivered, which is distinct from quickening. The first thing to learn is, “that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” The soul has to be passed through humiliating exercises to learn this. Could you say before God you know that? Why then are you trying to repair it? I may discover I have done wrong things, but to discover that I have a nature in me which is incapable of doing any thing BUT wrong things is very humiliating. I must submit to the humbling fact I cannot do the right thing. Many a one is ready to say, “I know I do wrong things every day,” who shrink from the fact they have no power to do the right things. Many of us know this doctrinally, but do we know it experimentally? Rom. 7 is experience. A person may have listened to the truth taught for years, and yet not know chap. 7 experimentally. We have to be subjected to the exercises the soul passes through in chap. 7 to find out what is in us; viz., that there is “no good thing.” Do you believe it? Do you know it? Have you gone through these ploughings and testings? or are you going through them? If you know it, you will never try to reform man in any way. Are you trying to remedy or to keep down such a state? You must learn you cannot do it. Again I ask, Is it a settled matter in your own soul that there is nothing good in you? I often hear it said, “I was overtaken, and tripped up to-day; but I will keep this temper down; I will not allow it to act.” Of course it is all right not to allow its exercise; but if you only seek to correct it, this is what Job did, who, after going through all the terrible discipline of God’s hand, comes to the point, “I am vile . . . I will lay my hand upon my mouth,” I will not let out anything further. But in Rom. 13 we get a step further, Job is brought to this, not only to acknowledge “I am vile,” but “I abhor myself”; and then he finds the relief of turning away from himself altogether, “Mine eye seeth thee.” It is now no longer trying to keep down or to correct the old nature, or to get anything good out of it. This is the first lesson a soul has to learn practically in the experience of this chapter: the utter, thorough, and complete ruin, that there is nothing good in us; yet not merely saying it, but what we have learned deep down in the heart. There is even danger in seeking to get a character out of the owning of our badness. When I hear a person talking much about their badness, I begin to fear they know but little about it. If we really know in the depths of our hearts that “in me dwelleth no good thing,” we shall not be seeking to get a character out of our own badness, or out of self at all; we shall find out the relief of turning our back upon it altogether as that which is good for nothing. How do we make this discovery? The law comes in for this purpose; it never could bring anything good out of the flesh. What was it made that which in itself is “holy, just, and good” powerless? “It was weak through the flesh.” It brought out and exposed what the flesh is before God. “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” We thus discover practically and experimentally there was nothing in us that answered to it.

The second thing is, there is another principle in me, another “I” which is not the flesh, but which longs after God, which “delights in the law of God.” What a bitter disappointment it is to discover, thirdly, that this new “I” has no power of itself. And this is the point where people get
disheartened. Many a one who may have given up hope of correcting the old nature, or of getting any good out of it, is utterly discouraged when they find the new nature of itself has not power over the old. The common idea is, that the cross of Christ has some kind of charm on man; that conversion consists in the re-adjustment of what was there before. This is deeper down in minds than we think. Scripture says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” You cannot make anything out of the flesh but flesh, however you may cultivate it. All the culture and care and diligence you may bestow on a crop of nettles will only produce a crop of nettles, because the nature of nettles is to produce nettles, though they may be stronger nettles from cultivation. A little ray of comfort breaks into the soul when it knows there is another “I” which wills right, which longs after God; but a terrible thing it is to break into the soul when it knows there is another “I” which has not power. Take an illustration: A child who is born to-day has got life, but no power; it has wills right, which longs after God; but a terrible thing it is to find that this new “I” has not power. Take an illustration: A child who is born to-day has got life, but no power; it has wills right, which longs after God; but a terrible thing it is to find that this new “I” has not power. Take an illustration: A child who is born to-day has got life, but no power; it has wills right, which longs after God; but a terrible thing it is to find that this new “I” has not power.

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therefore he is no longer on the ground on which he once stood as a child of Adam; but he has been brought into another position and condition, “in Christ” risen from the dead. Do you say, “If only I could feel this”? You never will till you believe it. If you begin at the realization side you will never realize. Begin at the side of the testimony of God; viz., that His Son has died, settled the question of condemnation due to you through his death, taken you out of the position you once stood in, and given you a new position, a new place; given you deliverance in the power of life in Christ risen from the dead. But you say, “I feel the workings of the old man in me.” But observe, it is one thing to say it is still in me, another that I am standing in it before God. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God”; but “ye are not in the flesh.” Oh the blessedness of knowing we are “in Christ Jesus” before God, all condemnation gone for ever, “sin in the flesh condemned” (not forgiven) in the cross of Christ. The effect of being in this new position is seen in v. 4. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If we do not walk in the Spirit, the evil principle within us will assert its existence; but we are brought into a place of power as well as security. We have to keep the sentence of death on ourselves. If I allow self any place, or allow it to work, the Holy Ghost must occupy me with the judgment of it, instead of being free to occupy me with Christ, and to fill my heart with Him. When the evil nature acts, and the soul does not know deliverance, we find the question arising in hearts, “Can I be a Christian? have I the root of the matter in me?” In the power of life and of the Spirit I am entitled to reckon myself dead in the cross of Christ. The second great truth in chap. 8 is, that the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer, and is the power of the new man; the Spirit of God energizes the new man. We get two things in connection with this. First, He is in us, the witness to the fact that we are children (Rom. 8:16, 17); and second, He takes part in sympathy with us, because of the link we have through our bodies with a groaning creation around (Rom. 8:22, 23).

In Rom. 8:19, 20 we see creation waiting on us, waiting for the day when the sons of God will be manifested. Then it will be brought into its blessing.

Rom. 8:20 ought to be read, “By reason of Him who hath subjected it.” Creation was subjected to vanity by Adam; i.e. under Adam, its head, the whole race partook of the consequences of his fall. Man brought in the ruin; the whole creation groans.

Rom. 8:21: “In hope that the creature itself shall be set free from the bondage of corruption unto the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”

We have a link through our bodies with the groaning creation; but these very bodies will ere long be fashioned like unto His body of glory.

The Spirit of God is spoken of in three ways in this chapter: “The Spirit of God,” as contrasted with the flesh, with what man is in his nature; the “Spirit of Christ,” as formative of our practical state; and the “Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead,” in connection with the raising up of our mortal bodies.

From Rom. 8:29 to end we have God for us. Observe sanctification is left out in v. 30, because it is not a question here of the work of the Holy Ghost in us; but God is for us, no matter who or what may be against us. A Christian is a man in Christ; God is in him, and God is for him. We are brought into a wealthy place. Alas! how little we know the wealth of it. Eternity will not be too long to praise Him for it all. Oh the blessedness of standing outside all that we were, and to raise the song of triumph to Him who has so blessedly accomplished it all, and at such a price!

“By weakness and defeat
He won the meed and crown;
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down.

“Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory;
Who lived, who died, who lives again
For thee, His Church, for thee!”

“The One Who Is Coming”
(Luke 12:13, 14)

It is interesting and instructive to see how the blessed truth of the Lord’s coming is presented in the Gospels. I treat now of the Lord’s coming in its widest sense, not restricting my thoughts to that part of it which we call the rapture of the saints raised or changed; that was received and communicated by Paul as a special revelation in connection with the hopes of that of which he was the minister (Col. 1:24, 25).

I would suggest as to whether in the Gospels the coming does not derive its character and subject from the object of the Spirit in each Gospel; for instance, in the Gospel of Matthew, is it not the coming of the King, the Messiah, in harmony with the object of that presentation of Christ? Then, in Mark, is it not the Lord or Master of the servants who comes, even Himself, who it is said “Is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch?”

Then again in Luke, as in the passage before us, it is moral and general, bearing on the state of heart of each one in view of His return, the attitude of expectancy and watching which His approach would create in the hearts of His own. While, in John, it is the Son of the Father, the Son of the bosom, coming to discharge the debt of love He still owes to His Father and to the children of His love, in taking them to Himself and welcoming them into His Father’s house, His joy and theirs meeting in this that He has His own for ever with Himself. But in this passage in Luke, it is very instructive to see how the way is prepared for introducing the coming of the Lord. There are two great hindrances here that are dealt with by the Lord in a twofold way, and which it will be very profitable for our souls to contemplate a little. I speak now of what I believe few are strangers to, viz., care and fear -- two of the commonest influences at work to weigh down the hearts of God’s saints. I believe the two are closely allied to
each other; that is to say, whatever causes anxiety, or care, is that concerning which we generally have most fear; whatever settles on the heart, becoming a pressure or weight there, produces fear in connection with it. There is a care which it is right to have, a godly, proper, prayerful concern, which if we are without, we should be little better than sticks or stones; but to have what the Holy Ghost calls cares (μερίμνα) resting on the spirit, coming in between the soul and God, is destructive of all true spiritual growth and progress in the knowledge of God. If we have God between us and such things, they are not then burdening the soul, for then they are but new opportunities to lean on Him, fresh reasons for turning to Him. Trial is that which comes sooner or later to us all; in one sense we are never truly proved till we have been under fire. The Lord’s charge to His disciples was, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation”; that is, pray that when the moment of trial comes, it may be an occasion to you to turn to God, instead of turning from God. We know well that is the moment when so many have turned away from Him, the test made manifest where they were. If the soul is really dependent and cast upon God, the testing-time is its harvest of faith. How blessed to have God between us and Him, the test made manifest where they were. If the soul is but the occasion of display. It is the Lord’s object to keep us up in His grace. Cares drag the soul down, our Father knows. But there is a snare here, which we do well to be on our guard against. We must never suppose that our need is the measure of our Father’s care or ability. It is the occasion, not the measure. The only true measure of His love is the Son of His bosom, whom He so freely gave in His love for sinners.

Whilst it is our delight to own how fully and graciously He knows and meets all our need, yet let us remember that there are motives and springs in His heart, of which our need is but the occasion of display. It is the Lord’s object to keep us up in His grace. Cares drag the soul down, our Father knows. What a rest, so that we may leave time, ways, means, everything to Him.

Let us see how He meets the fears. His own words are “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”; that is, it is the delight of your Father’s heart to be a Father to you; it is His good pleasure to do so. How blessed to think it is here the same word as that which sounded in His voice from the opened heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom is all my good pleasure.” Is it not blessed beyond all expression to know that in thus having possession, outside the reach of death, that insatiable archer, who selects the widest circle of blessings (as men speak) on earth, as the target at which he may shoot all his arrows!

Let us ask our hearts, what and where is our treasure? The Lord says that where the treasure is there the heart is also. May the Lord give us the joy of knowing Christ as our treasure, and heaven as the place where our treasure is; this and this alone can set us free from present things. The sense of Christ’s absence thus becomes our affliction. The place where He is not could never be an agreeable place to us; nothing but His presence can fill the void His absence creates. Thus we watch, not merely wait, for Him, and we watch through the long dreary hours of the far-spent night for Himself, the alone treasure of our hearts.

Alas, how little it is so with us! Alas, how little the ways and manners of pilgrims, and strangers, and watchers are seen in His beloved saints! How His heart must grieve to see His own so little in company with His affection and His love, and it is solemn to think that the poor world that lies in the wicked one, has too much cause to say something like this: “We hear it loudly asserted, and a position claimed because of it, but we fail to see it in practice, and they are but few and far between who look like unto men that wait for their Lord.” May we take this more to heart, with exercised conscience and heart, may His word find such a place in our souls as to awaken us from our seeming sleep, to go forth in conscience and affection, and meet the One who hath said, “Surely I come quickly.”

The Present Prospect

The portion of scripture which our God has graciously given us as the stay of faith in the last days, contains the following blessed cheer, in the face of all infidelity, all unbelief, all revolt from the truth: “The firm foundation of God stands” (2 Tim. 2:19). Let the overthrow of the faith of some be ever so marked, God’s foundation remains firm; this distinct abstract statement of scripture is a solid rock for faith and heart.

It is of the first importance at the present moment, in any outlook afforded by all that is passing, to place this in the foreground; for every true believer in the authority, sufficiency, and supremacy of Scripture as a revelation from God, there is nothing to fear as to the truth; undoubtedly there is much to chasten and solemnize the spirit, the times are displaced divine facts and truths; all this is without question very solemn, but the truth will still abide and survive; the only real question is, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” In a matter affecting the truth, the word applies — “he that is not with me is against me.”

The present prospect, then, suggests two things very plainly and distinctly.

1. The positive call of God, and our duty to rise up and stand apart from the leaven of false doctrine now so widespread. It is as clear as noonday, that scripture implicitly forbids all compromise of every kind in connection with the truth of
God; to have part or lot with those who deny the doctrines of scripture, would be high treason against God, and Christ who is The Truth. “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity,” defines the course of faith and loyalty to Christ as clearly as could be.

The Lord has so very graciously raised up a fresh witness to this truth in the author of “The Down-grade,” and all who love the truth must rejoice in the faithfulness of his protest against the tide of the so-called new theology, which threatens to flow over every hitherto supposed barrier; moreover the storm which his distinct and straightforward utterance has raised, is in itself an evidence of the corruption which is at work; this, and the treatment he has received, prove his case: it has ever been true that in a day when truth faileth among men, “he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.” May the Lord increase the number of those who are faithful to Christ in such days as are now upon us.

But the prospect suggests, in the second place, not only the refusal absolutely of what is false, but the maintenance as absolutely of what is true; and not only this, but that distinctive part of it, “in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Now is it not of the deepest moment to observe, that in the very portion of scripture which defines the path of faith and faithfulness, in days when faith is left off, the distinctive portion of the truth, which alone can sustain, is placed in the foreground, and so the apostle says to his son Timothy, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine” -- and then afterwards -- “from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.” Thus, then, attention is divinely called here to “my doctrine.” Let us inquire what this expression means. In Col. 1:24, 25. “My doctrine,” then, is evidently that peculiar heavenly economy committed to Paul, of which, too, he himself, in the terms of his mission after his conversion, is the witness, for it was said to him: “Delivering thee,” that is, taking thee out of the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee (Acts 26:17). Now here was a distinct heavenly mission, which had no connection whatever with either man or nation, and so is it as to the church of which he was the minister.

Further, we learn from his Epistle to the Colossians that the knowledge of what he there calls “the mystery of God,” was the great preservative against the peculiar wile of Satan to which they were exposed; the wile assumed a double form, namely, Philosophy and Judaism; philosophy being the rationalistic, as Judaism was the religious aspect of the snare. At the present time, all that the Down-grade controversy has brought to light is comprehended under the title of philosophy, this is now as then the great bane of Christianity, and this so-called new theology has not a shred in its garment other than that “vain deceit,” which only spoils after “the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

It is of the utmost moment that this “vain deceit” of man’s mind be refused and resisted at all cost; the man of God is exhorted to “shun profane and vain babblings.” Moreover, he is to purge himself from men that concerning the truth err, from all such he is to “withdraw himself,” “purge himself,” “turn away.” Again I say, all who love the truth cannot be too thankful to the Lord for the fresh evidence and testimony He Himself has given to the vital importance of separation from evil. But it is well to press the positive side of what the present prospect brings before us; it is in the knowledge of the mystery of God, preservation from the mental and religious snare of the moment, lies; the gospel without the church has been the cause of more evils than one, in these last days. What I mean by the gospel without the church, is a kind of salvationism, which makes man’s blessing and happiness everything, but leaves out the purposes and counsels of God respecting Christ and His glory. In proof of the supreme importance of the truth at this present juncture, I would point to the agony, the conflict of the apostle, as made known in Col. 2: “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.”

I would point to his agony as expressed in Col. 1, which was according to God’s energy in His servant in power, and for what? Even that he might present every man perfect (full grown) in Christ Jesus. But there was even more than this, for assuredly we may read in all His servant’s conflicts and labors, the thoughts of his Lord and Master, as to how indispensable in His mind is the knowledge of the mystery of God, for the saints; yet, alas! how little a place it has in our hearts.

May the Lord, in His rich grace, turn the present crisis into an occasion of his own, to set forth more distinctly the great truth concerning “the mystery of God,” in which are hid all the “treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Promise Substantiated and God Revealed in Grace
(Luke 4:14-32)

We have had before us, in Matt. 2, the first advent of our blessed Lord; and how all men, all classes of people, stood tested by it, and in relation to Him. In the scripture above, the Holy Ghost brings before us the two great consequent effects of His presence on earth, namely, the Christ in His own blessed Person, substantiating promise, and God in Him, here on earth, manifested and revealed in all His grace. On these two themes let us dwell for a little.

First, then, as to how all promise met and was fulfilled in Christ; it is blessed to see that He presents Himself in their synagogue at Nazareth as the very One in whom the words of Isa. 61 were fulfilled:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
How blessed! He stood before them there as Jehovah’s anointed Preacher, as Jehovah’s sent Healer of broken hearts, He presents Himself before their very eyes as the fulfilment in this of their own prophet; the omission, too, of the last clause of v. 2 of this prophecy makes the grace presented in Himself all the more striking, for surely the day of vengeance will come; but it was not then. He who came as Savior will come again as Judge, but that time has not as yet run round; but now, as when He was on earth, it was saving grace and goodness which was reflected in Him in all His ways and dealings with men. How little we think of the exact character of this world in His eye when He was in it. What did He find in the favored land -- Jehovah’s land? He found death, devils, disease, sorrow, misery, and wretchedness on every hand. He did not, blessed be His name, stand at a distance, but entered into all the wretchedness and sorrow as none else but Himself could do, measured it all and gauged it all, as only He could. How we are made to feel that we live too far away from human wretchedness to know it in all its reality, but how blessed to know there was One who in grace came into the midst of it, walked through it, as another has most blessedly expressed it: “bringing every grace in God down into man, and taking every sorrow in man up into God.”

Now all God’s previous dealings with men, kept man at a distance in His sins, and shut God in, holy and righteous, into Himself; darkness and distance describe this period of dealing and testing -- claims unmet and demands not discharged were the sad features of that dispensation. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ” -- that is, “That which not having actually been in being before [that is, in the world] now begins to be so,” [ἐγένετο]. How blessed is all this to dwell upon, what moral glory is met. The announcement that promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, calls forth the contemptuous utterance: “Is not this Joseph’s son?” Their hearts were veiled so as to be unable to see who was there, garbed as He was, in lowly mien; His lowness offended their pride, and they refused Him; but can grace be turned aside by all the folly and evil of man? Never! it has its purposes which it accomplishes in His time, and to this the blessed Lord gives utterance in these words that follow, namely,

Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

That is, reject grace and Christ as you may, He will still have objects of divine favor; yet this awakes, if possible, deeper animosity, and as at first they hated and rejected Him, so here they are ready to resort to violence and force, to thrust the blessed One out of the city, and even led Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong.

Oh what a picture of man, of humanity, we have here! how exposed and by Himself, too, who was God revealed in flesh! and this as law never could expose; it did condemn for what was there found as meriting condemnation, it dealt in all its severity with the “what hast thou done” of man; but He who came as Savior, and to accomplish salvation, tested the roots of man’s moral status, and brought to light, as He alone could, the “where art thou” of man. Oh how blessed to see Him, wherever we see Him, exposing by His perfectness that which He was about to end on the cross in His own precious death!

But we must turn now to ch. 5, and dwell for a little on the second point, which I have spoken of already and which is there found. In this chapter, then, we find the revelation of Jehovah in a Man, as in ch. 4 we have seen how that promise was fulfilled in Him. It is the great subject throughout the chapter, though set forth in various ways. The first great instance of this is in verses 1-11: it is Jehovah revealed in this blessed Man to Peter’s conscience; the circumstances all lend their weight to the fact. Peter had been called ere this, he had accompanied with the Lord and seen His ways, yet, as to Peter’s conscience, he had never been face to face, so to speak, with God; but now the moment for it has arrived, and responding to the impulse which the divine will gave to it, and then ceased in a tranquillity in which self had no place.
Peter, in the most favorable circumstances that man could find himself surrounded by, privileged to place his boat at the service of the Lord of glory -- makes a never-to-be-forgotten discovery. The blessed One, having taught the people out of the ship, directs Peter to launch out into the deep, and let down the nets for a draught. Peter does so, evidently doubting the use of further toil after a night of fruitless labor (v. 5). This done, the nets inclosed the treasures of the deep; He who created them, controlled them and commanded them according to His sovereign pleasure; so great was the take that the net brake, the filled ships began to sink, the power and presence of Jehovah in a Man were there, and Peter’s conscience breaks down in His presence with “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” What a moment of light it was! It is written, “God is light” -- here is the great proof of it in the conscience of Peter.

The Lord has His own way of conducting us all into this solitude; in that light we see light, as Peter did, he found out that he was “a sinful man” -- roots and springs and sources of moral darkness all were there uncovered. And so it is with us, it is in the presence of God alone we learn what we are, and knowledge of self is not reached save there. The revelation of God to us can alone give the sense that we are unfit for His presence. This has ever been the case. (See Isa. 6; Dan. 10:8.)

But observe further here, it was not simply Jehovah revealed to Peter’s conscience, but in grace, and hence the blessed words “Fear not.” In very truth, the One who awakened the conscience can alone meet its thus disclosed needs. It is from Himself who created the earthquake in the conscience, that the sounds of mercy come. The prison at Philippi, later on when, redemption being completed, Christ was on high in the glory of God, affords the same instruction. There the physical earthquake which shook the foundations of the dungeon was His power in nature, as the moral earthquake which shook the jailer (who was in reality the prisoner) was His power in conscience yet in grace! How blessed! and His power was recognized, His goodness or willingness to help was not assured to the diseased. Now see v. 12, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” The way the Lord meets this is so precious, He not only says He is willing, but touches Him -- it will be borne in mind that to touch a leper made him who so acted unclean in the midst of Israel, and, as such, outside the camp was his place. But observe the contrast here: before their eyes was One who, though Man, was a divine Person, One who could touch a leper and not be defiled, One who had come in all His grace to remove that very defilement, One in whom was all the willingness of mercy and goodness, and One who had all power as God. Well may we sing,

“Whose love is as great as His power, And knows neither measure nor end.”

How blessed to just sit down and dwell in adoring delight on all the perfections and glories of Christ, to find our food and freshness in thus, by faith, taking Him into our souls, the very bread of God that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.

There is one other point here of exceeding beauty and blessedness, on which it is a delight to dwell. Observe v. 16, how fully and perfectly He maintains His Place of entire and perfect dependence as Man before God, and that, too, in the hour of His fame and greatness among men. Oh how precious that verse: “He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed” -- that is, He was at that time waiting, occupied with prayer; what a sight for angels and for men! let the power exercised be ever so great, and manifestly the power of God -- divine power -- still He is, as ever, the dependent Man. How blessed!

I will, before bringing these thoughts to a close, here transcribe a few words of another, which are both food and solace to the heart in these weary days, and amid the heat and strife of the desert scene, now so near its end, and suggested by these scenes and events on which our hearts have been dwelling --

If I open the Old Testament anywhere, the Gospels, the Epistles, what different atmosphere I find myself in at once. In the Old: ways, dealings, government, man -- though man and the world governed by God no doubt, but piety in that scene; and even in the Gospels and Epistles the difference is quite as great -- in certain respects more important. In the Epistles (so the Acts) one active to gather -- souls devoted to Christ, valuing Him and His work above all -- power shown more than in Christ on earth, as He promised -- it is gathering, then caring power. I get back, though now in the power of the Holy Ghost, and grace in a saving, gathering way, to man, and it soon fails. But in the Gospels I find a center where my mind reposes,
which is itself -- always itself, and nothing like it -- moves through a discordant scene, attracting to itself through grace (what no apostle did or could do) and shining in its own perfection unaltered and unalterable in all circumstances.

What comfort and rest of heart to sit at His feet, to hear His voice, amid all the tumultuous waves and billows of present sorrows and sighings! May He, who alone can effect it for us, bring us there and keep us there, giving us so to taste the joys of His company and presence, that nothing around in the world without, and nothing in the far more insidious world within, may tempt us to leave our sweet retreat.

** Note: This also appeared as “His Word Was with Power,” in Helps in Things Concerning Himself, vol. 5.

“Remember”

I would call your attention, my reader, to three solemn occasions on which this word is used in Scripture, and I pray God by His Spirit to bless the consideration of them to your soul, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

First, the word is used by the blessed Lord Himself in Luke 17:32; viz., “Remember Lot’s wife.” He had been speaking to the Pharisees about the kingdom of God, and warning them as to the days of the Son of man, telling them that the times of Noah and of Lot would be repeated in those days. In the course of His most solemn words the blessed Lord says, “Remember Lot’s wife.” Now let us enquire and see what there is about Lot’s wife on which memory is thus turned. First, as to Lot himself, he was a righteous man, but altogether in a false and wretched position. If this little book should come into the hands of a child of God, oh, be warned by the example of Lot as to the result of being mixed up with and having fellowship with the world! Alas! there are too many Lots in these days -- converted men and women no doubt, but sadly immersed in the world and its ways, and even in some cases pleading a justification of it, being of the world on principle. Alas for such a total denial of the word and truth of God!

Now mark well the downward steps of this “righteous man,” Lot. He first made Sodom his choice (see Gen. 13:10, 11); he lifted up his eyes on it. To him it was like the land of Egypt; i.e., fair in appearance as the place of ease. Next he pitched his tent “toward Sodom,” dwelling in the cities of the plain; next we find him sitting in the gate of Sodom (see Gen. 19:1), which means that he held position there as one in authority. The end of the history as regards Lot himself is immensely solemn on his side of it, though most blessed in the manifestation it affords of sovereign grace, which rescued him out of this moral shipwreck -- delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

The record of all this we have in Gen. 19:15-17, and then it is added, in v. 26, “And his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” Now what was involved in her looking back? Observe this it is which gives all its force to the words, “Remember Lot’s wife.” There were two things in it which, I believe, give emphasis to the example, and are intended to be retained in memory.

First she “looked back” to where her heart’s affections were left. The life she had was there. How solemn! I may now be addressing readers of another class -- professors of religion, yet unsaved, whose hearts cling to the world of lust and pleasure and ease. To all such may these words come in power -- “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Second, her looking back was a distinct denial of and refusal of the urgent demands of the sovereign grace which rescued her husband. To him the word was, “Look not behind thee.” It was, moreover, a turning of her face to Sodom, and a turning of her back on God. Unsaved reader of these words, this is your position at this moment. Your back is on God, your face to the world, which is fast ripening for judgment. How solemn! May God by His Spirit, and through His word, awaken your conscience ere it be too late! May your ears be opened to heed the words of the Lord Jesus -- “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Let us turn now to another remember, which we find in Luke 23:42 -- “Lord, remember me.” These were the words of a poor thief to the Lord Jesus Christ when hanging on the cross; they are the language of faith and confidence in Christ as the alone Savior of sinners. This man was so bad that the world was getting rid of him, out of it; but as he was one of Christ’s sheep, He, the blessed One, was bearing the judgment due to his sins before God on the cross. Grace, yes, sovereign grace, worked in the mighty power of God the Holy Ghost in this poor thief’s conscience, convicted him of his being a guilty sinner, who deserved the punishment he was undergoing. Mark the proof of it in the way he addressed the other thief, his companion in sin and crime --

Dost not thou fear God, seeing we are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.

Reader, ponder these words. Here is true, genuine repentance, as in “Lord, remember me” is true, genuine faith. These are never separated in Scripture. Wherever there is true repentance there is true faith, and wherever there is true faith there is true repentance. Further, mark it well, and note what characterizes true repentance as here, even a full and divine judgment of the state the soul is in before God. No excuse, no extenuation, no attempt to lessen the enormity of the guilt, or to complain of the severity of the punishment; not a word. “We justly,” we deserve it all, it is our rightful due but of Jesus he says, “This Man hath done nothing amiss.” True thoughts about man and about Christ. How blessed!

Reader, have you had such real conviction? Has the divine arrow reached your conscience? Is the fear of God before your eyes? I entreat of you to stop, pause, consider. May this example arrest you by the Spirit’s power, so that in the same grace your faith in Christ, the spotless Man, as the alone Savior of the lost, may find its expression in the words of the poor thief -- “Lord, remember me.”

We come now to consider the third instance of the use of the word “remember” (Luke 16:25).
“Son, remember.” They are the words of Abraham to a man in hell. How solemn! How awful! This man while on earth was “clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” But how changed now it all is when we catch a glimpse of him in another world, lifting up his voice in hell, and crying in torment! Hearken, I pray you, my reader, to what God says in His word as to this rich man --

And in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, 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.

What memories that word “remember” must have stirred in his soul! How it must have brought the past before him in the light of what he was then enduring! Memories in hell. What a thought! Solemn, dreadful reality! But further observe what these are here connected with: “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.” As much as to say, “All that your heart went after you have received” -- “thy good things.” How bitter these words must have sounded in his ears! It is all changed now. In this world man is fallen and wicked; his good things are the portion of sinful man. Again, think of what a solemn, even awful, revelation we have here in this lifting of the veil from the other world! What a flood of light is shed abroad here! Riches and wealth are called in Scripture “the unrighteous mammon.” Why? Because they are the portion of fallen man, and belong to him. They are not what the word of God speaks of as the “your own” of the heavenly man; and further, this unrighteous mammon had no place when Adam was innocent, and as yet unfallen. It is well to remember that there was a promise to the righteous of the future life; and ruin, who owned the holy, spotless Jesus on the cross, who trusted in Him, and in Him alone, and to whom the Lord Jesus Christ, for His own words, “If any man will [is willing to] do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,” &c. (John 7:17); and in proportion to their own lack of faith and courage, standing apart from those who, amid weakness, weariness and much failure, sought at least to stand fast, and hold the truth as it had been given of God, communicated by His vessels, and received in faith of the Holy Ghost.

Thank God, there is still in His grace the open door of mercy, wide open too, through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for sinners of every class and clime. Reader, if you have never yet cast yourself upon this grace, let me entreat of you to remember all that is here brought before you -- remember Lot’s wife, and be warned; remember the rich man who passed from luxury to hell, and be warned; and remember the poor dying robber, who owned his guilt and ruin, who owned the holy, spotless Jesus on the cross, who trusted in Him, and in Him alone, and to whom the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” May God by His Spirit bring all these “remembers” before the souls of all my readers, for His blessed Son’s sake.

The Reserves of Faith

(2 Tim. 2:19; 4:17)

There are two words in these chapters which are the stay of faith in the darkest moments of the last days. They express as well, the reserve which faith ever finds in God Himself. When the inspired writer of this epistle took leave of the elders of the assembly at Miletus, he solemnly warned them as to what was coming (Acts 20). The spiritual forecast there recorded, the prophetic revelation of what was coming, is for our instruction in these last “perilous times.” It is worthy of note, that the apostle by the Holy Ghost recounted what should be, then admonishes them as to their own attitude of soul, so as to profit by the divine communication, in these words, “Therefore watch and remember.”

It is very clear that a state of mind and heart in contrast with this, would leave them a ready prey to the delusions and devices of the enemy. It is not, alas, an uncommon state of soul at this moment! It is a constant objection raised by those who are in this state, that they cannot see, they do not see, what others very clearly see, and they very often in consequence conclude that there is nothing to be seen, and that those who act on the warning of scripture, are the parties who are wrong -- in fact, extreme, and evil disposed persons alas, for such spiritual insensibility as this! If there were but that watching enjoined by the Spirit, that wakeful condition of soul, how different it all would be!

It is very instructive to see the state of things which gave rise to the divine comfort introduced by this “Notwithstanding.” The assembly is contemplated as being the scene of “profane and vain babblings,” even advancing to greater impiety, and their word spreading as a gangrene; such a state of things as asserting that the resurrection has taken place already, and carrying away some with it, even to the overthrow of their faith. What a solemn picture, what a dark moment! I can well conceive, how at that day as in this, some would be ready to give up all testimony, saying all was “gone,” all was “broken up”; others would take the ground that “halting” is the proper path, in their ignorance or unbelieving fear, forgetting the blessed Lord’s own words, “If any man will [is willing to] do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,” &c. (John 7:17); and in proportion to their own lack of faith and courage, standing apart from those who, amid weakness, weariness and much failure, sought at least to stand fast, and hold the truth as it had been given of God, communicated by His vessels, and received in faith of the Holy Ghost.

At such a moment as this, what a cheer this “Notwithstanding” of the Holy Ghost is, and the more so, as the full force of the word in the original is perceived: for it (μετανοεῖ) “affirms with certainty where doubt may have been raised”; the solemn state of the assembly as here described, might seem to cast a serious reflection upon the foundation of God; in reply to all such insinuations or suggestions of the enemy, through whomsoever expressed, the word of the Spirit stands out in all its comfort; “the firm foundation of God stands.”

What real cheer this is to the heart at such a time, and
how entirely it lifts the soul above and outside all mere human actings or notions; the Lord be praised for His reserve! If it had been possible for man to have made the foundation of God unstable, verily he would have applied himself with energy to accomplish it; but this is outside his reach, “the firm foundation of God.”

May every timid, tried heart take courage by this comforting word, and turn away their eyes from all the confusion and vain babblings of men, who as to the truth have missed the mark.

The other word to which we would call attention, is also filled with the deepest comfort and consolation; if “nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands,” has its own soothing voice in the almost disintegrated state of the assembly; so “notwithstanding the Lord stood with me,” is a word of very real cheer to every faithful and loyal heart, who may be in their measure, deserted and abandoned for Christ and His truth’s sake.

It was Paul’s especial lot, (and shall I say glory?) that in firm upholding and maintenance of the truth, he was abandoned, was left alone: “all forsook me.” What a trial of his loyalty and faith! Such must ever be looked for in the times here described by the Holy Ghost; and indeed, we might truthfully say, that as to our service, at all times we must be contented and ready to go on in it alone with God, most deeply thankful for any true-hearted, real fellowship, but so cast on God as to go on all the same if it be not accorded to us -- alone, and yet not alone. But the apostle’s position was of course special and peculiar. He was abandoned by the mass of Christians, as well as deserted by his companions in service; he names specially Demas, whose case was evidently felt by the apostle; the love of the age had carried him away in its rising tide -- alas, how many Demas’s there are! It is also worthy of note that it is in no way even implied that Demas had ceased to be a Christian, but he had no heart to share with the suffering apostle, the sorrows, trials, afflictions and reproach connected with the gospel. It is well to remember that this is the day of the afflictions of the glad tidings, and those who will share them must be prepared to suffer evil, even as the apostle himself, who endured it unto bonds.

But the circumstances in which the apostle found he was in here for the truth’s sake, only served to bring out fully what a reserve there was for him in the Lord Himself, and hence he tells us that in that dark and lonely moment, “The Lord stood with me and strengthened me,” &c.; observe the beautiful moral order of these words, not “strengthened me and stood with me,” but “stood with me and strengthened me”; and there is a reality conveyed by this order that is very blessed, for it puts first and in the foreground, the fact of the Lord’s company and presence with His faithful servant in the moment of his desertion by all. Oh, what a reality is the company of the blessed Lord! and precious and blessed as that is at all times, how doubly so, when all men forsook him! What a commendation of His beloved servant’s fidelity to His master’s interests! What a solace to his heart at such a moment!

“The Lord stood with me.” Verily, this was enough; alone, and yet not alone; and indeed, we might say never so little alone as in this moment. It has been said by another, and most truly too, that the great effect or result of the Lord’s presence with us is, that our greatest joys and sorrows are both alike forgotten in His; He is above all, supreme for time and eternity.

This company of the Master accorded to His servant, was not an isolated case, indeed, we are assured on the contrary, that the faithful, suffering apostle enjoyed it and knew it continually; but the mind recurs at once to Acts 23:11, and 27:23-25, where most blessed instances of a similar kind are recorded; in the former we read, “The night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul”; in the latter, the apostle himself assures the afflicted company on the ship in these comforting words,

For there stood by me this night an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve saying, Fear not, Paul... Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me.

And here I might say, that allowing all the speciality that is connected with the beloved apostle of the Gentiles and his mission, still assuredly the presence of the Lord, the cheer of His company, is the portion of all His faithful servants till traveling days are done. May we know it so as to prize it, is the earnest desire of the heart.

The words which have supplied us with our present meditation, are just those calculated by grace to steady the heart at the present moment; wherever the eye rests, nothing can be seen to afford any brightness or cheer as far as this scene is concerned; disruption and corruption abound on every side; the restless foe, the watchful enemy would profit by these consequences of his own work, to seduce, or at least dishearten: he would insinuate, indeed he has with some succeeded, that all is gone, all corporate testimony is over, that we have come to, what? Well, very like “atoms at last”! It is to be feared that this wile of the devil has found willing victims in some cases; it is painfully instructive to see how readily we can be allured or persuaded into what we should like. There is but little hope for all such; but there are others, a different class entirely, timid, yet real hearts; to all such I am persuaded God’s reserves will be a stay and cheer. May He abundantly bless His own words to such. “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands.” “Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.”

May hearts true to Him, find their resources in His reserves, in these dark days, as they wait in patience to see His face and hear His voice.

The Walk with God

Genesis 5:24

The first thing needful, in order to walk with God, is to have the conscience perfectly at rest; the blood of Christ alone can secure this to us. If the conscience is not at rest, having no sense of being so perfectly purged that it is fit for the presence
of God, there is no liberty in respect to it; and all things are regarded in the light of its felt need, and as yet, unsatisfied demands. A conscience enlightened by the word of life will not rest, and cannot rest, short of full and uncondemning quietness in the presence of God, where He dwells. How blessedly perfect, then, must that work be, which, on the one hand, has so perfectly glorified God, down to the very lowest depths of humiliation and judgment, where the eternal Son of the Father, who humbled Himself to become a man, went and lay for us, and has, on the other hand, so divinely and completely settled the question of sin, in its guilt and power, as regards our consciences, that the believer in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, is both relieved and delivered in regard to his conscience and blessed up to the full height of that glory where Christ is, in whose once marred, but most blessed face, the whole glory of God now shines.

My hearers, have you got such a conscience before God? -- until you have, it is vain to speak of other things.

Allow me to show you, as far as I am able, and with God’s help, how this blessed redemption-work of the Lord Jesus thus acts upon the conscience. As born of the first Adam, every man by nature is lost and guilty; the first, or “lost,” is the common estate of all men alike as born into this world. The other “guilty,” relates to conduct or acts; and hence, each man has his own guilt, or sins, to account for to God. Now, this twofold pressure on the conscience, is blessedly met by the death of Christ. Scripture declares that “the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Heb. 10:2). Observe carefully the expression, “conscience of sins;” what does it mean? Why, simply, that there is nothing between me and God; that God has no controversy with me in respect of sins; they are, for me, completely put away, and my conscience is perfectly purged. Now, mark, consciousness of sin, which means that I know I have an evil nature in me, is a different thing altogether from “no more conscience of sins.” Knowing that I have an evil nature in me, need not, and ought not, to give me a bad conscience. Yielding to that evil nature, indulging it, or giving way to it, will surely soil my conscience, and make it bad practically, so that I cannot stand against the wiles of the devil.

But I can well suppose some one of my hearers to whom all this is quite new (and it is for such I speak), earnestly asking this question, “How can I ever get that liberty from this evil nature, which I am conscious is in me, and under the dominion of which, I fear, I really am at this moment?” Well, there are few questions more important; and if the answer is not known in the soul, its history is the monotonous circle of self, self, self: the blessed fact is, that not only are the sins of the believer all put away, that his conscience may be perfectly purged, so that there should be nothing between him and God; but his old man, has been crucified with Christ on the cross; and God does not regard the believer now as in that old man at all, but in Christ risen from the dead, in whose death that old man was judged and condemned:

Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). 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 (Rom. 8:3).

Now I quite admit there is a difference in the way in which these truths reach the conscience, and I will endeavor to point it out here.

With respect to my first, namely, the question of my sins, believing on the Son of God, I have the testimony of God in the word, to my conscience, that all my sins are forgiven, never to be remembered any more. This is not in any sense feeling or experience. No doubt such will flow from it, and the more so in proportion as faith is simple; but in no sense do I believe because I experience or feel it; but, on the contrary, I feel it as I believe it. The pillows of my faith are the atoning death of the Son of God on the one side, and the blessed witness of the Holy Ghost on the other. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:15, 17).

There are three great objects on which the eye of faith rests.

1st. The cross, and the garden with its new sepulcher, hewn out of the rock, wherein the blessed One was laid, and out of which He was raised and glorified.

2nd. The Father’s throne in the heavens, on which He who bore my sins is now seated -- soon to be on His own throne.

And 3rd. The blessed witness of the Holy Ghost, the record, the testimony of the living God, which endureth for ever.

With regard to the other truth, namely, how we are delivered from the dominion of sin; experience has every place, that is, it has to be learned by experience; and this process leads to discovering these three things: --

1st. That in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing.

2nd. That there is in us a new nature as well as (yet quite distinct from) the old.

3rd. That, notwithstanding this, the old is too strong for us, and deliverance from it is looked for outside of self altogether, and from another: this issues in, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”; it is the song of the prisoner bird, now liberated -- it is its first note as it flies; it is not its highest nor its every note; it is the starting-post of the soul, not its goal or prize. Perhaps many souls have recently found this new liberty and life -- if so, the Lord be praised; but do not, dear friends, allow yourselves to suppose for a moment that it is anything more than the normal state of a Christian. It is not, I suppose, to be wondered at that those who considered it a necessary thing to be tied and bound with the chain of their sins for so many years, should regard their newly found liberty (if they have found it) as something wonderfully beyond what any one else had ever known -- and the highest and greatest good.

There is one further point, and when I have touched on
it, I feel I shall have cleared the way for my subject.

Have you ever looked at two scriptures to which I shall now allude, namely, Rom. 6:9-11,

Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now what does that mean? Why, simply this, that faith accepts this wondrous fact, that our old man is crucified with Christ, and the believer accordingly reckons himself to be dead. The Lord give us thus simply by faith to keep our reckonings with God.

The other scripture is 2 Cor. 4:10: “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.”

What does this mean? Why this, simply, that Paul constantly applied the cross, the dying of Jesus, to himself, so as to keep in the silence of death, sin, that was in him. Oh, how one’s soul ought to adore in the presence of such wondrous liberty and power, secured through the precious death of Him who was God over all blessed for evermore. This, then, is the realization of faith, as the other is the recognition of faith. The Lord give us to be established in these things, that we may be free to hear.

That we may hear His voice we must be in possession of both liberty and rest. If you have not repose, you cannot give him an audience. I do not mean to deny for a moment that there is a previous exercise connected with the silencing of nature, the fading of other sounds which were wont to fill the ear of the soul; but this is the setting aside of what intrudes, in order that the disengaged ear may be turned without distraction to Him instead of a morbid heart that wastes a weary, restless life away by feeding on itself.

There is a repose in one who hears well, that is very blessed to witness -- there was something of it at least in Mary, when she sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word. Her very attitude was restful; she sat and heard.

I do not deny the activity of life, either in its earnestness to obtain, or its readiness to surrender; but I contend it ought to be restful activity -- an activity which is kept alive and sustained by an object outside itself.

“As ground, when parched with summer heat,
Gladly drinks in the welcome shower
So would we, listening at His feet,
Receive His words, and feel His power.”

I shall here note one or two results of hearing in this spirit.

First, there is abstractedness of soul. Other sounds which otherwise might influence, now fail to interest. The ear is turned to catch every note of the voice of the charmer; and, oh, what a voice that is! His enemies, even, declared that never man spake like Him.

The bride (when the day of union has not as yet dawned, and whose affection is restless) is spell-bound as she listens in the twilight, and announces with rapture “the voice of my beloved,” . . . “my beloved spake” -- her whole soul turns to hear what the bridegroom of her heart had to say.

Next to abstraction is absorption, entire occupation of soul; the ear, not only bent to hear, but filled with the sound of His voice; and that, too, not as one who is apart from me, but One to whom I am united.

The eye of the soul is exercised as well as the ear: the voice of the object delights and engages the ear; the Person Himself delights the eye, the vision of the soul. It is a wonderful thing to know that the heavens are opened to the faith of a believer now, and Jesus in glory, pointed out by the indwelling Holy Ghost, to the one who looks up with steadfast gaze. Oh it is everything to have the eye on the object! What distinguishes Christianity from what went before it is an object outside of us, and power in us, Jesus in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us.

If the eye of the soul is turned in, the object is not seen. Failure will necessitate, but self-judgment will clear the way out of it; so that the object may again fill the eye, self-judgment will hinder self-occupation, and promote earnestness and purpose of heart. Self-judgment is not an act once for all performed, but a continuous habit of soul. Oh, what a blessed sight for faith, that transcendent Person, that glorified Man, that mighty Savior! Well may we pray,

“O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee.”

Let me again impress upon you the fact that we do not behold the Savior in glory, as apart from Him, but as those who are united to Him, one with Him. How very blessed to know I am one with my object! I shall only touch upon one or two consequences of beholding.

First, as we behold we are transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18); that is, as we are occupied with Christ, where He is, we become like Him; the moral features of Him who is our object, are transferred to those who, by the Spirit, behold Him in glory. Stephen is a beautiful instance of this; he acted like Christ in the midst of the most trying circumstances. (See Acts 7.)

Next, we find that the object in heaven forms the affections suited to itself. Herein lies the difference between Christian affection and heart-longing, and that which is found in the Song of Songs; in the latter, the bride does not possess the profound repose and sweetness of affection that flow from a relationship already formed, known and fully appreciated. Previous to the day of union, the relationship sought for was the consequence of the state of the heart, but now that the day has dawned, the state of the heart, the affections, are the consequence of the relationship. The same is observable in the Psalms; yearning, panting after God, are all to be found there; and the earnestness might well put us to shame: but the relationship, as well as the object of faith, and the power to enjoy the one and behold the other, are wanting. In the Song of Songs, the bride is not united to the Bridegroom; and in the Psalms, the remnant, whose experience is so blessedly depicted in various scenes and circumstances, is as yet outside
of all that which will, ere long, crown their hopes, aspirations, and yearnings.

The feet pursue the path marked out by His blessed footsteps, who has gone before. For this, divine energy is needed. The blessed apostle, who knew Christ in glory, heard His voice speaking to him from glory, and had seen Him in glory, follows him: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The mark denoted the spot, as it were, whither he pressed; the prize was that for which he ran. He did not think of his eye or his feet. That on which his eye rested, and for which his feet pressed on was everything to him: purpose of heart, earnestness, energy, there must be, as well as self-abnegation, every step of the course; diligence of soul and vigilance of heart too; -- but if Christ, seen in glory, and known in glory, does not form and maintain these in the heart, I know of no other motive or power. The Lord keep us hearing, and beholding, and following His own Son; that the tastes suited to Christ may be both formed and kept alive in us; and we ourselves, thus divinely strengthened to refuse everything of the first man, because we are so satisfied with the second Man; and that we may show forth His virtues, and glories, and excellencies, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights (heavenly bodies) in the world, holding forth the word of life.

**Salvation -- Liberty -- Food -- Security**

In John 10:9, we find the above blessed realities expounded by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. First, we have Himself set before us, next His actions in grace.

It is a great comfort to know who and what He is who laid down His life for the sheep, and has put them for security in His own blessed hand. This is what we are taught in the commencement of John 10. The blessed Lord Jesus Christ declares Himself to be the true Messiah of Israel, the one who had been promised as to come; He it was who entered by the door. He did not climb up some other way, as all the false shepherds did; they were at best but thieves and robbers, claiming unlawfully that to which they had no right. Not so Christ. He came in by the door, submitting to every rule and ordinance appointed by the owner of the flock -- the Jehovah of Israel. Beloved reader, how blessed to think of Him, the eternal Son of God as He was, yet He comes down and humbles Himself to become a man, and as a man submits Himself perfectly! But Israel would not have Him; they slighted, despised, and rejected Him. So He leaves. He goes outside the fold of Israel, the enclosure which was peculiar to them. This is what is meant by, “He goeth before them” -- as rejected and despised of His own people, He Himself goes first, and then it is said, He puts forth His own sheep, and they follow Him, for they know His voice. This was exactly the case of the blind man in the 9th chapter, who was cast out, and had been found by Jesus. What a blessed Shepherd by whom to be led and fed! How good to be under His care, outside all men’s religion and the whole array of those ordinances which belonged to Israel!

Having thus set Himself forth in this way -- His person the only ground of connection with God -- He then opens out most blessedly what it is that replaces the old Jewish system, Himself the foundation and accomplisher of it.

First -- There is *salvation*. “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” He now presents Himself as the door. He, and He alone, is the door; to enter in by that door was to be saved. He would lay down His life, costly and precious as it was. His blood was to be shed. It was His own voluntary act to shed His blood, lay down His life; no one could take it from Him. As to necessity, there was none on His side, save indeed that blessed love of His, which would remove every barrier to its full expression.

Again, think of Him in contrast with an hireling. The hour of danger or difficulty would find the latter thinking of himself; Jesus thinks of His sheep. If He then interposes, if He lays down His life, sheds His blood, the first thing that meets us at the door is *salvation*. “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

Again, there is also *liberty*. “He shall go in and out.” Slavery and bondage is the birthright of every child of Adam. He is born into the world a lost slave. The moment he has to do with Christ, he is met with salvation and liberty -- he is liberated, he is set free and there is also *food* -- “shall find pasture.” Oh for ability to describe the richness of the food! *Saved, liberated*, brought into a region where want is unknown -- “I shall not want.” Not only this, but *filled, satisfied;* and hence it is, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” And observe, it is, “*if any man enter in.*” It is not only now the children of Abraham the nation of Israel; the door of grace in Himself is wide open to all. Will you say, reader, if you know what it is to be blessed in this way under this gracious Shepherd Lord? Have you had to do with Him? It must be with Him; for it is, “*by Me,* if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Oh, what a contrast to all our purely natural thoughts of God and His Christ! What a contrast to all that was to be found in the *law or ordinances*! Neither the one nor the other could meet the first need to a poor outcast, either of Jew or Gentile. The law *required*, not saved -- the law brought in death, not *life* -- but, “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved”; and, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” is *grace* in its fullness.

Once more: we have here also *eternal security*. The life which Christ gives is eternal, everlasting but not this only, for of His sheep He says, “*they* shall never perish.” But then, where will He put them to secure them against enemies from without. He makes them as strong *outside as inside*. No weakness within could endanger, for it was “eternal life” He gave; and no enemy outside could harm them, for He has the sheep in *His hand*. The hand that was nailed to the cross is the secure shelter and rest for all the sheep. Oh, what contrasts are awakened in the soul as we read that word *“My hand” -- My Father’s hand!* Not the walls and barriers, the laws and
and made us sit together in heavenly places IN Christ Jesus.” Mark, it is not said with Him -- that shall be yet -- but now it is IN Him.

Dear reader, it is a wondrous ascent this, from being dead in sins -- from walking after the course of this world, the slave of its lusts and fashions and follies -- from fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind, ministering to self in all its hideous and most unseemly aspects: I say, from all this, and out of all this, taken up to the throne of God, “seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” What amazing grace! And this is where God begins with every soul. “Heavenly places” is not the goal of the Christian, but the starting-post -- not the position for which I hope, but the place into which I am now brought. And let me say, nothing is more important at this present time, than this very fact; but let it be once clearly apprehended by the soul, let the soul be once linked with this truth by the Holy Ghost, and there is set up not only the grand starting-post from whence the Christian runs, as well as the battle field where he is to fight, but also the plumb line and rule of his whole conduct and ways down here in this world. Oh, wondrous reality amid the unreal! My home is heavenly, my rest is heavenly, and my conflicts are heavenly; and let me say this, the great aim of Satan at this present time is to keep back from the saint the knowledge of his true position and place before God, to make him a mere earthly man, occupied with the trials, difficulties and perplexities of the wilderness, instead of a heavenly man, doing battle with principalities and powers and wicked spirits in heavenly places, and overcoming all the difficulties by the way in the powers of what is his in Christ, at the other side of death and judgment. In a word, Satan’s desire is to drag down the saint now to the level of a mere earthly man, surrounded by wilderness difficulties. It is perfectly true we are in the wilderness, yet I am not occupied with that. I am a heavenly man, though on earth, and as the seal leaves its impress on the wax, so should this great grand precious reality stamp my every act, my every way, my every thought. Oh, blessed Lord, Thou knowest how easy it is to profess, how flippant are our tongues, but do thou say it Thyself down deep into the hearts of Thy saints, “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

O Lord! how blest our journey, Though here on earth we roam, Who find in Abba’s favor, Our spirits’ present home.

For where Thou now art sitting, By faith we’ve found repose -- Free to look up to heaven, Since Thou, our Head, arose!

In spirit there already, Soon we ourselves shall be; In soul and body perfect – All glorified with Thee! Thy Father’s smiles are cheering The brief but thorny way; Thy Father’s house the dwelling, Made ready for that day.

The Comforter now present, Assures us of Thy love -- He is the blessed earnest, Of glory there above.
Christ in Heaven

The Spring and Satisfaction of the Affections of His Saints on Earth

There are many true and earnest souls at the present time sorely perplexed and tried because they do not find in themselves those qualities which they really long for, as suitable to Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. In proportion to their reality, and uprightness of conscience, is their sorrow and perplexity. They have tasted what earth and the things around cannot impart to them, yet it has been but a taste; the longings and yearnings are there unsatisfied and “hope deferred maketh the heart sick.” They see a brightness which they do not possess, a portion which is not theirs. They are like at the tomb; ardent affection is in them; this world is but a grave to them at best; they can tell you, with broken heart and weeping eyes, “I sought Him whom my soul loveth. I sought Him, but I found Him not”; and often they say, “Oh that I knew where I could find Him!”

Now all this imparts to a soul such a state, a perturbation, a quietude, an unrest, which is very marked; like the bee in quest of honey, which will inflict its sting on all who seek to oppose it in its pursuit.

These satisfied affections so longed for, heavenly tastes so very earnestly desired, Christ living (domiciled) in heart, eternal life exhibited here below, all these, and much more akin to them, are results, consequences, effects, not the producing power. I will state presently what that power is.

I need not delay to demonstrate, that produced effects or consciences cannot either create themselves or exist even apart from that which alone can create them. You generally find that if the mind or thought dwell much on the absence or possession of these things, the soul is correspondingly depressed or elated. It is surely good to be convicted, but dwelling much on our shortness of stature in divine fellowship, or on our leanness in realization, leads to self-occupation of a very insidious nature; and what comfort can there be in seeing certain qualities and joys which we know we ought to possess but which we have not? This is to us really what Pisgah was to Moses—a sight without possession; and hence in a manner we are tantalized and chafed in spirit.

Let me then state simply as the Lord enables me, that which alone can awaken, sustain, and satisfy divine affections in the soul.

1. There must be an object, as the spring or source, sustenance, and satisfaction of them; hence the affections which rise, live, and set in this object must be of the same nature with it. Christ is the object, and the affections He alone awakens, sustains, and satisfies, must be divine.

2. There must be, known through faith, conscious union by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, with Christ our object, the glorified man at the right hand of God. Wonderful, blessed fact, we are united to Him in glory! It is accepted in faith; and in the measure of our faith is our realization, communion, and joy.

3. He to whom we are united is in glory; and the whole glory of God, that is, God’s satisfaction according to His attributes, shines in His blessed face. It is from thence every ray of light that has reached us has shone. It is there we, by faith, see Him, know Him, have intercourse with Him.

In having to do with the Lord Jesus it must be where He is; then as it is so, as He Himself in glory engages and engrosses the soul, the affections, tastes, desires, so ardently longed for, are produced in us, and satisfied too.

This is all most important to bear in mind, because there is often a great deal of beholding afar off, a great deal of mere admiration, without its being untrue; the view from Pisgah captivating the heart, the land that Jehovah our God cares for, and on which His eyes continually rest, viewed, but not entered or dwelt in, seen in such a way as to spoil all else, but to give nothing better in actual possession. Those who are in such a condition display dissatisfaction and disappointment at every turn of their path; they, have no moral superiority or power.

It must not be supposed that this would in any way exclude that diligence and purpose of heart which there must ever be on our part most surely, yet not in anywise in the direction of what is produced in us, as if we could secure these, but that diligence and purpose of heart which is expressed in the words “looked up steadfastly into heaven”; for it is as we are detained by Christ Himself in glory, that those qualities are imparted to us which are seen and observed by men. Again I repeat it, nothing can produce on earth ways suitable to heaven, but occupation with Christ who is there. We are transformed into His image, I mean in our measure here, as we are impressed by Him there. Oh, the glory of His grace that shines into us, as Himself, the beloved of the Father, fills the entire vision of the soul, thus shaping and forming us in moral assimilation to Himself!

Thus too it is that the heart is secured against the danger of valuing the occupation because of the effect and consequences seen in others as resulting from it, rather than for the joy and satisfaction of being in the company of Christ. Not that any true saint would desire to allow the thought, yet we know ourselves but little if we have but little fear in this direction; and be assured of it, when the effects of having to do with Christ are prominent in the soul, Christ is valued rather in relation to these than for what He is in Himself, and His company is not sought or kept because of the simple satisfaction of being with Him.

The normal position of a Christian is Canaan first, and then the lessons of the wilderness. These have a very different character when this is the order. Yet be assured it is the divine order for us. Working to heaven, and living from heaven, are two very different conditions of soul. It is true we are going on to heaven through the wilderness; but yet it is also true that we have started from it, and this does not make the wilderness of this world less the wilderness than it is; but if we were traversing it as from glory all about it would be gilded, the clear and blessed light of heaven would soften the hardness and cheer the dreariness of its wilds.
It was after Moses had been in the mount with God that his face shone; the effects were witnessed by Israel when he descended from the mount. But now the heavens open steadfastly into heaven. He saw Jesus in the glory of God; and he, by the holy Ghost, looks up, and sees Jesus in the glory of God; he saw that which no man before of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven. He saw the Savior in glory

The Savior in glory had formed the vessel on earth the affections and tastes suited to Himself, but He had also satisfied those affections. Thirty years of continuous trial and unceasing labor had passed between the day that the Lord Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and the time the epistle to the Philippians was written. The dungeon of Nero might exclude the natural sun, but the light from heaven above its brightness, shone as brightly as ever, and the only change in Paul, is, that now he counts all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Even in the things of time and sense it would not be possible to overrate the power of an object; how much more, when that object is the eternal Son of the Father, the glorified One!

Do we really know that we are one with Him in glory? Do we seek His company for the simple satisfaction of being with Him? Remember, you can never be for Christ in any measure, according to His thoughts of being for Him, save as you know, possess, and dwell with Him in heaven. There cannot be too much purpose of heart, too great fixedness of gaze, as we look up steadfastly into heaven; yet these are neither the objects of the heart, nor do they produce or promote likeness to Him, Christ, and Christ alone, is the object. The Holy Ghost, by whom we are one with Him, occupies the soul with Him, and the effect is seen by those around in the quiet restful superiority with which all our path here is trodden. We see it in Paul; we see the race of a heavenly man, goal, prize, and mark, before him: he presses on; he stands fast when no one stood by him, but all forsook him; amid general weakness and abounding declension he pursues his onward, upward advance. He can “rejoice in the Lord greatly” amid sorrow upon sorrow; he can be careful for nothing amid ceaseless anxieties and disquietude, casting them on Him who can bear them and not feel their weight, and receiving instead the peace of God which passeth every understanding he can let things go here because he possesses an eternal portion in Christ in that place where He is, and who “is at hand”; he can occupy his heart with what is good amid abounding evil, and find the God of peace with him; he can be abased and yet not disheartened, can abound, and yet be not elated; because Christ is his sufficiency in the dark day, and better than the best in the bright day. Nothing is able to stand before the heavenly man all the days of his life (Josh. 1:5); nothing daunts him. Seated on the power of Christ, he can do all things; though he has nothing, yet he possesses all; though empty, yet he is full; he has a source, supply, measure, and channel equal to the heart of God, hence he can say, “My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Such, then, are the sources, maintenance, and satisfaction of those divine affections and yearnings which never can exist apart from their object, Christ, the glorified One at God’s right hand. May the Lord, by His Spirit, so turn and keep the faith of His beloved saints fixed there that in them may be witnessed amid this present time a more quiet, restful, and satisfied course through this present evil world, for His own name’s sake.

The Word of God: the Place it Holds in the Church of Rome

There is at present a manifestly uneasy and uncomfortable feeling among a certain class of Roman Catholics as to the hostility of the Church of Rome to the reading of the word of God. It is said by Roman Catholic controversialists to be an unfounded charge, and a refuted calumny; and so whenever either shame or policy makes it desirable to do so, the charge made against her of being opposed to the circulation of the scriptures, and that she prohibits the laity to read them, is very warmly and indignantly denied. Further, it is attempted to sustain this denial by adding testimony which is entirely short of the true standards and creeds of the Church of Rome. In the November issue of the Nineteenth Century, there is an article entitled, “Catholicism in America,” by Mr. Badley, in which he describes a sermon by Cardinal Gibbons, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, on the subject of “Reading the Bible.” In the sermon the Cardinal quotes St. Charles Bonomeo, who speaks of the Bible as being “the garden of the priest,” and the Archbishop adds, “I say it ought to be the garden of the laity, too. What is good for us is good for you.” Now this testimony is supposed to be quite conclusive as to disposing of this so-called calumny against the Church of Rome as to her treatment of the scriptures. But is it really conclusive in this direction? Whatever may be Cardinal Gibbons’ sentiments as to the Bible being “the garden of the laity,” he, as well as all faithful Roman Catholics, must abide by the standards of their church, it is to these all true appeal must be made for any correct and authoritative statement of the doctrines of their church. The object, therefore, of the present paper is to place before my readers some of the decrees of these standards respecting the Holy Scriptures, so that all may judge in the light of facts, what the true doctrine of the Church of Rome is.

At the Synod of Toulouse, A. D. 1229, the Pope’s legate set forth forty-five orders with the view of extirpating heresy.
The fourteenth order runs thus:

“We likewise prohibit the permitting of the laity to have the books of the Old and New Testaments, unless, perhaps, any one should wish, from a feeling of devotion, to have a psalter or breviary for divine service, or the hours of the blessed Virgin. But we strictly forbid them to have the above-named books translated in the vulgar tongue” [Labbaeus et Cossarte, tom. 11, part 1, p. 430].

It may interest my readers to know that the Church of Rome declared the Vulgate to be the only authentic version of the scriptures, still she did not determine what particular edition of the Vulgate should be received; consequently there have been rival editions emanating from the highest authority, but differing from each other. Prior to the Council of Trent in 1546, there were several editions in print, and after it closed, others appeared. Sixtus V., A.D. 1590, set forth an edition which he himself had with great care revised, and by a bull declared it the authentic edition, and ordered under pain of the heaviest anathemas that not the smallest alteration should be made in it. But ten years afterwards Clement VIII. declared this very edition of Sixtus V. to be corrupt, commanded its disuse, published another of his own which differed from the former in no less than two thousand places. The Council of Trent having decreed that the Latin Vulgate was the only authentic version of the scriptures, determined it should remain a sealed book from the people. A rule was adopted which forbid the laity to read even the Romish version in the vulgar tongue, without obtaining a distinct permission in writing from their confessors to do so. The fourth rule concerning prohibited books is as follows:

“Since it is manifest by experience, that if the Holy Scriptures be allowed everywhere without discrimination in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good will arise from it, on account of the rashness of men, let the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor be abided by in this matter; so that with the advice of the parish priest or confessor they may grant the reading of Catholic versions of the scriptures in the vulgar tongue to those whom they have ascertained can derive no loss, but an increase of faith and piety from such reading, which permission they must have in writing; But whoever shall presume, without such permission, either to read or have them, must not receive absolution of sin unless the Bible shall first have been delivered to the ordinary” [Regula IV. de Libris Prohibitis].

Further evidence as substantiating the foregoing is found in the year 1693, when Quesnell published a remarkable book under the title of “Moral Reflections” on the New Testament. This book immediately attracted attention, and called forth from Clement XI., A.D. 1713, the famous bull, “Unigenitus,” in which he anathematizes Quesnell’s book, and all who should read it. In order that all who read may understand what it was that drew forth the severe condemnation of Pope Clement XI. I will give a few propositions collected from Quesnell’s Reflections:

79. “It is useful and necessary, at all times, in all places, and for persons of every class, to study and to know the spirit, piety and sacred mysteries of the scriptures” (1 Cor. 14:5).

80. “The reading of the holy scriptures is for all” (Acts 8:28).

81. “The obscurity of the holy word of God is no reason why laymen should excuse themselves from reading it” (Acts 8:31).

84. “To take the New Testament from the hands of Christians, or shut it up from them, by taking from them the means of understanding it, is to close the mouth of Christ to them” (Matt. 5:2).

85. “To forbid Christians the reading of holy scripture, particularly of the gospel, is to prohibit the use of light to the sons of light, and to make them suffer a kind of excommunication” (Luke 11:33).

My readers will form their own conclusions when they hear that these propositions were condemned by the bull, “Unigenitus.” But further evidence of this fact is forthcoming in “Dens’ Theology,” where we find this bull quoted in order to prove that it is not necessary for all to read the scriptures. In Dens’ we find the following “Is the reading of the sacred scriptures necessary, or commanded for all?”

“ANSWER. -- That it is not necessary, or commanded for all, appears from the practice and doctrines of the universal Church. Wherefore in the bull, ‘Unigenitus,’ the 79th proposition upon the matter is condemned, ‘It is useful and necessary, &c., to which add the 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, and 85th propositions in the same bull.”

But further Dens asks:

“Is the reading of the sacred scriptures lawful for all?” He says: “The church does not prohibit by any decree the reading of the sacred scriptures in the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin tongue, even to the laity themselves.” [Dens’ Tractatus de Virtutibus, N. 64 de Sect. Scrip. S., vol. 2 Pp. 101, 102]

How wonderfully kind and benevolent the Church of Rome is! The poor peasant is not positively forbidden to read the New Testament in Greek, or the Old Testament in Hebrew. This is assuredly worthy of the Jesuitical stratagems of popery, but its effect is to chain the word of life to men, to put an effectual extinguisher on that light, of which it is so beautifully and touchingly written

This lamp which from the everlasting throne
Mercy took down . . .
Beseeking men, with tears
And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.”

But I may be met with such a statement as this: How can you so write and contend, remembering that the Church of Rome has published an English version of holy scriptures, and further, in Ireland, the Roman Catholic bishops have put forth an authorised edition of that version?

I reply, it is perfectly true that such is the case, but it is an unwilling concession wrung from the Church of Rome by Protestantism and this version of the scriptures. viz., the New Testament translated into English at Rheims, A.D. 1582, and the Old Testament at Douay, A.D. 1609, is the result of being so circumstanced in a Protestant country as to make it
impossible for Roman Catholics to be kept in total ignorance of the word of God; hence under this pressure this version came forth, but its false translations and corrupt notes neutralize as far as is possible the power of the word of God. But moreover it is plainly intimated that the issue of this version was an unwilling concession and not at all a true relaxation of the rule of the Council of Trent, for Dens speaking of this rule says that it is observed in Catholic countries, but among heretics there is some relaxation! [See Dens’ De Lecture Scripturae, S. N. 64, vol. 2, p.103.]

And further evidence is furnished as to this by the preface of the Rheims translators, viz.:

“Which translation we do not for all that publish upon erroneous opinion of necessity that the holy scriptures should always be in our mother tongue; or that they ought or were ordained of God to be read indifferently of all, or could be easily understood of every one that readeth or heareth them in a known language: pernicious and much hurtful to many: or that we generally and absolutely deemed it more convenient in itself, and more agreeable to God’s word and honor, or edification to the faithful, to have them turned into vulgar tongues, than to be kept and studied only in the ecclesiastical learned languages: not for these, nor any such like causes, do we translate this sacred book, but upon special consideration of the present time, state and condition of our country, unto which divers things are either necessary or profitable, or medicinable now, that, otherwise, in the peace of the church, were neither much requisite nor perchance wholly tolerable.”

The admission in this is without all doubt very clear and distinct. But further, the testimony of Cardinal Bellarmine is in the fullest sense confirmatory. He says:

“What we contend for is, that the scriptures ought not to be read publicly in the vulgar tongue, nor allowed to be read in the vulgar tongue indifferently by all.” [Bellarmine, De Verbo Dei, lib. ii., cap. 16, sec. 32.]

But he also assigns his reason for this as follows:

“If the common people should hear read in the vulgar tongue from the Song of Songs, ‘Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, and his left hand under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me’; and that of Hosea, ‘Go, and take to thee children of fornication’; also the adultery of David, the incest of Thamar, the lie of Judith, and how Joseph made his brethren drunk, how Sarah, Leah, and Rachel gave their maids to their husbands for concubines, and many other of those things which are mentioned in the scriptures, with approbation, they would either be incited to imitate the like, or they would despise the holy prophets, as the Manicheans formerly did, or think that there are untruths in scripture. And when they would see that there are so many apparent contradictions in scripture, and would not be able to reconcile them, there would be a danger, lest at length they might believe nothing.

I have heard from a person worthy of credit, that when the 25th chapter of Ecclesiasticus was read in a church by a Calvinist minister in England, in which many things are said of the wickedness of women, a certain female rose up, and said, ‘Is that the word of God? Yea, rather it is the word of the devil.’” [Bellarmine, De Verbo Dei, lib. 2, cap. 15, sec. 31, 32, tom. 1 p. 66.]

Now what blasphemy, I ask, can be more unblushing than this? Is the Church of Rome more pure and holy than the eternal God Himself, whose word she thus wickedly yet covertly traduces and maligns? Has the blessed God erred in giving man His word?

But further, the Church of Rome, when she speaks of scripture, does not mean the Hebrew and Greek of the Old and New Testaments, but the Vulgate Latin edition, or the Douay and Rheims translations, embracing also the Apocrypha. This is the Bible of the Church of Rome, and together with tradition is the rule of faith; the language of the Council of Trent is plain as to this, for it is asserted that “all the doctrines of Christianity are derived from the word of God, which includes scripture and tradition.” [Catechism of the Council of Trent.]

Further note the following:

“If we would have the whole rule of Christian faith and practice we must not be content with those scriptures which Timothy knew from his infancy, that is, with the Old Testament alone; nor yet with the New Testament without taking along with it the traditions of the apostles, and the interpretation of the church, to which both the apostles delivered both the book and the true meaning of it.” [Note of the Roman Catholic version on 2 Tim. 3:16.]

And in entire concord with this hear Dr. Milner in his “End of Controversy”:

“The Catholic rule of faith is not merely the written word of God, but the whole word of God, both written and unwritten, in other words scripture and tradition, and these propounded and explained by the Catholic Church. This implies that we have a two-fold rule or law, and that we have an interpreter or judge to explain it, and to decide upon it, in all doubtful points. [Milner’s “End of Controversy,” Letter 10, p. 53.]

It is very evident from a study of the decrees of the Council of Trent (Sess. 4 Decretum de Canonicis Scripturis; also Decretum de editione et usu Sacror. libr. also De Libris prohib. reg. 4) that the original scriptures, Hebrew and Greek, are not of authority in the Church of Rome, for we find them omitted in the decree, and a translation is substituted for them: also the intelligent reader will carefully note how that every Protestant translation of the scriptures, such as Luther’s translation and the English Bible are prohibited. Further, the word of God is degraded by placing along with it the Apocrypha as a part of God’s revelation; and both written and unwritten tradition is added to scripture; and not only this, but is placed in equal authority to it. Then according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, the reader of the word of God is not permitted to exercise his or her own unfettered judgment as to it, but is bound to understand its blessed utterances according to the way the clergy view them, as well as according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. Even if a scant permission be given to read the scriptures, all
individual exercise of conscience as before God is carefully provided against by this iniquitous system, the very genius of which is to intrude itself in every way between the soul and God. Every person is bound, according to the teaching of the Church of Rome, not to exercise an unfettered judgment in matters relating to faith and morals, the holy word of a holy God according to the tenets of the Roman faith is not a full, plain, safe rule of faith and practice. It is not a little remarkable that at all periods in the history of Christianity, its enemies have ever set themselves in opposition to the doctrines of holy scriptures, judging that thereby they were assailing Christianity, knowing no other repository of it, or store-house from whence it was set forth and proclaimed to man.

There is another fact of striking force and point. It is well and aptly thus expressed: “Fanatics, such as the Mormons, Southcottians, and others, add to the scriptures their respective new revelations. They pronounce the scriptures to be imperfect, a dead letter, obscure, unsafe, &c. The Roman doctors say the same things both in the same and similar words. From this principle, as adopted by the fanatics, the most monstrous errors proceed, and the greatest crimes are countenanced and perpetrated. For, supplying the insufficiency of scripture by their inward word, or their new revelation, they can be the subjects of no discipline, are not to be met with any argument, and hence arise a number of inconsistencies. From the very same principle of supplying the defects of scripture, the Romanists derive an imperious, interested and tyrannical religion. For as the fanatics supply the insufficiency of scripture by their new revelations, so do the Roman Catholics by the authority of their church. Thus the one and the other impose on consciences their additions to God’s law. For these evils there is no remedy but scripture, which is the proper standard by which to try the pretensions of each. The one supplies the deficiency of scripture by the inward word or new revelation; the other, by the Pope’s word, uttered ex cathedra: and the inward word and the Pope’s word shall rule and determine everything, and the scriptures shall pass for nothing; but as under the pretense of an additional revelation, every new thing shall pass for the word of God, so shall it also under the Roman pretense. For not he that makes the law, but he that expounds the law gives the proper standard. It follows from hence, that nothing but the scriptures’ sufficiency can form a proper limit to the flood of evils which may enter from each of these parties relying on the same false principle.”

But it is of great importance that we should plainly state here what is the genuine Christian’s rule of faith and practice. Let us state it then plainly and openly:

“It is the word of God as contained in the holy scriptures, not as understood by every man of sound judgment, but as holy men of God wrote them, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” The word of God is immutable and infallible truth itself. It is both false and absurd to say that any private interpretation of scripture is the rule of faith of Protestant Christians. If it were true that their rule was the word of God as understood by each person, it would present the ridiculous folly of being a rule and yet no rule at the same time. The real truth as to Protestants is, that their one only rule of faith is the Bible and the Bible alone. Their cry as to everything is, “To the law and to the testimony.”

Now the interpretation of scripture is the use of the rule, but not the rule. It is said in reply to this, “But see how men have abused the scriptures!” We return answer, man has abused everything. If he has abused and perverted the volume of revelation, so has he abused and perverted the book of creation. Men have gazed at the heavens, and become worshipers of the sun, moon, and stars, instead of learning there concerning an all wise and beneficent Creator. What would be thought of men in consequence being forbidden any more to look at those heavens, or if they did so by permission, it was only under the special eyes of their teachers?

I have no hesitation in adopting the proposition of another in the following words: “That the Bible ought to be read by all will be as evident to many, as that God is its author; and to admit its divine origin, yet question its right to be universally heard will be proof of insanity.”

But there is even a more serious aspect of this question, and it is this, that in order to acquire credit and prestige for what is called the church, Romanism takes practically the same ground as infidels in respect of the scriptures. The Church of Rome instills into the mind doubts and questions as to the authority of the scriptures, in order that she may extol herself in the eyes of men as that which alone can accredit the scriptures. This, no doubt, is her object, but to attain this, she takes the same ground as the infidel. Further, it is most solemn blasphemy, for it is asserting, that when God has spoken to men His word has no certain authority of itself over their consciences. This system of Romanism, on one side deprives the soul of certainty in the word of God, and on the other side it deprives the word of God of its authority over the soul. What can be said of this, but that it is wicked in the extreme, for the Church of Rome does not dare openly to deny that the scriptures are the word of God. If the Church of Rome, if the priests of Rome, believe it to be the word of God, why not forthwith take it and see what it says? Ah, they dare not it is too plainly condemnatory of the whole system. For example, the scriptures say, “there is no more offering for sin” (Heb. 10:13); whereas the Church of Rome is bound by the Council of Trent, Sess. 22, Canon 3, as follows:

“If any one shall say that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice made upon the cross, and that it is not propitiatory, or that it profits only the receiver, and that it ought not to be offered, for the living and the dead, for their sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities: let him be accursed.”

Further, in Dr. Butler’s “General Catechism,” the Church of Rome teaches as follows, pp. 59, 60:

“Q. What is the sacrifice of the new law?
A. The mass.
Q. What is the mass?
A. The sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, which are really present under the appearance of bread and wine; and are offered to God by the priest for the living and the dead.

Q. Is the mass a different sacrifice from that of the cross?
A. No: because the same Christ who once offered Himself a bleeding victim to His heavenly Father on the cross, continues to offer Himself in an unbloody manner, by the hands of His priests on our altars.

I bring this forward to show that Romanism and scripture must be antagonistic; that Rome dare not submit to be judged by scripture; hence it serves her end to join hands with infidels and sceptics in order to obtain influence for herself as a system over men’s consciences, by leading them to doubt the divine nature of scripture, so that she alone may be set forth as the one who can give certainty as to them.

But returning to the decree of the Council of Trent for a little, observe the absurdity of Dr. Butler’s Catechism asserting that a bloody and an unbloody sacrifice are the same! Further, how can the sacrifice of the mass be a continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, when Jesus said as he died, “It is consummated?” If they are the same sacrifice, as the Church of Rome says they are, how can one be the application of the other? And how can an unbloody sacrifice be the application of a bloody one?!

But let me produce one further instance and witness of the absurd contradictions and inconsistency of Romish teaching with itself. In a stereotype edition of the New Testament, printed by R. Coyne, Dublin, 1850, and having on the back of the title an approbation in Latin, approving of this edition of the New Testament, and of the Short Notes it contains, as “agreeable to Catholic verity” (Catholicae veritati consentaneae). The following note occurs on Rom. 4:7, 8: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin.”

“NOTE. -- Covered, &c. This covering, and not imputing, means that our sins are quite blotted out by the blood of the Lamb, who taketh away the sins of the world; so that we are no longer to be charged with them, because they are no more.” This is true and in accordance with the word of God, and moreover it leaves not a stone for the Romish system to stand upon, but entirely demolishes the whole structure. Now what will be thought of that which I am about to adduce? In an edition of the New Testament, published by Duffy, Dublin, 1851, that is, a year after that just cited, with the approbation of Dr. Murray, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, dated August 17th, 1851, the note on the same passage, Rom. 4:7, 8, is as follows: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. That is, blessed are those who by doing penance, have obtained pardon and remission of their sins, and also are covered, that is, newly clothed with the habit of grace, and vested with the stole of charity.”

Now here are two New Testaments equally accredited, having each a note on Rom. 4:7, 8, but flatly contradicting each other. It does not require very great erudition to understand that such a statement as “there is no more offering for sin” upsets a system which is founded upon offering one continually. Roman priests, doctors, and canons may quote fathers of every name to prove that there ought to be a continual sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead; or for the matter of that, they may quote them to prove that there was one, but if the word of God has authority, I defy them to assert there is one according to the authority of God.

But further observe well, my reader, how the fact as to the offering of Christ having value, in the non-repetition of it, is proved; the apostle, writing by the Holy Ghost, quotes the testimony of the written word of God, as the witness given by the Holy Ghost (see Heb. 10:15); that is, what we have got here is the efficacy of this one offering testified of by the Holy Ghost Himself.

Now that is exactly what as poor sinners we want, and which we get only by this truth; and the person who is taught of God knows this with a certainty and blessing which no power of devil or man can shake.

I would now turn for a moment and discuss the reason given why the scriptures are not permitted to be in the hands of all.

About the year 1874, Cardinal Manning preached a sermon at Belmont, Hereford, in which he says that, what Christ was in the synagogue at Nazareth in His day, the church now is; and he places the church instead of the Holy Ghost as the author and power of faith. The whole teaching of Cardinal Manning in this sermon sets aside Christ and the Holy Ghost for the church. In page 15 of his sermon, Dr. Manning says that the church is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the word of God says Christ is: further, the testimony of scripture is clear, as to the Spirit that quickeneth, and that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are spirit and life. Cardinal Manning asserts that the letter of scripture without the church kills, but that with the living voice of the church it quickens. How fearful to think of Dr. Manning setting up his church on the ruins of both scripture and Christianity. It is false and absurd to contend as Roman Catholics do, that the scriptures were placed in the hands of one set of people to be used by them for another set. The scriptures were sent by God through inspired persons to those who were to use them: they were exactly what they wanted, and those to whom they were so sent by God were bound to use them and submit to them, and responsible for not doing so if they did not. The theory and system of Romanism is to displace the authority of God by His word over the conscience by the so-called church, whose history is of the very vilest and most abominable evil ever preserved in record! Let me be very plain as to this, Romanism and the clerical system have taken the word of God out of the hands of men; and what was the result -- the dark ages, a condition of things which, under the name of church, had never been equalled by the horrors of heathenism itself. Now mark this well, and it is a full and complete reply to the wicked assumption of the Church of Rome. The apostles, and others sent of God, preached to the heathen, they at least owned no church. The grace of God and His Spirit
accomplished all the work without any church at all.

The Jews had the Old Testament scriptures, but there was no church to interpret them; further, the Jews did not own either the apostles or the church, but when grace had wrought in their souls they did search the scriptures to see if the testimony rendered by the apostles was true. How plain it is that it is in those who hear, that grace acts, and there is not a shadow of proof, nor a thought of any interpretation with authority. Then as to Christians, the word of God, as already said, was sent direct to them, and was the expression of the Divine mind which they were bound to follow. Not a trace is there in the sacred writings of the system of Rome, Dr. Manning’s church. But let me enquire where is this church, this infallible guide and interpreter? In reply, I will adopt the words of another:

“But is Rome the whole church of God? I will answer with Jerome, referring to Rome, major orbis quam urbis. Dr. Manning tells us of a living organization with two heads, Christ in heaven and the Pope on earth, the whole hierarchy of the church uniting it. But what does living mean? None of the hierarchy, they admit, are necessarily alive in Christ, neither is the Pope. Popes have been deposed for mortal sin; popes have been heretics; popes have been infidels; not one of this living organization is necessarily alive. Besides history makes known, nor are facts wanting now to confirm it, though not so glaring as before the Reforma­tion -- that this pretended living organization was the most vile, wicked, corrupt, immoral body that ever existed -- sunk in profligacy of every kind and of the worst kind -- cruel, persecuting and ambitious, and notoriously worse than the heathen whom it supplanted. Is that the living organization of which Christ is the Head? It is impossible to defile one’s pages with the habitual course of conduct of what Dr. Manning refers to as taking the place of Christ, and as a living organization under Christ as its Head, and I speak on the authority of their own historians. Baronius, their great historian, a cardinal, and a Jesuit, declares that for a century, he cannot own those who filled the See of Rome as legitimate popes -- put in, as they were, by the mistresses of the Marquis of Tuscany, and not chosen by the clergy or even approved by them. It is well people should know, that never was any body of people on earth so depraved as Dr. Manning’s living organization, and the human head on earth, at the head of the depravity; often fighting for this seat of power, and, if one turned another out, declaring all the consecrations and ordinations null and void, so that a book had to be written to show there were still sacraments -- all was in such confusion, and often two and even three popes at a time, and Europe divided as to who was the true one, each excommunicating the other and all that owned him. There is no such history in the world for iniquity and confusion as that of Rome. I dare Dr. Manning to deny it, or if bold enough to do it, to disprove it from history. Indeed, the evil state of what is called the church began before Rome’s supremacy, though it ripened under it. Let any one read Salbian’s ‘De Gubernatione Dei,’ accounting for the judgment coming on the Roman Empire, declaring that virtue was to be found among the heretics and heathen, and nowhere among Christians; Cyprian’s ‘De Judicidita,’ or Chrysostom’s ‘Two Discourses on the Virgins,’ both showing the extent of depravity already existing in what was afterwards matured in the Roman system, in the boasted holiness and real depravity of monks and nuns. The assistance of God the Holy Spirit is always with His church and people; but is that a reason for taking the chief leaders in debauchery and wickedness -- and such were the popes and clergy, I defy denial -- as the vessels of that Spirit to interpret the scriptures with authority as Christ did?”

It is sad and heart-breaking in the extreme to witness the strides which a bold and daring infidelity is making on every hand, but I am bound to bear my witness that popery and clericalism have beyond all else contributed to produce it. It is well known to the careful student of the human heart that when the profession of religion sinks below the level of natural conscience, it produces infidelity.

Further, it is perfectly true, as has been said, that “religions as a profession wear out. Old heathenism did, and infidelity supplanted it; Brahmanism is wearing out in India, and again infidelity supplants it. What is truth?” says Pilate. Romanism had done this for professing Christendom. At the Reformation God’s word brought in faith in the word in large districts.

Now all is worn out as a system and infidelity believes nothing. Christianity met the case when Grecian and Roman heathenism had lost their hold. When Romanism had made Christian profession worse than heathenism, the Reformation partially met the case. Now judgment only, and the coming of the Son of man, awaits professing Christendom.”

What then is our security and stay amid the rockings and heavings of the vessel of professing Christendom? Is the Christian left amid the fury of the storm without a sheet anchor or harbor of refuge? Not so, thank God. There are two grand realities left for us in scripture.

First, we are warned by scripture to expect perilous or difficult times; we are distinctly told that the church so-called would become a moral wreck, as bad as, if not worse than, heathenism. In the midst of such a state of things as this, the voice of God in scripture to the Christian sounds distinct and clear (see 2 Tim. 3:5), “from such turn away.” Then, a little further down in the same chapter, the Christian is turned to the scriptures (see vv. 15, 16), to these he is exhorted to adhere, to continue in them. Further, we find in Rev. 2 and 3 the history of the church, given us by God Himself; there we have the Lord Jesus Christ revealed as judging the state of the church and the individual Christian is called to hear what Christ says. From this it is very evident that the church cannot have authority over the Christian, for he is called to hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says, when sitting in judgment on the church, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The next great sheet anchor for the Christian is in hearing the apostles themselves, “We know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” See 1 John 4:6. It is not denied by any that we have in their various epistles what the apostles said;
therefore we are bound to hear the scriptures, or we are not of God. “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” How solemn; this responsibility rests on every individual Christian, and escape from it, he cannot. We are not told to listen to what the fathers or traditions say, as if thus nearer to the source; the fact is we have the source itself for we have what the inspired teachers themselves taught. The Apostle Paul warns the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20, that after his decease both grievous wolves and perverse men would arise; and in very truth this is the only apostolic succession that I can trace in the divine record; he does not commend them in view of this coming storm to the shelter of an apostle who was to follow him, but says, “I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (v. 32). And fully in consonance with this is the testimony of the Apostle John, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24). We have got in scripture that which assuredly is from the beginning; there is much written elsewhere which may or may not be in accordance with scripture, yet it is not from the beginning, so that a Christian can judge by it; scripture alone is that, and to its test and judgment all must be brought.

I have done, and I claim to have proved, beyond all question, the charge against the Church of Rome, of being an enemy to scripture. I believe from the very depths of my soul, that the attitude of Rome towards the Bible is aptly set forth in the words of our blessed Lord to the lawyers in His days, viz.: “Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in you have hindered” (Luke 11:5 Douay version). The Roman Catholic priests and hierarchy are the lawyers of the moment, they are the undoubted enemies of the word of God, they are opposed to its free circulation in the world; their great aim and object is to keep men in ignorance of the scriptures, in order to their being more readily and easily held in spiritual subjection and thraldom. The Church of Rome dreads the scriptures. She well knows how it sheds its own pure light upon her doctrines and her claims. She knows well how hostile scripture is to her interests, and hence her effort has ever been to silence its testimony. Whether this blessed light has shone to cheer the solitary desolation of a cloister, or whether it glimmered in the Waldensian valleys, or burst forth in its splendor in the Reformation, or even shed its own pure heavenly rays upon the rugged mountains of Connemara, or amid the wilds of Kerry, or the glens of Antrim, Rome arrays herself in all her opposition to it, has ever sought to quench and hide this only “kindly light.” Right gladly do I adopt as my own the beautiful words of another, and say

“There is not a throne in Europe whose pillars are not more firmly established by the Bible. There is not a tribunal in Europe whose decisions are not rendered more just by the Bible. There is not a prison in Europe whose dungeons are not rendered less dreary by the Bible. There is not a home in Europe whose privacy is not rendered more sacred by the Bible. It has waged successful war with tyranny and oppression. It has burst the captives’ chains, and checked the power of the tyrant. It has made liberty sweet, and bondage endurable; and lifting up its voice above the world in thrilling and commanding tones, it cries, ‘Man must be free!’”

Dear readers, let us prize, cherish, and enshrine this blessed book in our hearts, believe, submit to, and obey its precious utterances.

Christ’s Desire

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).

It is an affecting thing to one’s heart to see how little really that which is so much in His heart is in ours, i.e., what remains: He has finished everything, accomplished everything, glorified His Father in everything, and only one thing remains, and that is, to have us with Himself; “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am”; because you know it is one of the distinct characteristics of love, love never tolerates absence; it may bear it, and have to endure it, but it is impatient of it and therefore when you look at Him, how blessed to know it, because I believe it is the spring which creates a kindred affection in our hearts when the fact is grasped, that He longs to have us to be forever with Himself. Do we believe that, beloved? do we believe that there is that one (shall I say it with reverence) unsatisfied yearning in the heart of Christ, to have the people of His love with Him? “I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am”; because you know it is one of the distinct characteristics of love, love never tolerates absence; it may bear it, and have to endure it, but it is impatient of it and therefore when you look at Him, how blessed to know it, because I believe it is the spring which creates a kindred affection in our hearts when the fact is grasped, that He longs to have us to be forever with Himself. We have Him with us now; of course that is blessedly true, as we walk through the world, this poor scene of death; we cannot get on without Him, but to be with Him, and to be like Him when we see Him, how much is that before us? I shall see Him; see that blessed face which was more marred than any man’s -- see Him as He is, not as He was. I shall see Him as He is, but I shall be like Him when I see Him, and shall be with Him, and that is what He waits for; that is the longing of His soul, the yearning of His heart at this present moment. He cheers us along the waste with the sustainment of His presence, and the comfort of His love; but the thing that is in Christ’s affection, with respect to us, is, He wants to have us with Himself.

How wonderful to think of it! There is one thing that remains, “Father; I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” It is the one thing that remains: He owes one service to His Father and God, and He owes it to us, the people of His love, and He will perform it. May our hearts be on the lookout with the expectancy of hope, for His
name’s sake.

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, shall 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.
From Helps in Things Concerning Himself

Vol. I
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“Dead with Christ”

Romans 6:8

It would be impossible in words to express sufficiently the momentous and solemn nature of the subject, conveyed by the above words of scripture. As the Lord may help, I would set before my readers a little of what they bring before the heart, as to the great fact announced in them, as well as the corresponding effect intended to be produced in practice; it were an evil day when doctrine and practice are divorced; and there are not wanting at the present moment signs of deep-seated danger in that very direction. How solemn a triumph of the enemy in this would be! How easily he will succeed if the truth be received only in terms, heard only in the utterance of the loftiest and highest expressions, without any corresponding effect in manner of life. Let us not forget that the characteristic mark of the last days is the having a form of piety, but denying the power of it. See 2 Tim. 3:5, 6. It is our wisdom to watch jealously all the inroads of the enemy in this direction. First, then, let us seek to enter into the meaning of the words, “dead with Christ.” What do they imply? Surely there is a far deeper thought in them than that which occupies the first part of Romans, namely, the bearing our sins. Have we not in the words “dead with Christ” such an association with Christ in His death, as closes forever before God our previous history and condition, as that of fallen, sinful Adam? I could not better express the truth which by God’s grace my soul has bowed to, than in the following beautiful words of another: “When He died, He, who knew no sin, came out of that condition of life in flesh and blood, to which in us sin attached, in which we were sinners, and in which He, the sinless One, in the likeness of sinful flesh and a sacrifice for sin, was made sin for us” . . . “Christ, the sinless One, came and stood for us and God’s glory substitutively; that is, as a sacrifice in that place, He was made sin, underwent the forsaking of God, and, glorifying God, died in and to the place, to the whole condition of being, in which we were, and in which, as made sin. He stood for us before God.” “Christ took human life in grace and sinless; and as alive in this life, He took sin upon Him. Sin belongs, so to speak, to this life in which Christ knew no sin, but was made sin for us. But He dies -- He quits this life. He is dead to sin; He has done with sin in having done with the life to which sin belonged, not in him indeed but in us, and alive in which He was made sin for us. Raised up again by the power of God, He lives in a new condition, into which sin cannot enter, being left behind with the life that He left. Faith brings us into it by grace.”

This I believe with all my heart to be the truth, of deepest moment just now, and shortness as to it, not only leaves us outside the mind of God as thus set forth, but correspondingly leaves us in our soul’s apprehension, in the condition of being in which we were as in Adam fallen, and out of which Christ’s precious death alone could extricate us. It is thus there can be no recognition whatever of man in the flesh, either as to allowance or acceptance of it.

There is also another point now to which I desire to call special attention. I will do so by italicizing the word association, when I use the expression “with Christ in death,” I mean by it, the association of the believer with Him in His death. I do this to distinguish it from union. Union with Christ was impossible until He had risen out of death and ascended into glory. Union with Christ in incarnation is a solemn denial of His own words (see John 12:24), and is the root of popery and its adjuncts. Association or identification are not the same as union. A Christian is indeed united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, but it is to Christ who has died, is risen again, and gone into glory.

Nothing can be more important in its place than a distinct and definite apprehension of this great reality. Not only has Christ died for us, but we have died with Him, believers can say. Oh that we might see, that the saints of God might see, how this cuts at the root of everything. What can a dead man seek down here in this world? This question is suggested by the great fact that I am seeking to press; everything that man in the flesh had to reckon with God about, but which he never could have settled, has all been disposed of between God and Christ. To nature and to common sense, the thing is impossible, unreasonable, absurd. But to faith, not only is it most blessedly true, but the believer can also say that he has died with Christ, is past the judgment, and out of the condition on which in relation to us judgment rested, so that there is naught against him, but he is alive for evermore in a life which death cannot touch, which knows no grave, is beyond judgment and the judgment land, yea, even in which judgment is turned into victory.

Further, as regards this life, nothing can be more blessed than to see how it has objects and motives entirely its own. This is what may be called the Positive side of the question, and on which I do not now dwell. But I do press Christ’s
death in the special aspect of it already before us, and the association of the believer with Him, in death, and the value of that association, not only to get judicially clear from the penalties resting upon man as a fallen creature, a descendant of Adam, though without all question, in that light, all judgment is past and that for ever: but that which is beyond all doubt most blessed, is, the value of that association as setting the believer free from self and the world, so that he can brightly and happily say, “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.” This it is that a man must be fully assured of through faith and by the Holy Ghost, even that in the sight of God, he has died with Christ, that he is regarded by God in that sense, as dead, and that he so regards himself; this it is that enables him, as is well said, “to reckon himself as dead, for him to be able to use that death against Satan, the world, and the flesh: to give, if I may be allowed the expression, by it, the slip to himself, and all that self furnishes as a handle to Satan, the world, or lust to lay hold of.” How true it is that “Christ’s death is made of little effect by most Christians; that they have Judaized it out of its eternal value and the estimate heaven forms of it, and reduced it down to be a part of a human system of their own, borrowed from the law of fallen humanity, and the elements of the world, both of which marked Judaism, and that this is a most solemn sin. The Colossians who had been dead in their sins, and in the uncircumcision of the flesh, that is morally dead, are thus charged: “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” They would sanction worldliness, and accredit their own flesh if they did so. And he adds, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” He has so appropriated all that I was, as to bear the record of it in His own body. My soul knows those hands, those feet, that side, that forehead; but, blessed be God, I know them in Him who was dead, but is alive again. I know them in Him who shall reign for ever as the Lamb who was dead, but is alive again for evermore.”

Beloved reader, has God in His infinite grace brought these things before our hearts? If indeed it be so, may this further grace be given us, that they act in power upon us, and that we may find grace and power to act on them.

**The Vessel of the Ministry**

*2 Cor. 4*

As we turn to this chapter, there are three things I will refer to in connection with this ministry. They are in the seventh verse. He says, “we have this treasure,” and it is “in earthen vessels,” and there is what is called “the excellency of the power,” or, as I believe it should be, “the surpassingness of the power.” These are three wonderful things to get before our thoughts.

“This treasure,” what is it? I do not think the treasure is so much the estimate that my heart forms of Christ, as the value that God has found in Him. That is the reason, I believe, why it is called a “treasure.” I do not deny the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is to be a treasure to His people, because you get the scripture elsewhere, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”; but here the treasure, which is, of course, Christ, is presented more as it is looked at from God’s side. It is the treasure in God’s estimation. It is what the thought of God is as to this blessed One. Christ is His treasure. How did that treasure come into the vessel? Look at the sixth verse for a moment. He says: “For God, who commanded that but of darkness light should shine, hath shined in our hearts, for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” That is the way the treasure comes in. It is not that I have possessed myself of the treasure. It is a wonderful thing -- it sustains one’s heart -- to think of the sovereignty of the grace of God; to think of that sovereign grace in its actuings, as well as its purposes. How, then, did this treasure find its way into our hearts? Let me ask, how did light come into this dark world? Remember this, the sun was not the creature of the first day; it was created afterwards. How then did light come? What was the light of the first three days in the old creation? This: “God said, Let there be light; and light was.” Just so spiritually in our hearts: God, in His wonderful, blessed, sovereign way of dealing, God Himself, who commanded that out of darkness light should shine, is the God who has shone in our hearts. It is not merely a ray from Him, or some emanation from Him, but God Himself shining; that is a very different thing; God Himself shining in a man’s heart, in all His blessed illuminating power, for, or in order to, the shining forth of the radiancy of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Take an instance of it. This very Saul of Tarsus himself, on the road to Damascus, a persecutor, who had never had a good thought of Christ, nothing but hatred, a man who thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, suddenly, in a moment, without the slightest warning, saw “a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun,” a light that eclipsed the sun, shining in his noonday splendor, and the Savior in glory was revealed in his soul. He is thus the living instance of the way this blessed treasure is deposited in a man’s soul. Paul himself, who was writing this, is the living instance of the way in which God would command the light to shine out of darkness in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The whole glory of God is thus expressed.

And you cannot understand anything about the glory of God, except as you understand how it is seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and it is in the presence of that glory that conscience is dealt with; and if you think you can learn God in any other way, you are seriously mistaken, because the moment you bring your understanding or your mind to bear upon the things of God, apart from your conscience, there is the greatest danger of shipwreck as to faith. If I really see the whole glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, I
cannot help being challenged in the depths of my conscience, and that is the blessedness of it. There are royal roads to learning in other things, but not in this. The moment you have to do with God and Christ, you are convicted, and the earliest expression of your heart in the presence of that glory must be, "I abhor myself." And yet, as I said, this leads to confidence, and is the only thing that is formative in our hearts.

That is the first thing. Next observe where this treasure is placed; that is the second point in the verse: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." You may have often observed that when man has anything valuable, he generally encases it in something that is at least in appearance far more valuable. The outside coverings of man's valuable things are generally to sight a great deal more brilliant and valuable than the thing that is inside. The casket eclipses the jewel. Not so with God. He takes His treasure, the costliest thing, the most valuable and precious to Him, and puts it in the most contemptible vessel that you could conceive, that is, a poor, fragile vessel of clay. This is what he calls an earthen vessel; a poor, perishing, fragile vessel of clay.

But then He has a purpose in this; it gives Him the opportunity of doing two things. First His delight is to make everything of the treasure, and second, He is pleased to bring out the surpassingness of the power. There is not only the surpassing glory of the treasure, but the surpassing power with which He works in the vessel -- the vessel broken to atoms; indeed, not worth anything until it is broken to pieces; but behind this poor vessel there is surpassing power. This, indeed, is a wonderful sight to look at. The whole power of God goes along with the poor vessel, into which He puts this treasure. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power should be of God and not of us." But we have not only to accept the breakings that God brings upon us; but beside that, and in addition to that, we must keep the sentence of the cross, the death of Christ, which has given us liberty from the condemnation to which we were exposed -- must keep that death upon ourselves. God breaks the vessel; but we must keep the sentence of death upon it as well, in order "that the may be of God and not of us."

I do not pursue this further, but would ask to think of these three things which are connected with this ministry: first, the vessel of clay, just what you and I are; secondly, a treasure placed in it of surpassing glory; and thirdly, a power that is surpassing in its efficiency behind it; and that power ever working in company with nothingness and weakness and self-abnegation, as well as a complete, utter, thorough denial of the flesh and the world. You cannot have power otherwise; and there is no manifestation of Christ, no shining forth of Christ, except as this vessel is entirely as clay in the hands of the potter. There is no shining in, or shining out either. It must be clay for Christ, the treasure, to shine into, and clay for the Holy Ghost to bring the features of Christ out of, so that others may see them.

The picture alluded to here is no doubt Gideon's army. They put the light into the pitcher, but the light never shone out until the pitcher was broken. They had to break the pitchers, and then the light shone. And no doubt the Spirit of God alludes to that fact here. You have the shining in of the glory, and you have the surpassing power working that it may shine out. These two things go together, namely, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining into our poor earthen vessels, or pitchers, and the surpassing power of God that works through these vessels for the display of the glory of Christ.

How little our hearts are really up to God's wonderful purpose in giving such a ministry as this from those opened heavens! How little of affection there is in our hearts to enter into the purpose of God and into His thought, that, in a world which rejected His Son, cast Him out, despised Him, nailed Him to the cross, there should be those who should be the expression, the manifestation of that blessed, wonderful One whom the world rejected, but whom God glorified. Do our hearts desire that? Is that what we long for? Is that our purpose and object? Is that what we propose to ourselves? God will help us if we have such purpose of heart. Can we say to Him, I have only one desire, that I should be upon this earth a vessel in whom the display of the glory of Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, should be found in every circumstance here? God delights to help us, and we shall have the comfort, the sustenance, of being in communion with His thought. I do not know any greater comfort in the whole word of God. Oh, the blessedness and rest of having, through grace, common mind with the Lord in any little measure! God and His people of one mind about those things that relate to the glory of His Son. It is most wonderful grace on His part to bring us into such a place that we can have like mind with Him, and to enable us by such surpassing power.

Suppose I see one turning his back upon everything in this world, who looks for nothing in it, who has no interests here, who does not expect anything, and would not take anything from the world. I say, What surpassing power is displayed in that man! If I see a poor, feeble creature lying on a bed of sickness, racked with pain, the poor body pressed down with disease, morn, noon, and night, and one who might be tempted to say, What good am I, a trial to every one about me, and a burden to myself? -- Yet if I see, amid all the weariness and pain, instead of complaint, satisfaction instead of querulousness, rest and quietness instead of quickness of temper, the blessed manifestation of Christ in meekness and endurance, I say, What a surpassing power there is there!

That is what this ministry is able to do, beloved reader, and that is God's thought about us in relation to it. There is not a circumstance in life, or a detail in our history, or a position that we can be called into -- whether sickness or health, pain or its absence, prosperity or loss, trial or ease -- there is not a single thing too many for the one who is satisfied to be clay in the hands of surpassing power. And more than that, it is in these very circumstances that Christ is endeared to us, for He alone is our sufficiency for all. Also, it is where we are, not where we would be, that the blessed God desires to have His Son seen in us.

This is the testimony that is really lacking at this moment. Every one is heard speaking of doctrines, and is
supposed to be clear about them; but people are amazed to see so little of the doctrines practiced, and they fail to see the corresponding grace in the propounders of them. Oh, for the manifestation of the truth in love, that exhibition of Christ which would stop the mouth of the rejecter, and commend itself to the consciences of men! And hence, says the Holy Ghost, “by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (v. 2). Men would be forced to say, Though I hate those people because they are so narrow, yet at the same time my conscience is bound to give this testimony, that they seek to please God. Herein is the efficiency of the power manifested, that in every circumstance, every service, everything I have to do, I am to be an expression of the skill of His hand.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give our hearts to desire to be His handiwork, to say in reality, and to act it as well, Lord Jesus, take me, and form me after the fashion of Thine own heart, place me where Thou wilt, only grant me this desire. Jesus, take me, and form me after the fashion of Thine own redemption had been fully and entirely finished, for He who in His hand, in His own place in heaven, the Second Man and last Adam in the glory of God; further, that in glory in heaven He cares, and shows He cares, that poor rebel sinners who care not about Him or His glory should not perish through the blinding power of the god of this age. How blessedly does He not thus in glory stand out in striking contrast with all that is seen of man and his ways in this poor scene?

2. The good news of the glory of Christ brings before us in very blessed reality the great fact that all the work of redemption had been fully and entirely finished, for He who had come as the sent One of the Father, as well as in His great love given by God, having now accomplished all, has been (as man) received up in glory. It is not only that the sins of which we were guilty as sinners have been forgiven, but in the cross we see the end of man, as man was; the old man has been crucified with Christ. How blessed to see in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ the end of man driven out of Paradise, His resurrection the beginning of the new state of man according to the counsels of God, and His place as man in glory, the new place of man.

3. What good news is conveyed to us in the glory of Christ, of the fact that judgment has been inflicted by the death of Christ upon the first man, and that He who in His blessed love to His Father and the objects of His donation to Him, having passed through death and judgement when He was made sin for us, has begun again His life of man in an entirely new state beyond death and judgment.

4. We have said that the gospel of the glory of Christ brings to us the proof of the sin Christ had borne being utterly put away. But it also tells us of victory over death, and the introduction of man into the presence of God in glory, according to the eternal counsels of God’s love.

Further, to use the beautiful words of another: “It was withal the full display of divine glory in man according to grace, which the Holy Ghost takes to show us, in order to form us after the same likeness. It was the glorious ministration of righteousness and the Spirit which opened the free way for man to God even into the holiest in entire liberty.”

Now it is important to see that what the apostle terms, “the gospel of the glory of Christ,” and elsewhere “my gospel,” had reached him when a blasphemer, persecutor and injurious; on the road to Damascus, armed with full credentials to express his hatred and violence toward Jesus of Nazareth, the light of the glory of Christ had been kindled in his soul, in order that it might shine before men. How truly it was the power of God which had wrought in Saul of Tarsus, in the same way as when of old God had said, “Let light be, and light was.”

Let it be borne in mind that Paul was to be both a minister and witness of the things which he had been. What had he seen? Had he not seen Christ in glory? And did not that light eclipse for him all else beside? How did man, and earth and all in it, look as seen in the “light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven”? What, I ask, could be more beautiful or wonderful than this blessed good news, beginning and consummated in the bright and beautiful circle of God’s presence in glory?

Further observe how much is conveyed to us in the announcement of the Spirit, that the subject of Paul’s first preaching was that -- “Jesus was the Son of God.”

How blessed to know that the Savior, who is in glory, is the Son of God. It is this which conducts the soul outside all that belongs to man and earth. Alas, how few there are who in soul and heart have been laid hold of by that which shone in the apostle’s heart! Beloved reader permit me to ask, have you?

It is the gospel of the glory of Christ alone that can assure the heart of how entirely the first man has come to an
end judicially before God. I desire with all my soul to emphasize *judicially* as it is now denied and refused. The second man, risen out of the death and judgment, which He voluntarily underwent for God’s glory, is now a man in the glory of God; as seen there by faith, all of man and earth is distanced. It is this and this alone which conducts the soul into what I may call the heavenly eclipse, and leads to such an expression as is thus set forth, admired by all, but made good alas, in so few of us --

“Marvel not that Christ in glory
All my inmost heart hath won;
Not a star to cheer my darkness,
But a light beyond the sun.”

“All below is dark and shadowed,
Nothing there to claim my heart,
Save the lonely track of sorrow,
Where of old He walked apart.”

Yes beloved reader, the Savior in the glory of God, seen by faith, is the true heavenly *starting point*; but He is also, as seen in glory, the true *gauge* of all else beside, and He is as well the *center* for the soul to rest in. It is this heavenly object which turns this world into an *inn* with its “guest chamber” for those whose eyes have rested upon it; the tendency of our poor hearts is to make a *nest* in this world, but the gospel of the glory of Christ takes us into the scene where the Savior is in glory, and then it is not a sad thing, but a happy thing to be a *heavenly stranger* where Christ is not.

**“The Root of the Matter”**

The veil is rent, Satan’s power is broken, the sting is taken from death, and the victory from the grave -- moreover He who in His love has accomplished all this in His death, is risen and in glory.

Now this makes the gospel of Christ so precious for every soul. Do you, my reader, believe there is a man at the right hand of God, because He died for our sins?

Will you come to Him now? There is an open way. Jesus never said “Come” until He Himself came first. When He came, and was here in the midst of sin and sorrow, His blessed voice said “Come,” and further -- “him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Now that He is in glory, having finished all the work, He says, “Let him that is athirst come.”

I think I hear you speak somewhat like this -- “Well, I trust I have come and cast myself on Christ alone, I believe He is the only Savior, I believe nothing else can avail for me but His death; but yet somehow I am not at rest, and am often full of doubts and anxieties.”

Now hearken to me for a moment. I was in conversation not long since with one who expressed herself much as you have done; after a little, I said to her, “What are your doubts about? Have you any doubts about the *fact* of the cross and death of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

She replied -- “None.”

You are quite sure that all the work that Jesus came to do was finished on the cross?

She replied -- “Yes, quite sure.”

Do you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin?

She replied -- “Yes, I do believe it, but I am not sure if the root of the matter is in me.”

Is that your trouble? Let me assure you as to that. Thank God, the root of the matter is in Christ; if it were in you, you would not need Him.

“But,” she replied, “I have other doubts. I am not sure whether I have the right kind of faith.”

Have you faith *at all*, I said; that is the point. And I sought to illustrate it in the following way --

“Suppose a very startling piece of news were brought to you by some person, how would you feel with regard to it?”

She replied -- “If the person were a *competent* and *reliable* witness, I should of course believe it.”

Just so. And you would not think of your belief in the matter at all; the only question you would have, would be as to the *reliability* of the witness -- if it were a truthful witness that cannot lie, all questions would be at an end.

Now, my reader, so it is with respect to the certainty of salvation: the unerring, unfailing testimony of God’s own word ends all doubt and uncertainty for whosoever believes. Scripture declares that Christ died for our sins, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is in the glory of God; and scripture also declares that by Him all who believe are justified from all things. How blessed to rest on the

WORK OF CHRIST and the

WORD OF GOD.

**“I Cried . . . He Heard”**

Troublers are multiplied, but the first thought of faith is "Lord." There the spirit is at home and looks at troublers from thence. Jehovah is thus trusted. When Lord comes in the heart before those that trouble me, all is well. Our spirit sees Him concerned in matters, and is at peace. He is a glory, shield, and lifter up. Another point is, it is not a lazy, listless view of evil and good, nor listless confidence. Desire and dependence are active, the links of the soul with Jehovah -- I cried and He heard. That is certain. That is the confidence that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears, and if He hears, we have the petition. We do not desire, if sincere, to have anything not according to His will; but it is an immense thing, in the midst of trial and difficulty, to be sure of God’s hearing and God’s arm, in what is according to His will. Hence peace and rest, “I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for Jehovah sustained me.” How emphatic and simple! Is it so with you, reader? Does all trouble find your heart so resting on God as your Father, that, when it is multiplied, it leaves your spirit at rest, your sleep sweet, lying down, sleeping and rising, as if all was peace around you because you know God is and disposes of all things? Is He
thus between you and your troubles and troublers? And if He is, what can reach you? The thousands of enemies make no difference if God is there. The Assyrian is gone before he can arise to trouble or execute the threats which after all betray his conscious fear. We are foolish as to difficulties and trials, measuring them by our strength instead of God's, who is for us if we are His. What matter that the cities of Canaan were walled up to heaven, if the walls fell at the blast of a ram’s horn? Could Peter have walked on a smooth sea better than on a rough one? Our wisdom is to know that we can do nothing without Jesus — with Him everything that is according to His will. The secret of peace is to be occupied with Him for His own sake, and we shall find peace in Him and through Him, and be more than conquerors when trouble comes; not that we shall be insensible to trial, but find Him and His tender care with us when trouble comes.

This testimony is so blessedly true, so comforting and yet so soul-searching that I have transcribed it in full. There can be but little doubt that the Psalm was the experience of David, and the bitterest and most painful kind of attack is thus expressed, “There is no help for him in God.” It was to this part the great Reformer alludes when he says: “They not expressed, “There is no help for him in God.” It was to this David, and the bitterest and most painful kind of attack is thus can be but little doubt that the Psalm was the experience of God’s, who is for us if we are His. What matter that the cities of Canaan were walled up to heaven, if the walls fell at the blast of a ram’s horn? Could Peter have walked on a smooth sea better than on a rough one? Our wisdom is to know that we can do nothing without Jesus — with Him everything that is according to His will. The secret of peace is to be occupied with Him for His own sake, and we shall find peace in Him and through Him, and be more than conquerors when trouble comes; not that we shall be insensible to trial, but find Him and His tender care with us when trouble comes.

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I trust it has been clearly set forth that there has been a ministry on this earth, which had its day and purport in the mind of God, introduced at Mount Sinai by Moses, which carried the law, which claimed righteousness from man, and was in form written on stone; that thereby the knowledge of sin came in, and thus consequently it became a ministration of condemnation and death. It is to this ministry these words refer, namely, “If the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious.”

It is of the deepest importance to remember that this ministry was suited to bring out the unwelcome but, solemn truth, that the trial of man in the flesh only displayed his entire and complete ruin; not only had man come short of The glory of God, but the reflection of that glory in the face of the mediator, carrying with it, as it did, the claim for righteousness from man, repelled him instead of attracting; the glory of God In the face of Moses, had the same effect as “the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words” at Mount Sinai. With regard to the first, Israel demanded that Moses should hide his face with respect to the other, they entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.

Moreover, this ministry being, as has been said, one of claims and demands from man in the flesh, it could never be formative in character or power; indeed, it would cease to be of its own nature were it to produce in man that which it claimed from him under the sanction of condemnation and the curse. To sum up, then, respecting this ministry, its sphere was the earth, its character, a principle of claim and demand, and its issues, bondage and death.

Now the contrast to all this is, what is entitled in chapter 3 the ministry of the Spirit, as well as the ministration of righteousness, and the great point in the contrast is that what the first claimed, the second carried with it. The source of this ministry too, was very different from the former, as was also its basis. Its basis was the accomplished victories of the Son of God, who as Son of Man, glorified God on the earth, and finished the work which was given Him to do. It is to this blessed culmination of all His obedience, He Himself refers as follows, “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).

We know that this was spoken in anticipation of the sufferings and judgment of the cross, as well as the blessed proclamation, in resurrection and ascension, of how completely and fully He had glorified His God and Father. The basis then of this ministry from the heavens was the perfected atonement of the Lamb of God; therein was demonstrated the truth and love of God, as never before;

The Power of the Ministry

2 Cor. 4

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ministry to which he was called by the Son of God; whom he be in his own person the expression, as a witness, of that wonderful than the testimony of a witness; all are not called had seen in the way. I cannot conceive anything more

the vessel, and the "chosen vessel" of heavenly glory, was to witness, if I rightly apprehend the mind of the Spirit of God; for the ministry of the law from Sinai to be in any sense formative in its nature or effects; in truth we may say plainly, that if it in any sense imparted to man, it would cease to be what it was in principle, a demand upon man; but not so this ministry from the heavens, the very nature of which is to impart and thus to be formative. In this respect its contrast with the law is its glory. By what it ministers, namely, righteousness, and the Spirit, the believer is competent both as to title and power to gaze at the full and undimmed glory of God, as seen in the face of Jesus Christ, and thus the formative power of this ministry is maintained. Righteousness and the Spirit are the basis, transformation into the same image from one degree of glory to another is the result. What a blessed, wonderful ministry! Well may our hearts exclaim -- Surpassing glory! excelling glory!

Now it is perfectly clear that, as another has truly expressed it -- “A man of like passions with us, he (Paul) was one who in a wonderful manner lived with God so as to carry out this ministry; he (Paul) labored more abundantly than they all: Still what he ministered we receive; only he was a vessel filled in more than ordinary degree. But this same blessed truth, as it especially regards the testimony, is committed to us, whatever the sphere, whether the greatest as an instrument, or the least, and therefore the thing that he ministered is ours, so that we are vessels, each one in his own little measure, of that with which he was filled.”

It is very instructive to see in the case of Paul the double character of testimony, if I may so say, which he was called to bear. We read in Acts 26:16, “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for 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.” We learn from this he was to be a minister and a witness, if I rightly apprehend the mind of the Spirit of God; the expression “witness” meaning that he was to exclaim practically what he ministered. What a wondrous calling, beloved reader, poor, feeble, failing man on this earth, now the vessel, and the “chosen vessel” of heavenly glory, was to be in his own person the expression, as a witness, of that ministry to which he was called by the Son of God; whom he had seen in the way. I cannot conceive anything more wonderful than the testimony of a witness; all are not called to be ministers, but I submit that every saint is called to be a witness, and I am bold to say the most telling and weighty ministry at this present time, is the silent, noiseless, but explicit unfolding in one’s own person of this heavenly testimony. Oh, to be more like clay in the hands of the potter; shaped and fashioned by His blessed hand as He Himself pleases. The purpose of God as to His people being His witnesses here on the earth, is their being so controlled and held by Himself, that He can point to them as the living testimony to what His own Son from glory can effect for His people on this very earth. Now in this chapter where the subject of the ministry is pursued practically in every detail, we find in v. 7, three distinct subjects, namely, “this treasure,” “earthen vessels,” surpassingness [excellency] of the power” It is on my heart to write a little on each of these.

“We have this treasure.” This is described in vv. 4 and 6; it is according to v. 4, “the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, as well as in v. 6, “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” What a treasure to enrich us, as well as for us to be enriched by! Nor is it less wonderful and blessed the way in which we are taken possession of by it, hence we read, “The God who spake that, out of darkness light should shine, has shown in our hearts.” The possession of this treasure is nothing less than a revelation of the Savior in glory in us; producing as illustrated in the history of the apostle himself, a moral revolution in the subject of it: this and this alone, takes the brilliancy out of the best here. I ask can you say, as the apostle did “We have this treasure”?

Second: The next subject is the vessel, and contrast is sharply marked between the treasure and the vessel in which it is lodged; nothing could be more significant than the expression, “earthen vessels,” that is, perishing vessels of clay; it is not the vessel holding the treasure, but the treasure governing the vessel, and displaying itself through the vessel. Could anything be more blessed? In vv. 8 and 9, are set forth the inward and outward exercises to which the vessel is subjected, with a view to the display of the treasure. Then in v. 10, we have the only power in our hands by which we can have common thought with God in His purpose for displaying this treasure through us; hence we read, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” Observe it is not our dying, but the dying of Jesus, the practical application of the cross to every part of us; the death which alone could set us free from all that was against us being now used by us to silence all that would interfere with the display of the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh. Wonderful object, wonderful power for accomplishing it; glory the starting point, but death the only road back to glory, and Christ the goal! And as we travel that road back to the heaven we have come from, His blessed purpose about us on the way is, to display His own Son in each one of His people this costly, valuable treasure, placed designedly in these poor earthen vessels of ours.

Thirdly, we have a power working as well as a treasure shining, hence we have the word “that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not of us.” What wonderful contrasts are thus grouped together by the Holy Ghost; the costliest conceivable treasure to shine out through an earthen vessel, by the surpassingness of Almighty power!

This power, too, is displayed, at this present time, so
differently from what we would naturally conclude; there are two scriptures which speak of it in the manner of its energy, namely; Col. 1:11 “Strengthened with all might according to the power of his glory unto all patience (endurance), and longsuffering with Joyfulness.” These are the elements in which surpassing power declares itself in earthen vessels at this present time. The other scripture is, 2 Corinthians 12:9: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me” -- that is, “may pitch its tent over me.” What a calling, beloved reader, vessels in whom such a treasure shines, weak and feeble in ourselves, but so held by the treasure, and so wrought in and upon by surpassing power, Almighty energy, that Christ and Christ alone is seen and heard; and each circumstance on the road to the Father’s house, used up by Himself, and wonderful to say, by us too, in fellowship with Him, that He may be magnified in our bodies whether by life or by death. The Lord awaken our hearts to the dignity and glory of such power.

I need not say, I trust, that this power is that of the Holy Ghost; the very power “from on high,” which was waited for until He came, the very promise of the Father, which, says our blessed Lord “ye have heard of me”; He, and He alone is the power of the ministry. Oh may He be known and owned as such by His servants and witnesses. Of Him truly we can say in adoring faith,

“Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.”

**The Perfect Servant**

*Psalm 40:6-10; Isaiah 50:4-5; Exodus 21:26*

Both the latter scriptures are connected with the first. That which makes the Psalm so wonderful and so blessed is that in the 7th verse we are taken into the secrets of eternity. Is it not wonderful grace in our Father and God to permit us to stand as it were in His council chamber of eternity, and to listen to the communications which passed between Himself and the eternal Word?

This is what we find in the opening verses of this Psalm.

In the 6th verse the blessed One says, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire ... then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart”: that is, He proposes Himself in eternity, to do what the sacrifices and offerings which would be instituted in time could never do. How blessed to sit before Him, the glorious One who could discourse with Jehovah in eternity! God had no pleasure in the blood of bullocks and goats, they could not satisfy His holy, righteous claims, they could not discharge the conscience of a sinner. It has been truly and blessedly said as to this, that “The Son and Word (who was with God and was God and in the beginning with God), according to what was written in the roll of the book, has the place of obedience prepared for Him, ears dug, a body prepared, and according to the divine counsels (and love for us) freely and willingly undertakes the same place, the place of obedience; His delight (when He has taken it, and is man -- has taken the form of a servant) is to do God’s will. God’s law is written within His heart. Such is Christ as man, obedient, who in free-will had come, taking the body prepared for Him, and entered into the willing servant’s place, the place of willing and glad obedience.”

The grace of God, beloved reader, stands out strikingly before the heart, when we think that creatures like ourselves, poor worms of the earth, should be brought into such blessed nearness and relationship to the Father in the Son, and then graced to listen in adoring wonder to such communications as these.

Now in the 6th and 7th verses we are in eternity; in the first we have the thought, and counsels of God, in the other the voluntary mission of the Son, to give accomplishment to the will of God in accordance with those counsels. In v. 8 the blessed One speaks as being actually in the place of dependence and obedience as man. His words, “I delight to do thy will, O God: thy law is in my heart”; express in all their preciousness His own perfection as a man; but not only have we this, but elsewhere He is set before us as the poor and needy one on the earth, waiting patiently for Jehovah, and making Him His trust and hope; oh that the hearts of His own might by His grace discern this place that He was pleased to be in, and thus enjoy the blessedness of the next Psalm, even that of “he that considereth the poor.”

The place of perfect dependence as man which the Lord Jesus was pleased to take is a blessed theme for holy contemplation. Observe well how the will of God was the spring and motive of all that was in His heart: this was the character and nature of His obedience, “the obedience of Christ.” Man as such is characterized by his will, and this is in its essence sin, but “in him was no sin.” I would here for a little refer to Luke 23:44. As to the “ninth hour” there spoken of, I believe it was the hour of prayer; if this be so, does it not point, to the fact that now in the Savior’s death an acceptable evening sacrifice was offered to God, the savor of which had reached the very presence of God? How blessed to dwell upon it Further, in the gospel of Luke, we find the blessed One as man, superior to death, while submitting to it; full of strength, the Savior commits and commendeth His spirit to His Father, and expires; in the presence of such moral glory how the heart thus expresses itself --

“Adore thee evermore; Hallelujah!
Savior for thy boundless grace; Hallelujah!
For the cross whereby to us; Hallelujah!
Sure is made eternal bliss; Hallelujah!”

It is specially interesting to the heart to observe the words which the Holy Ghost uses in the gospels in recording this transcendent moment.

In Matthew’s gospel, where He is set forth in an especial way as the victim, the words used for “yields up the ghost” are δῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα.

In Mark’s gospel, where He is seen throughout as the servant prophet, the word used is ἐξεπνευσε, His service is closed as it were in its greatest act.
In Luke’s gospel, where He is seen as man all through it is ἐξήπνευσεν. This along with the blessed words “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,” gives us the truth so preciously set before us here in these words, viz.; It was death in absolute faith which trusted in the Father, death with God in faith.

In John’s gospel, where a divine person is presented to us throughout, the words are παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα these set forth His divine competency, He Himself delivered up His Spirit.

Let us in conclusion look at the other two scriptures for a little in Isa. 50:4. His life service is set before us in its own perfect, patient, dependent nature, He ever waited for and on the word of Jehovah. Let us not be wanting in true adoration as we hear Him say -- “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” Yes, truly such was His grace that He stooped to become a man, and as such had given Him a disciple’s tongue and a disciple’s ear.

Lastly, in Ex. 21:6, the ears bored, point to His being a servant for ever. Oh how plainly He said “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free.”

May our hearts adore Him as we dwell upon all His perfections, in the place He was pleased to take becoming a man, “the Word became flesh” -- as in all His lowly and lonely path of suffering and service here below.

Have You Understanding?

“Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and foresight, of all human grandeur” -- a common observation, little-acted on, but always true. As it is said of wisdom, “death and destruction have heard the fame thereof with their ears.” They cannot give positive wisdom, but they can negatively show that only what does not belong to mortal man has any value.

Man establishes his family, perpetuates his name, but he is gone: nothing stays the hand of death. Ransom from that is out of man’s power. There is a morning coming when the righteous will have the upper hand of those who seem wise as regards this world. Death feeds on these, or as neglectors of God, they are subjected to the righteous when His judgment comes. But the power of God in whom the righteous trust is above the power of death. But further, Christ having died, the Christian’s connection with this world has ceased, save as a pilgrim through it. He has the sentence of death in himself. He knows no man after the flesh, no, not even Christ. His associations with the world are closed, save as Christ’s servant in it. He reckons himself dead. He is crucified with Christ, yet lives; but it is Christ lives in Him, and he lives the life he lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him, so that he is delivered from this present world.

Oh, the folly of laying up and making oneself great and counting on a future in a world where death reigns and in the things to which its power applies.

Man being in honor abides not. How difficult, even if happy and heaven-minded in Christ as to one’s own joys, not to look upon the things that are seen, to think that the wisdom and talents and success and approval of men is simply nothing, the food of death; and that all the moral question lies behind, save so far as these may have deceived men! The saint has to watch still, not to be afraid when success accompanies those who do not accept the cross.

We await God’s judgment of things in power; we exercise it in conscience. There is no divine understanding in the man whose heart is in the glory of the world. Men will praise him. How well he has got on, settled his children, raised himself in his position. The fairest names will be given to it. He has no understanding. His heart is in what feeds death, and that death weighs it.

All the motives of the world are weighed by death. After all, in them man is only as the beasts that perish, with more care. I feel what a solemn witness and word this is for every class. Is it possible, reader, to call it in question? Is it not true? Suffer a fellow passenger on life’s great highway to ask you with real concern and affection and earnest desire for your everlasting interest, what are you living for? Whither are you hastening? Is your heart in the glory of the world? If so, there is no divine understanding in you. Have you never read the scripture which saith, “The world passeth away and the lust thereof” (See 1 John 2:17)? Oh that your eyes might be opened as to this now; a man who had fuller and more extensive means of proving what all under the sun was worth, thus expressed himself: --

“I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me; and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (Eccl. 2:4-11).

What a record! and remember well, that it was while Solomon was in possession of all that he pronounced it vanity and vexation of spirit. You will often hear those who have lost it all say so, but Solomon the king said it, when he had it all in his possession! Ah yes, it could not satisfy, there is the secret of the whole matter, the heart is too large and the passing world too small. But, reader, there is One who can satisfy and fill your heart, even Him whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin; only trust in Him and His atoning work and all will be well. Are you, my reader, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the once crucified, but now risen and
glorified Lord and Savior? If this is happily the case, allow me to ask you, are your associations with the world closed by Christ’s death, save as His servant in it? Have you learned that as a Christian, you are thus described in the words of scripture: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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” (see Gal. 2:20)? How blessed to have great in our eyes Himself who hung on that cross: and to see the world that crucified Him in its true character in that cross; to glory in His cross, happy by its means to be dead to the world, to have it ended, crucified, put to shame for the heart --

“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spread o’er His body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.”

**Charity -- Love**

1 Cor. 13

I feel greatly pressed to bring this subject before the prayerful consideration of my readers; the importance of it none, I suppose, will dispute; the urgency of it, few perhaps will enter into. May the ever blessed Spirit, God the Holy Ghost the Comforter, suggest and control my thoughts, as well as guide me in the current of the scriptures of truth, while I write.

First as to the word “love,” translated in the authorized version “charity.”

It is not necessary to point out that the popular application of the word to the distribution of money, or the giving of alms, is an entire mistake; the chapter itself will prove this, for the Apostle says it were possible to bestow all the gifts to feed the poor and not to have charity.

It has been very beautifully pointed out that our word “love” combines two notions which are expressed in Greek by two different words ἀγάπη (agape) and ἐρως (eros). Now this latter word for love denotes “the love of desire,” which seeks its satisfaction in being loved. But the Greek language knows another love, the love of complacency, which is much more disinterested, which contemplates, approves and yields itself; this is ἀγάπη, (agape), a word, it is said, certainly related to the verb ἀγαπάω (agamai) to admire. Now to this term, it is thought, the word charity better corresponds; and it does seem reasonable and true as so presented. So much for the terms charity and love. But let us now see what our God says to us in His word as to charity. Even this, that we might speak with the tongues of men or of angels, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries and all knowledge, have all faith so as to remove mountains, and yet not have charity! How solemn, how searching!

But it may be said, is it not merely a supposed case which is here presented? Let not such a thought for a moment rest in the mind of my reader. Alas! experience, both ancient and modern, only too clearly establishes the absolute truth of what is here set forth, and that the shrinking from self-surrender will accompany progress in this kind of endowment, leading to spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. It is very solemn to dwell upon what the Apostle compares this state with, namely -- “Sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.” These terms denote, the one a piece of unwrought metal struck to produce sound, the other the concave plate, used in the East as a musical instrument; and they describe in a most marked and arresting manner “the inflation of an exalted imagination, and an overexcited sensibility,” and of these it is well said that “Religious language is then no longer the natural over-flowing of a heart filled with love -- it resembles the resonant sound of a dead and hollow instrument.” Further, it is said that the expression is very nearly allied to one which was a proverbial name for those who speak much and do nothing.

What a solemn message all this has for professing Christians at the present day: for who is so barefaced and bold as to deny that just now the children of God, at least professedly, are the standing reproach of an unbelieving, agnostic age. If I must needs supply proof for what I conceive is only too self-evident, I appeal to the hatred, variance, strife, party spirit, venom, spite, and bitterness which characterize a certain class of religious controversy at the present moment. I grieve to say I see it on all sides. It is a solemn sin which lies at the door of professing Christians, and, what is worse than all, it is practiced by almost all under the devil’s delusion of zeal for Christ’s glory. This is to me saddest of all, even that His blessed name who is Love, should be made a cloak wherein to wrap a mind the very opposite to Himself. How truly it is said that -- “In our day, too, one may be a celebrated theologian, the instrument of powerful revivals, the author of beautiful works in the kingdom of God, a missionary with a name filling the world; if in all these things the man is self-seeking, and if it is not the divine breath of charity which animates him, in God’s eyes this is only seeming not being”

“Behold the fruit of all these magnificent gifts: all speech, all knowledge, all power, and yet nothing! Love alone is anything in the eyes of love.” It is well we should see who it is the apostle has in view here, even “a Christian carrying to this degree the appearance of love to Christ while seeking at bottom only his own fame or self merit in the eyes of God.” The trickeries of self-love are unfathomable, and to deceive the very man who is their instrument.” “Love accepts only what is inspired by love.”

But, now, dear readers, how solemn is all this for us at this moment; are we not met every day with the awful denial of it by those who call themselves Christians? Brethren, who assume the very highest position, they would tell you they alone care for the glory of the Son of God, they alone are Philadelphia, they alone are “the people,” and so forth, but in vain will you look for a manifestation of that love which is of God, in which being rooted and founded, there is full ability “to apprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge.” In vain will you look for a manifestation of that love, which is developed in reference to
the greatest is love; why is it the greatest? I will give two
solemn!

faithfulness and loyalty, which is nothing better than “a
not justify on the other hand a caricature of Christian
quotations which express the answer far better than I could –
sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal”; – by this system, for
1879 by one gone to his rest, when he wrote –

out of sleep as to this great reality, have we not got down
desirable. May the hearts of the children of God be aroused
desire
nature
follow after
The all importance of this love receives further confirmation
from the exhortation, “Follow after charity” -- the word
follow after διωκεῖν (dikein) shows the indispensable
nature of what is thus pursued, in contrast with the next word
desire ζηλοῦν (zeloun), which expresses a faculty, simply
desirable. May the hearts of the children of God be aroused
to “follow after charity.” Assuredly it is high time to awake
out of sleep as to this great reality, have we not got down
among the dead as to it? How true were the words penned in
1879 by one gone to his rest, when he wrote --

Did we walk even as once we walked? Was there devoted
service among the poor and needy, visiting the fatherless
and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves
unsptotted from the world . . . I have long said brethren
began by practical separation from the world. Though
certain great truths for the last days were there, still what
the world saw was that they were not of it . . . It was not
a discussion whether they were Philadelphia or not.

What a voice those solemn words of twelve years ago have
now. May hearts be opened in His grace to listen to the truth
they convey, may we remember that “when God is at work,
it is love for the truth, grief at the condition of the church of
God, and separation of heart and ways to the truth, while
waiting for Christ -- not thinking of ourselves as vessels of
it.”

“What Is Man?”

This striking question is three times asked in the Old
Testament scriptures. It is asked by Job (chap. 7:17), in the
moment of his boundless grief, consumed by suffering.

In the accumulation of his sorrows, and struggling under
the hand of God, Job exclaims, “What is man?” asking to be
let alone till he had swallowed down his spittle. The meaning
of man here is, frail mortal man; in this connection it suggests
the sense he had, more or less, of what a poor worm he was,
and how strange that the mighty God should set His heart
upon him, visit him every morning and try him every
moment, even such an one as he whose foundation is in the
dust, and who is crushed before the moth. It is well we should
enter into the real secret of all Job’s trials; it was the
discipline of God’s hand on His servant to lead him to the
blessed consummation described in the words, “I abhor
myself.” It was for this God had at the first proposed Job as
the subject of Satan’s sifting. “Hast thou considered my
servant Job?” -- is met by the insolent question of the devil,
“Doth Job fear God for nought?” This was a vile insinuation
as to the purity of his secret motives; and suggests the thought
that if needs be, Satan would do as much himself.

It has been very beautifully observed that this was in
reality an attack upon God Himself: “For if the most pure of
mankind is incapable of loving God gratuitously -- that is,
really -- it follows that God has not the power to make
Himself loved. Now, as it is the perfection of a being to love,
so it is His glory to be loved” . . . “The most telling blow,
therefore, which can be inflicted upon the divine honor is to
assert that even the most devout worshiper of God upon earth
only serves Him with this arrière-pensée: What shall I gain by
it?”

But we have the same question asked in other
circumstances and connections in Psa. 144. Here we have the
godly remnant in Israel crying to God in the last days; they
are passing through the bitterest trials, and plead with Jehovah
the entire insignificance of their oppressors, “Man (i.e. frail,
mortal man) is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that
passeth away.” This is set forth as a reason why the speedy
judgments of God’s hand should work deliverance for them,
from their oppressors, who are in prosperity all around them.
When man is thus seen, there is a knowledge acquired both of
the scene and of the great patience of God. But yet is it in
striking contrast with the knowledge of the Christian, for him
the cross has settled all and for ever, and he reckons himself
to have died, yet alive unto God through Him who died and rose again; further, he knows himself of a new creation, and a child with the Father. How blessed is this, and how sad to see the desire to be *earthly people*, living only to die at the close of human life!

But now let us turn to the third mention of this question in scripture; it is as we have said in Psa. 8:4, quoted in Heb. 2:6. There we find the spirit of Christ in the Psalmist asking the question, “What is man?” How blessed to see that He does so as the rejected One, put to shame by His own people and by men, His heart feeling a sorrow thus peculiarly His own, pours itself out to Jehovah, and from this His humbled place, taken and accepted by Himself He asks, “What is man?” Jehovah’s answer is, Christ!

He was this Son of man, set over all the works of God’s hand. It is most touching and beautiful to see the way this Psalm is quoted in Heb. 2 already alluded to; “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; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.”

Observe how this and the explanation following is introduced; the inspired writer does not say, David in a certain place testified, for he knew well that a greater than David was there! How blessed to ponder all this and treasure it in our hearts. In the days of the sorrow and humiliation of this blessed man, babes and sucklings uttered His praise, and thus the enemy and avenger was stilled; now He is crowned with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.”

Thus, then, what is set before our adoring faith and praise here is, man in the counsels of God, the second Man, the last Adam, Christ the glory of Jehovah, as well as His delight, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

And as in that day that is at hand, when, as we have said, His name shall be excellent in all the earth, so the whole inheritance of this blessed man, the Redeemer-Heir, taken by Him under that title, shall reflect His praise and glory, displaying the power of His redemption, as at the first the material creation displayed the handiwork of the Creator, in all its variety of living beauty. This being closely connected with His glory in part, must ever have an affectionate interest for His own, while at the same time faith now turns on high, sees Him and knows Him there, knows too its own associations with the second Man in glory, leaves in spirit the earth and the earthly scene, to dwell with Him in the delights and joys of the Father’s house on high, and to journey here where He is not, as a pilgrim of faith, whose “commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself.” (Phil. 3:21) Lord, hasten it in Thy time!

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“A Stranger Here”

**Exodus 2:22**

While the wilderness we travel,  
Nought save dreariness around,  
Not a gleam of earthly sunshine,  
Only storm and tempest found.  
Rich the joy of surely knowing  
Home and rest are all above!  
Won by Him on earth a Stranger, --  
Proving timeless, changeless love!

See Him stooping down from glory,  
Lowly, humbled, sorrowing here;  
Scorned of earth, by man rejected,  
No bright spot His heart to cheer.  
See Him all along His journey,  
From the mountain* to the cross,  
Save His Fathers love -- how lonely  
Meeting shame, contempt, and loss.

Want and woe in man’s sad story  
Never wearied His blest ear;  
Widowed hearts and orphans sorrows  
Found in Him relief and cheer.  
See Him in His hour of travail,  
Contrast to our path below;  
We have Him for every sorrow,  
He had nought save deepest woe.

Wrath of God in fiercest judgment,  
Borne alone upon the tree;  
Love that passeth every knowledge,  
Now flows forth unstraitened, free.  
Raised from death, His Father’s glory  
Claims Him Victor for His throne  
There alone His ransomed know Him,  
There alone their joys and home.  
Here they wander through death’s valley,  
He beside them, yet on high;  
They like Him on earth but strangers,  
He with them for ever nigh.

Soon His shout will greet His pilgrims --  
Welcome long-loved home and rest;  
Now by faith enjoyed and entered,  
Then with Him for ever blest.

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3. He reached His highest glory as a man on Mount Tabor, and then descended to Calvary.
Resource and Strength
Phl. 4

What a blessed reality to know that which the apostle speaks of in v. 7 of this chapter, namely, to have the peace of God which passeth every understanding keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

Now observe how we must be in spirit in the sphere of the peace, in order to have the heart and mind kept. Our poor hearts and minds could never keep the peace of God. The best illustration I know of the peace of God, is that magnificent declaration of Psa. 29:10: “The Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth king for ever.” It is striking too, that the word rendered “flood” is elsewhere applied only to the deluge of Noah. Thus above all the desolations of earth, in the serenity of His own majesty the Lord sits as King; and observe the verse that follows this, namely, “The Lord will bless His people with peace.” In a higher and fuller way the apostle tells us that the peace of God which passeth every understanding shall keep, as in a garrison, your hearts and minds, that is, the affections which the word heart refers to, and minds, the motive power of the man as we speak.

There is nothing so often disturbed as our minds, especially if activity characterize them, but if our God puts His own peace as a garrison to guard the heart and mind, all of quiet and rest is secured in the stronghold of that divine fortification. Thus alone can we enter into the deep meaning of how our strength is to sit still.

When we stood as it were on the shores of the Red Sea, with its waters as yet unopened before us, and dreaded the descent of the overflowing enemy behind us, the word was, “stand still and see.” Then we beheld as it were a divine transaction, for us no doubt, but in accomplishing which we had no part; now, as garrisoned by the peace of God we learn the blessedness of the word, “be still and know that I am God.”

Now in v. 12, the apostle gives himself as an example, “I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: both to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Thus he tells us how he had passed through all the circumstances: how often have I heard the remark: “You know nothing about it, for you are not in it.” Now it is well to remember, that one needs to be out of trial, as having passed through it, in order to sympathize with one in it, then is it that we can be witnesses to the grace, peace, and power which sustained us, and we can say, in some sense, poor though it be, I have found Him all I needed, far more, thank God, but this most blessedly. It is very interesting to see how the apostle was passed through all the exigencies of human life, so as to be in his own person the witness to the truth we have before us. One of the distinctive marks of Christianity is, the resource and power which belong to it, and these are brought to light by the straits and difficulties through which the people of God pass in the wilderness way. In another day when a sight of the land tested Israel, Joshua and Caleb could say, “The people of the land are bread for us.” Israel were in dread at the moment of being devoured by giants!

In v. 19 the apostle says, “My God.” Why does he not say, “Your God?” Was He not the God of the Philippians as much as of Paul? Assuredly He was. But he was speaking of God as he himself knew Him, or, as we might say, experimentally. the apostle had proved Him as His God. He says as it were, “I have been all the world over and He has never failed me.” “My God shall supply all your need.” I can not only count on Him for myself, but also for you. Neither your need nor mine can measure what is in Him. What is the measure?

“According to His riches in glory.” How blessed, how infinite! May our hearts and minds be thus kept in this divine fortification continuously.

The Popular Gospel

My attention was directed a few days past to some words on this subject which I venture here to transcribe, as a solemn and timely warning at this moment.

A carnal evangelism produces a scoffing worldliness, which refuses henceforth to listen to the solid gospel of the grace of God. To popularize the gospel is to take away from it every element of divine power which it possesses. Allow of human methods or ingredients, and immediately the flesh breathes freely and listens pleasantly, but bring in Christ crucified as doing away with man in the flesh altogether, and going on with the second Man, who is risen and gone into heaven, and the flesh is choked by the heaviness of the atmosphere, and makes its escape.

This modern popularizing of the gospel has given even evangelical society its itching ears, and has turned away the thoughtful from listening to the word as a divine thing. Thus the evangelical conspired with the rationalistic to ruin the whole crop and reduce the field to barrenness. ‘The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.’ A rationalized college, and a popularized gospel, have made the name of Christ odious, and the holy scriptures a suspected and distrusted book.

What is here set forth very forcibly and aptly, is assuredly worthy of solemn consideration at this moment when the tide is rapidly flowing in the direction indicated, and when there seems spread abroad on every hand, as the morning upon the mountains, a mist of earth and deep delusion of the devil, so insidious and ensnaring, that but few have the power to discern the counterfeit coin, which a deeply designed imitation hides from them; and when the great mass of people are carried away by the blasphemous buffoonery and burlesque of modern evangelism. May the Lord open the eyes of His saints to the workings of the enemy in this “last hour” of His great patience and forbearance.
The Mystery of Godliness

1 Tim. 3:16; 4:1-8; 6:3-9

This mystery of godliness, while on the one hand it lies at the very center of the truth maintained by the assembly before the world, on the other, is the only power that can sanctify and separate the saint to God.

It is striking the way in which it is brought in here. In chapter 3:16 we find what the testimony was, committed to responsibility and to be maintained by the assembly before the world. The assembly, let us remember, is the pillar and support of the truth. This is a truth of the first moment; it is well said, “that on earth Christ was the Truth. He is so always, but He was so on the earth. The assembly is not the truth: the word of God is the truth. His word is truth. Truth always, but He was so on the earth. The assembly is not the truth; the world is the truth. His word is truth. Truth exists before the assembly; it is faith in the truth which gathers the assembly together. But the assembly is that which maintains the truth on earth. But the assembly does not teach. Teachers teach the assembly; but by faithfulness in holding fast the truth taught, it sustains it in the world."

Now, in connection with all this we are warned by the Holy Ghost, through the apostle, as to that which Satan would introduce and set up in opposition to it, and we find one part of this scheme in chapter 4 and another character of it in ch. 6. The enemy seeks to set aside the testimony by what we find in both these chapters.

Next, in order that we may see clearly what the great mystery of piety is, let us state it as given by God here. “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Here, then, we have set before us both God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have Satan’s counterfeit in vv. 1-3 of ch. 4 -- there would be those who would depart from the knowledge of the one Creator and Savior-God, He who had not only created the world, but who also had revealed Himself in Christ. The first great element in this counterfeit is a denial of the end of the first man’s history at the cross. The great object of the devil is in every way to deny this in fact, or set it aside in practice. It is one of the solemn realities of this present time that the judicial end of man’s history in the cross is not accepted, but denied; and hence there is no divine conception of what the new man is -- “the new man, which, according to God, is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” Alas with many their conception of the new man is little better than changed conduct. The new man is a new creation, and the moral characteristic of this new creation is that which is according to God, created in truthful righteousness and holiness.

Now observe in the scripture before us the revival of the first man, in the denial of its judicial end in the cross; the exactions spoken of here are the proof of this revival by the enemy: “forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.” These are the exactions which the devil would put upon man; these impositions recognize the existence of man in the flesh before God, and the wile is to produce a sanctity pretending to superior holiness, but in reality a false sanctity which denied the authority of God, in forbidding that which He had ordained from the beginning, as well as reviving the history of man in the flesh, which had been judicially condemned and put out of God’s sight in the cross.

Now in 1 Tim. 6 we find the further work of Satan; here it is an attempt in the direction of the elevation of man as he is, taking the favors, the mercies surrounding him in this world, as indicative of the goodness of God to man as allowed in his standing in the flesh before Him, “supposing that gain is godliness.” How specious these various attempts of Satan to set aside the truth; we see the first in full bloom in popery, and the second in human philanthropy. The truth thus attempted to be set aside is itself our great security. What a marvelous truth in fact that God had been manifested in the flesh! How blessed to think that God Himself was manifested in the center of weakness and evil, that where sin was, there was love above the sin; yet in Him, who became flesh, the absence of all sin was made evident by the power of the Holy Ghost during His whole life: He was seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world: it was not the display or manifestation of visible power demanding His rights and glory, but the tender grace that sought the weary and the undone for their perfect, richest blessing.

Lastly, we read, “received up into glory” -- thus He takes His place on high as Man, in that glory whence He had descended.

This, then, is the great truth to be maintained before the world by the assembly, the vessel for testimony; but there is another aspect in which we may look at it, namely, this mystery of piety is the true and only producing power of all true godliness in the saints, as well as the ability to fill their varied relationships according to the mind of God. God has, in His own blessed grace, come down, and has cleared, as it were, the scene for Himself that He may now occupy it; it is as we are engrossed with Him who is received up into glory, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. I do not deny there are claims, but how earnestly do I desire to press the charms of the heavenly Man now in glory on the affections and hearts of His own!

“No More”

This is a sad expression by itself. It speaks of the end of life down here, as in Psa. 39:13; or it sets forth the termination of things in this world, as for instance when we say we have no more means, or no more opportunity, or no more strength; but it is a very blessed expression when used in connection with three great realities set forth in the blessed word of God.

Now in Heb. 10:2, 17, 18, we read of three wonderful and blessed no mores, namely: --

1. No more offering for sin.
2. No more remembrance of sins.
3. No more conscience of sins.

Let us observe in the first place how it is said that the remission of sins proves that there is no more offering for sin.
That is, the full and blessed efficacy of the one offering of our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly set forth and manifested in its not being repeated, it was once, because all was accomplished by it. Now under the law the sacrifices were many and often. Why? Because they were not effectual for the taking away of sins. Each fresh sacrifice proved that those which had been previously offered, were ineffectual. The truth is that in those sacrifices and under the law, sins were brought to remembrance, not put away. By Christ’s one offering there is full remission and forgiveness of sins. Is not this abundant comfort to all who simply trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice it was? Reader, are you trusting in Him? Have you any other hope? May God open the eyes of all who read this paper, to see what sure and perfect ground the atoning death of God’s dear Son supplies to every sinner who simply trusts in Him.

Second. But next it is said in virtue of this sacrifice God will remember the sins and iniquities of His people no more. He did remember all their sins and iniquities to Jesus on the cross, where He, the spotless One, was their Substitute. It was not they who laid their sins on Jesus; it was God -- that God who knew them all, against whom, too, they had been committed; He it was who laid them all on His spotless Lamb, the Substitute of His people.

Hence it is that in righteousness God can now say, He will no more remember His people’s sins. Christ on the cross “made sin,” and bearing God’s righteous judgment due to sin and against sin, has so perfectly glorified God about sin, and so entirely and fully exhausted all the holy judgment of God due to sin, and so fully borne His people’s sins in His own body on the tree, that God can say as in this precious verse: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Third. Now the word of God declares that for those who have their sins forgiven there is “no more conscience of sins” -- observe well, the scripture does not say, “no more consciousness of sin,” but no more conscience of sins; and the difference is solemn and very important; if it had been no more consciousness of sin, the scripture would have then stated that the Christian is to be without the consciousness of indwelling sin, which it never does state, but the opposite; thus there is no ground whatever for the many delusions abroad on this subject. What God does say in His word is, that the purged worshiper has “no more conscience of sins”; that is, the conscience of such an one is uncondemning in the presence of God, in virtue of the eternal value of Christ’s precious blood shed.

How blessed, then, to be rejoicing in no more offering for sin -- no more remembrance of sins -- no more conscience of sins.

**The Close of the Year**

*Heb. 1, 2*

The close of another year reminds us of the rapid flight of time and brings before the heart in various ways its changing scenes; all, even the best here, fades as a leaf and vanishes away. How blessed to have found a new home in a new scene, outside and beyond; and to have found it in connection with Him who is there, thus the Person and the place where He is become everything to us, and we only await His return who shall change our body of humiliation and fashion it like unto His body of glory: until then we move on with Him; how different that is from being borne along in the throng of the passing panorama around us. The scripture at the head of the page is suggested by the dying year -- all here on earth is under death and dying; thank God, the Christian has passed out of death into life. What a rest and solace to have to do with Him, of whom it is said: “Thou remainest,” “Thou art the same.”

The reflection is valuable to us in a two-fold way, namely:

First, it is well to see things as they are: the tendency is in an entirely opposite direction, as a rule, among men down here in this world, things are not what they seem.

It is well for us to remember that God did once invest a man with the ability and resources necessary to test the value of all here in itself. Solomon had everything that the heart of man could desire, and, moreover, his wisdom remained with him. What is his testimony when in possession of all? “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Solomon found that nothing here could fill and satisfy the heart, and that death lay as a cankerworm at the root of all under the sun. Do we not find it so in changing years and times? If Solomon the king found it so in his affluent circumstances, how much more those whose lot is of a very different kind?

But the reflection is also valuable in bringing out the contrast set before us in those precious words spoken of the Savior, “Thou remainest,” “Thou art the same.” How blessed for the heart that has found its all in such an One as that! Beloved reader, have you? And as the passing year and fleeting seasons are but part of what other words found here describe, namely, “They shall perish . . . and they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed,” can you, in the rest of possession in and with Him where He is, say --

“The Savior lives and cannot die,
And with Him lives our joy”

May God in His great grace and mercy grant that as years fail and pass, our hearts may be found to have already left the scene, to have, as it were, ascended with Him to where He is, and there continually to dwell.
“The First Month of the Year”

Another year is past and a new year has begun, verily “We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told.” It is well then, standing here just now, to survey for a little in memory the way of the past. There can be but little doubt that at such a season as this, recollections of the past will mingle strangely, and it may be unbidden as well, with anticipations of the future. The past! think of the memories that word recalls! Think of the deep emotions and varied experiences it awakens! With how many is it associated almost through all its months, with scenes of sorrow and suffering, hours of toil and temptation, days of depression, gloom and darkness, times of peril and perplexity.

These must ever have the upper hand with us, if we have not learned by faith to have to do with Himself outside the scene through which we are passing.

In the chapter from which the heading of our paper is taken, we find that from the creation time had rolled on unchanged as to the mode in which it was reckoned.

It is striking that not even the flood of waters, the universal grave of the generation of that day, save those in the ark, effected any change; but now we are introduced to a most important and striking change, and we are justified in saying that all was new that characterized this change: they have often been dwelt upon, hence it must suffice just now to enumerate them.

1. The sacrifice was new -- a Lamb.
2. The time of its being offered was new -- in the evening.
3. The place was new -- Egypt.
4. The feast inside was new -- a roasted lamb, “his head with his legs and the purtenance thereof.”
5. The time for eating it, and the attitude and apparel of those who eat it was new; namely, the time midnight; the attitude, standing; the apparel, loins girded; shoes on the feet; and staff in hand.
6. The bread was also new -- for it was unleavened.

Thus we find the items as we may say of Israel’s new history. How blessed, my reader, if the commencement of another year should find you, if never before, in a new order of things, as to your soul’s realization in faith; oh, to know Christ Himself in the new and heavenly place where He is, to abide there with Him, finding all your heart’s deepest longings there fully met and satisfied, so that in heavenly peace and repose and calmness, you can go through this world of unrest and disturbance, as has been so blessedly said, like a rich man amongst the destitute, having everything to contribute, but looking for nothing and wanting nothing here.

That in this sense, this year may be the opening up and out of “blessings of heaven above” to all my readers, is the earnest desire of my heart.

“Follow Thou Me”

The first thing needful, in order to walk with God, is to have the conscience perfectly at rest; the blood of Christ alone can secure this to us. If the conscience is not at rest, and without the sense of being so perfectly purged that it is fit for the presence of God, there is no true liberty; and all things are regarded in the light of its felt need and, as yet, unsatisfied demands. A conscience enlightened by the word of life will not rest, and cannot rest, short of full and uncondemning quietness in the presence of God, where He dwells. How blessedly perfect, then, must that work be, which, on the one hand, has so perfectly glorified God, down to the very lowest depths of humiliation and judgment, where the eternal Son of the Father, who humbled Himself to become a man, went and lay for us, and has, on the other hand, so divinely and completely settled the question of sin, in its guilt and power, as regards our consciences, that the believer in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, is both relieved and delivered in regard to his conscience, and blessed up to the full height of that glory where Christ is, in whose once marred, but most blessed face, the whole glory of God now shines.

My reader, have you such a conscience before God? -- until you have, it is vain to speak of other things.

Allow me to show you, as far as I am able, and with God’s help, how this blessed redemption-work of the Lord Jesus thus acts upon the conscience. As born of the first Adam, every man by nature is lost and guilty; the first, or
There are three great objects on which the eye of faith rests. Iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:15, 17). The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and the blessed witness of the Holy Ghost on the other. “Whereof from it, and the more so in proportion as faith is simple; but in no sense do I believe because I experience or feel it; but on God, in the word, to my conscience, that all my sins are forgiven, never to be remembered any more. This is not, in sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 6:6). “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” (Rom. 8:3).

Now I quite admit there is a difference in the way in which these truths reach the conscience, and I will endeavor to point it out here.

With respect to the first, namely, the question of my sins, believing on the Son of God, I have the testimony of the believer all put away that his conscience may be perfectly purged, so that there should be nothing between him and God; but his old man has been crucified with Christ on the cross; and God does not regard the believer now as in that status at all, but in Christ risen from the dead, in whose death that old man was judged and condemned. “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). “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” (Rom. 8:3).

There are three great objects on which the eye of faith rests.

1st. The cross, and the garden with its new sepulcher, hewn out of the rock, wherein the blessed One was laid, and out of which He was raised and glorified.

2nd. The Father’s throne in the heavens, on which He who bore my sins, is now seated -- soon to be on His own throne. And

3rd. The blessed witness of the Holy Ghost, the record, the testimony of the living God, which endureth for ever.

With regard to the other truth, namely, how we are delivered from the dominion of sin; experience has every place, that is, it has to be learned by experience; and this process leads to discovering these three things

1st. That in us, that is in our flesh there dwells no good thing.

2nd. That there is in us a new nature as well as (yet quite distinct from) the old.

3rd. That, notwithstanding this, the old is too strong for us, and deliverance from it is looked for outside of self altogether, and from another; this issues in, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”; it is the song of the prisoner bird, now liberated -- it is its first note as it flies; it is not its highest, nor its every note; it is the starting-post of the soul, not its goal or prize. Perhaps many souls have recently found this new liberty and life -- if so, the Lord be praised; but do not, dear reader, allow yourself to suppose for a moment, that it is anything more than the normal state of a Christian. It is not, I suppose, to be wondered at, that those who considered it a necessary thing to be tied and bound with the chain of their sins, for so many years, should regard their newly found liberty (if they have found it) as something wonderfully beyond what any one else had ever known -- and the highest and greatest good.
recognition of faith. The Lord give us to be established in these realities, that we may be free to listen.

That we may listen to His voice we must be in possession of both liberty and rest. If you have not repose, you cannot give Him an audience. I do not mean to deny for a moment that there is a previous exercise connected with the silencing of nature, the fading of other sounds which were wont to fill the ear of the soul; but this is the drowsing of what intrudes, in order that the disengaged ear may be turned without distraction to Him instead of a morbid heart that wastes a weary, restless life away by feeding on itself.

There is a repose in one who listens well, that is very blessed to witness -- there was something of it at least in Mary, when she sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word. Her very attitude was restful; she sat, and heard.

I do not deny the activity of life, either in its earnestness to obtain, or its readiness to surrender; but I contend it ought to be restful activity -- an activity which is kept alive and sustained by an object outside itself.

As ground, when parched with summer heat, Gladly drinks in the welcome shower; So would we, listening at His feet, Receive His words, and feel His power.”

I shall here note one or two results of listening in this spirit.

First, there is abstraction of soul, other sounds which otherwise might influence, now fail to interest. The ear is turned to catch every note of the voice of the Charmer; and, oh, what a voice that is! His enemies, even declared, that never man spake like Him.

The eye (when the day of union had not as yet dawned and whose affection is restless) is spell-bound as she listens in the twilight, and announces with rapture “the voice of my beloved,” . . . “my beloved spake” -- her whole soul turns to hear what the bridegroom of her heart has to say.

Next to abstraction is absorption, entire occupation of soul; the ear, not only bent to hear, but filled with the sound of His voice; and that, too, not as one who is apart from me, but One to whom I am united.

The eye of the soul is exercised as well as the ear: the voice of the object delights and engages the ear; the Person Himself delights the eye, as it were of the soul. It is a wonderful thing to know that the heavens are opened to the faith of a believer now, and Jesus in glory, pointed out by the indwelling Holy Ghost, to the one who looks up with steadfast gaze. Oh, it is everything to have the eye on the object. What distinguishes Christianity from what went before it, is an object outside of us, and power in us: Jesus in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us.

If the eye of the soul is turned in, the object is not seen. Failure will necessitate this, but self-judgment will clear the way out of it; so that the object may again fill the eye: self-judgment, will hinder self-occupation, and promote earnestness and purpose of heart. Self-judgment is not an act, once for all performed, but a continuous habit of soul. Oh, what a blessed sight for faith, that transcendent Person, that glorified Man, that mighty Savior! Well may we pray,

“O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee.”

Let me again impress upon you the fact, that we do not behold the Savior in glory, as apart from Him, but as those who are united to Him, one with Him. How very blessed to know, I am one with my object. I shall only touch upon one or two consequences of beholding.

First, as we behold we are transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18); that is, as we are occupied with Christ, where He is, we become like Him; the moral features of Him who is our object, are transferred to those who, by the Spirit, behold Him in glory. Stephen is a beautiful instance of this; he acted like Christ in the midst of the most trying circumstances. (See Acts 7.)

Next, we find that the object in glory forms the affections suited to itself. Herein lies the difference between Christian affection and heart-longing, and that which is found in the Canticles, in the latter, the bride does not possess the profound repose and sweetness of affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated. Previous to the day of union, the relationship sought for, was the consequence of the state of the heart, but now that the day has dawned, the state of the heart, and the affections are the consequence of the relationship. The same is observable in the Psalms; yearning, panting after God, are all to be found there; and the earnestness might well put us to shame: but the relationship, as well as the object of faith, and the power to enjoy the one, and behold the other, are wanting. In the Song of Songs, the bride is not united to the bridegroom; and in the Psalms, the Remnant, whose experience is so blessedly depicted in various scenes and circumstances, is as yet outside of all that which will, ere long, crown their hopes, aspirations, and yearnings.

The feet pursue the path marked out by His blessed footsteps, who has gone before. For this, divine energy is needed. The blessed apostle, who knew Christ in glory, heard His voice speak to Him from glory, and had seen Him in glory, follows Him. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The mark denoted the spot, as it were, whither he pressed; the prize was that for which he ran. He did not think of his eye, or his feet. That on which his eye rested, and for which his feet pressed on, was everything to him: purpose of heart, earnestness, energy, there must be, as well as self-abnegation, every step of the course; diligence of soul and vigilance of heart, too; but if Christ seen in glory, and known in glory, does not form and maintain these in the heart, I know of no other motive or power. The Lord keep us hearing, and beholding and following His own Son; that the tastes, suited to Christ, may be both formed and kept alive in us; and we ourselves thus divinely strengthened to refuse everything of the first man, because we are so satisfied with the Second Man; and that we may show forth His virtues, and glories, and excellences, in a crooked and perverse generation among whom we shine as lights (heavenly bodies) in the world, holding forth the word of life.
Labor and Rest

Mark 6:31, 32

There is a word here of sweet and precious import, and full of deep comfort.

The context presents a scene of labor and toil. The Lord had called the twelve, and sent them out two by two for their journey, without anything save a staff, “no scrip, no bread, no money.” They went forth, they preached, they cast out devils, they raised the sick; it was a time of work and incessant toil, but a time of labor which resulted in fruit.

In v. 30 we find the apostles returning, gathering themselves together, and rehearsing to Jesus all they had done and taught. He had sent them out empty, and they had returned full, and now they spread before the precious Master, as it were, their riches, the proceeds and fruit of their labor and toil; and this draws forth the heart of the blessed Lord, ever overflowing in love and tenderness and compassion for hungry multitudes and weary servants -- and here are His gracious words, “Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest awhile.” Now let us note how it is not, “go and rest,” but “come!” Oh! The sweetness of that word “Come!” Assuredly it is not the desert place that would constitute the rest, necessary, yea called for as it is at times for all His workmen, but the rest is connected with the company, with the presence of Jesus. He accompanies us there, and hence the rest, His own bright and blessed company secures that which neither the comforts of a fertile valley, full of springs of water, could supply, nor the barrenness and aridity of a howling desert, could hinder. May every beloved laborer then remember it is “come and rest.” Then there is another precious thought, the Master knows well the snares of service, He sees how easily the poor weak vessel could be ensnared into giving service that place which alone belongs to Himself, how soon the work would take the place of occupation with Him, hence I am sure He often isolates us, saying, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place.”

Further we are told that “there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” In this day of rush and ceaseless toil, how often is it so? But we need to be reminded that “preaching is not Christ,” and the Lord’s workmen must have time for feeding on Christ and meditation in His word, if their service is to be of any real profit. The quality of our service we fear is in this day but little thought of compared with the quantity; the quality will indeed be poor and wretched in the extreme, if the laborer’s own soul is not nourished and fed upon the true Bread that came down out of (Èk) heaven. How loving then of our own Master to say, “Come and rest,” and how blessed when He takes His poor, fainting, failing workmen by the hand, aside, apart into the desert place, shutting them out from all around, and shutting them in to Himself, that with a mind undisturbed, and a heart undistracted, they may rest with Himself, thus gathering up new strength and fresh courage to go forth with and for Him.

But there is also here a beautiful instance of the deep compassion of the Savior’s heart, which was ever touched by distress and want. We are told the people “outwent them and came together unto him.” Yes, Jesus was the attraction! They were seeking Him. How many such testimonies do the gospels contain to His tenderness and pity and accessibility! So we see how He yearned over a scattered flock of sheep destitute of a shepherd’s care. Though it be a desert place, He will cause it to yield bread enough and to spare for them, thus He feeds them and sends them away, He Himself departing into a mountain to pray. Now we have a picture of the present and the future. Jesus has gone high into the place of intercession; during His absence the wind and storm and waves of difficulties, vicissitudes, are felt; yet He is not absent from His own in interest or heart. Then His poor disciples proved it, for in the fourth watch (the darkest part of night on the eve of day dawn) He comes to them walking on the water! Oh! The majesty of the scene, which sets before us the tender, compassionate, unfailing Friend, at the same time the mighty God, “God -- over all, blessed evermore.”

Have You?

“Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and foresight, of all human grandeur” -- a common observation, little acted on, but always true. As it is said of wisdom, ‘death and destruction have heard the fame thereof with their ears.’ They cannot give positive wisdom, but they can negatively show that only what does not belong to mortal man has any value. Man establishes his family, perpetuates his name, but he is gone; nothing stays the hand of death. Ransom from that is out of man’s power. There is a morning coming when the righteous will have the upper hand of those who seem wise as regards this world. Death feeds on these, or, as negligors of God, they are subjected to the righteous, when His judgment comes. But the power of God in whom the righteous trust is above the power of death. But further, Christ having died, the Christian’s connection with this world has ceased, save as a pilgrim through it. He has the sentence of death in himself. He knows no man after the flesh, no, not even Christ. His associations with the world are closed, save as Christ’s servant in it. He reckons himself dead. He is crucified with Christ, yet lives; but it is Christ lives in him, and he lives the life he lives in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him, so that he is delivered from this present world. Oh the folly of laying up and making oneself great and counting on a future in a world where death reigns, and in the things to which its power applies. Man being in honor abides not. How difficult, even if happy and heavenly-minded in Christ as to one’s own joys, not to look upon the things that are seen, to think that the wisdom, and talents, and success, and approval of men is simply nothing, the food of death; and that all the moral question lies behind, save so far as these may have deceived men! The saint has to watch still, not to be afraid when success accompanies those who do not accept the cross. We await God’s judgment of things in power; we exercise it in conscience. There is no divine understanding in the man whose heart is in the glory of the world. Men will praise him. How well he has got on, settled his children, raised himself in his position. The fairest
names will be given to it. He has no understanding. His heart is in what feeds death, and that death, weighs it. All the motives of the world are weighed by death. After all, in them man is only as the beasts that perish, with more care” -- What a solemn witness is this, my dear reader? Is it possible to call it in question? Is it not true? Suffer a poor fellow-passenger on life’s great highway to ask you with real concern and affection, what are you living for? Whither are you hastening? If your heart is in the glory of the world, there is no divine understanding in you. Scripture says -- “the world passeth away and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17).

Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins having been washed away in His precious blood? If so, permit me to ask you, are your associations with the world closed, by Christ’s death, save as Christ’s servant in it? Have you learned that as a Christian your place is thus described -- “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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).

“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).

How blessed to have great in our eyes Him who hung on that cross: and to see the world that crucified Him in its true character in that cross; to glory in it, happy by this means to be dead to the world, to have it ended, crucified, put to shame for the heart --

“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spread o’er His body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.”

“The Word of The Lord”
Jeremiah 22:29

Assuredly it becomes the Christian, at a moment like this, to hear “the word of the Lord.” In one sense, who else can hear it? He is pleased, in His great grace, to open the blind eye and unstop the deaf ear by such a solemn and loud-speaking call as the present prevailing sickness, we had almost said plague. Oh that this might be the case in many instances at this time, will be the earnest cry and prayer of faith.

The Christian is not of the earthly family dispensationally, nor of the world morally, by Christ’s death the Christian is crucified to the world and the world to him, his resorting to the world is doing violence to the cross. He is not of the world even as Christ is not of the world. Alas! how little this barrier of death is owned, even in doctrine, and hence the failure in practice. Alas! too many of God’s saints belong to the world on principle; the church-world and the world-church is the order of the day; the religion of the world and the world of religion keep step in giant stride and funeral march in these last times.

The Christian has a positive status, as well as a negative one; he belongs positively to heaven now, he is going to where in faith and spirit and affection he is already; he is blessed now with all spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ; this is not the position nor the description of the position of the earthly family. I feel that this introduction must be entered into, rightly to understand the application to a Christian now of the Lord’s voice in either pestilence, or famine, or sword.

If I understand correctly what is the singular and unique position of a Christian, I could not apply to him, save in a moral way, passages of scripture which contemplate directly the earthly people -- yet in a moral way such a passage as that which heads this paper does very distinctly apply, as well as all such kindred passages.

Further, I am assured that in proportion to the departure of the Christian from his own proper position, calling, and hope, so is intensified the call of the word of the Lord in this moral sense.

Is it then not gross darkness to be now insensible to the present rod, His appointed stroke?

Let us not fear to plainly state the truth. The so-called church and the world have become one Christendom, which is fast ripening for judgment. The world is an empty, lying pageant. The so-called church loves to be patronized by it, and caressed by it, and in return, adopts its principles, habits, and ways. Alas! how many true, beloved saints and servants of Christ seem asleep or indifferent to this. Has, then, the fact that “the Lord’s voice crieth unto the city” no solemn moral significance at this time in this direction?

The angel of death has been stalking through the land, neither prince nor peasant is spared; it has been a solemn moment, may God open His people’s ears to hear. Oh, is He not saying to us, “hear ye the rod.” Shall we listen, shall we hear? One passage of scripture very distinctly comes before me in connection with the Lord’s word to Christians, namely, “Hear me, ye Levites; sanctify now yourselves, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place” (2 Chron. 29:5). It is in this very especial way, at this present moment, the Lord’s voice speaks to Christians. How solemn to see the tendency on all sides to coquet with the world and adopt its ways, both in the worship and service of God. Alas! some who speak loudly against it in worship, seem inclined to adopt it in measure, in service, and Christian work. How fully the heart responds to the following words of a servant of Christ, just recently put forth: “Now I desire to profess my full confidence in God’s word, as the only means by which God’s work is to be done. I believe that it is still ‘the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth’ (Rom. 1:16). That it is still ‘able to make wise unto salvation’ (2 Tim. 3:15); that ‘it shall accomplish that which Jehovah pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it’ (Isa. 55:11). I am not tempted therefore to adopt any of the modern methods of the nineteenth century, which all proceed on the implied assumption that the word of God has grown weak and has lost its ancient power. No, ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost.’ I have no apologies to make for the truth of His word, and I have no commission to treat with its enemies. I am charged to ‘preach the word,’ and bidden to have faith in its power, while
forewarned that the time will come when men will not endure 'sound doctrine' (2 Tim. 4:2, 3). It is not my business therefore to study the tastes of such by what are called attractive services, which mean that the music is to get longer and longer and the sermons shorter and shorter, because the time has come when 'men will not endure sound doctrine.'

Thank God for such a faithful, outspoken testimony. The need for a firm front as to this is now plainly seen. Alas! there are Christians who seem, just now, to be "drifting away," an easy but dangerous process; some time back, the scriptures of truth, the word of God, seemed to be their one weapon, the word of God and the Holy Ghost their one confidence; but now they seem disposed to go with the times and tide, and the thin edge of the wedge of the world is pressed in in some little way, in some innocent innovation -- a musical instrument, or a magic lantern, or some little beginning -- avowedly to meet the growing taste of the age, which ever is the precursor of greater and further departure. O beloved fellow-Christians, let us hear the voice of the Lord at this time! Is He not speaking loudly to His own? Is He not distinctly saying, "Consider your ways"; "Carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place"?

Alas! has not Christian position and testimony become neutralized by world-bordering and worldliness, in the spirit of it as in the letter of it, and is there not a great danger of being seduced by the intoxicating cup that is passing around -- the mixed, "cup of fornication"?

May the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, called, commissioned, and sent by Him from glory, lift up their voices without fear, may they see that none are out of reach of the danger. They must expect to be reproached and despised as not up to date, and so forth; be it so: may they prefer the contempt and sneer of the world and the worldling to their smile and approbation; it is part of the servant of Christ to look for and to seek his dear Master's approval, and to await that day when all shall be made manifest.

May the voice of the Lord be heard at this time, in the city, in the midst of man's proud haunts of business and of pleasure, with the corresponding recklessness and indifference to God; but let us remember that if the saints of God refuse to hear it, in its moral application to them, they are effectually helping to bind faster upon the poor ungodly world the chains of darkness flung around it, as well as to stop the ears of men to the solemn cry addressed to the earth at this time: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

The Heavenly Comforter and The Heavenly Home
John 16:7

It is very solemn to reflect upon a fact to which attention has been very pointedly directed long ere this, namely, that the more the truth comes out in its clearness and fulness, and the more developed becomes the state of the external professing church, it is only too evident that in the dark ages, prior to the time of the Reformation, the full truth of the gospel, the Holy Ghost as the present power of the church of God, and the present standing and calling before God of the Christian individually, was not possessed or known.

After the long dark reign of Popery, with its records of monstrosity and iniquity, the blessed God in His grace wrought by the Reformation, which was indeed as daybreak after a weary night of darkness. Then it was that a partial recovery was reached, as regards the gospel of his grace; and the value of Christ's blessed work was brought to light; yet how much it was vitiated by what has been termed the "suckers" of Popery, those who have weighed the history must know. It is well known that the theology of justification, at the time of the Reformation, set forth God as an appealed Judge, and Christ as a Savior, in whose heart the love was. This was the extent to which it went, there was no thought of the presence on earth in person of God the Holy Ghost, consequent upon full and accomplished redemption, and Christ glorified as Man at the right hand of God.

In these latter times, God has, in infinite grace, again wrought, and the result of his sovereign goodness is the truth now clearly and plainly set forth, namely, that God the Holy Ghost, a divine Person, now has come down to dwell, whether in the believer's body individually, or in the whole house of God on earth; so that Christianity is characterized by His presence and indwelling. The scripture is plain and distinct as to this, so much so that it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). In setting forth it is thus described: "It is not a question of what he may be afterwards, or whether he is a sheep, or, so to speak, ἄνωτος; but even if God be working in him to lead him to Christ, he is not yet His in fact until he has His Spirit."

. . . "All men are Christ's in a certain sense; all His sheep are His own in another: but none can be said to be His when they have not His Spirit" (Letters of J. N. D.).

Now the first great truth which is presented by the blessed Lord in connection with the promised sending of the Comforter, is his own departure out of this world. What a thought for the heart -- the absence of Christ! The manner in which the blessed One speaks of it and refers to it, is worthy of our adoring contemplation. He was about to "depart out of this world to the Father"; again, "I go my way to him that sent me"; "I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." Think of all that these precious words bring before the soul as to the Father and the Son; and the infinite grace that gives us to be interested in His own glory, in His happiness, and in it, to find our own.

Alas, beloved reader, how little is it so! What a small thing it seems to say, "He is not here," and how well we all seem to get on without Him here, save, indeed, when some stormy wind or wild commotion shakes our earth-bound nest; then it may be in some poor sense, selfishness asserts itself in an expressed distress, not because He is not here, but because of the contrary winds and waves. But oh, that we might be conscious of the blank for His own sake! Then, and not till then, shall we enter into the greatness of His gift, sent by
Himself as the ascended, glorified Man.

Further, it is the sense of His absence here that induces in the heart the affectionate desire to know Him where He is, in His own proper glory, which can only be by the Holy Ghost sent by Him from the Father, as well the longing to be with Him, which may be at any moment by His coming again to take us to Himself, or by our departing and being with Christ, which is far better. In this longing, which has Christ for its motive and object, we see the reflection of that desire of His own heart, thus so tenderly expressed, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). Thus then we see how that the absence of our blessed Lord from this world is presented in the forefront of our subject. There are three points in which this expediency of His going away will appear to us.

First: It was only by the Holy Ghost they could know about, and have communion with Him in the heavenly glory He was going into. I need not say that it was only by the Holy Ghost they could be united to Him in heaven; but that I do not treat of here, as it does not form the subject of John’s writings; it is, as we know, fully unfolded and applied in those of Paul.

Now this is a truth of the deepest moment for the heart sensible of the absence here of its beloved Lord. Its path here is one of increasing retirement and isolation because He is not here, not that it would be inactive in His interests, for they, in truth, now constitute the one object of the life of strangership where He is not; Himself in heaven, His interests on earth.

Next, the expediency of His departing is set forth in the fact that they should have on earth God the Holy Ghost, both in and with them; thereby the testimony of Christ’s deep affection and love for His own would be maintained, and by the Holy Ghost all this would be both entered into and enjoyed. Moreover, the blessed Spirit dwelling in them would be the source and power of those divine and heavenly affections of which Christ Himself is the object.

Thirdly, by the Holy Ghost alone as the divine power, suited testimony would be given here on earth. This we know on the authority of the risen Lord Himself in these words, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Let us note this well, that a new power was to fill and energize the vessels of testimony, whether the testimony related to the earthly side of Christ’s glory, or whether it pertained to the heavenly glory, in which He, the blessed One, now is; of whatever character or nature the witness was, the power for rendering it should be the Holy Ghost in and with the vessel. The twelve were to testify of what they had seen of Jesus on earth, Paul was to witness of Him whom He had seen in heavenly glory. We may here well ask how far have we divinely taken in the immensity of this grace? The heavenly Savior and Lord is, alas, but little known as such. The drift of the present tide is this side of the cross and death of our precious Lord and Master; the Lord knows how little prepared any of us are for such words as these, “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2 Cor. 5:16). Oh that His own voice, in its mighty power by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, might be heard clearly in all our souls, saying as it were to all of us, “Let us go over to the other side,” and then assuredly, like the people in John 6, we shall find Him in true heavenly order.

There is one other point of real comfort in connection with the presence of the Comforter consequent upon the absence of Christ. It is striking how, in the Gospel of John, the personality of the blessed Spirit is brought out, when the absence of Jesus is fully announced by the blessed Lord Himself. He is set forth rather as power in the early chapters, but in the last chapters He is spoken of as a divine Person throughout, He is the Paraclete (Παρακλητός), the Comforter.

This term, Paraclete, occurs five times in the New Testament; four of these are in the Gospel of John, and applied to the blessed Spirit; once we find it in the Epistle of John (1 John 2), and there it is applied to Christ, as we know Advocate there is Paraclete.

All this is most interesting to the heart, as bringing before us in a very distinct and striking way, His personality. Oh that our hearts may more sensibly appreciate the companionship of such a heavenly Guide, and rejoice in such comfort as He brings! Further, this blessed Person is found abundantly set forth as such in the Acts, called those of the apostles, but in reality of the Holy Ghost; there we see Him ever in personality, supernatural, supreme, directing, controlling the servants of Christ in everything, thus establishing, in part, the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in John 14, “When he the Spirit of truth is come.” Some at least, who read this, will note what force His personality derives from the expression “he” not it: in the language of revelation εἷος (he).

It is not possible to over-rate, at the present moment the value and importance of this great truth; the presence here on earth of a divine Person, sent from Christ in His own proper glory in heaven; this, along with accomplished redemption and the coming of the Lord, form the great distinguishing present characteristic of Christianity, and its specific future as well. It is no question of acquirement of knowledge in any sense, but the heavenly position and power of the Christian; and Christianity cannot be apprehended, or entered into in faith where this great truth has not its place; and I judge that, at the present moment, there is a tendency to let it slip, and thus to drop down to an order other than what is heavenly, an order which does not “go beyond earthly things, though earthly things with God -- the desert now [not Canaan], and the desert to blossom as a rose, but not Canaan.” Surely the Lord would have all our hearts exercised before Him as to this, that the heavenly Comforter might conduct our souls in faith to that blest place where Jesus is, fill and satisfy them.
with Him who is there, so as to detain our affections in that scene itself, and enable us in this world where Jesus is not, without effort of any kind, without a gloomy or sad face, but simply and naturally, in heavenly brightness, to reflect its light on all the darkness and dreariness around.

**The Rejected Man**

1 Chronicles 12

Among those who were gathered to David at Ziklag were characters full of deep instruction for present times. The center of that despised company, and the light and beauty of that exiled spot, the *rejected man* of that day, beautiful in appearance yet contemned, was a type of that blessed living One on high, who is the rejected Man of this day of boasted appearance yet contemned, was a type of that blessed living One on high, who is the rejected Man of this day of boasted resources and might, the motto of which is, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” The first thought therefore that presents itself, as we meditate over this scripture, is concerning a truth now well-nigh practically obsolete, namely, a rejected Lord! Alas, how little thought of, even! And as to the few who once owned it, or it may be now doctrinally own it, what are they corporately and individually, with some bright exceptions, but a testimony to how little it formed them?

Now with regard to these Gadites, and men of Issachar, it is interesting and blessed to see that the combination of their characteristics supplies us with an example of that state of soul in the saints now, which alone can act suitably to our Lord Jesus Christ in the day of His rejection.

The first notable feature in the sons of Gad is that they were a separated company, they had gone out, not come in; how important to see that this is the very responsibility of the saint to-day, in order to his being a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use. (Cp.1 Chron. 12:8 with 2 Tim. 2:21.) May the Lord give us understanding to see that communion is a greater thing in His eyes than usefulness, and that communion is the alone divine spring of all usefulness and service suitable to God. How blessed, how pleasing to Him to find a separated company like the sons of Gad, or a sanctified vessel, whose purest joy and deepest delight is suitability to His Person, to Himself. Then further, it is said of these separated sons of Gad, that they were men of might, men of war; they could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains. How blessed to see that in their separation was found strength, courage, skill, boldness, alacrity; these are the qualities of a separated heart to Christ, and His Person is worthy of them all.

But further, how solemn to observe that ere any of these qualities are found in exercise, Jordan must be crossed, and that when it had overflowed all its banks (v. 15); so that these sons of Gad, separated unto David, filled with strength, courage, skill, boldness, and alacrity, must pass, as it were, through death, ere they could serve. And beloved reader, is it not so to-day? “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” In very truth, herein is that which gives scope for all true devotedness to the Lord, death must be known practically as passed and carried by us (see 2 Cor. 4:10). And so it has ever been, whether in type in other days, or in the power of the Holy Ghost in life and reality today -- death in the power of life is the secret of all true following of Christ, as well as the secret of all true acting for Christ. Elisha’s newly acquired mantle of power, received from the One to whom he separated himself (see 2 Kings 2:2-14), leads him, ere he uses it, to the same spot as these lion-faced sons of Gad. Oh how deeply solemn and yet how true! May the saints be more really impressed with the reality of it! How deeply solemn and yet how true! May the saints be more really impressed with the reality of it! Jordan alone could open the door for me to reach my Lord in His separated sphere in heaven; Jordan alone can open the door for me to follow Him in suitability to His rejection on earth; and Jordan alone can give to those qualities before spoken of, that subduedness and mellowness so in keeping with the vessels of the Christ, devoted to Him in every turn of the heart, but efficient for Him as death in the power of life is working in them.

Lastly, it will be found that what characterized the men of Issachar, marks the saint of to-day, according to whether he is a son of Gad or not; that is to say, if you are not a son of Gad, you cannot be a man of Issachar; if you are not separated to David, with the qualities of such, but accepting Jordan, *when its banks were overflowed, too*, as the only path wherein to follow David, you cannot have “understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.” And so it is true now, that no one can know the Lord’s mind as to the saints, who is not suitable to the true David. What can be more excellent, first Christ, then His own, and the only way to know the mind of our Lord about His interests on earth is to be truly devoted to Himself, in communion with Him, and walking in His path, as we follow on through the desert of this world.

Thus it is evident that nothing can please the Lord in this the day of His rejection and shame among men, but a remnant wholly separated to Himself; and because so, empowered, in communion with Him by the Holy Ghost -- their alone strength, courage, skill, boldness, and alacrity -- to walk His path down here, accepting death, *His death*, as the only door out of all visible things, to Himself, whether for rest and enjoyment with Him on high, or for true-hearted following below. May the Lord, in rich grace, find and call out such a company in these days.

**“Not Here” . . . “Taken Up”**

Matthew 28:6; Acts 1:2

The above great realities are the truths to which the Holy Ghost would give special prominence in a day like this. The Christ is hidden in the heavens; His work finished and completed; the earth, the scene of His rejection and murder, inhabited by the descendants and generation of those who cast Him out; the course of the age all downward in its ripening progress for judgment. To the faith and affection of the new man the words of the angel are most significant, for they close for it the scene here; not only is all the bad under judgment in
Adam, but all that was beautiful on earth has terminated in His death, whose life was taken from the earth.

The more I meditate on this the more impressed I am with our general insensibility. Oh! how little it seems to affect any of us that “He is not here.” If we were under the power of this stupendous reality, it would operate upon us, as it seems to me, in a two-fold way, namely:

First, it would affect us in the place where He was, but is not. The scene of His rejection and refusal could never be a home of rest to us; His absence leaves a blank in this world for the heart that knows Him. The generation of His murderers are in power, and another is on the throne of this world. True; we are here, though He is not; still, let it never be forgotten that we are here as sent by Him, and from Him, and for Him. “As my Father hath sent me even so send I you.”

Secondly, it would affect the place in respect of us; its brightest scenes and days would be clouded and tarnished by the absence of our Lord.

Alas! how little it is so; and yet how well we understand it in our path and history below! How well we can enter into the blank and desolation which the heart is made conscious of in the brightest day on earth, if we have lost from the heart a beloved object -- what is it all to us? Can any alleviation be found in the place where our Savior is not?

May the Lord make His absence such a reality to His beloved people that nothing can comfort their hearts save the presence of the Holy Ghost, whose blessed mission it is to testify of Christ, the glorified One. It is this truth which gives tone and character to the true path and witness of the saint to-day; in the absence of His Lord, and in the dark night of this world, he seeks to pass on without an interest here save Christ’s. What part can such an one take in the projects and schemes, the policies or politics of the age? No citizen of the world is he, but a stranger here -- ready, it is true, to be used by all; but absolutely refusing to be made part of the order of things. Alas, alas! how sorrowfully evident it is on every side that this peculiar and separate path is either lost sight of or abandoned by the saints to-day; the Demas spirit rules with an iron sway, and increasingly so. Hearts refuse and resent the truths which spoil their hopes and projects here below, which are now, as it was in another day, advantages and rest this side Jordan. (See Num. 32:1-5.)

The second scripture of our subject is that which inaugurates and endears our new home to us. “He was taken up.” This assures me where He is, as the other tells me where He is not. Heaven is now His home, and for us, His people of to-day, distracted and diverted on every side. Lord, close our eyes and ears to things and sounds where Thou art not, and open and fix them on Thyself where thou art, for Thy name’s sake.

The Position and Ways of the Separated Ones

I have made a distinction between the position and path of separation, and I believe rightly; and I am confirmed in this by observation, for I see clearly at this moment that many “take the ground,” as it is called, who have no sense whatever, nor have they been, in ever so little a degree, exercised in the solemn consequences of it, or of that which may be called the path and ways of separated people; nor is this surprising, when we remember with sorrow that there are those who teach and lead others, who have never as yet even allowed that a path and ways practically of distinct separateness are the inevitable consequences of the position. The wise of the enemy at the present time seems to be in blinding the eyes of saints so effectually as to render them obtuse to a “manner of life” suitable to what the apostle calls “my doctrine.” Now, I believe it is only due to the Lord, and the interests of His blessed testimony, fully to admit the possibility in many instances of an uneven pressing of the “manner of life,” and by this I mean that it may be there has not been an equal prominence given to the producing power, namely, “my doctrine.” I am also free to own that perhaps the state and condition of souls has not been enough taken account of, and that in every case it must be the heart before the feet; this must be increasingly felt to be a point of the deepest moment, yet fully admitting all that might be demanded on these heads, it is now very manifest that there are those whose objections and refusal of the path and ways of separation spring from a source and origin far deeper than that recited. For example, when the habits and principles of the world are appealed to as the guide and director of those who have, professedly at least, taken an outside position, when it is said that we must order our homes and families according to our station in life, that we must dress, for example, according to our position in society, is it not evident that the “manner of
life” is rudely severed from “my doctrine”?

Now, it is of no use to urge a general inconsistency -- I am willing sorrowfully to admit this; but the sad part in reality is an avowed principle of worldliness which is fast making those who contend for it, while ecclesiastically holding on by the position of separation, a reproach and a by-word; and when I say a principle of worldliness, I mean a line of conduct drawn from the spirit and ways of this age, instead of that flowing from the position of full and complete blessedness in which the grace of God has set us.

It does often seem to one as if the cross in its breadth and magnitude was not apprehended. It is boasted in, and truly, as the ground of forgiveness; but how little is it seen as the end of man and of the world morally before God. How little is it looked at as that “whereby the world is crucified to me, and I to the world”!

If, as a saint now, I am truly laid hold upon by Christ, what is my position? Do I not date the birth of my new history from the risen One? Am I not part of the “much fruit” which results from the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying? Am I not united to Christ, the glorified Man? Is not all this a great fact which faith accepts to-day? But if so, are there no ways, habits of life, practice suitable thereto?

If it be pressed that because “our citizenship is in the heavens,” it is not here, but that on the contrary, pilgrim ways and manners, unworldliness in spirit and in fact should mark all our relationships on earth; are we to be held up as extreme persons? Alas! for that testimony which would amount to little better than a correct creed in boasting of Paul’s doctrine, while adopting the world’s spirit, ways, and habits in the manner of life.

It is not attempted to be denied that good cause may have been given by some in their ignorance and indiscretion to fear the introduction of visionary and imaginative notions laying hold, in fanciful power, upon morbid minds, and thus really injuring the truth of God; yet this is very different from the decided opposition to every kind of practical separation now offered by those who, on the contrary, maintain as a principle that it is the duty of every Christian to keep their worldly status, and to make it the guide of their ways and habits of life. All who plead for heavenly-mindedness and unworldliness in this respect being branded by some as ascetic, by others as transcendental; while the true cause of the dislike is, it is feared, to be found in the fact that such are determined to keep the world, and that a species of antinomianism is fast laying hold of souls, under the wings of which credit for a correct ecclesiastical position is both claimed and enjoyed, while all that surrounded those so claiming it, in their previous life and associations, are not only maintained, but contended for and justified as suitable to their class and rank and the requirements of the so-called proprieties of the age.

Now, it is fully admitted that there are differences of relationship, or our natural relationships in the world: there are husband and wife, parent and child, servant and master, and these are all God-ordered and to be divinely maintained by the saints. No question is raised as to the continuance of these relationships, nor can they be done violence to without the condemnation of the word of the Lord; the absence of natural affection is one of the marks of the last days, and any who manifest it are ungodly and unspiritual. But this is not the real question, but the motive and directing power in which they are to be maintained; and he who, although strenuously advocating orthodoxy, imports into his responsibilities, in respect of such relationships, either the spirit or ways of the age, is a worldling at heart. The Lord Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified One, is the only true wisdom, motive, and power of the saint, for these as for all else. In Him the saint of today is “a new creation,” and “as many as shall walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”

May the Lord open the eyes of His saints to see the vastness of the field of blessing into which His grace has introduced them, that, as separated to God positionally, the character, ways, and habits of it practically may be recognized and joyfully adopted more and more amongst us, for His name’s sake.

The Great Supper and Discipleship

The contrast between the two great subjects of Luke 14, is both instructive and solemn. The great supper which grace provides, and to which the most outcast ones are welcome, is followed by a proclamation very momentous, as to what is involved in following Christ in this day of His rejection. For the first, there is no claim, exaction, or demand whatever: for the other all must be abandoned and forsaken absolutely. Let us inquire as to the differences so markedly presented here. The supper is grace, the provision of the blessed God according to the largeness and ability of His heart: not only so, but in its costly and precious providing, it is the expression of His nature, so that therein is unfolded His own satisfaction and delight as well as the surpassing blessedness of that scene where every heart is satisfied with that which it is the joy of God’s heart to provide. It would be impossible to conceive anything more wonderful than this, it over-reaches all our narrow and contracted thoughts of His grace, and it rebukes our natural conception and ideas of God Himself. The one whose ejaculation of “blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,” gave occasion to the blessed Lord to expound the supper, must have marveled at the magnificence of the scene described, compared with his own thoughts, but what is it to the soul now taught and led by the Holy Ghost to enter into it by faith? It never can be too earnestly insisted upon that it is not a part of grace, but the whole which is unfolded in the supper; it is not the mere relief of a sin-stricken conscience or a jaded heart, but the rich resources of a sphere where want is unknown. Oh the blessedness and satisfaction of lying down here and surveying the vastness of the love, which not only entitles us to all it provides, but makes us welcome even to share the deep and blessed joys of God Himself; where He has His own festivities.

It is sorrowful to see how this magnificence of grace is received by man: he has no taste for God’s supper, the old wine of nature is preferred to the new wine of grace, and as the one is cultivated, the other is refused. It is true the refusal is not couched in offensive terms, it is polite and refined enough,
but it is notwithstanding a genuine and distinct refusal, and “I pray thee have me excused,” is a solemn commentary upon the word of God: “No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better.”

It is well to observe also, that not one of the good things of nature here named as reasons why the invited guests might fairly decline the invitation of grace, are bad things in themselves; they are not what are sometimes called unlawful things, on the contrary they are what may be termed good things, and herein lies the snare. Things bad and unlawful would be readily owned as such, and never for a moment placed in competition with grace, and its rich feast; but the sweets of nature, and its providing here named, are all the things which are lawfully open to man, but as the heart finds its treasure and object in them, Christ is superseded and set aside, there is no taste for the supper. May this have its weight with all our souls at this moment; the joys of nature have the tendency to distract the heart, and this distraction is the bane of real spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. To him whose heart is in the world, or whose exercises of soul to walk with God are not only on the surface, but scant and shallow, it may seem otherwise; but not to him whose eye is single, and whose heart above all desires to be in the secret of the Lord at this time. May the Lord teach His beloved people the surpassing delight and joy of this rich feast of His.

The next subject is discipleship; and here the contrast with the supper is immense; for clearly to follow Christ rejected, involves the breaking with everything; it is impossible to have two hearts, a heart for Christ, and for the world. The deplorable picture which is being presented at this moment is the effort of many to hold the world and Christ; may the Lord in His great grace open eyes to see the impossibility of it! Alas, discipleship as here unfolded is old-fashioned and out of date, and those who seek to follow in this path are reviled and aspersed by the half hearted and the worldling. The consecrating principle of grace spoken of here, salt, that holy separation unto God, alas! at what a discount it is, among the professed servants of Christ, and even among those who outwardly remain where it is evident their hearts and affections are not! What a description the Lord here gives of an unspiritual saint -- salt that has lost his savour, and which is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dung-hill, but men cast it out. May the Lord awaken up conscience among His people, that they may see the faith and claims of a rejected Lord and Christ amid the confusion and darkness of the present moment.

The Present not the Future Heaven

“An exceeding good land,” are the words wherewith the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, described the land of Canaan, amid the complaints and murmurs of their brethren; and who can deny their application to the land beyond Jordan -- the place of promise and rest for Jehovah’s chosen people? Yet not only did they bear testimony to the land, but, as regards the competency of Israel to take possession of it, this is their witness: “We are well able to overcome it”; and further, “if the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into the land and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Num. 13:30; 14:8). Now this Canaan was a type of the present not the future heaven -- a type of that place into which faith is conducted to-day, and where it finds all its rest, joys and satisfaction. True we are still, as to our natural life, in this world, and we are called to pass through it as strangers; the cloud and the manna defining our path as well as sustaining us in it. How blessed to think of this! If it were but adopted, how it would dispose of the many anxieties and cares which, alas! too often weigh down the heart.

But life in Canaan is not traversing the wilderness, however true and faithful we may be in it; neither is it the needful and salutary exercise of heart and lessons of the way.

Now as regards this land of promise, it is very instructive to see the manner of its description in the book of Deuteronomy, because it equally applies to that place above, where our Savior is, and where alone true rest and satisfaction can be found. It will be found, then, that the description is twofold: namely, in Deut. 8 it is described in its own essential excellencies, and they are of such an order as to place those brought into that land in a condition of absolute independence in the right and true sense of the term -- “without scarceness” and no lack of anything in it. Is it possible to overestimate or unduly to magnify the richness of such “an exceeding good land”? and may I ask, if Canaan, as an earthly rest and portion, was all that to Jehovah’s ancient people, is not heaven, the place “where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,” as rich a possession and as satisfying a rest for faith to-day? Is it not sorrowful to think that there are many hearts who are contented with leaving heaven as a reported region of future and postponed enjoyment? Consequently they never really retire from earth in heart or affection, and while never rising beyond the wilderness in experience, they never really possess faith or power to carry them even through it according to the mind and thoughts of God. Alas! that it should be so.

But we find that in chapter 11, this goodly land is described in its comparative and contrasted excellencies; in Egypt, anxiety and trouble were evinced around its river, the great source of fertility and refreshment; sowing and watering in the land of bondage, tell their own tale. In Canaan on the contrary, it was drinking water of the rain of heaven, being cared for by the Lord Himself, His eyes resting upon that contrary, it was drinking water of the rain of heaven, being cared for by the Lord Himself, His eyes resting upon that bright and blessed country from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year; and such, though in a far more perfect way, is that place into which the blessed Spirit leads faith in conscious realization and enjoyment to-day. Who can fully or adequately portray the light and glory of that scene where Christ is? It is from thence comes all true energy and divine power to surmount the various hindrances in our way; we are never really true to our calling in the wilderness, until we have found a home in heaven, and from thence come back, as it were, to be practically heavenly strangers in a land that is not ours.

Now, when we go the book of Numbers, to where we find Israel on the eve of leaving the wilderness, and entering this goodly land, we are met with one or two striking and solemn facts, which are not without a significant voice for us to-day. In Num. 13 is recorded the mission of the twelve spies and the
searching of the land -- they were sent, they went up, and searched the land, and this is their report: “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and with honey, and this is the fruit of it” -- exhibiting at the same time a branch with one cluster of grapes, borne between two upon a staff, as well as pomegranates and figs. What could have been more convincing or assuring? Yet in the face of all this, arises the wildest outburst of unbelief on the part of ten of these spies, ending with their evil report of the land, and the most solemn and rebellious murmuring of Israel. Observe, there was no question as to the beauty and fertility of the land in itself; still the purport of their witness and report, save Joshua and Caleb, was to deter the people from going up and possessing it. And has not this a solemn counterpart in the history of many at the present time? Verily the history of the ten spies is being repeated in this day; the truth as to the Christian’s heavenly position and relationship is admitted, because it is impossible honestly to deny it; but the unbelief which marked the spies, is as prevalent to-day, and as they sought to hinder Israel by mapping out their evil report, so has it been attempted in this day to deter souls from entering in and spiritually possessing what divine goodness and grace has made theirs. It is striking to see how set against the mind of God at any given moment, the enemy is; in the wilderness, while on the very borders of Canaan, he will have tools for his object in the ten spies, while on the other side of Jordan, and in the land, he will seek to accomplish the same purpose and present the same testimony in the two-and-a-half tribes. May the Lord waken up His saints to the design of the enemy, and, in His grace, preserve us not only from being deceived and robbed of our blessing, but also from becoming tools of the enemy for this end.

It is very cheering to see in the end of this record of the searching of the land, how the faithful, in such a moment, will rise to the height of their calling and openly assert it, and this was the case with Joshua and Caleb in their day; and beautiful was their testimony. It amounted to this: Jehovah’s heart and hand were enough to lead His people into the land of His choice for them, and so it is with faith now. Unbelief may minutely portray its evil report by mapping out the difficulties and dangers, but the Joshuas and Caleb’s of to-day will be only the more manifested as each such crisis declares itself. May the Lord grant to all His beloved saints more grace and faith, boldly and fearlessly to put the soles of their feet upon what He has so graciously made ours -- may no evil report of the land, however speciously given, deter them from practically going up; and may there be raised up many true-hearted ones who will stand up earnestly and faithfully at this time, for the true calling and testimony of the saints, and by their practical heavenly ways, as well as by their lips and pens, encourage the hearts of their brethren in this day of trial and difficulty.

The disciples were also there, but they could not keep awake in the presence of His glory, any more than they could afterwards in the presence of His sufferings. That is what man is, and what people want to exalt and put on a pedestal to-day. But when they were awake they saw His glory, and then Peter
makes this proposition, the object of which was to put the Lord, Moses, and Elias all on an equality one with another. He says, “Lord, it is good for us to be here: let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Let us have this thing perpetuated in this orderly kind of way. Now mark what comes.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. The cloud was the place of the divine presence, the shekinah, or cloud of glory. It was a bright cloud, and there is no brightness except up there. We get the mist here, you must go up there to get the bright cloud -- and, with all holy reverence I say it, a bright voice came out of that bright cloud; and a blessed voice it was, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” What is the meaning of that? Just exactly what the disciples found afterwards when the voice was past, when the affirmation of the Father was gone, telling of His heart’s desire to have that Son of His bosom supreme. There could be no equality with Him on that ground. He must be first and last, everything -- supreme for time and for eternity, “all things,” and that voice that vindicated the right of Jesus to be first, and to be everything, when past, was found true. They proved what the voice affirmed. “When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only” -- Jesus only, that is heaven. Now I think there is no subject, perhaps, that has been more fancifully dealt with, and upon which the imagination has been allowed to play with greater freedom, than the subject of heaven. And I will tell you more -- that some of the late ideas and notions on this subject have turned people away from the truth, and turned them away to what I call a specious, wretched kind of materialism which lowers the truth, and brings it down from its own blessed speciality, and peculiarity, and from its own proper glory -- and all this has greatly arisen from these fanciful ideas to which I have referred. People have allowed their minds to run on in connection with heaven, and the real meaning of what the enemy is about in all this, the object he has before him, is to make the things down here, which are things of sight and sense, that pertain to this life -- his object I say is positively to turn them over, and to give them a sort of exaltation, and thus to level them up; and on the other hand, at the same time, to level the heavenly things down. You never see leveling up, but you see leveling down in proportion. Be assured, as you level up the things of this world, and our life here and all that pertains to it; in proportion as you cry them up, so you correspondingly degrade and bring down the heavenly. And all these ideas about heaven, and pictures of heaven, which are indulged in, even by some in preaching, are simply the outcome of a diseased imagination, which is allowed to run riot in picturing heaven after a material fashion.

What I want you to see, the first thing here, and that which is very comforting to one’s own soul, is, that here we get a picture of heaven, here I find what heaven really is, and what I believe the heart that really longs for it delights in, and that is, it is “Jesus only.” That is heaven, Jesus only. And I will tell you more than that, beloved brethren, the comfort of it to the heart that knows and tastes its preciousness, and that is to hear Him praised, and praised, and praised! That is heaven. You must be conscious of this, that people -- and it may be the case with some here tonight -- have other thoughts about heaven, I know very well the way people talk about it. They have lost beloved ones on earth, they will meet them in heaven. Their heaven will be a resumption of old ties. All material -- that is not the heaven of scripture. I do not mean to say for a moment but that all belonging to Him will be there in supreme blessedness. But do not tell me there is any other object but Jesus only. Mark the jealousy of the Father’s heart to make the Son in that scene supreme. “This is my beloved Son -- hear ye him.” The Lord, in His infinite grace, enable us not only to enter into that now, but may we, in spiritual power, let our hearts go out in all its present blessedness.

Some weeks ago a friend staying at my house, had a bird, and she had a thought that this bird long enough in captivity, would not desire to leave, so she opened the cage and let it out in the open air. Well, this bird had wings on it all the time it was in captivity, but could not use them because confined by the cage, but as soon as ever it was out of the cage, and in the open air, it began to use its wings, and did so with effect, and soon flew away, and who would blame the poor creature that it did so? It found out it had wings that would carry it out of the reach of all who would retain it here, and it used its wings. And there is not a Christian here tonight who has not wings: why are we not all using them? Why, because we have got some cage around us. If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit of God, and you cannot have less than the Spirit of God in its fulness. A Christian is a person who, having the forgiveness of sins through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, is sealed with His Spirit. If you say a Christian has the forgiveness of sins, but leave out the fact that he is sealed by the Holy Spirit, you leave out Christianity. He is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is the wings, and the Spirit would carry you to heaven now, in affection and faith to the place where Jesus is, and carry out the Father’s desire about Jesus, and make Him everything to you. And that is what heaven is now, and oh, do not say it is a very fanciful idea, and that we cannot be in the enjoyment of that now. Did you never hear of a person being in heart where not in body? A man crosses the Atlantic, or goes to the Antipodes, and leaves wife, and children, relations, and friends behind, and is not that man when he reaches the shores of America or New Zealand, in heart and affection still in England? And if that is true down here, how much more true is it where the Spirit of God carries your heart up to Christ. You have not got the Holy Spirit to carry your heart and affections to your natural relations. But He does carry you in faith, and affection, and heart, to the place where Jesus is; and He makes everything of that blessed One, and “Jesus only” is before your soul, and you love to live there. I remember when I first went to Yorkshire, I was greatly interested in watching the coal mining on such an extensive scale, and I felt the truth very much of what I have been speaking about, when I saw the men go down in the cage
to bring up the coal, and when I saw these men drawn up again, knew that they had a home and a circle above that they loved so well -- did they not leave their hearts behind them when they went down into the coal mine? And so exactly is it as to what I am bringing before you now. The Spirit of God carries the affections of the new man, and sets them on Him who is the spring and delight of those affections after He has created them. Then you find “Jesus only” fills every eye there; and He only satisfies. But you should continue there, and then you will know what heaven is. And be assured you are not fit to live here till you go there. No one is fit to live in this world till he has crossed over, until he has been lifted up in heart and spirit to be where Christ is. Thus this is a beautiful picture of that place where “Jesus only” is before every one. Oh, that the Lord, in His grace, may give us to know what this is! If we would only use our wings, we might.

It is the cage, some of us get, that keeps us from it. Only get the door open, break open the cage, and what a different being you would be. Depend upon it, it is the cage that keeps you. Just remember what the writer of the old hymn felt when he wrote, --

“See how we grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys,
Our souls, how heavily they go, to reach eternal joys.”

And there is an immense deal of truth in it; but it is the cage that keeps us down. I never saw a person yet who had enjoyed the smallest taste of it, if he could not gratify it, but was depressed. Do you say you do not know what it is? That is because you are not gratifying your heart and your new affections. Here you are, and you have got new tastes, and you are positively not gratifying them. And that is where so many of us are. They are unsatisfied, and you can see it in their faces. Hence some of them take up the Lord’s work in hope of reaching this satisfaction. But this avails not. They will leave the mark of dissatisfaction on their work.

Now observe, when they leave the mount and come down to the plain, what do they find? A very solemn thing -- they find the devil’s work, and his confusion and disorder; affliction, the result of his hatred of God and man, they find a most pitiful and touching case. Here was a poor father with a lunatic child, and he comes to the Lord’s disciples, and beseeches them to free him from this terrible calamity. They had the power to do so. We see in chapter 10 Jesus had given them the power; and they might have said, Oh, yes, we have the power; then the father says, Do free me from this pressure; yet they could not do it. Then observe he comes to the blessed Lord Himself and says, “Lord, have mercy on my son,” &c. And Jesus said -- and oh! what a word -- in tones so tender, so gracious, and gentle, “Bring him hither to me.” Thank God! what comfort to the heart, “Bring him to me.”

Now I want to apply this. You may not have got a trouble so heavy as that -- you may not have a lunatic child, but you have some trouble, the result of the devil’s confusion, and what do the Lord’s people do in these circumstances? It is a sad thing to see the resources the saints turn to when difficulties arise. What a mournful thing to contemplate the ways of God’s people! When pressure or difficulty come upon them they are thoroughly perplexed; they run to this person and that, and what to find? Not any good, just distraction, and just unsatisfaction, and the place where they think most to get help and comfort is often the place where they least find it, and they have to go away vexed and disappointed.

What does Jesus say? “Bring him to me.” Have you been to the Lord with your trouble or your difficulty or your affliction? Have you done like John the Baptist’s disciples? When their master was roughly and rudely murdered they took up the body and buried it, but it was just a lifeless body, and their burying it did not calm their broken hearts, but they went and told Jesus. Do you know what it is to do that? Down here in the plain the devil makes all sorts of confusion, and turns things upside down for us, but the whole question is, Have you been to Jesus about it? He says, “Bring him to Me.” The church may fail, do you think He has failed? Do we say, “Is it not all gone?” I tell you, we are all gone if we say so. The disciples have failed, has He failed? That is just the thing that comes out here, “Bring him to me.” And the father brought his child, and again we get the most touching proof of His sufficiency. Oh, how blessed, and what a comfort to see this! He likes us to bring our troubles to Him. Oh if we could only believe how His sufficiency waits upon our every need! Are you in the most pressing exigency, have you a sick child? “Bring him to me.”

He says, as it were, Have you some trouble on your heart, some pressure on your spirit. “Bring it to me.” I am the One to come to when all else is broken up, I am unchanged. That is the way He gives us to get the comfort. He is not changed in the least, the same in glory that He was down here.

Now notice when this child was healed, the disciples say, and well they might, Why could not we cast him out? And mark -- and I would to God we might all learn from this -- they come to Jesus; there is something very noble in the disciples in this matter. They had the sense, they could not do it, and they would like to know why? Now, dear brethren, do not you think we ought to say to ourselves, when placed in circumstances like this, how did I get into this strait, how was it I did not see the path through this labyrinth? Why in that difficulty -- why, Master, could I not meet it? We have got the power by the Spirit, and He is here to guide into all truth; but some confusion of the devil has tripped us up. Why is this? The disciples say, Why could not we? He never says, Because you have not power. He says, Because of your unbelief; because you have not faith. And then He mentions a grand characteristic of faith.

“If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed,” &c. If you had the smallest confidence in God, that is, if you had faith at all; not strong faith. I think there is a great deal of confusion introduced by the discussion about faith. If you had faith at all you would be able to do things truly impossible to nature. You might say to this mountain, &c., and nothing would be able to stand against you. But He says further, and this is the thing that ought to come home to us, “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” Thus you see it is not only a question of power, as some of our dear friends would make us believe. They tell us it is all a question of
standing, and all a question of position; there is nothing of that here. It is prayer and fasting wanted, the moral state is in question. And beloved friends, that is so important for us in meeting the devil’s confusion, and what he works. If you have moral condition, or prayer and fasting, that is dependence, and that you do not minister to nature in its resources, you cut that off, then you refuse nature as an adjunct or help if you fast. I do not for a moment mean to say that fasting is not scriptural, that abstinence from food was not what was meant fast. I do not for a moment mean to say that fasting is not.

And is not this a solemn thing for us in connection with our difficulties, our church troubles, and our domestic troubles, and our troubles generally here in this world? How our moral state is revealed thereby! Is it not a sad revelation of our moral state that when the devil creates confusion in the church there is no power to meet it, and people are stranded in a moment? While all is going on smoothly they can swim on as easily as possible, but the test comes, and they are nowhere, and why? The moral state -- lack of prayer and fasting. May the Lord by His Spirit teach us this. They had the power, but could not use it; and they were not able to use it because of their moral condition.

The third scene is the city. And it is a very interesting point we get at the end of this chapter, and that it should have taken place at Capernaum of all places. It was the city of exalted privileges, the place most of all expressive of great glory. A city is the result of man’s wisdom, and skill, and power. It sets forth man and his glory, all that he is able to collect together.

That made it so solemn for the bride in Canticles to be found in the city. What business had she there? The bride in the city! Was it not right she should lose her veil? She had got into man’s circumstances. There are two things here. First the Lord announces His death. Now I am very anxious we should take this in, because there has been a great deal of gratuitous affirmation about what the disciples knew and expected, and what the saints of old time looked forward to; but what did the Lord say here? He announced His death as a martyr, “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.” Some people would fain persuade us because they were sorry they entered into the thought of his death as a sacrifice for sin. They were exceeding sorry, a very strong word, but why? I never understood the meaning of this passage till I heard a beloved servant of God, many years ago now, explain it; and he used this expression, he said, “it was the death of the heir.” That is to say, He was the link as the heir to all the earthly promises they were looking for, and all the earthly inheritance, and all their hopes in this world, and His death put an end to all. Oh, but people say, how the disciples looked into His death. It was the very thing they stumbled at. Just as in Luke 24 the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, when the Lord met them, and asked them why they were sad. They spoke to Him of his death, and added, “We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” His death was the overthrow of everything in their minds.

That is how people try to level up and down. What in reality was in their minds? Earthly things; the very thing that turned them all aside; they were looking for something here: and there are people to-day looking for something here, and it is a thousand times worse for people to-day in the light of Christianity, for those who profess to have been brought into the fulness of the light of the truth to be looking for things on earth, and yet that is what diverts people, and that destroys the principle of walking in the truth of the heavenly things.

The disciples were full of earthly things; and therefore the death of the heir, the One that linked them with all the promises down here, with all that their hearts were set on -- for Him to be slain was intolerable to them. But all our blessings begin with the Son of man lifted up. They begin in connection with the cross. Hence in John 3, you have the earthly and heavenly things contrasted -- when do the latter begin? With the Son of man lifted up. Here there was an instance of what I have referred to, how occupation with earthly things turns us away from the heavenly. They were looking for Christ, the heir to all the promises to David and to Israel to set up the kingdom in this world; and hence, as these hopes were blighted, they were exceeding sorry. And we know as a matter of fact, for the Lord says so, and He say’s it, too, in the Gospel of John, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now,” &c.

The last point is with Jesus at Capernaum. And I touch on this just to bring out a fact of the deepest blessedness for us, viz., that in connection with the payment of the tribute money. “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, doth not your master pay tribute?” In other words, Is He a good Jew? Peter replies, Yes. When the Lord comes into the house, He anticipates Peter by saying, “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?” Peter replies, “Of strangers.” “Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.” They were the children of the great King of the temple. They were then to exact from strangers and not from children. “Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” “Lest we should offend them.” What a word this is from Him; see the graciousness of His heart. But again, “Give unto them for me and thee.” How blessed that He should associate His poor disciple with Himself in that act, but that is the kind of association which really takes the heart out of everything here.

For what matters it about things down here in this world if I am associated with Him in that way? You will find the
same principle brought out in Psa. 45, viz., that association with Him breaks off other associations -- hence He says there (vv. 10, 11), “Hearken, O daughter,” &c. Association with the King breaks off the other -- makes you forget the thing nearest to you. It is a hard thing for some people to forget their own people and their father’s house.

Now I commend these three points to you, and may God give us in His grace to know what the joys of heaven are now. What it is to be brought up to the hill-top for we must be brought up there to get them. Jesus brought them up. Just as in Luke 24, they were led out. You must go up for it, not be sitting down here. He brought them up to the mountain, and they found He was everything up there. He was supreme in the Father’s affections, in the Father’s heart; there is no one to Him like His Son. “This is my beloved Son,” and the Father adds, “Hear him.” Listen to His voice, fix your eye on Him, turn from everything else, and let it be “Jesus only.” Will you want your natural tastes there? Oh, no, it will be Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only!

But down here in this world we need to have prayer and fasting, moral condition to use the power He has given us. And what then shall we covet of the great world and its cities, and all the rest, if nourished with Christ Himself?

Oh, may God, by His Spirit, just imprint these great realities on all our souls, that thus we may rise up and go from this place to live from heaven down here. It is not a sort of materialistic heaven, nor a carnal heaven; but it is a sphere of unspeakable blessedness and delight, where God and the Lamb are the divine source of every joy and love.

“As in the Days of Her Youth”

Hosea 2:15

These are the touching words of the Jehovah of Israel by the mouth of His servant Hosea, describing the future state of the nation, the result of His faithful ways with them in crushing and alluring, then speaking to the heart in the wilderness, and from thence giving them vineyards and hope and song.

It is not without its deep interest to observe that the meaning of Hosea is salvation, thus bringing before us the deep, eternal thought of Jehovah’s heart for His poor and afflicted people.

Let us meditate a little on this and the voice it has for us in the moral and spiritual truths it records. Now redemption out of Egypt was the commencement of their history, as brought to God; on the shores of the Red Sea, which they passed over dry-shod, their first note of song was raised -- Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Aaron led that song in those first moments of victory and triumph; that song recorded the might and power and faithfulness of Jehovah. “Jehovah is my strength and song. He is become my salvation.”

He had secured their shelter on the night of the Passover: when He, as Judge, passed through the land of Egypt, in the habitations sprinkled with the blood of Jehovah’s appointed victim they were safe and secure; though they were still in Egypt’s territory, but yet safe and secure beneath the virtue of that blood which had, as it were, met all the holy, righteous claims of the Judge. But through the judgment waters of the Red Sea they passed out of Egypt for ever -- here it is change of place, a point of very especial moment to seize -- Jehovah, who had provided in the land of Egypt a shelter, at the Red Sea became their salvation; through its opened waters of judgment they pass out of Egypt’s territory, they are brought on to another ground altogether. Salvation ever means this in scripture -- as saved they sing. The sea, which opened to let them pass through dry shod, closed in upon their enemies and pursuers in all its strength, when the morning appeared, and swallowed them up, not one being left.

Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore; but they also saw that great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians, and they believed and feared and sang.

Now it is to this the words “As in the days of her youth” refer. It is worthy of note that this song celebrates Jehovah’s victory and glory, when they were in the result of it: it did not, save very indirectly, refer to themselves; true they were the subjects of Jehovah’s salvation, but they were not the subject of the song -- Jehovah, and He alone, was that. Thus it ever is, where the Victor fills the vision; and is He not worthy? Where can one be found who has such a claim upon the homage and worship, the adoration and praise of those whom He has for ever liberated and blest?

Now following this song of Ex. 15 intervenes a long and checkered history, the pages of which are filled with the record of this peoples departures and backslidings; very solemn are the words of prophetic warning spoken in Deut. 31:20 by Jehovah Himself:

For when I have brought them into the land, which I swore unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

Again,

This people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befal them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? and I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils that they shall have wrought, in that they are turned to other gods.

Then, following these words, are those of the song which Moses taught the children of Israel, in which the faithful, unchanging Jehovah is celebrated thus:

He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just, and right is he. It was none other than such as He who, in His faithfulness and truth, could bring back to Himself a rebellious and headstrong people.
Verily the gifts and calling of God are without change of mind on God’s part; the history of this people is the great evidence and proof of this, and so it will be in that coming day for them, when crushed and allured and broken in His love, from the place least expected, He will give the vineyards and the door of hope, and in the lovely words that head this paper, “She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth.”

This truth has its moral force and voice for us, in principle it is just the same: His faithfull grace brings us back to Him, if, like Israel, we have flitted and wandered away. As it was with Israel so it is with us, the valley of Achor is the door of hope.

May He who alone can teach us, lead our hearts into a right apprehension of His own rich and wonderful grace, for Christ’s sake.

"At The End of The Days"

Daniel 12:13

The closing days of another year are upon us, and that in the last moments of the history of the church on earth. One great event, which is our glad future and hope, would seal the doom for ever of thousands around us. Do we realize it? Are we ready for it? The old year is fast dying out, and will soon be numbered with the past. The rapid flight of time suggests {defective copy here} searchings for us all. For us who {defective copy} of God, the word is loud and clear, “It is high time to awake out of sleep.” Alas! how drowsy and insensible to the true state of things are so many of us; the condition of the church God and the world at large seems so little to affect us. Alas! what weakness and feebleness in the former, and what recklessness and wickedness in the latter. Let us awake and arise and shake ourselves from the dust.

The bold and daring rejection of the truth is one of those dials upon which we may read hour of the world’s age, and the lengthening shadows upon its face seem to intimate that the day is drawing towards a close. The most fitting words to describe the present moment are the heart-breaking and solemn utterance of the prophet: “For truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth”; and as the loyal and faithful heart enters into this, it responds with all affection to the call which reaches into its inmost depths: “But that which ye have, hold fast till I come.”

May the heart of all my readers respond to this, in ready affection and true-hearted devotion to our only Master and Lord.

Home after Labor

Lord Jesus, I would dwell in Thee,
    And nestle in Thy love;
Midst desert lands Thou leadest me,
    Whilst Thou art still above;
Though weaker than a bruised reed,
    Oft faint beyond a sigh,
Yet “Thou remainest,” still “the same,”
    Unchanged Thou’rt ever nigh.

My blessed Lord I’d hear Thy words,
    Thy heavenly voice so sweet,
When fever’d is the aching brow,
    And worn the toiling feet;
I’d rest with Thee in peace and sleep,
    In calmness I’d abide,
My head upon Thy bosom keep,
    Whilst watching by my side.

O Savior, Lord, what joy and rest,
    Shut in alone with Thee --
Shut out from all the din and strife,
    My Christ my all shall be.
Assured Thy love will perfect soon
    Thy work of grace alone,
Then oh! The pure, uncheckered joy
    Of sharing Thy blest home.
“With Christ in
Death and Resurrection”

No words can sufficiently express the momentous and solemn nature of this subject. The Lord helping me, I desire to set before my readers, all the fellow-members of His body, the nature of the position set forth by the words “With Christ in death and resurrection,” and the practice which flows from it. Oh! for a renewed and deepening sense of the enormous importance of not overlooking or underrating the latter. It would be a fearful triumph of the enemy if the saints of God were to receive the truth only in terms. If it were possible to adopt the loftiest and highest expressions of truth without the corresponding displacement of all that belongs to the first man, which is the divine result; remembering that the characteristic mark of the last days is the having a form of piety, but denying the power of it. (See 2 Tim. 3:5, 6.) It is well we should jealously watch all the inroads of the enemy by which he might stealthily set aside the truth.

First, then, let us inquire into the meaning of the expression, “With Christ in death.” What does it imply? Is it not clearly such an association with Christ in His death as closes for ever before God, judicially, our previous history as connected with Adam fallen? The true condition of every believer, that which from the very starting point this doctrine teaches, is the utter judgment of the old man; the sentence of death passed upon it, and condemnation altogether. This was accomplished in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one true, spotless Man. There is no recognition of the flesh as to allowance or acceptance of it. I trust my beloved brethren will allow me in all affection to italicize the word association, when I say, With Christ in death, I mean that I am associated with Him in death. Union with Christ was impossible until He had died, risen again, and ascended into glory. Union with Christ in incarnation is a solemn denial of His own words (see John 12:24), and is the root of popery and its adjuncts. Association and identification are not the same as union. A Christian is indeed united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, but it is to Christ who has died, is risen again, and has gone into glory. Nothing can be more important in its place than a distinct and definite apprehension of this great reality. Not only has Christ died for us, but we have died with Him. Do we see how this cuts at the root of everything? What can a dead man seek? This question is suggested by the great fact I am pressing; everything that man in the flesh had to reckon with God about, but which he never could have settled, has all been disposed of between God and Christ. To nature and to common-sense the thing is impossible, unreasonable, absurd. But to faith not only is it most blessedly true, but the believer can say that he has died, and is past the judgment, so that there is naught against him, but that he is alive again for evermore in a life which death cannot touch, which knows no grave, is beyond judgment, yea, even in which judgment is turned into victory.

Further, as regards this life, nothing can be more blessed than to see how it has objects and motives entirely its own. This is what may be called the positive side of the subject, and on this we may dwell a little further in detail another time. Just now I press Christ’s death, and the association of the Christian with Him in death, and the value of that association not to get judicially clear from all the penalties resting upon man as a creature, and as a descendant of Adam, though, without doubt, in that light all judgment is past, and none remains; but what is blessed is the value of that association as setting one free from self and the world so that one can brightly and happily say, “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.” I close our present meditation with the words of another, which I desire most fully to adopt as my own: “The way that Christ’s death is made of little effect by most Christians; the way that they have Judaized it out of its eternal value and the estimate heaven forms of it, and deduced it down to be a part of a human system of their own, borrowed from the law of fallen humanity and the elements of the world, both of which marked Judaism, is a most solemn sin. The Colossians, who had been dead in their sins and in the circumcision of the flesh, that is, morally dead, are thus charged: ‘Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?’ They would sanction worldliness, and accredit their own flesh if they did so. And he adds, ‘Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.’ He has so appropriated all that I was as to bear the record of it in His own body. My soul knows those hands, those feet, that side, that forehead; but, blessed be God, I know them in Him who was dead, but is alive again. I know them in Him who shall reign for ever as
Beloved brethren, has God shown us these things? If He has, shall we not earnestly cry to Him, that this further grace may be given to all who own them as true, that they act in power upon us, and that we may find power to act on them?

The Importance and Solenity of Our Calling
Num. 32:1-33

I desire to bring before you on the one hand the intense solemnity, and on the other the great importance, of knowing what our true calling is. All depends on the standpoint from which we view things, as to the solution of the difficulties that arise, and this is of the deepest moment for each of us. It is often happens that we are, as it were, all adrift, and do not know how to solve them, or what to do. It is because of where we are standing at the time, because of the state of the soul, for we can never reach the true solution of these difficulties save as we are occupying our true position. It is not possible to know how to grapple with difficulties, nor how to find the way through the labyrinths, apart from the position in which we are standing at the moment. Balak was a shrewd man on his own ground when he changed Balaam’s place to get him to curse the children of Israel: there is a great principle in that. “Come,” he says, “I pray thee, unto another place . . . and curse me them from thence.” It was the most consummate piece of wickedness to curse the Lord’s people, and he saw how much depended on the standpoint from whence he looked at them. And we must be really holding things in faith with God, and looking at them from that standpoint to know how to act in relation to all that comes in our path. Mere credence will not do. Credence is not faith. Faith is that which acts as well as asserts the truth of a thing. It acts out practically, and puts into operation that which it accepts as of God. You cannot leave out that part, for if you are not maintaining in faith your true standing you will be simply and only holding a creed. Sooner or later you will find with regard to the questions which arise, you will be obliged to resort to what I have alluded to, as was the case with the two and a half tribes -- a thing exceedingly popular at the present moment, and which is supposed to be the only safeguard in the midst of confusion, and that is a confession of faith. But this is not the true standing. The true standing is the confession, and it is not only a confession of faith if in your true standing.

Look at the beginning, and you will see how it comes out. Further you will find we are all tested. And it does not follow, because we have, through God’s infinite grace, been preserved through one test, that we shall be necessarily preserved through another. Perhaps we have been rudely instructed as to this. We have found those who stood firmly through one test failing before another. And it is very important we should make up our minds to this, that all along the road, every step of the way, we shall find one series of tests after another. It will be all test throughout. And that is how God keeps alive a bright side in all the trouble, that is how He keeps alive the truth of His own testimony, and it is a great thing to keep that side in view. Sometimes we get too low down, and as we see the result of the sifting we wonder what God means by it. But God will sift, and why? Because the tendency of every one of us is to drop. Is it not so? I am afraid we have too good an opinion of ourselves. It does not follow because we have been kept so far that we shall not fall under another test.

God has committed to His people the most precious thing, and the tendency is to let it go; but it is revived through sifting. That is the meaning of the whole thing, and we ought to look at it so. What do we find? As a matter of fact there are places where everything goes on so quietly, and so peacefully. Yes; but there is a quietness in death, let us not forget that. The grave is a quiet place, the shroud is a quiet robe and that is positively what has been seen -- not life enough oftentimes to assert itself in the corruption. And then what does God do? He comes in with some test that brings everything unto its true position. It is not His doing, but He permits something to come up that manifests and brings out into the true light what would otherwise continue to lie concealed and be passed over under a veil. That is the history of the testimony in this world. What a tendency in God’s people to get away from the ways of God as revealed in His book! The principles of God are here, why should we be subjected to a different order of principles? What we have to learn is this, and it is a lesson of the deepest importance, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.” Very solemnly, very severely that lesson has had to be pressed upon us.

Now look at the beginning. Here is a start in what I call the departure from the true calling. At least it is so in a certain way, perhaps there are links farther back. Here we see it, as it were, full-blown in the two and a half tribes. Now a question arises, and I ask your special attention to it, a question of positively and practically taking possession of what God has given them. There are two things I do want the youngest believer to get hold of. People say God has given it to us. Yes; but have you taken it? Oh, yes; I see my title to it all very clear; but you have no enjoyment of any of it. I tell you what it is like, even a man who is the owner of the most lovely domain possible to conceive. That, he will say, all belongs to me, and he will show you with the greatest clearness that he has got his title to it; and there are the deeds all secure. But do you know he has never lived a day on the estate, never been to the castle, never walked the green sward of time beautiful lawns; he has never once settled down there; never taken into his view the beauty of its landscapes and the magnificence of all the scene -- he can only talk to you about his title. He has no sense of possession, not the least. He will talk to you from morning till night about his title-deeds. But the man who lives there can tell you about the thing itself and not the title merely. Oh! he says, it is a lovely spot. Will you only come and live with me in my beautiful place? It is the place he is thinking of now. He has got it. That is the difference between our title to the inheritance, and our having set foot upon it, having got it in conscious possession; and that is just what some would have us part with, and be content
with having the title. And suppose you talk about conscious possession, and conscious results, what is the answer? Take care, you are thinking about yourself. Though, for that matter, you may be thinking quite as much about yourself if talking only of your title. But here is a very serious question: how can I know the blessedness and the greatness and the perfection and the glory and the beauty of what God in His wonderful grace has given me, if I refuse to allow my heart to be carried by the Spirit of God unto the realization of it? You cannot; it is impossible!

Now you will find that is what meets us here. God had given to the two and a half tribes the land of Canaan for an inheritance. That is a distinct feature. It was the other side of Jordan, in figure that which answers to being dead and risen with Christ. That is the meaning of Jordan. The inheritance was the other side of the river of death, and there was no other way to it but to cross over. This was clearly the case as to Israel, and certainly it is the same now as to the inheritance God has in infinite grace given to us -- it is the other side of death and resurrection.

Now look at the first thing. Here are the two and a half tribes, the genuine people of God; and God had given them the land, and now it was a question of setting their foot on it, or, in other words, taking possession. Did you ever notice that little word in Josh. 1? Take notice of it. Joshua who is their new leader, a picture of Christ in resurrection, says to them: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.” He does not only give, but it is for them to possess; their foot must be set upon it, and you cannot possess it otherwise. You might stop short with the fact that God had given it; but the thing is, that you possess it. They were “to go and to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.” You are to practically realize, and have the enjoyment of, what God has given.

There is another thing concerning which, perhaps, we have made a little mistake -- the way in which they are put in possession in v. 5. It says: “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.” Who was this said to? Not to Israel, but to Joshua! He was the leader, the one to bring them into possession. He is the one who leads them across the river of death, a type of Christ. And you see that is an immense comfort; our leader is an invincible leader, One whom no power can stand against. How is it, then, we fail when something arises? Is it not because we do not submit ourselves to, and follow our Leader? It is a simple question of confidence in Him who can lead us across, and bring us into practical possession of what God has given us.

Now see these two and a half tribes when the question of taking possession comes up. They say, we have certain possessions of our own, and what is that? Now that cuts us all; we have certain possessions of our own. Well, we have cattle, and this is a good place for cattle. Yes; that is so, thinking of our cattle, our substance, our possessions in the wilderness, all we have got down here. And there was a country which God had subdued before Israel, which was not Canaan properly, a place they wished to take as their possession. It was not Egypt, and it was not the wilderness; but it was not Canaan. It was a country that expresses the very thing that so many people look out for, a sort of via media (a middle path), and you lay the flatteringunction to yourselves that you are not resting in Egypt, nor yet in the desert, though not in the land; and that is just the point, it is not Canaan, not the other side of Jordan; but it is a good country for cattle, and we have cattle. Like Lot, it was the same principle, he saw the place that it was well watered -- even as the garden of the Lord. There was the snare -- it was like the garden of the Lord. Thus, when people intend to have a thing like this, they attach the Lord’s name to it, as they must have a religious sop for the conscience. They say, I am quite sure the Lord gave me this or that; and alas, it is clear He did not.

Now see what a solemn thing it is: they give up their calling, their true inheritance, and positively refuse to be brought across the river of death to take their possession. Bring us not, they say, over Jordan. And what makes it the more striking is, they are actually ready to go across and to fight for a country they do not intend to possess or enjoy at all. They are actually ready to accept the trials and vicissitudes and dangers, and engage in the battles of their brethren to subdue their enemies, and fight for a land they were not going to possess, and would not have. And they are very solicitous about it, too. I often think they were in a certain sense very superior to a great many Christians of the present day.

But God was overruling. He would not have the unity of the nation broken in taking possession. It is perfectly true the unity of the nation and the unity of the body are not the same thing, but the unity of the nation is a striking illustration of the unity of the body. God had His thoughts about a unity in those days, and had got then a unity, mark, that He would not have violated, would not have touched, though it was only the unity of the nation. And if he was so jealous about the unity of a nation that He would not have it infringed upon in the slightest degree, how much more do you think he is jealous of anything that in the slightest degree touches or infringes upon the great truth of the unity of the body now? You see how all these truths are enforced and illustrated.

But what was the effect of this departure from the calling? See where it places them? You see they had set the commonest details of their life -- their substance -- before their calling. What did they care for their calling? Did they care to be in Jehovah’s territory, in that place which He had described as “a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for, the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year”; did they care for this before their cattle which they had down here in this world? That is where the test comes. It comes down into the practical details. That is the way we are tested to-day. I do not believe any saint of God at this present moment, who is going on with his calling, and living in the truth of it, can possibly prosper in this world. It is in the nature of things perfectly incompatible.

You cannot prosper in both. Possession in heaven is that which shakes you out of the desire to have possession here.
And there is where the test comes in. This is a most solemn instance. It is said, “And when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle” -- then they desired it. Ah! those Jazers and Gileads, may we not well dread them! They are the snares to draw the heart from the calling, exactly what they proved to the two and a half tribes. There the calling was really given up. I will now point out the effect of this in a certain way. Turn to Josh. 22:9, 10.

The two and a half tribes were now going back. We were looking at how they were compelled to share in the fortunes of the war, and now they were taking their departure to the land which had been given to them by the hand of Moses. Let me remark here, as it may be some have a difficulty about it, and say, Did not Moses allow this? Yes, they were allowed, so that they might work out in God’s government His own ways, which He permits for chastisement, but not the purposes of God at all. You remember at the first when this proposition was made Moses was indignant at it, afterwards the thing passed and was permitted. Just as in the same way when afterwards the children of Israel desired a king to be set over them, Samuel was at first indignant at their rebellion; and yet afterwards they were allowed to have their desire. In both cases it was the permission of God, but only to work out His own moral government. Well, now the people are returning unto their possession, and coming to the border of Jordan they set up a great altar to see to. What was the meaning of this? Now here was the first effect of giving up the calling, the first consequence of it. Now they begin to realize what they had not thought of before. They said, we shall soon be passing away, and our children will come on the scene, and then they turn to the other tribes and say, “your children may speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you.” Look at the effect of giving up the true calling of God. The effect is not all seen exactly at the moment. Now the thing is upon them, and they are going over to the wrong side of Jordan, to take up a position there, and then they begin to think what may result from this. Well, there is the effect of giving up the calling, and mark what they did; they set up an altar. What does that mean? Well, they set up what was in reality a sort of crutch, the result of their lameness -- a great altar to see to, something the eye could rest on, point to, and say, Look at this! There is no difference between us.

Well, as soon as ever the altar was built, set up, and called “Ed,” that is, “witness,” the rest of the tribes were indignant, and rightly so. And they were not only indignant, but were actually prepared to go up against them. Why? Because they had broken the unity of the nation, and they were setting up a kind of independency there on the borders of the Jordan, seeking to establish something, the result of their self-will, being outside the unity of the nation, outside the divine calling and divine portion, a resort to human expediency, which appeared like a connection, but the worst thing possible. For the thing that is nearest to the truth is the worst thing, because it resembles, but is not the truth.
when it was a case of fornication, in faithfulness to his God vindicated the right and the authority of God Himself even unto death, and earned by his faithfulness an everlasting priesthood. They chose Phinehas, who would so maintain God’s glory — that was the man for the occasion. The man who put the fornicator to death will maintain the glory of God now. He was the man for the crisis. And we see Phinehas brings three cases before them, and he presents them in their moral order — Achan’s comes first. Well, you remember about Achan, and what he did. He coveted the world, and the world, beloved friends, in the two great features so marked in this day — clothes and money. The things Achan coveted were the Babylonish garment and the gold and silver. And we see Achan driven off his feet by these two things, clothes and money. You remember as to him, how his heart went out for the things of this world, and how that overthrew him?

The next case is what is called here Peor, which is Balaam’s case. You remember about Peor. Phinehas says (Josh. 22:17, 18): “Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us,” &c. Balaam was the man who of all others brought about the idolatrous association between the Moabites and the people of God, and taught them to commit fornication. Ecclesiastical evil taught for reward, that was Balaam’s error, as we find in Jude; and again referred to by the apostle in the address to the church in Pergamos, “Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam,” &c.

Now what a solemn thing this is, first the covetousness of the world, and secondly association with its religion. And is not that what we see all around us in the present moment, and it marks those who have departed from the calling? Associate with the religion of the world, and with the ways of it, give up your calling, and you become a great man in the religious world at once; it is only necessary to fall in with it, and adopt its ways and principles. But the more you do that the more blinded you will become. These are important things, and our God would have us wise and discerning.

The third thing that Phinehas presses, and which is included in the case of Balaam, was religious independency. thus we have the three — covetousness, association with the religious world, and independency. And depend upon it, when we give up our calling and attempt to depart from it, these are the things that meet us at every turn. I pray God we may be kept from them. We have as it were bidders for us on all sides, and there is no safety and no security outside our calling.

The Bondsman of Jesus Christ

We are passing through a period which is very distinctly delineated in scripture as “perilous times” of “the last days,” and for which special instruction is vouchsafed. The rocks and shoals, with which the troubled waters of our time abound, are all divinely marked out for us in that epistle which faith recognizes as its special chart in days like these. The fullness and explicit nature of that revelation is most blessed; nothing is overlooked; the difficulties are neither magnified nor diminished; and the power and presence of God are held out to faith as its sufficiency when the darkness is at its height.

We find, in the second epistle of Timothy, most full and minute directions as to how the saints are to carry themselves. The path of the true-hearted is through persecution, pressure, and trial: evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. One principle of immense importance is found in 2 Tim. 2:19: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

Two pages in the editor’s copy were missing.
servant of the Lord. First of all, full and unhesitating courage and faithfulness. He was to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." If everything has gone, and all have turned away, Christ remains unchanged. What a resource He is at all times, blessed be His name! And what force and power there is in an exhortation of this nature from one who himself could speak of how the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him, when he was abandoned and forsaken by all.

Also he was to "endure hardness," and not to "entangle himself with the affairs of this life." That is to say, on the one hand he was to accept, in all its parts, the path through the storm and tempest; and not only that, but he was to be inured to it. On the other hand, he was to shun and avoid everything of the nature of entanglement. So that we have these three things expected from the servant of the Lord and the minister of Jesus Christ.

First: patient endurance. Second: distinct separation from all that would be incompatible with his service. Third: an ardent desire to answer to the wishes of his Master.

Again: "If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." That is, he cannot obtain the prize unless he complies with the regulations. Now these regulations insisted upon systematic discipline and training as indispensable qualifications for entering the lists; history furnishes us with particulars of the training which the competitors in the Greek athletic sports underwent; the diet, exercise, fixed hours, and hard life which were endured in order to obtain a corruptible crown. So the servant of the Lord in these days of ease, affluence, and self-indulgence, is to practice the very contrary on himself, in order that, according to the will of his Lord, he may exercise his ministry and service.

He was also to be as the husbandman "laboring first," that he might have the first claim to the profits of the produce of his farm. Then the first part of the exhortation is closed by that magnificent eighth verse: "Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David, raised from among the dead, according to my glad tidings." How blessed this is to have the heart and thoughts, by the Holy Ghost, thus fixed on that blessed One, that perfect Servant, who, from the manger to the cross, served through suffering, sorrow, shame, contempt, and is now presented to the adoring gaze of faith as "raised from among the dead."

So far we have looked at the qualities -- the indispensable requirements -- of the servant of the Lord in perilous times. As yet we have not touched upon the spirit in which these qualities are to be exercised, the tone and the temper in which the faithful servant is to address himself to his work. But it will be readily granted that in proportion to a man’s courage and faithfulness in a time of general declension and spiritual decay, will be the pressure brought to bear upon his spirit. Endurance, tenderness, meekness, will have large drafts made upon them; and standing faithful will expose the servant to those rude blasts which will only elicit, if there, the qualities I have spoken of.

It is not enough to be faithful in dealing with souls; the manner and methods of its display surely have their place. The tone and temper of the servant in the faithful exercise of his gift, surely are important. Very touching are the words of the apostle on this head. "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Again: "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

No doubt, in days of declension and unfaithfulness, the true servant must pass through many a sore exercise respecting those whom he seeks to serve, and many a trial, and many an anxiety will his heart endure in connection with such but, while that is fully admitted and felt to the utmost, it cannot but be felt that a little more of the tone and temper of 2 Timothy 2 would secure the absence of many a pang which true and faithful hearts have inflicted upon themselves and some whom we may have thought to drive, instead of leading and instructing, might have been won, when they could not be coerced. Alas there are too many instances of hearts sad and broken and the corruptions of the age, retarded on their way, whilst they groped about to find a clean path for their weary feet, as well as grieved and stumbled as they sought to walk therein, by the ungracious and unwise methods adopted towards them. "Feed my lambs," "Shepherd my sheep," "Feed my sheep," are terms of the blessed Lord's commission to restored Peter. The shepherd and the nurse are the similitudes employed by the Holy Ghost, when he would set forth the manner of a servant's fulfillment of his work. "Feed tine flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."

If any who read this turn away in their mind from what they most likely will regard as common-place truisms, I can only plead as an excuse for introducing the subject here, the great danger of its being overlooked.

No doubt the peculiar character of these days makes large demands on the servant; but be trials ever so many, and disappointments ever so great, nothing can compensate for the absence of such a spirit as is implied in these words:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppress themselves."

I might have urged the patient, gracious dealing of the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls Himself as the type and pattern for those whom He has gifted, with a view to the leading and helping of His sheep; or I might have urged the same blessed, tender care of Him who is the Head of the church, His body, towards His poor members here. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church" -- but I forbear.

One other scripture only will I refer to, namely, Ezek. 34:2-6: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty
have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beast of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

"That Waited upon Me"
Zechariah 11:11

It is with the moral teaching of the passage, rather than with its dispensational and primary application, I am now dealing. With regard to the latter, it may be well to say that the subject evidently is the history of Israel in connection with Christ. Jehovah takes up the case of His desolate people and flock. There was no compassion in their own shepherds towards them; it is very blessed to see that while the nation is handed over to reap the fruit of its own ways and sins, Jehovah, in the infinite compassion of His heart, cares for the poor and oppressed of His people, but the nation as such are left to themselves, Jehovah gives up for the time being the inheritance of the Gentiles, it is in His earthly people He is to possess it. Then it is we find that the poor of the flock are they who recognize the fulfillment of the prophetic word in those ways of Jehovah. So much for the literal application of the passage. Now the moral bearing of this is of the deepest moment for our souls in these days, for there are now morally as well as in the history of Israel, "the poor of the flock." How blessed to think of this divine characteristic! It carries one’s thoughts at once to Matt. 5, the very first mark of that which meets the much of God in a world where all has departed from Him, is poverty of spirit -- that which is in no sense indigenous to man on the earth, that which so far from being promoted, is suppressed and hindered by all that obtains amongst men and in the age.

Poverty of spirit is only found in those who are broken, those who are down in the dust before the Lord, as their rightful place. Alas how little of it is to be seen, how much of the opposite; self-elevation and self-assertion, a determination to maintain self at all costs; lowliness of mind and humility of mind are not virtues of the present moment or age; on the contrary, high-mindedness amid pride, alas! prevail to a sad extent. How blessed to dwell upon that which is kindred to the thoughts of God, that which He takes pleasure in, and that which has ever met His mind from the very first. But, further, this spirit has, as it were, its own surroundings and atmosphere; it grows and flourishes far away from that which is found amongst men. It is impossible to maintain poverty of spirit if men and the world are mingled within. “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.” These are the principles and objects governing in the world, and none else beside. It is a solemn question for conscience and heart, how far apart from such a sphere do we walk? May the Lord exercise each of this before Himself as to this.

But not only do we find here “the poor of the flock,” but we also find their attitude -- “that waited upon me.” This is ever the attitude of the soul where poverty of spirit is the characteristic, confiding dependence and expectation mark them at all times, whether the remnant in Israel, or the few who to-day in loyalty of heart cleave to the Lord: hated, reviled, slandered, and despised, they ever have been, and will be, yet He knows them as trusting in Himself and waiting on Him.

But not only is there in this attitude a very marked dependence on, and expectation from the Lord Himself, but there is an active exercise of heart implied in the words, “waited upon me.” How unlike the busy restlessness of the moment we are in, amid the scene we are passing through! The moral magnificence of one who waits on God simply is beyond all admiration. How blessed to be brought to this simply, so as to say, “Thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day”; or again, “This is our God, we have waited for Him”; or again, “Yea, in the way of thy judgements, O Lord, have we waited for thee.”

It was this which marked the Lord Jesus in all His blessed perfection as a man on earth; how blessed to hear Him speak, as in Ps. 40:1. He takes the place of patience without failure, “I waited patiently for Jehovah”: it is exactly opposite to what man is as man, with his will and all that belongs to it. Observe it is “for Jehovah,” that is, until He came in; His own will never moved; Christ would have no other deliverance than Jehovah’s. That which was found in the blessed One in His own perfection, is by grace wrought in the poor of the flock, and in feebleness and imperfection still is exhibited in some small measure by them. Oh, may it be ours more and more to be known, simply as a poor and an afflicted people who wait on the Lord and trust in Him.

Then, lastly, observe here how the Lord says “The poor of the flock that waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the Lord.” This shows very blessedly the connection between the state of soul according to God, and the discernment of His mind through His word; and may we not ask. Is it not ever so? The wise and prudent on the one hand, and the unseparated on the other, never discern His will; it is hidden from the former (very solemn reflection this); it is revealed to babes. As to the other class, those who are separated and consecrated to God, it is written, “The knowledge of the holy is understanding”; and further, “Do not drink wine nor strong drink . . . when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation . . . that ye may put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:9, 10). May the Lord apply His own word to all that needs its piercing light at this moment, so that there may be, by its divine acting, formed in our souls that capacity and ability of His Spirit, to know what is the word of the Lord in its application to all the difficulties and exercises of the way at this present moment.
“Thine Are We”

1 Chron. 12:18

The intense applicability of the truth conveyed by these words at this time cannot be called in question. The supreme inquiry of the moment is, who are practically the Lord’s, and who are on His side?

The order, too, is striking and significant, for it is first *whose we are*. The circumstances in which David was at this juncture are familiar to all who search the scriptures; he was in a rejected and outcast position, and this became of itself the test -- his position manifested those who were true to his person and interests.

But it is not a little interesting that those who thus declare themselves through Amasai, chief of the captains, as true to the person and fortune, if we may so say, of the rejected and despised man of Ziklag, were men who “went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks.” And further, it is said of them in this connection, that “they put to flight all them of the valleys, both towards the east and towards the west.” Now, it is blessed to ponder and meditate on that which is set forth in this, to see that all true power, true affection, and true devotedness, spring from the other side of Jordan; death is the door to Christ in heaven, or to follow Him with whole-heartedness on earth. It has ever been so, Elisha’s newly acquired mantle of power, received from the one to whom he separated himself (2 Kings 2:2-14), leads him, ere he uses it, to Jordan as well. Alas how little such a solemn reality as this has set its mark upon us! Not only are carnal wisdom, earthly-mindedness, and worldliness allowed to pass unexposed and unrebuked, but it has been even attempted with disastrous effects to press them into the service and testimony of the Lord. Let us be well assured that we must leave behind in death, practically, self and its fortunes, and the opposite to, the prevailing spirit of the hour, “With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?” But further, observe, that to be really where we can take that place with Christ, and be, as well as say, “Thine are we,” Jordan must not only be passed but it has overflowed all its banks, that is, death in faith accepted by us in all its extent, but it must be *carried by us* as well (2 Cor. 4:10), and carried by us, not once or in a way, but “always.” Oh, the reality of the “dying of Jesus”; “that is the death we must always carry but how unspiring it is; nothing of man, not to speak of nature or flesh, can be tolerated here. Why is it we see and hear so much of man? Is it not because this great reality is avoided by many, refused by others, and dreaded by all? Lord, help us always to bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus!

“Thine are we.” This, we may be assured, is the desire of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ as to all that are His own; they are *in fact*, blessed be His name, His own; His own, too, whom He loves right on to the end, through everything and in spite of all! We may well say, what should we do if we were not so? But the fact underlies the great practical truth we seek to enforce, even that what is true of us in His amazing grace and love should be *practically* recognized and acted upon by us. How blessed to see it in the apostle of the Gentiles, he who followed Christ as none before or since, and to see it declared in a moment of human suspense and emergency, even when in the shipwreck all hope of being saved was taken away; what words of comfort from the mouth of a poor prisoner, as he opens it to comfort and cheer the despairing and the overwhelmed: “There stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.” Mark those blessed words well, “whose I am”; what dignity, what confidence, what affection these utterances breathe. Oh, that the beloved saints of God tasted the liberty of belonging to Christ; exclusively and entirely to be to Him, “a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” -- that is, fully, finally, and only for Him! “Whose I am,” “Thine are we”; our happy confession to Himself and to all around us in *acts* and in *words*.

But we have also another mark of true devotedness in their further confession to the rejected David -- “and on thy side”; indeed, we might say this is the simple consequence of “Thine are we.” How grateful to the heart of David this confession at this moment, hunt as he was, like a partridge on the mountains. It is just this that one sees the immense lack
of at the present moment. “Who is on the Lord’s side,” who? may well be asked. Now, indeed, every side has its adherents and supporters; but, alas! how few take sides with Christ; and, moreover, there is a lack of perception, a density of spiritual understanding, and blindness of spiritual vision as to His claims and rights. The profession (alas! it is to be feared in many cases little more than profession) of His name and rejected place on earth is allied with earthly-mindedness and worldliness in its many phases; “divine ground,” is rudely grasped as a platform upon which man in the flesh is exalted, and the many appliances to further this end, such as ambition of various kinds, intense desire after money, with the pride and oppression that ever accompany it, are all here in full energy; and if any are found with enough of conscience, not to say devotedness to Christ, even to make a stand against this growing tide, they are accounted persons to be slandered, maligned, avoided and shunned at all cost.

These are sad and sorrowful matters to be met and faced by us if we would be in truth and verity on the Lord’s side, and loyal to His interests, who is our rejected Lord and Master. Is it to be wondered at, that the infidel, the free-thinker, the scoffers of the age, should all demand with a kind of triumphant sneer, “Where are the disciples, friends, and witnesses of the rejected Man, who had in the world but a place on earth. “Thine are we, and on thy side” -- the language of its rejection, because devoted to Him in the power of His love, might be more ours in His grace; what a reality to find in His claims and rights. The profession (alas! it is to be feared in many cases little more than profession) of His name and rejected place on earth is allied with earthly-mindedness and worldliness in its many phases; “divine ground,” is rudely grasped as a platform upon which man in the flesh is exalted, and the many appliances to further this end, such as ambition of various kinds, intense desire after money, with the pride and oppression that ever accompany it, are all here in full energy; and if any are found with enough of conscience, not to say devotedness to Christ, even to make a stand against this growing tide, they are accounted persons to be slandered, maligned, avoided and shunned at all cost.

Paul’s Three Desires

Phil 3:4-10; 1:20-23

Here are three express desires of the apostle are -- what we might really call longings of his soul. First, he longed to be found in Christ, then to know Him, and lastly to be with Him.

Sometimes when those words are read in ch. 3, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ,” &c., they are spoken of as if the apostle referred to bad things; but they are all good things -- things that gave him a religious status here before men in this world. “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews”; there was not a drop of Gentile blood in his veins -- no approach to the accursed race -- as to the law, belonging to the straitest, strictest sect, for he was a Pharisee -- “concerning zeal, persecuting the church.” These were all things that gave him a place here before men -- those are the very things we find it so hard to be dissociated from. They were connected with earth. We may not have those things literally, but we all of us know how many things we have which tie us down to earth. I am far more afraid of the earth than of the world. The ways of the world may get into our hearts, but by earth I mean a comfortable state of things here -- things which are not wrong in themselves, but which come in and clog our souls. When the Philistines stopped up the wells of Abraham, they stopped them with earth. I believe it is exactly the same kind of thing in principle which happens to our souls. When the springing well that refreshes our souls is stopped, it is earth that stops it. Many of us through God’s grace can judge what is of the world and refuse it, but something that is not in itself wrong may so clog our souls as to stop up the inlet of heavenly light. In the supper in Luke, not one of the things the people plead is wrong -- all those things were connected with earth, and they choked the affections when they became supreme there, not one would have God’s supper. We are too apt to say what harm is there in that? do you see any wrong in it? The wrong is, the heart gets clogged, the affections become set on something else that is not Christ. After the apostle goes through all that wonderful unfolding in the Epistle of John, he ends up with “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” What is an idol? It is something that likes you, not merely that you like, something that will minister to you, that will captivate you -- something that will get hold of our hearts, that will meet us in the part which is most susceptible. I simply allude to all this in connection with Saul of Tarsus. He says, as it were, “I gloried in those things, I got some value out of them.” What was it that changed the whole thing for him? The dawn in his soul of a heavenly Christ, a heavenly Savior, a Savior in glory. The Savior in glory rose in revelation in him just like the rising sun, the beams of which nothing can withstand. The Savior was revealed not to him but in him.

There is no such thing in this world as an intrinsic value being attached to anything -- things in this world have a relative value -- we value them in relation to something else. Money is valued because of what we get by it. Now we say, Christ, this heavenly Savior, who dwanned by the Holy Ghost on his soul, turned all the value out of everything -- the shine went out of the things here. It is a different thing from the stripping principle. You cannot strip a person’s heart, a person’s affections; but you can by God’s grace so have a brighter, more blessed Object and Person that other things go. That is the principle of Christianity. If I were asked what the two principles of Christianity, in contrast to everything else, were, I should say a heavenly object and heavenly power to pursue that Object.
That is what made the change in the apostle “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” The Savior in glory revealed in the heart of that persecutor altered everything -- everything was changed -- as we sang just now.

“Heavenly light makes all things bright,

Seen in that blissful gaze.”

It was the heavenly light that shone in here.

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” It was not a question of what a loss they were to him, but of the gain he had got. The gain so filled his soul that it turned other things into loss. There (v. 7) he brings you back to this heavenly illumination: it was the start.

Verse 8. There is a long distance between those two verses. He who writes this epistle is a prisoner -- he is writing to this heavenly illumination: it was the start.

What a blessed thing when that Sun that has shone into our souls does not wane in our hearts. The Lord keep us in the rays of that Sun. At first when the light streamed into our hearts, how little everything seemed but the rub is, that as we go along we pick up something here, the wretched things of this scene.

It is not by effort but as we walk in the Spirit, and the Holy Ghost really keeps that scene of glory and the One in glory before our souls, that all is fresh. Paul not only counted things here loss but dung. Once things become refuse and good-for-nothing, there is not much difficulty in getting them out of our house. Oh to have the value taken out of them! Now the sun is shining in all its strength, the stars are still in the heavens, they are not gone but they are eclipsed. One is glad to have the stars if we have not the sun, but how much more blessed to have the sun that rules the day -- to have the One that rules the day of our souls, that heavenly Savior, “to be found in him” -- found in Him on His side. All He has acquired and won is ours in association with Him. Oh to be found in Him!

Two things characterize and form the Christian, he is out of man and out of earth. I do not want any here to misunderstand me, for a person might turn round and say, are you not on the earth? Yes, painfully conscious of it; but I am out of earth as before God, as to His thoughts, I do not belong to it. I am out of man, and out of earth. Earth is where man was placed in responsibility, now I am dead, and I have got a new status and standing -- a completely, totally new position and standing in Christ before God. I have a standing before God outside all the ruin and wretchedness that Adam brought in, and that is the meaning of the title of the Lord as “last Adam.” No other order of man before God can ever be recognized than He. That is the new order by grace to which we belong.

“That I may know him.” It is hard to speak of such a subject as that -- “that I may know him.” In reading, some years ago, Hewitson’s Life, where he says, in speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ better than he knew any living man; I thought to myself, I would give anything to be like that. Why not? Whoever has placed himself at my disposal so that I might know him as he has done? What creature on earth has ever come so near to you as Christ has done? Knowing a person is not merely casually meeting him: knowing a person brings before the heart intimacy, personal contact with a person in his surroundings as people say, you must live with a person to know him. Oh to know Christ in that way, to go and live with him in heaven! Our life must be where He is that we may know Him. There is that beautiful verse in John 10.

“I am the good Shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father” (New Trans.). Is not that wonderful? The character of the intimacy between the Shepherd and the sheep is after the pattern of the intimacy between the Father and the Son. What an intimacy that is! What a knowledge of Him that is! We must go where He is, we must go to His side to know Him. He is not here. It is perfectly true that when He was here, and the disciples of John wanted to see where He dwelt, He said, “Come and see”; but there is no Christ on earth now. There was a suffering, lowly Christ in this world, and men in their various needs came in contact with Him; but He is not here now, and that is why I press that we must go to His side to know Him. The Holy Ghost is here to lead your affections to Christ where He is.

I want this intimacy -- I want to be on terms of personal knowledge and intimacy with Him. Supposing you were shipwrecked and an island rose up in the midst of the sea, and the lifeboat landed you upon it, what would you do? You would say, I should like to know something of this place, I owe my safety to this spot, I should like to know this spot. May the Lord help us to know Christ. That is what Paul says in Colossians: “Seek those things which are above,” and then set your mind on them. It is the object that is before us -- there is power in an object. We never set our mind on them if we do not first seek them.

“The power of his resurrection.” What is the difference between “the power of his resurrection” and the power of Jehovah? I leave it with you to think of, I will not answer it now. The power of resurrection carries us into a new sphere. What do you mean by the word “sphere”? It carries you outside of everything down here in this world. Many many years ago this passage was before my mind, and I only got from it that it was the power by which Christ was raised. It is not that at all. The power of God raised Christ and set Him as Man in glory; it is not that here, but “the power of his resurrection.” That is what the apostle longed for, and that carried him into fellowship with His sufferings. The power of His resurrection leads to identification with Him in His path of suffering.

The third desire -- I long to be with Him: “Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is FAR BETTER.” Where the love of Christ has really laid hold of
our hearts, really constrains our affections; where the love of Christ really fills us -- the love of a Person -- the love of Christ, that devoted Himself for us, “To know the love of Christ that passes knowledge” -- that timeless, changeless, everlasting love of Christ -- the effect of it will be, I want to be with that One.

When that love has come in mighty power before your soul, and earth’s vanities have disappeared for a little time, then you want to be with Him. I cannot understand a love that can be satisfied with absence from the object of its affection. How could you understand a man who leaves his home-circle, and goes on business to New Zealand, saying, I am quite satisfied to be here, when he has left those he loves in England? There is not much affection there. No; he would say, I long to be back at home. This should be a great deal more true with us. If the love of Christ really enveloped us round, we should say, I long to be with Him. This tests us more than the coming of the Lord. There is nothing that more tests our affections as to whether the Sun is in power in our hearts, than that we can say, I desire to depart, to go through what men call gloom, I desire to be with Him, to be unloosed from everything here, like a vessel unloosed from her moorings. Oh the cords that bind us to moorings here.

It is Christ on His own side in heaven that causes this spring of affection and desire to rise up in the apostle’s soul. Oh may He be so before us, We have the Holy Ghost for this -- this heavenly power in us. We have arm invisible Object and an invisible power.

May God give our hearts to be living so engrossed with that blessed One, that other things may drop out of our hearts, things that are so Important to us now.

The Risen One

John 20:19-23

I want to speak a little about this part specially of the chapter, but before I do so, order to connect it, I refer to the previous and what is exactly brought before us in it.

First of all we have the Risen One Himself on His resurrection platform in the magnificence an unsurpassed triumph. I often wonder little we are detained by such a sight as that. He has left everything behind -- the grave, Satan’s power -- He went down beneath everything, He has risen up above everything. It is most wonderful to see Him on that morning, the brightest morn that ever dawned on the earth. We have the history of the second garden here: the first garden opened with a man and a woman in innocence, it closed with them driven out from the presence of God. The locality of Eden cannot be discovered. God has prevented the site being found where innocence was.

Now we come to the second garden, and the first Object that meets us is a risen Man, much more than a man. “God over all, blessed for ever.” Yet He became Man. He went down underneath all the judgment and bore it, and now He is risen. Here we have a risen Man and a redeemed woman. In the first garden it was a fallen man and a fallen woman. I see Him now risen. I believe there is some one here tonight that has never seen Him, never known Him as risen. I know how many a day it was before some of us beheld Him risen. We might all subscribe to the articles of the truest creed, but it is another thing when the soul sees Him as risen out of all the wreck, ruin, and judgment of the first man.

I believe there are a great many who have never seen Him risen, and a great many whose relations are not with Him risen.

“. . . Now we see Thee risen,
Who once for us hast died,
Seated above the highest heaven,
The Father’s glorified.”

I believe it would have a most wonderful effect upon our souls if we really in our hearts’ affections came in contact with a risen Christ -- to see all the wreck and ruin that came in by the first man left behind by another Man who has borne the judgment and is out of death. That is the way John 20 opens. The next object is the woman. She was the subject of perfect Satanic power on the one hand, and the subject of Christ’s perfect power on the other. He cast seven devils out of her. Seven is the perfect number either in good or evil. She was under the power of Satan in its malignity, and the Lord freed her from it. She is attached to Him. Are we? She passed from the sense of the favor to the preciousness of the One who conferred it. have we passed from the sense of the favor we have received to the value and preciousness of the One who has bestowed it on us? Joseph’s brethren lived on his bounty, but they never knew his heart. There may be many here like him. He has relieved us, has brought us into untold blessings -- how much are our hearts attached to the One that has done it, so that like Mary we have no home in the place where He is not? She cannot find His body -- she is ignorant. Would to God there were more of that kind of affection that cannot do without Him! In my inmost soul I believe what we want is more heart affection for Christ. Mary cannot find His body, she does not know where He is; the disciples contented themselves that He was not in the sepulchre, and they went away to their own home. How like you and me! They were satisfied that He was not in death; they had a right creed, but they had not Jesus, and they could not tell where He was.

“Then the disciples went away again to their own home.” Mary had no home. She stays at the sepulchre. I almost think I hear her say, “Where Thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. Home in this world without You? No; here I stay: here You were laid, and even though You are not in the sepulchre my heart is linked with the spot where last I saw You.” There is another proof of her affection, and a very striking one. Jesus speaks to her, but she does not know Him, and “supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She could not have done it, she had not the power, but she had the love. There is no prudent, long-headed calculation about affection. It is wonderful what the heart will do. Take a hen with her chickens round her, and an overwhelming danger threatens: she puts herself in an attitude of the greatest defiance as if she had all power, it is affection for her brood that makes her do...
it. That is what we want. How constantly we hear, What harm is there in this? Why should I not go there? There is not the least bit of genuine affection for Christ in that.

You find here that He is everything to Mary -- she would go and take Him away. It was exactly at that moment Jesus makes Himself known to her. It is the moment of recognition between the Lord and her soul. I wonder how many of us have really travelled into that moment.

In the case of Joseph and his brethren, at the moment of recognition he says, as it were, I must be alone with you. "Cause every man to go out from me" (Gen. 45:1). I must clear the scene. I have something to communicate to you alone. There is a solitude about it. It was the purpose of God in John 20 that every one should go from that garden but Mary. With Joseph it was the manifestation of his person. Here the Lord turns to her and says, "Mary." He owns her as His. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."

Mary thought she had got Him back for earth: that is exactly where people are to-day. I know, in my soul naturally, I would like to have Jesus on earth. The moment Mary recognized Him, she bounded forward to embrace Him: she would resume the old associations she had with Him this side of the cross. She says to Him, "Rabboni" -- my Master. In the exuberance of her love she wanted to have Him here. What is so blessed about that is, He says, as it were, "Mary, I will never give you up, you are just the same to me as ever; but, Mary, there is a new order of things now, there are new associations. Mary, death has come in. I have risen out of all that is old. He is educating her in the most gentle way. He says, as it were, "Mary, I cannot resume with you the old order of things here. I am going to My Father. There is an entirely new order of things -- new relationships." What a wonderful thing to be connected with heaven in that way -- to have the Lord coming and taking our hearts out of this scene, and connecting them with Himself in that scene where He is with the Father! That is the meaning of going to His side. Our thought is to have Christ here. He says, I want to have you there. It would alter your whole life if God gave you to enter into it by His Spirit, that your objects, your relationships are connected with Christ in the scene where He is. Your heart has found a home there. What a sweet word that is -- home. Here on earth, oh, the desolations of it! -- the withered leaves and disappointed hopes strewed around what we call home -- the heart aches over vacant spots in the homes here -- there are none of them there. The Lord grant that none of us may think of home anywhere but in the place where Christ is.

The Lord says 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." Mary goes at once, there is not a complaint. He educates her there and then. She was inconsolable till she heard His voice: the moment she had got Him, she is ready to do His will. The disciples in Luke 24 were inconsolable till He made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread -- then "they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem."

How our chapter opens with the Risen One and with the woman whose heart’s affections are entwined round Him. The Lord leads her off the human side on to His own ground.

John 20:19. All the disciples found here are those really who turned their backs on the Lord. "They all forsook him and fled." There was not a single one detained by Him; they had not affection enough for Christ to keep them when He was in the presence of His enemies. Here they are all together -- in another gospel it says they had partaken of a meal -- but there is another thing: they were in the most terrible fear, they were afraid of the Jews, afraid of a hostile power outside of them. There they were, and Jesus comes into their midst. In spite of the closed doors and all their fears -- their hearts were like birds that had been shot at, terrified and frightened -- Jesus Himself comes into their midst. It is the risen One now. That was an out-of-the-world scene. The very moment the Lord came into that scene, I believe He brought everything of the glory and victory of redemption and of Himself into it. He certainly did not find anything there; but He brought everything in with Him. Have we learnt, in our souls, to appreciate the spot where He is -- the fact that Christ is there? People are constantly talking about right meetings, right principles. I believe the only way to find the thing suitable to Christ is to find where Christ Himself is. I believe it must be a question of intimacy between the soul and Christ; not a question of long-headed doctrine, but one of intimacy of heart with the Person, so that you know the scene where the Person would be. The knowledge of a person gives you the knowledge of the things that surround that person.

Jesus Himself "stood in the midst." It is His presence, the presence of a Person. I assure you I dread a mere historical Christ before us. I dread our hearts, our minds only having known of a historical Christ. What I mean by that is, we have not come in contact for our hearts with the Person of Christ. It is a Christ you have read of, not a Christ you know. I am not speaking of anything material, but what faith brings home to us. If you ever reached it, you could never forget the moment. I have heard Him. Do you think Saul of Tarsus would ever forget the moment when he saw the Lord? Never. You say, that was a miracle. It is nothing more than what happens every day to the soul that is in contact with Christ in heaven. The Holy Ghost brings the soul into contact with Him there.

Verse 59. First you have His presence; that is beyond everything -- He was there. Next His peace. His very first word must have carried their hearts over all His victory. There is not a hostile power that has not met its doom. Everything has been disposed of from God’s side down to you.

Then "he showed unto them his hands and his side." He connects Himself, as risen, with the One who died. He says, as it were, Do not have any question that I am the very same One. What a moment that is! The risen One showing Himself as the One who has died, and has left death behind for ever. He is the second Man and the last Adam. and He has closed the history of the first man, there will never be any other man after Him.

Here He identifies Himself as risen with the very One
who died. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” Would your heart and mine be glad if we saw Him? If once that sight dawned upon your eyes -- the eyes of your soul -- not a single thing on earth could have any attraction for you. The more these heavenly things come before our hearts, the more we feel that nothing in this world is good enough for us. It is not that I am tearing myself away from what is attractive, but it has all lost its brilliancy, the brightness has gone out of it. Nothing in this world is good enough for me if once I come in contact with a risen, glorified Christ. A risen, glorified Christ is the alone divine elevator out of earth -- we leave it behind.

Then He communicates His own risen life. He gives them peace in connection with their mission and breathes on them, saying, “Receive ye Holy Spirit.” What the Lord communicates there as the last Adam, breathing on them, is His own risen life in the power of the Spirit.

With regard to the Lord’s coming into the midst of the disciples here there is a sort of practical comfort for our hearts. They were in fear (ungrounded fear, I believe), the barred doors were a proof of it; they had shut themselves in. We might put ourselves in those circumstances through the fear and folly of our hearts; but no barred doors keep the Lord out. He passes through every kind of hindrance and fear and folly of our hearts; but no barred doors keep the Lord out. He comes to our side, as has been said, like My side. That is exactly what the comfort and sustainment of side, and nothing will hinder me; but I come to take you to them to His side by giving them the sense, I come to your side, and nothing will hinder me; but I come to take you to My side. That is exactly what the comfort and sustainment of the Lord is to us. He comes to our side, as has been said, like a great strong brother with a little one. He says, as it were, “I will stretch out my strong hand to help and succor you; but it is that I may draw you to where I am.”

All our new associations, all our life is connected with Christ where He is. The Lord give us to know it more for His name’s sake.

Notes of an Address.

The King and the Apostle

 Isa. 38:9-19; Acts 20:22-24; Phil. 1:20-23

The king of Judah and the great apostle of the Gentiles were saints of God. Hezekiah was a saint and servant of God as well as Paul. I do not say that he was in the same position, but he was a real saint of God in old days, and as much a saint in that sense as Paul. You could hardly find the experiences of two men so strikingly and so vividly in contrast as these two, and that is what I desire to look at, wherein the contrast was, so that what one chose and desired the other shrank back from.

Now first of all observe what marked Hezekiah’s position: he was really, although a saint and servant of God in that sense, an earthly saint. His hopes, prospects, and blessings were in connection with earth, therefore to sever him from earth, the scene and sphere of his blessing, by death, to remove him out of the place where he received these things from God was to cut away every single hope from under his feet.

The apostle on the other hand was a heavenly man -- all his prospects, all his blessings were the other side of death, therefore anything that would come and remove him to where his Savior was, was his greatest possible blessing. You cannot compare these two experiences. Man tries to put together what God has put in contrast, and Christianity is made the continuation of Judaism. Christianity is the contrast to Judaism. There is hardly one point in the one that is not the direct contrast to the other. You do not get Christianity fully brought out until Judaism, as a system in its essential features and elements, was closed. That system received its death-blow in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. No sooner did He give up His blessed life on the cross than synchronizing with it was the veil rent from the top to the bottom. The hidden God is then revealed. He can come out in all the blessedness of His own nature.

I take these two men this evening to set before us in a striking way what the nature of these two positions really is (Isa. 38:57). I believe what was in the mind of the king of Judah in his recovery from sickness was the governmental forgiveness of his sins by God. According to that system, death, removing people from the scene of their blessings, was God’s governmental dealing with them. He says, You have recovered me from going down into the grave, and you have governmentally forgiven my sins. The governmental dealings of God with His people of old in taking them out of the scene of their blessing is a totally different thing from God having cleared us from our sins by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 19 I have often heard quoted incorrectly, as if it were moral truth; it is literal truth.

All the chains round Hezekiah’s heart bound him down here to earth -- it was not the world at all. The world is a moral order of things which has grown up since the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The earth is what He gave to the children of men. I would ask any Christian to show that he has any title-deeds to it. In Luke 16 we get things here spoken of as “unrighteous mammon.” Why does the Lord call it that? Because it is not yours at all as a Christian. You find yourself in possession of another’s things, and God says, If you make a right use of them, I will reward you. If you do not make a right use of them, “if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” that is, heavenly things. It is very solemn and searching. I do believe if we let the force and power of those passages into our souls it will affect us very much as to how we shall use what we find ourselves in possession of. It will not be what you can afford but it belongs to another, and how would He like you to use it.

The Jews had basket and store, they had riches, &c., and I am afraid oftentimes that we would like to have them. The
Choose the right category for this text: Spiritual growth and Christian living.

The tendency of us all is to be an earthly people -- not so much worldly; all would shun the concert and ball-room -- though the world is much more than that. You can get the spirit of the world into your hearts even when you shun the gross things. We have to take care lest we get the principles and maxims of the world into our hearts. I long to feel more contaminated and soiled in looking at worldly things. I speak of this because it helps to bring out the striking contrast of this position. Nothing here is my true position. You find as a matter of fact that what stops the wells in your souls is earth; that is what the Philistines stopped the wells with, that were dug in the days of Abraham.

You can now see very well Hezekiah’s misery in having to leave the place of his blessings. He calls up creation to make known the misery of his soul. (v. 14) He had not a link with heaven, and he was about to bid farewell to all that enchain his heart here. It was the same thing in principle in the history of those two disciples in Luke 24, after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. They never really looked for His death. It was the death of the heir to them. Every prospect was broken in that golden bowl for them, every hope they had was gone. It was an immense trial to Abraham when God said, “Take now thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovetest . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering.” He was to take the one in whom all the promises centered that had been made to him. That is what it was to the disciples, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” It was all over for them, but not for God -- “to-day is the third day since these things were done.” They had not a single thought of His death. None of the Old Testament saints or disciples looked for Christ’s death. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day,” that is, the day of Christ instrumentality, and say, God. You may be passing through deep waters. What a alleviation to him. The first is, He has done it Himself -- “He This voyage coming into harbor in full sail and not a single spar gone. The air of heaven fills the apostle’s soul here. How few one sees finishing their course with joy! How many one has loved have gone home with broken spars! Oh, to go right on to the end the heart having come from that scene to finish the course here with joy, glad to have finished here to get home! Paul left his heart in heaven, he came from heaven, he is going back there. A Christian is a man from heaven. We are going back there. Paul had come from heaven, that is what marked him; hence at the beginning it is, “taking thee out from the people and the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee.” It removes you from every earthly nationality; Christians are not Englishmen, Irishmen, or anything else -- they are men from heaven altogether. The Lord says to Paul, I take you out and send you back, “to open their eyes,” &c. That was his mission.

He says now, as it were, Nothing here moves me -- no affliction, no persecution, no hatred -- nothing moves me. All I desire is to finish my course with joy. It was in the power of heaven all that was accomplished.

In Philippians you get what his course as a Christian is; in Acts he is the servant. In Philippians it is the normal life of a Christian, life in the power of the Holy Ghost. The apostle is taken up as the pattern of it. It is life in the power and energy of the Holy Ghost, deriving all its power from the Object. “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death.” The force of “earnest expectation” is that I am stretching out my neck after it (like the eagle stretching out its neck after its object) that all that Christ is should come out in my body, not making Christ greater than He is, but that all that He is should come out in my body.

“I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” It is not that I am resigned to die, but I long to go. I am resigned to stay here,
that is where he puts resignation. “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.” I give up my own personal desire.

What could produce all this in us? Nothing but heaven brought in the living power of the Holy Ghost into our hearts. We are all pretty tightly held here in one way or another. There are natural links which hold us all. It is a wonderful thing to have the heavenly links stronger in our souls than those. Oh to cultivate heavenly links, heavenly affections. May we not be entangled by earthly things. It is entanglements we have to beware of, those are cords, silken cords, but they bind very tightly.

I often think of the Lord’s words to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” we can go to the “other side” now in heart, and by the Holy Ghost we can cultivate, foster in our souls, the desire to go to the other side, only we must see first that it is our own place, our own country, our Canaan. Canaan is beyond Jordan to-day. Nothing this side Jordan’s wave can ever be Canaan. That is our country, and all our blessings are there. Our blessings come from the place of Christ’s exaltation, and our place is the place of Christ’s exaltation, our associations in this world are to be with Himself in rejection.

We are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The place where He is exalted at the right hand of God is our home. Here in this world I am connected with Him in His rejection, to walk with Him in the scene where He is not. Alas, how little one is in the truth of it!

May we insist upon this -- I belong to the place where Christ is, and all my blessings are there, and I set my heart on the things there, and by His grace I seek to cultivate everything that would make that place more precious to me. Notes of an Address.

Near to Christ

Luke 7:36-50

There are two remarkable features in the action of this poor woman of the city who was a sinner, and it would be very blessed for every one of us if we possessed them a little more; the one is an entire abstractedness from herself so that she surmounted every difficulty in order to be near Christ. Now there is nothing more common and largely common amongst saints than in the first instance thoughts of themselves with reference to Christ; it is not the getting near to Christ for His own sake, it is not the glory of the Person of Christ attracting the heart, so that we say we want to get near Him. It is not a question of what we get from Him. It is blessed to know we get everything from Him; this woman had received what she did not know she had received until this time. The point with her was the grace of His Person it was an object outside of herself which drew her heart away from every thought which would naturally present itself; because there was no place where she was less likely to be welcomed than in the house of a Pharisee; but she is not thinking of the reproach that will be heaped upon her, or how she would expose herself; her one great controlling thought was, “I want to get near Christ, I must get near Him.” Now, alas! how little there is of that amongst us! I find nearly all are occupied with themselves some way or other, either with their sorrows, or their progress; and the one is as bad as the other. We do progress as we have to do with Christ: just in the same proportion, I am progressing exactly as I have to do with Him, and no more. The more I have to do with Him, the more things are distanced to me, and the more I find I am lifted out of myself.

Oh what a wonderful thing it is to find a person in this world who has been so commanded by the grace and beauty of the Person of Christ, as to be indifferent to all but Himself. Is it not an encouragement to one’s heart to think that we may get near Him? Luke 7 is different to John 12. Mary stands on a higher elevation than the poor woman of Luke 7; but I am speaking as to the thing practically. Let me ask now, Are we near to Him? Have we got the conscious sense in our souls that we are near Christ? What a wonderful moment in a person’s history, when he has got the sense that he is near Him! Take even the lowest thing, viz, to come behind Him, and touch Him. The Lord by His Spirit give our hearts a little deeper sense, not only that He wants us to be near Him, but the consciousness of what a real thing it is to be near Him. How little it makes of everything, how small everything would seem!

The second thing in Luke 7 is, she makes the most of Him, because of what He is Himself. I find the tendency (and I believe it is a thing we need to watch against) to be entirely occupied with our getting blessing for ourselves, because you are blest if you are near Christ, how blest! Who could measure, who could fathom either the depths or heights of the blessedness that drops like fatness into the soul as we get near Christ. Oh what a real thing it is to get near Him! There is a certain atmosphere about one who is there; it is not the stiff hardness that one finds on the one hand, nor the dissatisfaction that one finds on the other; but there is a blessedness, a wonderful ease and gracious repose about one who is near Christ.

May the Lord by His Spirit give each of us to know what a blessed thing it is to get near that blessed One, and as we get near Him, to make much of him, with all that delicacy and reverence that love can devote to its object. It is a wonderful favor to get near Christ, and as we get near Him to expend all we have upon Him.

“The Man That Is My Fellow, Saith the Lord of Hosts”

Zech. 13:7

These are the solemn and touching words of Jehovah Himself respecting the Lord Jesus Christ in His sorrows and sufferings; the words reveal the true character of His Person and His sufferings.

It has been very blessedly remarked that when Christ is looked at in His humiliation as man, He is treated by the Spirit as the equal of Jehovah in His rights.
We are living in a day when the malignity of Satan against Christ has well-nigh reached its height.

The moral atmosphere of the professing church is charged with irreverence and blasphemy: in order to discredit the written word, it is found necessary now to dishonor the incarnate Word; and this is resorted to with an audacity and profanity peculiar to the age. As an instance of this, I would adduce the attempt of what is called higher criticism to prove spurious the predictions of the prophet Isaiah; when it is urged, if this be so, the Lord Jesus Christ cited what was spurious in order to make good a claim to which He had no right, it is retorted by a slur upon His person involving the knowledge and fallibility of Him, who although He became man, was never less than God, “God over all, blessed for evermore.” It is thus, I may say, at the present moment that the blessed One is degraded at the hands of His foes, and this will surprise no one who sees clearly the tactics of Satan; but there is another aspect of this solemn question, which fills the heart with pain and anguish, and brings to mind his own blessed, sorrowing words “One of you shall betray me.”

It is very solemn to reflect on how the moral character of the age at any time acts upon the church of God; at the present moment it is very evident that the irreverence of the day, like a polluted atmosphere, is spreading all around, expressions are used about sacred things which are revolting to a spiritual mind, the things of God are treated with a cold, mental analysis which forebode disaster and sorrow ere long if persisted in; the holy mystery of His blessed Person is attempted to be unremedied and explained, after a fashion that one’s whole soul shrinks from, and the end must be that adoration and worship will be superseded by reason and speculation. May God in His great grace and goodness avert the savor of Christ in your thoughts, and you will only find in their room the barrenness of man’s spirit in the things of God and in the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man, because he labors there at his own charge. It is as if one dissected the body of his friend, instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character.”

Oh! that our hearts may be more filled with adoring wonder and worship as we gaze on Him by faith, Him of whom it is said so blessedly -- “I find a center where my mind reposes, which is Itself, always Itself, and nothing like it.”

"He Could Not Be Hid"

John 4; Mark 7

The manifestation of God in Christ comes very blessedly before us in both these cases, let us by His gracious help trace it a little with adoring and worshiping spirits. In the first instance He was weary with His journey, and sat alone in the world He Himself had created, and into which in His blessed love He had come: as a weary man He feels the rejection of the world He His heart pressed by the rejection of the people He loved, and as to the lowly blessed place He had in grace taken among men, dependent on a poor, sin-wearied, lonely woman for a drink of water. Oh what blessed grace shines forth in every line of the record, and how was not God most blessedly revealed in what He was in a lowly man, by His being a lowly man.

It is so blessedly expressed in the beautiful words of another, which run thus: “He acts in divine grace. Here therefore where grace, free grace, works, we find him fully -- a weary, rejected man, bound in Spirit on a way he must needs take, and waiting on the kindness of another for a drink of water. Grace is in the humble and obedient man -- there it is that what God is shines out. It is not ‘before Abrahaim was I am,’ but ‘if thou knewest the gift of God,’ that is, grace; ‘and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink.’ It is not the supreme God forced so to speak, to say He is so to heartless adversaries without conscience, but God revealed in what He was in a lowly man, and surely if grace is, that is grace.

What heart is in the words! What a need to win the confidence of a weary soul! Yet the simple expression of what His own heart was full of, of God as goodness . . .

There is no feeling like that of the Perception of the Person of Christ, and His words and He are one. He was what He said always. Yet it is thoroughly in human nature I look at Him here, yea, that is the way, and here I learn it. With adversaries He is simply God, in grace He is a man yet
God; and only precious as man, because He is, and as a man, dependent. Yet we have seen the Father in Him."

How blessed to thus contemplate Him in all His grace, and to have the affections of the heart nourished and fed as He is thus before us. Further, observe how that in His grace He made this poor weary heart to know that He loved her, and oh what delight to her heart it must have been to be loved of Himself after He had in her own words told her all that ever she did. What a secret treasure had she not found to bear henceforth with her through this weary scene!

Then observe His joy here. He had in precious grace made a path for Himself right into her poor desolate heart, and when the disciples came and found Him talking with the woman, and pressed upon Him the fruit of their anxiety for the need of His blessed body, His lips uttered to them what His heart had said to her, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah and in that revelation she found an object that henceforth was to govern her whole life. It has been so truly and sweetly remarked by another that with adversaries He is simply God -- in grace He is a man yet God, and only precious as a man because He is, and as a man, dependent.

So far we have been meditating on the Samaritan, not her state in any wise, but how He Himself had in His blessed grace come where she was, and caused His pressed heart to flow out to the sorrow and need that were there.

Let us now meditate on the Syro-Phoenician. The Lord leaves the confines of the region of His mission; this was, as we know, to Israel. He was Jehovah's Servant in the midst of that people, according to prophecy and the purpose of God. He is not seen here as among the Samaritans rejected by His own, but going forth to the borders of the accursed region, Tyre and Sidon. Here we see the blessed One seeking retirement, seeking to be alone, that is out of His sphere of labor, not in anywise as giving up His mission; then it is said of Him, "He could not be hid." Oh what a sentence! full of the deepest grace and blessing, as well as full of most precious meaning to the heart that longs to be filled more and more with Himself.

Further, this beautiful word as to Him lets us into the secret of the types amid shadows of olden days; it accounts for promise and prophecy as well; oh what a charm to the heart that knows His love that sentence is, "He could not be hid" -- the multiplied witnesses to His glory in this great reality, add to this charm, and give its measureless value to this great impossibility -- "He could not be hid."

But observe how suited to the heart of the blessed Lord was this place of hard-heartedness of the people on which the curse of Jehovah rested, as compared with Israel, for here He met want, need, which sought goodness in power -- this need and misery expressed in this poor woman here draws out what is above all promise, appealing to a riches in goodness able and willing to reach in mercy to wretchedness without title.

How blessed, then, to see the glories of the Person of Jesus Himself shining out in the various cases of want and misery that met Him in his lowly, blessed path on earth, each varied place and case serving to elicit His own worth and beauty. How well it is said that "Grace is the secret of the divine mind, love to sinners is the affection of the divine bosom, and out of a heart so stored there has been a constant utterance."

"What of the Night?"

Isa. 21:11, 12

Another shadow is nearly gone down on the great dial of time, another year will soon be numbered with the past, verily, "We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told," how soon they are fled as a watch in the night! How well it is said that "we take no note of time but from its loss"!

Standing, then, as we do just now upon the confines of the dying year, it becomes us solemnly and earnestly to ask the question: Where are we? "What of the night?"

Now observe the person addressed here is entitled a "watchman," a sentry keeping watch with wakeful eyes and measured step, through the long dreary hours of the night; open to be challenged as the only one who can give a true and accurate account of how things really are. It is the absence of our precious Lord and Master from this world which makes it night, and happy would it be if all His own so felt it, as to maintain in affection and heart loyalty that outside position which suits the friends and followers of a despised and rejected Christ; and along with it that expectant position which asserts the fact that nothing but His own personal coming for them can turn the gloom of the night into the joy of the morning.

There is something very blessed in "keeping watch," it is the only safe condition of the servant in such a night as now hangs around us.

Let us also note here how fully alive and awake the watchman in our scripture is: he answers at once, there is no delay in the reply, it is a direct, decided rejoinder immediately. But the reply itself is most significant, and points in a very striking way to what is immediately in our front, as we stand upon the threshold of 1894.

First note, "The morning cometh." Let us challenge our hearts as to whether this expresses the real affectionate longing of our breasts. It was on this the watchman’s fixed and steady gaze was set; it was this beyond all else that he longed for, with this his mind was engrossed and filled.

Reader, is it so with us? Are our hopes and longings “the day-break and morning star”? “The morning cometh.” How welcome its coming! Have we not known what it is to keep vigil by the bedside of a loved one, during the long dreary hours of night, and how eagerly greeted were the first streaks of light betokening the approach of day dawn, and how welcomed they were as well. Oh may it be so, only in fuller, deeper measure, as we wait for and see by faith the speedy coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
But there is another reply of the watchman, which is very solemn, namely, “also the night.” It is night now, but there is a darker, drearier one at hand. At the present moment the dark shadows of the “ebon night” are thickly flung around us. True, the present “far-spent night” is very dark, very gloomy, unrelieved by one spark of light save what comes from above but it is as nothing to that which is coming, a real night that will be to the world which will be left down in the night, behind in the night, to be overtaken by a thief in the night. Think of the world’s outlook at this moment a kind of universal dread wraps it around, men’s hearts are failing them for fear, general insecurity and mistrust prevail on all sides. Men are dreading every moment some fearful outbreak of violence and bloodshed, dreading the bursting forth of national convulsions which will ruin the commerce and prosperity of the kingdoms of Europe, and therefore they would give any price for fixed and settled peace.

Now, amid all this dismal foreboding, the dreary, sullen silence is at times broken by the despairing question, What is this to end in? What is this world coming to? Is there any hope? What is to happen to us? These are the sounds which reach our ears amid the closing hours of the dying year. Alas! how few are more than half awake to the true and real state of both the church and the world? The departure in the church from the truth is simply appalling, the settling down of the world for coming judgment simply terrible to contemplate. The increase of knowledge, the tremendous stride science has taken of late, the rapid growth of philosophy are all marks of the moment, keeping pace with these is a refinement of iniquity as dark as it is daring, a blasphemous determination to degrade the Son of God down even to the level of Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed, with the avowed object of benefitting the great “Brotherhood of Humanity.”

This has actually taken place in the so-called “Parliament of Religions” at Chicago.

One leading morning paper presents its readers with a description of the scene given by an eye-witness, himself a so-called minister of religion. He says:

The spectacle of Christians, Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, met together for a few brief days in fellowship, if not in unity, ‘gives,’ as the French say, ‘to reflect.’ The experiment, endorsed by the pope, disowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, embraced by the heathen Chinese, welcomed by Hindu, Parsee, Cingalese, and the chiefs of almost every acknowledged religion of the world, has resulted in a demonstration, the like of which has perhaps not been seen since the days of Constantine, Arius, and Athenæus.

Then in the close of his account this writer, expressing what the effects produced on himself a so-called minister of religion. He says:

With all this profanity crushing in upon us we may well say, “What of the night?” what of its blasphemy? of its rebel will to dishonor and degrade the blessed Son of God? We reply, a darker, blacker night of judgment awaits it, and rapidly approaches.

Oh, that His own stood out more distinctly and separately for Him, waiting to hear His own blessed voice, and to be caught up to meet Him in the air!
“Thy Sun Shall no More go Down”  
(Isaiah 60:20)

These words describe in vivid reality the coming time of blessing for poor scattered Israel, when the daughter of Zion, who now dwells, as it were, in dust, shall awake, and arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord be risen upon her.

But they also describe morally and spiritually all that lies before us, as we by faith survey the coming, nearing day-dawn of the bright Morning Star, in contrast with the fading, falling shadows on our life of pilgrimage below.

As with the New Year opening upon us, we turn over a fresh leaf in the book of history, is it not well to challenge our hearts, and ask where this new date finds us, and what is really before us?

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the Day-spring and Morning Star, but, blessed be His name, He is the Sun of the one eternal day, and the clearer and brighter He is before our hearts, the greater the ease with which we retire from all down here. All that is eternal and unfailing is on His side; all below and around us is in reality but sunset, the brightness and beauty are gradually but surely fading. If our poor eyes are turned there they are only on what is sinking below the horizon, but when they are fixed like the martyr Stephen on Jesus in the glory of God, how different it all is; then the outline, beautiful beyond all conception, of the eternal realities, unfolds itself before us.

There is one great and blessed fact which stands out to the eye of faith thus fixed on the nearing, heavenly sunrise: it is the blessed establishment of communication between the heart and its absent object. This too by the Holy Ghost, the heavenly messenger and glorifier of Jesus, who conveys to the soul the sense and comfort of His love and His blessed thoughts about us -- thus are we really invigorated and revived, thus do the things above display themselves in all their own blessedness before us. We live then in His own sphere with Himself, in all the calm and rest of that blessed region of satisfied desire, and in the peace and power of it we are carried through the raging storms on our own side, superior through His grace to the watery waste around us, the heart already in the place where its treasure is, where the sun no more goes down, but where the everlasting light of His presence enfolds it around for ever.

May our hearts, dear readers, turn more than ever there during this new year; be it days and weeks and months, few or many, and may we be more intently, looking up to, as well as abiding in, Him who came and died and rose again, and sits at God’s right hand for us, and looking forward to that blessed moment when His shout shall be heard by all His own raised or changed, who shall follow Him into the Father’s house, and there share His heavenly bliss and joys, of which we sometimes sing, when we say: –

“There with unwearied gaze,  
Our eyes on Him we’ll rest,  
And satisfy with endless praise  
A heart supremely blest.”

Looking Up and Within

The question asked has awakened a real desire to be, if possible, some comfort as to it. I think I know where many are as to this and such like subjects. Alas! we are all but poor ones as to deep and real heart exercise before the Lord concerning these things that trouble many. Let me first endeavor to emphasize the fact that what so many are longing after, as feeling they have not got, is the consequence of something else.

What is longed for, and rightly too, “affections satisfied,” “tastes imbied,” “Christ living in us,” “eternal life working” -- all this, and much more akin to it, results from, flows out of, something else. I will try and show what I mean by that something else, presently. Now observe that produced effects or consequences cannot create themselves, and if our mind or thoughts dwell much on their absence or possession, we are correspondingly depressed or elated; it is good to be convicted, but it does not help us to dwell much on our shortness of stature in divine fellowship or realization; and it does not comfort us to see certain qualities and joys which we know ought to be there, but which we are sure we have not. I think I hear the words, “Tell us what is that something which begets all this in the saint.” Well, I will try.

1st. The Christian is of a new order, and united to the Man at God’s right hand; the Christian is one with Christ in heaven. Wonderful, blessed fact that! Faith accepts it in all simplicity, and in the measure of faith, and in the power of the Spirit, is realization, communion, and joy.

2ndly. He to whom the Christian is united is a Man in glory, and the whole glory of God shines from Him; there he
knows Him, *there* he sees Him, *there* he has intercourse with Him; it must be so, because if we have to do with Christ it must be where He is, then as it is so, that is, as He Himself in glory occupies the whole soul, we are changed into His image. Diligence and purpose of heart on our part there must be most surely, not in the direction of what is produced in us, as if we could secure these, but in being absorbed with Him, who by His Spirit forms in us, as we are engrossed with Himself, all those *fruits* which are seen and noticed by men. Again I repeat it, nothing can produce results corresponding to heaven but occupation with Christ, who is there; that we while here are changed into His image as we are impressed by Christ *there*; that the beloved Son filling the entire vision of our soul, shapes and forms us in moral likeness to Him as He was here. This is all blessedly true, yet I feel that there is a danger of the heart valuing this rather for the effects and consequences which are produced by it, and flow from it, than because of His own inherent and captivating blessedness. I do not of course mean to say that one would say so, or even allow oneself to think so; yet there can be no doubt that if effects or consequences are prominent in the soul, what produces them is valued rather in reference to them, than absolutely in itself.

With us it *ought* to be Canaan first and then the lessons of the wilderness. These have a very different character when this is the order, yet I am assured it is the *divine order* for us; *working to* heaven, and *living from* it, are two very different things; starting from heaven would not make the wilderness of this world less the wilderness than it is, but all about it would be gilded, the clear, soft, blessed light of heaven would gild the dreariness of earth’s wilds.

We get an illustration of all this in Ex. 34. Moses’ face shone *after he had been in the mount with God*, and the effects were seen and felt after he came down among the people; the object in heaven forms in those whose object He is all those holy men, a nation, Israel, and as we have observed, with the father’s house, a witness both in the world and against the world which belonged to God alone in the mind and heart had been usurped by Satan, for the gods they worshiped were *demons* (see 1 Cor. 10:20, where Deut. 32 is quoted). It was then that God *chose* and called out one man for Himself, to be *separate* from his country and kindred, and his father’s house, a witness both in the world and against the world for God. In Abraham God had separated to Himself a family, a nation, Israel, and as we have observed, with the purpose of their being His witnesses among other realities to the fact that there was *one only God*. In due course this nation were further separated to God Himself from the world, of which Egypt was the figure, by a typical redemption, and became His dwelling-place on the earth.

But now be it observed this great revelation and witness of *one only God* was not sufficient to bring men into relationship with Him, and as to fact, God abode within the veil, as it is said, “In the darkness which shrouded his

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1st. The power of faith that looks up and *takes possession above*.

2nd. The power of *death* that displaces all that would dispute His right below. I would add, that in Phil. 4 we see the heavenly Man’s superiority to *all around* Him: he can “*stand fast* in the Lord,” when general weakness and declension abound; he can “*rejoice in the Lord*” in a scene and circumstances full of sorrow and grief: he can be without a care in a world full of cares, because he casts them on One who can carry them and not feel their weight, and thus he has “the peace of God” where all is unrest and disquiet around him: he can let things go here, because he has an eternal certainty in that place where Christ is, and who is “*at hand*”; he can occupy his heart with what is good amid abounding evil, and so find the God whose peace keeps his heart, walking beside him; he can be abased, and not be disheartened; he can abound, and not be elated, because Christ is his sufficiency in the dark day, and better than the best in the bright day; nothing stands in his way, he balks at nothing, he is seated on the power of Christ, and “*can do all things*”; though he has nothing, yet he possesses all, though empty, yet he is full: he has a *source*, and a *supply*, a *measure*, and a *channel* equal to the heart of God. “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, through Christ Jesus.”

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“The Man Christ Jesus”

*1 Timothy 2:5*

There are two great realities, two great divine facts, which constitute the basis of all true religion.

We have them both stated in the verse before us, namely:

“One God” -- “one mediator.”

God was pleased in former times to make one nation (the Jewish) the depositary and testimony in the world of the truth of the unity of the Godhead: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Lord is one Lord.”

We learn from Josh. 24:2 that the world had lost the knowledge of the one true God even the family of Shem, and the position which belonged to God alone in the mind and heart had been usurped by Satan, for the gods they worshiped were *demons* (see 1 Cor. 10:20, where Deut. 32 is quoted). It was then that God *chose* and called out one man for Himself, to be *separate* from his country and kindred, and his father’s house, a witness both in the world and against the world for God. In Abraham God had separated to Himself a family, a nation, Israel, and as we have observed, with the purpose of their being His witnesses among other realities to the fact that there was *one only God*. In due course this nation were further separated to God Himself from the world, of which Egypt was the figure, by a typical redemption, and became His dwelling-place on the earth.
majesty” (see Deut. 5:22; 1 Kings 8:12; 2 Chron. 6:1; Lev. 16:2).

Now it is in the second great fact, which is the distinctive truth of Christianity, that we learn how God can be in relationship with man. Note it well that whilst Christianity fully reveals the one God, it alone presents the fact of one Mediator. I would here record the testimony of another witness to the greatness and preciousness of this truth:

Two things here characterize the Mediator. He is a man; He gave Himself a ransom for all. The time for the testimony was ordered of God.

Precious truth! We are in weakness, we are guilty, we could not bring ourselves near to God. We needed a Mediator, who, while maintaining the glory of God, should put us into such a position that He could present us to God in righteousness according to that glory. . . . But He must be a man in order to suffer for men and to represent men. And this He was. But this is not all. We are weak – here, where we are to receive the revelation of God; and weak with regard to the use of our resources in God and our communion with Him -- even when our guilt is blotted out. And in our weakness to receive the revelation of God, Christ has revealed God, and all that He is in His own Person, in all the circumstances wherein man could have need, either in body or soul. He came down into the lowest depths in order that there should be none, even of the most wretched, who could not feel that God in His goodness was near him and was entirely accessible to him – come down to him -- His love finding its occasion in misery; and that there was no need to which He was not present, which He could not meet.

It is thus that He made Himself known on earth; and now that He is on high, He is still the same. . . . He is still a man in glory and in divine perfection. . . . No tenderness, no power of sympathy, no humanity like His. No human heart that can so understand, so feel with us, whatever the burden may be that oppresses the heart of man. It is the man, the Christ, Jesus, who is our Mediator.

It is blessed to dwell upon His Person as both God and man, and our wisdom and blessing is to hold fast both, not the one to the setting aside of the other. It is a poor and contemptible necessity to be clear than on that of life; I do most thankfully adopt the words of another and say:

If they did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, they had not life. . . . For that it was necessary that a divine and heavenly life should descend from heaven and communicate itself to souls, and that in one man; it was necessary that that man should die and terminate every relation between God and the fallen race, and risen should begin a new race, possessing (having through grace appropriated to themselves Christ) divine life.

How blessed to dwell then on the precious Lord’s “emptying Himself” (ἐκεκρατήσας) (see Phil. 2:7). Oh, to receive into our souls the full significance of this amazing grace, how He “took on him the form of a servant,” and so being dependent and obedient, a position He most carefully and in perfection continued in. . . . The Father has “given to the Son” (so incarnate) to have life in Himself. This is not true of Godhead. You could not say God lives διὰ any being. Christ says, I live διὰ τοῦ Πατερού (by the Father) (John 6:57). And the subject here is just this descent of life and our living by Christ, and the flesh of Christ is distinctly brought in and His death. In John’s Gospel this reception from the Father is most carefully everywhere retained, while His own proper Deity shines all through most strikingly.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the mediatorialship of our precious Lord, both as regards life and propitiation. Further, the fact of a mediator between God and man is, as we have observed, the great and distinctive truth of Christianity, “His coming from on high, His divine nature, His death, His life as man in heaven, all point Him out as the one and only mediator.” The loss of this mediatorial place of the blessed Lord would be the loss of Christianity.

Lastly, it is very solemn to ponder and dwell upon the fact, namely, that in coming times, Satan’s great personification of wickedness will deny Jesus Christ come in flesh (1 John 4:1-3). The confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh was “not merely to confess that He is come, but to confess Him thus come.” The denial of Jesus come in flesh is the spirit of Antichrist, and is also “that (power) of the Antichrist.”

Oh, for hearts true and loyal to His blessed Person in all that constitutes the God-Man, holding fast His divine glory with all holy reverence, but equally holding fast the perfection of His humanity and its servant form, the “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

“**To Believers in Christ**”

A letter bearing the above title has just come to hand, and in view of the subtle misuse of scripture which pervades it, as well as the utter ignorance of the word of God, and confusion of the writer’s own mind, evidenced therein, some notice of
it seems called for, as a warning to any who may be deceived by a crafty counterfeit of the enemy. It is, as the writer himself says, with principles not with persons we have to do.

First, there is a painful absence in the letter of any divine conception of the true nature and character of the church, the body of Christ. I cannot find once in all that is written, a sentence which conveys the thought of a divinely Spirit-taught mind as to this great secret and counsel of God before the foundation of the world; he seems never to rise beyond the association of believers on earth, and inasmuch as every association, according to the scripture thought of it, has the fact of one body for its basis, the writer is even in what he treats of, entirely apart from the thoughts and mind of God.

The letter is professedly issued as an exposition of the reasons which led the writer to sever his connection with a company of Christians with whom he had been for some time in fellowship.

But the object of these comments is to point out the perversion and misapplication of scripture which underlies the whole.

On page 2, last paragraph, a number of scriptures are put together, and it is said that these designate in various ways a principle in the New Testament, namely, “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13, R.V.). The scriptures so put together are 1 Cor. 1:9; 3:16; Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5, R.V.; Eph. 2:21, 22, where it is said, “a similar thought is found.” A more sad confusion and perversion of scripture could hardly be found than this. In order to set up what is called a “conditional” fellowship or association, “the kingdom of the Son of his love,” which is a precious unfolding of the Father and the Son, the counsels of association, “the kingdom of the Son of his love,” which is a precious unfolding of the Father and the Son, the counsels of association, according to the scripture thought of it, has the fact of one body for its basis, the writer is even in what he treats of, entirely apart from the thoughts and mind of God.

Now in the passage in question, we find that all was there that God had given; the blessed Spirit had come down, but was in fact circumscribed within the limits of Jerusalem and among Jews: no Gentile had as yet been received, nor was the unity of the body taught, all was yet undeveloped and the union of Jew and Gentile in one body was not, as has been said, “in evidence.” It is very evident from the application of this scripture that the author does not understand the meaning of verse 47. “To the assembly” here is evidently a gloss, and the word found in chapter 3:1 should come in here; it will thus read, “and the Lord was adding day by day together those that were to be saved,” that is, the spared ones at the close of the Jewish dispensation. It is beyond all question a lovely picture which is here presented to us, and that too for but a brief moment; there never had been seen such a picture previously on earth; it was the effect of divine grace, and it was in the name of the once crucified, but now glorified One; yet it was of a transitional character, and as to fact was confined to Jerusalem and Jews, so much so that if the nation had repented, Acts 3 might have been fulfilled. It is not until we come to Paul that we are instructed as to the body of Christ; as soon as the blessed One is rejected entirely, both in humiliation, and from glory, then the great secret is revealed, and the words “Why persecutest thou me?” told out the great fact that Christ was here on earth in His body, the church; now as all church association and fellowship must be on the ground of “one body,” how can any one be clear in respect of the principles of gathering, if they have no true conception of the heavenly nature and character of the church the body of Christ?

Another sad confusion as to scripture is found on page 4, middle paragraph, where John 1:13 and 10:28, 29 are adduced as evidence of the Lord building His church Himself, and “that we are added thereto unconditionally and eternally.” There is perhaps no part of the letter in which the total absence of any spiritual apprehension of the body of Christ is more apparent than here.

There is not a word in either of these passages in John of the Lord building His church, or our being added thereto; such is not the subject of John’s ministry or apostleship; it is specially and characteristically that of Paul; further, we are not “added thereto,” as the letter asserts; we are, by the Holy Ghost, united to Christ as Man glorified in heaven, and equally united together in one body; the distinction between “adding” and “uniting” is of every importance. It is very certain that independency is hostile to the whole principle of
one body. The church is not a voluntary system, not a trace is to be found of the principle of independency, it everywhere speaks of one body on earth, whose unity was, as has been truly said, “the foundation of blessing in fact, and its maintenance the duty of every Christian.” Let the writer of the letter we comment on take care that he is not in principle and in fact on the lines of a new and subtle independency, which is a crafty counterfeit of Satan. “There is one body and one Spirit,” is the divine ground and principle of all gathering and association of saints together, and all who are gathered to His name, would act as one simply because they are one.

To Paul was committed this special ministry. He tells us he was a minister of the church to complete the word of God, and so we are prepared to find the doctrine of the church as the body of Christ, fully set forth in his writings; we find full and detailed unfolding of it in Eph. 1 and chapter 3, in 1 Cor. 10 and chapter 12, and also in Colossians, yet there will not be found therein any such thought as building a body; what we do find is that the risen glorious Man exalted at the right hand of God is the head of His body, the church, and that He was given by God as such to be this -- The thought of a building, a habitation of God, is distinct in itself, in it there is no thought of head, or body, or union at all. It is important to see that in Ephesians we have Christ as the glorious Man raised and exalted in glory, Head over all things to the church His body; next we find those dead in sins, whether Jews or Gentiles, children of wrath, quickened together with Christ, raised up together and seated together in Him in heavenly places, as His body, all this being the fruit of the purposes and counsels of God before the foundation of the world; but when we turn to 1 Cor. 12 we see the body of Christ on earth, and maintained in unity by the power of the Holy Ghost. This it is which gives such force to verse 27, “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular,” that is, they were so in principle as gathered together at Corinth, but not in any wise as separating them from the whole body on earth, but as forming part of it, and on the basis and ground of it in principle and constitution.

As feeling the deep importance of the truths called in question in this letter, as well as the great truth of the moment, the body of Christ on earth, now the object of Satan’s direst opposition in various ways, but chiefly by counterfeit and imitation, I have entered thus into detail, with the earnest desire and prayer that God may open the eyes of the hearts of His people to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**Was all Christ’s Life Down Here Only a Manifestation of God to Men?**

I do not believe it would be possible to exaggerate the importance of a true and divinely taught reply to the above question. The truth as to it involves so deeply a holy appreciation of the relations into which the blessed Lord has been pleased to enter as man with regard to men, as well as His glory in connection with them, that I feel the Lord would have His own alive to their precious import and blessedness. In order to promote this I will here transcribe the words of the beloved servant to whom the whole church of God owes so much, though but little recognized, or it may be remembered by many now. The reader will remember that the italics are mine wherever found, except the contrary be stated:

There is one other point to which, though I have noticed it, I return, as of vital importance. Dr. W. holds that Christ represented God before men, not men before God.

The first part is most blessedly true, but even that not to the extent of the inferences Dr. W. would draw from it, that there must be identity of operation. The Son did not send the Father, nor spare Him, but deliver Him up for us. The thought would be utterly anti-Christian. He accepted His part of the work of grace. “Lo I come to do thy will, O God”; and a body being prepared for Him, He took upon Him the form of a servant and was found in the likeness of men. I may return to this point elsewhere; I merely take note of it now, and turn to the question of representing God to men and man to God. Now in His life down here, he that had seen Him had seen the Father, a most precious and sanctifying truth. John 14 is express in stating it, as the whole life of Jesus is the verification and illustration of it. He is moreover, in His Person the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His being, His hypostasis. As to this scripture is plain; and I have no controversy with Dr. W. Further, that He was true God and true man, united in one person, is not in question either; it is believed by both of us. The question is, Did He stand for men before God as well as for God before men. That He does in heaven is quite clear. He is gone into heaven now to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24). But was all His life down here only a manifestation of God to men? When He took His place with the godly remnant in Israel, being baptized with John’s baptism, assuredly not confessing sins as they did, but fulfilling righteousness, having emptied Himself and taken the form of a servant and entered upon the path of obedience, ἐν σχηματι εἰρηθείς ὡς ἀνθρώπους (that is, “being found in fashion as a man”), saying to John, “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” When He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, did He represent God to men? Was it not, as the first man was tempted and fell, the second man held fast and overcame? Did He not overcome, saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” and overcome by refusing to go out of the place of a servant which He had taken, though challenged by Satan to do so as being Son of God? Did He not hold the place of man when He said, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”? Did He not, when He dismissed Satan, saying, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”? He was always the obedient man before God, as Adam was the disobedient one; and though He abode alone, until redemption was accomplished, the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, yet He stood in this world as man before God, as well as God before men. Who was the obedient man, did always such things as pleased His Father, pleased in Gethsemane when His hour was come in the days of His flesh, with strong crying and tears made His supplication unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He
fear, ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας (that is, for His piety), was this representing man or God?

That He was alone till redemption was accomplished I fully recognize, but alone as the sinless man amongst men, to accomplish what was called for from man for God. If He tasted death for every man, was that as representing God to men, or standing for men before God? When God laid our iniquity on Him, was it representing God before men? When it became Him for whom are all things, to make the Captain (ἀρχηγὸς) of our salvation perfect through suffering, whom did He represent? When He cried in deep agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” did He represent God to man? That He must have been God to be fit and able to do it is most true; but He was not representing God before men, but drinking the cup given to Him. When He was made sin, for whom was He made sin? Did He represent God to man then or stand for men before God when He took up the cause of man (Heb. 2)? He did not represent God to men, but it is written in a certain place, “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, thou crownedst him with glory and honor.” He was the second man, the last Adam. He was the ἀρχηγὸς (Captain) of our salvation, the obedient, sinless, suffering man, who overcame Satan as man for men, was made sin for us (italics the author’s), died for our sins, that is, represented us before God, our iniquity being laid upon Him, and drank that dreadful cup, taking it from His Father’s hand, “the curse of wrath.” Was suffering (italics the author’s) the curse of wrath representing God to men or man as made sin under the righteous judgment of God? I add, that though the priesthood of Christ be now in heaven, where He appears in the presence of God for us, yet all His life was in every sense a preparation for it.

He had so taken up man, that it became God to make Him perfect in that heavenly place through suffering; He was tempted, suffering being tempted, that He might succor them that are tempted. Not only so, but He was made like to His brethren in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in all things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. And so in chapter 5 of the same epistle, comparing Him with the Jewish high priest, though showing the difference; and it is clear that the priest represented the people before God, confessed their sins on the scapegoat, and went into the sanctuary for them, as Christ has done into the true sanctuary for us. The priesthood of Christ is no doubt for believers; but to deny that He represented men, stood there as man for them before God, and that on the cross, as in Hebrews 2:17, as man, alone indeed but for men, is a ruinous error.

I do not make any apology for the length of this extract, its truth and deep importance at the present moment will be apparent to every soul taught of the Spirit of God. May God our Father, in His rich grace, grant to all who read it the “understanding” which His Spirit alone can give, to apprehend the precious truth it conveys, and its most marked and significant bearing on the times we are now passing through.

The Comforter

I think we might profitably look at the way the Spirit is presented in those three chapters -- John 14, 15, 16.

John 14:15-19, 25, 26; 15:24-27; 16:7-13. -- In the early chapters of this gospel the Spirit is presented more in the aspect of power -- divine power (chs. 4 and 7). The Lord said to the woman, “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.” He evidently points to eternal life in the power of the Spirit, so in chapter 7:37-39, and I think all through in the early chapters. When we come to chapters 14, 15, 16, the Spirit is spoken of as a divine Person who comes into the world consequent on the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is both power and a Person. If Christ personally leaves this scene, and He does, a Person comes from Him into the scene, and is identified in that way as “another Comforter,” Christ Himself remaining one, though in heaven. The Holy Spirit has come into this world a divine Person. He is power in the absence of Christ. He is here personally in us, and with us. The force of “another Comforter” is that Christ remains still that for us in heaven, does not give up the place of being a Comforter there. The Comforter is really paraclete; the meaning of that word is, one called to your side. The Holy Ghost is a divine Person, yet called to our side. How blessed!

This is consistent with the character of the gospel: it does not take us to heaven where Christ is, but brings heaven down to us. It is this that makes this gospel difficult. Paul takes us up to heaven. John brings heaven down to us.

The source of the mission of the Comforter in these chapters is very beautiful. In John 14 the Father sends Him, and that is very much in keeping with the chapter. The sorrow spoken of in chapter 14 is really heart sorrow, trouble of heart, and no one can meet that except the Father. The Father, knowing the sorrow and trouble of heart caused by Christ’s absence, sends the Comforter. When the Lord speaks of sending Him, He sends Him “from the Father.” The cooperation of the Father and the Son is thus blessedly kept up in that expression. When the Lord speaks of going away out of this world He does not speak of His death as such in this gospel, but that He is going to the Father.

“He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” Those are the Father’s things really.

It is beautifully pictured in the case of Abraham and Isaac. Eliezer said, “Sarah my masters wife bare a son to my master when she was old, and unto him hath he given all that he hath.” We ought to recognize the presence of the Holy Ghost that He has come in the name of the One that is gone. He has come to tell us of the One that is gone.

Then we come to chapter 15. There He comes from Christ in glory. Here in chapter 14 He comes from the Father. In chapter 15 it is the witness the Spirit bears to Christ, the glorified One. In chapter 14 it is the comfort the Father ministers by the Spirit to bereaved hearts in the absence of Christ. I am sure we do not feel in its force and
realization the absence of Christ, that He is not here, else we
should value the presence of the Spirit in a different way. The
trouble of chapter 14 is heart trouble. The heaviest sorrow in
the world is nothing to the desolation of a heart bereft of the
one that is everything to it. One longs to know Christ more in
that way, so as to feel bereft of His absence. We could not
feel it quite like the disciples; they had known Him on earth
with them. We should feel it if we came back from the place
where He is.

The presence of the Spirit, as in verse 17, would have a
very separating character. The world cannot receive Him, it
cannot enter into anything we have in connection with the
Spirit’s presence, so that if there is any drawing near to the
world it must be entirely on the side of the believer in failure.

Another thing comes out in chapter 14. When we lose
loved ones on earth we can have no more communications
with them -- they are with the Lord. The Lord says, as it were,
I am going away, but there is One coming who will keep up
the communications with you, who will bring all the
blessedness of the absent One into your hearts.

Observe the force in verse 18 of “I will come to you.” It is
not a manifestation of the Spirit, but the spiritual manifestation
the Lord gives to His people in His absence. It is realized by the Spirit. It is like Paul in the shipwreck (Acts 27:23),
when the apostle said, “There stood by me this night
the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.” It was a
distinct spiritual manifestation to him at that moment by the
Lord Himself.

Another incident resembling it was when Paul was in the
prison, and “the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good
cheer, Paul” (Acts 23:11).

We find the same kind of thing further down in this
chapter (vv. 21, 23), and this tells us the way in which it is
enjoyed. Our enjoyment depends on our keeping the Lord’s
commandments.

Is it not very striking that everything in Christianity, and
the enjoyment of its blessings, is connected with the Spirit and
the power of it?

And that is why there is so little enjoyment of it because
the Spirit is grieved and hindered. The presence in person of
the Spirit is the great mark of contrast between what existed
previously and what is now. When one understands the real
power of the Spirit one can understand the deficiency the
disciples had in not knowing it. There was no indwelling
presence of the Spirit in Old Testament times, but an
operation. The Spirit came upon them in power, but not in
Person. Now a believer is really indwelt by the Spirit. It is
the personal coming of the Holy Ghost, and it is just as
distinct and real as the coming of Christ in incarnation. I do
not think people realize that the Spirit is a distinct Person. He
is thought to be an influence, not a Person.

There is a good deal of talk in the present day about
getting the second blessing. What does it mean?

I believe what is really meant by it is what we call
deliverance. If a person has received the full blessings of
Christianity, that he was entirely purged by the blood of
Christ from every spot and stain, and that his old man was
crucified with Christ and the Spirit dwelt in him, I do not
know what second blessing there could be after this. All that
kind of thing tends only to occupy you with yourself -- a sort
of introspection which leaves you in weakness. A mystic is
full of desire. Love has an object. Christianity presents an
object to you. We are a great deal more mystics than we have
any idea of. What characterizes a mystic is desire, not love --
desire, a longing for something you have not got. The real
proof of the Spirit of God in power in a person is, that Christ
is before the soul. Observe the all things of verse 26 include
everything they failed to enter into and apprehend while the
Lord was with them.

The special character, as we have noticed, of the Spirit’s
presence in chapter 14 is that He is here in the absence of
Christ as a Comforter from the Father. Then in chapter 15 it
is what we might call a supplementary witness. “He shall
testify of me” of Me in heaven. The Lord contemplated His
ascension, His exaltation, and as ascended and exalted He
sends the Comforter. The testimony of the twelve which we
have in the gospel history was to what Jesus was on earth; the
testimony of the Spirit is to what He is now in the glory of
God.

I believe we have that testimony in Acts 5:30-32. He
would bear witness in the disciples as well. But we have this
witness of the Spirit to Christ in heaven, especially in Paul’s
epistles, because he presents a man gone up into the glory of
God. In John it is more God come down here into this world.
Is there not much to be gathered from the order in verses 26
and 27? Must we not receive the testimony to a glorified
Christ before we trace His path on earth?

I believe we must, we could not enter into the full
caracter of the gospels if we have not received the truth of
the epistles.

The real word for witness is martyr. Martyrdom is the
meaning -- the witness sealed his testimony with his blood. A
witness is a person who not only bears testimony by word of
mouth but suffers for it. If a person maintains the truth and
suffers for it, it is martyrdom really. Two words are used to
Paul -- “to make thee a minister and a witness,” and there it is
martyrdom. It is one thing to be a minister, but very
difficult to be a witness. A minister is one who makes the
thing known -- a witness, one that is it in his own person.
Minister in that verse could only apply to the apostle.

When we come to chapter 16, it is not a question of the
mission, the truth brought out there is not who sends the
Spirit, but the fact of His presence on earth, and the effect of
His presence. “When he is come he will reprove the world
of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” His presence
is the demonstration of these things. The Spirit will bring
demonstration to the world of these things. We must be either
with the Spirit as witness, or with the world and against the
Spirit. It shows how impossible it is for us to occupy any
position but an outside one, because if we are in company
with the Spirit we are bound to be outside. Is not this the
reason why we get so much about the world in John?
The whole system of the world is in opposition to the Father. There is nothing in the world that I can be an object to. If the Father’s love is in my heart, the love of the Father in me, it gives me the sense that I am His object:

“The object of His love I am, and carried like a child.”

In Joseph’s history, that was the compensation for the hatred of his brethren -- his father loved him. It is a very blessed thing to have the sense that I am the object of the Father’s love, I am an object to Him. What would preserve you from the love of the world would be that you are the object of the Father’s love.

It should read in verse 13, “the Spirit of the truth.” It is very important, because He is the One that maintains it, and the truth therefore will be maintained while He is here. He is the only One by whom it can be received, too. The truth can never be lost. The wonderful thing for us is that He maintains the truth through us, but if we are unfaithful, He will maintain it as long as He is here.

Apart from the Spirit you could not bear the communications of God. He is the servant of the Father’s glory.

1 Cor. 2: You get three things here that are very striking in connection with the Spirit -- revelation, inspiration, and reception. You could not take in things but by the Spirit -- you must have receptive power by the Spirit -- “All things that the Father hath are mine,” the identity of interest between the Father and the Son in the possession of those things. You could not learn the Father’s things apart from the Son. Any truth pressed apart from Christ is barren.

The Worthiness of Christ
(Rev. 5)

There are two words in this scripture, which are blessed words (ver. 2),

I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon, and (ver. 5),

Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.

Here we have the fact of worthiness, and the fact of power and ability to do it, and neither of these were answered by any one save Christ. “Who is worthy” and “The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed” are wonderful words for us, because they relate to the inherent excellency of Christ’s Person. He was worthy, in the glory of who He was, and He made a claim upon God to open the book. No one except Himself in the worthiness of His Person could make a claim upon God; it refers to that, so that He was entitled both in His Person and in the rights which He has secured to open the book; and then the other is a very affecting word, “He hath prevailed.” He prevailed through sorrow, death, the afflictions of the cross, being forsaken of God, despised by men, enduring suffering, and as the words of the hymn have it; “By being trodden down,” “He hath prevailed.” It is a blessed word to think that the ability of Christ, in that sense, consisted in His voluntarily going down and enduring everything, becoming, in that sense weaker than everything, giving Himself up to sorrow and the judgment of God, because of sin, and receiving everything, even that which was connected with man, from the hand of God.

“The object of His love I am, and carried like a child.”

I look at Him there by faith in heaven now, and see Him wearing the crown and sitting for a little while on the Father’s throne, and by-and-by He will give the overcomer to sit with Him on His throne -- and how do we overcome? Is it not true that we overcome by what is called defeat; giving up everything, surrendering everything. When I hold to Christ, I am the loser, not in the true sense of the word, but in another sense I am; but what a wonderful thing to look up and see Him there, and hear to-day those notes that are sounding in His ear in heaven, “Worthy,” and to know that God will move every created intelligence to do Him homage; because that is what I understand by Rev. 5, there shall not be a created intelligence that God will not move to do homage to the One who gave Himself up to suffering and death, the object of all heaven’s worship -- what a precious thing to think, that the One who gave our hearts to praise Him in time will sustain the combined worship of heaven through all eternity. The Lord give us to dwell upon His personal worthiness to-day, and to remember more unceasingly what He passed through, and that He has a right and claim and title over everything, as in Ephesians 1. He has acquired a right and title over everything, He is Head over all things to the church which is His body; that which He will own by-and-by, as bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh; as Adam owned Eve fruit of his mysterious sleep, so will Christ own that which was formed out of His sleep of death as bone of His bone, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

The Lord keep us waiting for Him, and in our measure delighting and rejoicing in Him now.

Labor and Rest

There is a word of great sweetness and comfort in Mark 6:31, 32. We are introduced to a scene of real labor and toil. The Lord had called the twelve, and sent them out two by two, without anything for their journey save a staff. They went forth without scrip, or bread or money: they preached, they cast out devils, they raised the sick; it was a time of diligent service and incessant toil, but a time of labor which resulted in fruit. After this we find the apostles returning, gathering themselves together and rehearsing to their blessed Master all they had done and taught. He had sent them forth, as it were,
empty handed and destitute of all man’s resources, and now they have returned and are spreading at His blessed feet their acquired treasures, the fruit of their work and toil; He, with all that tender grace and kindness which were ever His own, accepts it all, and in the divine and blessed love which ever sought the good of His own, He says, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile.” Let us note it well. He does not say, “Go and rest,” but “Come and rest.” Ah! it is not the desert place that could furnish the rest, if so it might have been “Go,” but it is Himself there, there where no distraction can intrude, no surge of worry, no blast of care can for a moment enter. Oh! how blessed His company in that sweet retreat, made so by Himself alone! How well may we sing of that –

No soil of nature’s evil,
No touch of man’s rude hand,
Shall e’er disturb around us
That bright and happy land.
The charms that woo the senses
Shall be as pure, as fair,
For all while stealing o’er us
Shall tell of Jesus there.

But there is a further precious thought here. Our own Master and Lord knows the snare of active service, even for Him -- the danger of giving that place which alone belongs to Himself -- the temptation to His poor, weak child and vessel to be more absorbed with it than with Him; hence how often do we hear Him say, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile.” We are told that “there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”

In this busy day of ours, with its confessed and crying needs on all hands, how true the picture before us is; yet while recognizing fully our clear, distinct duty to the church and the world, and not in any wise seeking to clothe our indifference or selfishness with a religious sanctimonious garb, let all who love His blessed service, which is indeed perfect freedom, bear in mind the lesson of our passage, which is plainly this, that the quality of our work will be poor and attenuated indeed, if it be not connected with Christ, from Christ, for Christ. Those who really and truly work for Him, must first of all be sustained and fed by Himself, as they hear Him say, “Come and rest.” And oh! how gracious of Him to take His poor wearied worker by the hand, as it were, aside, apart into a desert place with Himself, shutting Him out from all but Himself, that with mind undisturbed and heart undistracted, all may be gone over with Himself, in rest and quietness, and fresh thoughts of Himself and His love thus impressed upon the heart, producing renewed vigor and energy for further service for Him.

After this we have recorded a delightful instance of the deep compassion of that heart which was ever touched by distress and need. We are told the people “outwent them and came together unto him.” Oh! how He did attract the weary and wanting ones! How He also met and taught and filled them! How He made the desert place to yield bread enough and to spare, and then having finished all in His compassionate tenderness and goodness He Himself departed into a mountain to pray; His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. But we must bring these thoughts to a close by a glance at the end of the chapter. In the departure of Jesus into the mountain, we are shown in figure His taking the place of intercession on high; His disciples cross the water in a boat, and we have their vicissitudes; it is such a comfort to think of what is said here, “He saw them toiling in rowing.” Not the shades of night, nor the earnest vigil which He kept in prayer on the mountain-top, nor the storm-lashed lake that they were crossing, none of these could hide His poor servants from the Master’s eyes. Then He who “saw them” came to them in the darkest part of the night, walking on the water in supreme majesty, but in love, and spoke such words of comfort, “Be of good cheer,” “It is I” (ἐγώ εἰμι), “Be not, afraid”

In darkest shades, if He appear,
My morning is begun –
Lastly, observe it is said, “He talked with them.” How blessed the rest of that intercourse after all the toil and labor.

The Principle and Pattern of All True Greatness

Luke 22:24-27

Save for that blessed knowledge of Himself and the knowledge of the utter alienation of the carnal mind in its enmity against God, as proved in the rejection of Himself, it would be difficult to conceive how there could have been a “strife” in such a scene as is shown us in this upper chamber. The nature of this strife adds its solemnity to the fact; the word “strife” really means an ambitious contention, or love of quarrel; the word only occurs here. The dispute may have arisen while they were taking their places at the couches where they reclined, and may have perhaps been occasioned by some claim made by some for official precedence. Be this as it may, it is very clear that self and pride filled their hearts. Alas! it is all too evident that in the midst of all these deep solemnities, the thoughts of the poor disciples were about their vanity. Then the tender, gracious way He meets all is so blessed, there is no reproach of any kind, yet He so preciously sets them right: it was as though He said to them, “You are seeking for a high place, but I have taken a low one.”

What should we have said if so circumstanced? Would it not have been something severe, hard, wounding? Ah! nothing of that kind ever passed from His blessed lips. First, He tells us His verdict on the world -- in it the proud are flattered, it likes the haughty and the great; but you shall not be so.

Oh what a comfort and solace to the heart it is to come to the mind of Christ! how precious to dwell upon His beauty and upon His lowly, perfect grace! He was among them as One that served; whatever high place they sought, He took the low place.

Thus we have the principle and pattern of all true
greatness in His blessed words and Person here. No doubt with the disciples thoughts of the kingdom filled their minds in a carnal way, and led to the strife spoken of here for preeminence; it is in the presence of His coming and foretold sorrow all this takes place, as another so solemnly and blessedly says:

And this, in the presence of the cross, at the table where the Lord was giving them the last pledges of His love. Truth of heart was there, but what a heart to have truth in! As for Himself, He had taken the lowest place, and that -- as the most excellent for love -- was His alone. They had to follow Him as closely as they could. His grace recognizes their having done so, as if He were their debtor for their care during His time of sorrow on earth. He remembered it. In the day of His kingdom they should have twelve thrones, as heads of Israel, among whom they had followed Him.

Oh how perfect and precious is this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how tender and gentle are His rebukes; these never separate, never put us at a distance from Him, indeed they bring nearer to Him, as here, where, as we have seen, He speaks of them as companions of His temptations! In connection with all this, may we not say with another, that one feels too sadly in one’s own heart, that it is one thing to render to Jesus the tribute of admiration, or even of tears, and another to join one’s self with Him for better or worse, through good and through evil, in the face of the present world; one thing to speak well of Him, another to give up all for Him. Lastly, observe all this is on the way to the great end, the great consummation of all His blessed love and grace. It is striking and solemn to see how this blessed end is another to join one’s self with Him for better or worse, render to Jesus the tribute of admiration, or even of tears, and among whom they had followed Him.

The Divine Metamorphosis

(2 Cor. 3:18)

We hear the expressions continually, a transformed life or the transfigured life, and the word in the original language, given by the Spirit (μεταμορφώμεθα) gives us the English word metamorphosis, and is used, as in this chapter, of the Christian who beholds the Lord in glory without any intercepting veil, like Moses of old upon his blessed face; and is also used of the blessed Lord Himself when He reached His highest glory as a man on earth, and was transfigured on the holy mount (see Matt. 17:2) (μεταμορφώμεθα).

Before looking at this great reality itself, and how it comes about, I would remark that it is not said our life is transfigured or transformed, but that we ourselves are, no doubt the life of such will manifest this, the evidence and proof of the metamorphosis will be seen in the life; but it is of all importance to see that it is of the Christian himself it is said the transformation takes place -- the Christian, who is God’s workmanship, a new creation, dead and risen with Christ, and in whom God the Spirit dwells. It is blessed beyond all expression to know we are thus “in Christ,” and to know we are actually united to Christ in glory; a Christian is of Christ’s generation and suitable to be united to Him, in that sense he is of His kindred, fruit of His death (see John 12:24). As such he is fit to be united to Christ in heaven by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

The first great reality set before us here is the blessed Person on whom the Christian’s eye is turned, the divine object here presented, the Lord in glory without any veil on His face; here He is the contrast to Moses who had to put a veil on his face. The reason they were afraid to look at Moses was that the glory was there -- they could not look to the end; they did not know when they offered a sacrifice that it was typical of Christ.

How blessed to see the contrast in the face of Jesus Christ, every ray of glory shining there attracts and assures the heart. There is no veil on His blessed face, and there is no veil on the Christian’s heart. The object then is the Lord in glory, He, who having made atonement, has gone up into heaven, and is in the glory of God; on Him we gaze with joy, with affection, with intelligence, then as we gaze on Him there, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by “the Lord the Spirit.”

From glory to glory conveys to the heart the thought of progress. Thus, as we think of the divine metamorphosis, we have these blessed facts:

1. *The Object* -- the Lord unveiled.
2. *The place where He is* -- heaven and in glory.
3. *The power*, by and in whom the beholding is effected -- the Holy Ghost -- the Lord the Spirit.

How blessed, then, in the power of the Holy Ghost to fix the
Peace -- Power -- Plenty
(Phil. 4:7, 9, 12, 13)

What an immense comfort it is to know that the word of God leads our souls on the one hand up to the most exalted thoughts of the revelation of God, on the other hand down to the commonest things a child of God has to pass through. We have a striking instance of it here; the close of chapter 3 sets before us most blessedly how that our body of humiliation shall be fashioned like unto the body of His glory. Then in the beginning of chapter 4 we see how the same grace can come down to the details of the pathway of two women, who were not walking evenly together! How blessed to see that there is no forgetfulness in grace of even the smallest thing, “Pray that your flight be not in the winter,” shows us that the thought of the weather was present to His gracious mind. The word then is, “Rejoice in the Lord,” and the fitting person to express this is a poor prisoner in Nero’s dungeon. This shows how entirely it is outside and beyond all around us here. Again observe it is “always” as well as “in the Lord,” or perhaps it would be more true to say it is always because it is in the Lord. Clearly then his song is “Rejoice in the Lord alway,” and it furnishes us with a blessed illustration of 2 Chron. 29:27, “And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began.”

“Let your moderation be known unto all men.” This will be the proof to all, that our conversation is in the heavens; if we are seen to stick up for ourselves, it is the very opposite of yieldingness: this, along with subduedness and unresistingness is our true pathway through present scenes. This brings us to the “Peace of God which passeth every understanding.” What a blessed resource is this peace of God, and what a wonderful exchange for our cares! these it is our privilege to make known to Him, bringing all to Him and leaving all with Him. Alas! many try to keep the peace of God instead of its keeping them. Oh, that such of my readers may prove what a blessed sanctuary and retreat His peace brings us into.

But not only have we peace here, but also power; this flows from the occupation of the heart with good; what a mercy it is in a world of evil, that the heart may be free to find its delight and pleasure in what is good; we are not only living in a world of evil, but we have it in our own hearts, and must judge it where it is tolerated, yet to be ever occupied with it is a fruitful source of weakness. Even when we judge it, it defiles, it is soiling to the mind even as such. The real power is in taking delight in those things in which God delights, to be living now as with God in heaven, doing those things that please Him, and also being in that condition of mind in which He takes delight.

Here, then, is the true pathway of power,

Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are

honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things . . . and the God of peace shall be with you.

May our hearts more and more know what it is to go in the blessed company of “the God of peace” through a restless scene.

But then further, we have also here plenty as well as peace and power, and so the apostle says he had learned it, learned to find in Christ both competency and fulness, it was a real state for Paul; it is not here, as we say, an abstract proposition: if full, he has preserved from all self-satisfaction and self-elation; if hungry, he was preserved from despondency and dissatisfaction; for him Christ was all embraced all in Himself. May we know and enjoy more fully this blessed peace, power and plenty.

Victory but not Communion
“I have seen God face to face”
(Gen. 32:30)

What a moment in one’s life when it could be said by any of us, “I have seen God face to face”! Let us see how this came about with Jacob. An interval of considerable time had elapsed since he had said, “this is the gate of heaven,” of the place where he is seen as a poor, weary wanderer at sundown with only the stones of the earth for his pillow. His circumstances have changed considerably since then. Now he is full, now he is rich, he has a stake in the world. While in Laban’s country he has grown and increased, “oxen and asses, flocks and men servants and women servants,” declare his wealth and possessions, but his faith is poor and his heart oppressed, “greatly afraid and distressed” tells the sad tale of him who dreads Esau’s host, and how like us oftentimes when we look at him, fearing and praying and calculating and settling all with human skill and to the best of man’s device.

It is well for us to remember that there is such a thing as an exercise of spirit, which is the product of pure unbelief; under its influence we are awake in nature’s dread, and we pray in unbelief and want of confidence. Oh how often is it with us like the disciples in the storm, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”

Now this state brings us under discipline, our God and Father is at issue with this, yet so wonderful is His grace that He makes that which calls forth the discipline the occasion of our blessing; such is His grace that all is laid under tribute, as it were, for His own glory and His children’s blessing.

But to return to the history before us, so full of profit and instruction to the soul. It is well to observe that in poor Jacob’s mind and thoughts it was quite otherwise to seeing God face to face. He was full of the dread and horror of meeting Esau; this, and this alone, engrossed his mind, hence it is he has recourse afresh to the means of unbelief. Wives and children are sent on before, and present upon present prepared for Esau: “I will appease him with the present that
goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face: peradventure he will accept of me.” This is Jacob’s plan and hope. Alas! how vain, his strength was not there; neither human wisdom, nor carnal stratagem, nor skill of craft, can supply this. God Himself now draws nigh to deal with Jacob, He delivers him from Esau’s hands, but, blessed be His name, He takes him in his own blessed hands, as He wrestles with him. Oh what a sight! a poor weak worm grasped by almighty power under the mystic form of a man; here is Jacob, in the crisis of his life, singly and alone, face to face with the Invisible, Himself!

Again, observe how blessedly God sustains his faith in the wrestling; it was needful, nay, it was indispensable that Jacob should be withered, pulverized, crushed; how blessed to see that all this is accomplished, yet Jacob is sustained -- withered, yet sustained!

Oh that our hearts may rightly take in the precious wisdom and grace unfolded to us here!

Further, observe how he is victorious -- he is made to feel his weakness for life; God touches him in the hollow of his thigh, the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him; this closes the scene of wrestling, as soon as the limb commences to shrink it is over. Yes; but victory is his with God who wrestles with him. Jacob is, as a crippled, withered man, a prince with God, and prevails with God and with men.

Let us note well here the nature of the blessing -- in figure and type all is new; we have here a new day, a new name, and a new kind of conqueror -- a halting victor.

Oh that our hearts may be made sensible of the glory of all this -- all, as it were, new and all of God. It may be, some who read this page have proved it, how their God and Father has brought to an end practically the strong nerve and muscle which has been their stay and resource -- how He has said to us, as He wrestled with us: “My child, all this must come to an end.” No more self-dependence, no more self-confidence, no more human skill and craft, and carnal, worldly wisdom; but simple, guileless, childlike weakness, that casts itself wholly on and waits only on Me.

Lastly, observe how that here it is victory but not communion -- there is no revelation of His name, it is a secret and hidden; it is a blessed scene here in the grace witnessed, but how unlike the calm and peaceful and restful communion of Abraham with Jehovah, interceding for others instead of wrestling for himself.

May we know what it is to be halting victors, but also having the joy of communion with Himself.

“Lame as I am, I take the prey; Hell, earth, and sin with ease o’ercome; I leap for joy, pursue my way, And, as a bounding hart, fly home -- Through all eternity to prove Thy nature and Thy name is Love.”

“His (Three-fold) Glory”
(John 1:1-12, 14, 18, 29-32)

Let us adoringly meditate a little on this blessed theme.

First. The glory of His Person in all the deep depths of it comes before us. The first twelve verses have been called, and appropriately, too, “the golden preface” of this gospel; the Lord Jesus is here set before us in all that is personal, so that with reverence and holy love we may contemplate His glory, “a glory as of an only begotten with a father, full of grace and truth.” It was difficult to exaggerate the blessedness of such true, reverent contemplation, the Spirit of Christ alone can be the operator in, and power of this. The mind is here above all an intruder; when it asserts its usurped rights, within this sacred enclosure, it does so with an eagle eye and icy heart, proving itself, as it ever does, entirely destitute in regard to love and hope and joy, reveling in analysis and glorying in dissection. But our blessed theme just now is entirely apart from all this; we are dwelling on the glory of His Person in all its positive blessedness; it is what He is in Himself; as has often been remarked, He is not set before us here in His relative character. Another has said that Christ was the earliest thought from God that rose upon the moral darkness and chaos of apostate man. The Christ of God was the earliest revelation that arose upon the ruins and darkness of Adam, and though for a season that divine depositary of all light, that great source of all vivifying beams, remained unmanifested, yet effulgence worthy of Him, and which belonged to Him, came forth to cheer and guide.

Let us further remark in our contemplation of Him how it is said, “In the beginning was the Word.” At the beginning of all things He was there without any beginning; this, as it is said, is formally expressed in the words with which the chapter opens: so that we are now here in presence of the eternal existence of Himself. “In the beginning the Word was.” How blessed thus adoringly to dwell, Lord Jesus, on Thy Person as “from everlasting!” In connection with this we are also told of His distinct Personality and the eternal nature of the Word. “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” I feel it of great moment on this subject to quote here the words of another.

The distinct personality of the Word was not as people have wished to make it, a thing which had a beginning. “In the beginning the Word was with God.” His Personality is eternal as His nature. This is the great and glorious basis of the doctrine of the gospel and of our eternal joy, what the Savior is in Himself, His nature, and His Person.

So that in our adoring contemplation of Himself we can say in His existence He is eternal, in His nature divine, in His Person distinct.

Now let us dwell on another glory here, even the revelation of God and the Father in Him: this we have in verses 14 and 18 of our chapter: this is connected with what the eternal Word became (εγενετο) up to verse 14. We have what He was as well as the state of the sphere in which He
was manifested: at verse 14, as is said, historical Christianity begins. The Word became flesh; it was not an appearance as in olden days, but a real man in the midst of men; then we are introduced by the Spirit to the two great things resulting from His becoming man, first grace and truth have come in Him; secondly, the only Son in the bosom of the Father reveals Him as known by Himself in that position. Oh how well it is that we can say as here we wonder and worship, that there is nothing like that, and how surpassing all knowledge is the thought of it! Further, how much higher (if we are permitted so to speak) is this to what Rev. 19 or Psa. 45 unfold to us; in these we are instructed as to His relationship to man in government, but in what our hearts are now contemplating, we see Himself in His essential relationship to the Father; and may we not again say that as we behold Him so revealed and revealing as in it, the bosom of the Father, we fall at His blessed feet and worship and adore. The third glory found here is that of His blessed work in its two parts.

He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, this is its blessed first aspect; it is well to note that this passage does not treat of the guilt in which men are, that is a subject of the deepest moment and interest, and has its own place as such in scripture; but here we are instructed as to the state of things before God. The majesty and holiness of God both demand that sin be removed from before His eyes. Jesus is the Lamb of God, He comes, as it were, from God’s side, He was perfectly suited to the glory of God, He and He alone could establish it, and that too where sin was found. Another has most blessedly thus expressed it:

The cross is the basis of this blessing. All the moral elements of good and evil have been clearly brought to light, and have been shown each in its proper place, and Christ is at God’s right hand, as Man, in the divine glory, in virtue of having resolved every question that was thus raised.

How blessed thus to contemplate with adoring heart and affection His glory as the Lamb of God; its full import is most preciously set forth in the words,

And I beheld, and lo in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy . . . for thou wast slain, &c.

How precious to the heart that has been taken into His love, are these words, “Thou art worthy . . . for thou wast slain”; and in its worshiping homage, it delights to treasure up the fact that has been stated, namely, that as in His deepest humiliation, His glory was not veiled from the opened eye, so the glories of His heavenly throne do not conceal the tokens of His sufferings. Thank God, He never can be hid, be the scene what it may.

The other aspect of the glory of His work is that He baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and this of course implies His ascension into the heavens and His being glorified. Oh how blessed to contemplate Him in this, from the “lower parts of the earth” to “far above all heavens,” so that as Man victorious, Man in the glory of God, He might receive the Holy Ghost for others, and thus the blessed Spirit of God, third Person of the adorable Trinity, He Son of God, in due season did shed forth on others. Lastly for His own the deep significance of this second aspect of His blessed work is apparent; it is thus they are brought into an entirely new position, and this too as the result of His glory as the ascended Man. Now may we not ask, What subject could be more precious than this to the hearts of His own? Oh that the affections of all that are His may be not only called forth, but also detained in true worship and adoration, as each part of His glory passes before our souls.

“We Spend Our Years
as a Tale that is Told”
(Psalm 90:9)

The shadows of the expiring year are lengthening upon us, the end is fast approaching, another milestone in life’s journey will soon have been past. The sunrise and the sunset belong to this world, the eternal day lies beyond it all and above it all.

Let us then, standing on the verge of the closing period, pause and listen to the voice which speaks to us to-day.

Wherever we turn the eye, one great fact is clearly seen, namely, that we have reached in very earnest the era of universal instability and change. “The foundations of the earth are out of course.” The great moral obligations, which in times past have bound society together, are all in a state of dissolution.

In every department of life here, the same sad sight forces itself upon us.

The two spheres on which the eye is most fixed at the present moment are the church and the world. In the first, the symptoms of approaching judgment are thick on every side.

The apostasy from the faith has well-nigh reached its summit, so complete and far-reaching has the surrender of truth been, that but little remains to be given up. Blasphemy against God and His Christ is the pervading atmosphere of the professing church, and the blasphemy is nourished by pride; “proud blasphemers” abound on every hand; verily we are in a far-spent night, and a very dark night as well. Those who
occupy this standpoint, and who witness from its elevation, are decried and refused as alarmists, pessimists, and so forth; in this, as in all else, history repeats itself.

Further, external appearances are all against them it is said, there is the increase of knowledge, the tremendous strides of science, the rapid growth of philosophy, the clear light of a deeper and more enlarged scholarship. All these are flung in their faces, and they are bidden to be silent in the presence of such indisputable testimony; thus the word of the living God is set aside, and its solemn and precious contents scattered to the winds -- these as not worthy of this enlightened age, are characterized as puerilities, composed for a bygone ignorant generation and unworthy of present credit. Oh what a sight does the professing church exhibit! Superstition and rationalism, hand in hand, overflow the face of the land, carrying the great bulk of people on their flood-tide. In view of all this how solemn are the words of our blessed Master and Lord: “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith [πιστεύειν] on the earth.”

When we turn and look at the condition of the world, how ominous the signs on the horizon. The lull of the armed peace is already broken, and a conflict for the existences of kingdoms is looming in the near future. Who can tell what complications may be at hand, what embroilment of nations may arise out of this present struggle between China and Japan? It needs but an open eye to see the dark cloud which overhangs the world; it will ere long burst, then oh, what a crash when the war fever asserts itself! Weapons of deadly power and magnitude are prepared, and in hand, too; man’s inventive powers having been all exercised to their utmost in devising the most effectual engines of destruction.

Amid all these time marks, and above and beyond all this upheaving, that is in sure progress, the bright and blessed heavenly hope shines in all its own brilliancy and warmth before the eye and heart of the watcher and waiter for the One who is coming for His own. The heavenly hope is the heart’s affectionate longing for Himself, it is not to be absent from the sphere and scene of trial, but to be with Him for his own sake, to be in His blessed presence and company above and at home forever; this has ever been the hope of the church, her heavenly hope. She will be no doubt associated with Him in other scenes, and her heart delights to know that He who was cast out here will reign here and have His rights here; but above and beyond that, her own special bright prospect and longing is to be with Himself where He is.

How near is this to faith and affection! How blessed to think that ere another year runs its course, we and all His own, so scattered here, may be gathered to Himself, raised or changed, and caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be ever with the Lord. May the Lord awaken, by His grace, the slumbering hearts of His own to go forth in greater distinctness and affection to watch for Him.
The Person and Offices of the Spirit

No. 1

I desire simply to bring before you the scripture unfoldings as to the Person of God the Holy Ghost. The subject is of all importance, not only because our God and Father has been pleased to reveal it to us in scripture, but also because the presence in person of the Comforter on earth constitutes the essential difference of the present Christian state; it is true it is not the foundation of it, but the power and presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, as the result of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and His exaltation to the right hand of God, is the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity.

I would at this time confine myself to the great fact of the Personality of the Spirit as we have it revealed to us in scripture.

It is very comforting to the heart to know that while on the whole page, as it were, of scripture, His divine Person is unfolded more or less, He is brought before us more vividly in His Personality, as soon as the blessed Lord announces to His disciples His approaching departure out of this world to the Father.

What tenderness of the heart of Christ comes before us in this! He knew what a wrench His departure would be to their poor sorrow-filled hearts, He knew what a blank His absence would create. He was about to leave them in Person, another Paraclete (παρακλητος), or, as some have called Him, Advocatus, that is, one “called in,” was to be here in Person. Oh how tender of the Lord all this, as He was about to leave them in Person a Person then was to come and abide with them for ever.

This is the more striking as we remember that in the early chapters of John, the blessed Spirit is presented to us rather as Power than in Personality. We know, thank God, He is both.

But further, in order that we may have the fact of His divine Personality more impressed upon us, I would observe how that throughout those precious chapters of John 14, 15, 16, the language in which the blessed Spirit revealed the mind of God, and inspired as well the writers to convey it, leaves no doubt whatever as to the Personality of the Comforter, for we have the masculine, such as άντος, that is, that Person; άντος, that is, He Himself used, when speaking of the Spirit: it is then Him, as has been very truly said, “As the living and conscious exerciser of true personal will and love, as truly and fully as the first ‘Paraclete,’ the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (1 John 2:1).

Now it is very blessed to observe that this new personal power, this divine Person, God the Holy Ghost, is spoken of as “Power from on high” (see Luke 24:49, and compare with it Eph. 4:8 and Psa. 68:18); this heavenly endowment they were to receive consequent upon the ascension and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, moreover, note they were to be clothed with it, for that is the force of the word in the original (ενδυσαμενοι), they were to have put upon them the garment of heavenly power, heavenly endowment! How precious to dwell on this, and what light it sheds on His own gracious words, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” Further, note that in the sense of power we are unclothed until we receive the heavenly gift -- God the Holy Ghost -- and He alone is power. May we rejoice evermore in this heavenly Comforter and power.

But again let me remark, that this new power was also to be the fulfillment of the promise of the Father in three ways, namely:

1st. In vivid contrast with law and Jewish blessing.

2nd. As setting forth the new order of power connected with the characteristic name of Christianity, namely, Father.

3rd. As having been given to Christ and received by Him from the Father for others; it was but suitable that He the second Man in His place of exaltation, having revealed the Father, should receive Him, the Spirit, for others, and as soon as the Spirit had been given, and sent down from Him in glory, this explanation is thus given, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he (Jesus) hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:33).

Let us then dwell much on the blessed fact of there being in us and with us a blessed divine Person, God the Holy Ghost, He and He alone could be the solace for the wrench and the filler of the blank caused by the departure and absence of our Lord Jesus Christ; He and He alone could supply the comfort...
for their sorrow, sustaining their faith in the One now to be unseen, and as well testifying of the loved absent One to their hearts. May we know this gracious ministry of this personal Comforter more and more.

“Thou Remainest . . .
Thou Art the Same”

Another period of time is begun, and the things of the former year are passed away with it, men and things have faded from view, many of them to be forgotten, remembered no more. We enter upon an unknown future to-day, full of hopes to some, fears to others, uncertainty to all. When I say uncertainty, I mean only in respect of time and things on earth; thank God, all that is of real value is for the Christian "sure and certain . . . within the veil."

In the passage which supplies us with the two blessed presentations of Christ which head this page, we find the Spirit through the apostle contemplating the perishing, and the waxing old, and the changing, and the folding up of the whole of this material earth; but humbled as He might be, who became man, yet He was the Creator Himself, and His years could not fail.

Further, let us note the importance of the word rendered “Lord” in the quotation from Psalm 102:25-27 -- it is the supreme and incomunicable name; it is Jehovah here, but is translated “Lord” in the Septuagint. It has often been remarked that the name God may be used in a subordinate sense and applied to those who represent the authority of God, but the name of Jehovah is never thus used, it is His own blest name of covenant relationship, Himself the everlasting and immutable One.

Let us just for our comfort meditate on the precious contrast presented to us here, namely, the crumbling and perishable creation with the eternal Christ -- Jehovah.

First, how blessed to know that He abides, He remains the same, when all else shall have both changed and passed away; the tendency with us is to look at material things as forming a solid resting-place for our hearts; it is amazing how substantial to us is the land of shadows, how we pursue them, though continually wearied and disappointed.

Secondly, observe that all these things shall not perish simply for want of abidingness in themselves, but according to the will of Him who created them, hence it is said, “As a covering shalt thou roll them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same” -- that is, the existing One, who does not change -- the word used for remain (διαμενεί) means to abide through all changes.

May our hearts find their rest and repose in Him, may we be both won and satisfied by Himself, so as to be both suitable to Him and to serve Him the little while we wait for Him.

“...And thus our bark moves onward,
O'er life's tempestuous sea,
While death's unerring hand
Is stamp'd on all we see
But faith has found a living One,
Where hope deceiveth not,
For life is hid with Jesus --
And Jesus changeth not."

Mark 7

There are two great subjects in this chapter, and I do not think it is amiss to divide it under these two great heads; that is to say, we have everything upon man’s side exposed, and everything on God’s side in goodness and grace and kindness manifested. I think this chapter will bear division into these two parts, the entire exposing of all on man’s side, and the manifesting in grace and kindness by our Lord Jesus Christ of all on God’s side.

Let us look at the first division, the opening out and exposing of all that was connected with man. It is very solemn to see that it is not here man in what I might call his worst condition. When God is pleased to let in His light in scripture upon the state and condition in which man is by nature before Him, He takes up (and I think you will find it, not in one part of scripture only, but all through) what we might call the best kind of humanity, not the worst kind; He lets His light in upon that which might be considered best in man, to show what was really there, even when there were external advantages which He Himself was pleased to confer. And when I say the best kind of humanity, I mean what the Jew was. I think this will be found set forth in other parts of scripture in other connections: for instance, all through the Gospel of John we see what was old and what was connected with the Jew contrasted with that which is new and that which has come in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Jew is in every case taken up in that way as the great illustration and instance of mankind in his most favored circumstances and condition.

Now let us look at how it stands before us in this chapter. First of all, we have depicted in a very solemn way the terribly low and degraded condition in which the Jew was found. The people had sunk down to this, that religion with them consisted in hardly more than the lowest conceivable external washing of pots and cups and brazen pans, and so forth. It had come to the most degraded and lowest form of ritual; that is the way the chapter opens. And I think it is not going too far to say that in proportion to the excess of the external is the diminishing of the internal; that where there is great attention to what is outside, there is but little thought of what is within. We see that all around us at the present moment, and that is what meets us in the very first instance here. There was great thought for what was external, the washing of hands, and so forth, what is called in the Epistle to the Galatians, “beggarly elements,” and in the degradation to which they had fallen, that is what their life of religion consisted in.

But along with that, we find here that there was a system
of religious fraud, it cannot be called anything else, built up upon the abuse of what was of God in the ritual of old -- that is to say, the consecration of property, for that is the meaning of the word “Corban” here. “Ye say if a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.” Now the meaning of it was simply this, a man was enabled, by this huge system of religious fraud, to so devote his property apparently to the service of God, under certain limitations, that he himself could avail himself of it whenever he pleased, but it was put out of his power to devote that property for the advantage and help of his poor relations. He, although he had consecrated his property in that way, was none the poorer for that consecration; all he had to say was “Corban,” when it was a question of his fulfilling the filial relationships of life to his father and mother, when it was a question of acting in the natural affection that is planted in the heart of man, and without which there is manifested one of the leading features of the last times. Instead of all that, a man could so retire from the need of even a father or mother that he could positively glorify God by neglecting the relationships of life. That was the meaning of “Corban,” and that was a great system of religious fraud; and the Lord exposes what I may call the inward thing in connection with that of which we have already treated. The washing of certain things was external, but this principle connected with the word “Corban” was what really came out from the heart; it was a deliberate intention, by fraud, to reserve to one’s self the right to use one’s property when one pleased, and yet to get the name of devotedness as having consecrated it to God. That is the first great element of the state of degradation in which this favored people of God were found here in this world.

But now there is another case, that not only was there all this external unreality, and this deep-seated determination to carry out the tradition of the elders, and the extinction of all that was correct and true with regard to the relationships of life, but there was also an empty system of mere lip service to God. “This people” -- the Lord quotes from Isa. 29 in exposing the condition of man -- “This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” And now how solemn it is to reflect on that. The lips were all in activity, the mouth was ready to attest its willing witness, but the heart, which is the real seat, the real source of all that God cares for and looks at, and that no other eye but His can penetrate, the heart was perfectly lifeless and distant as far as God was concerned. “This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” And you will find just as then so now, that the bowed head, the rigid posture, and the wretched face are all consistent with a heart distant from God, and that all that sort of external pietism, if I may so express it, has not got in it that which God accounts as the germ of that which is really true to Him. The root principle of this is unreality, and that is the root of all that prevails and asserts itself at the present moment. The crying need just now is a breakdown in the minds of men in what is called religion. That is the great need of the day. And let it not be supposed that any class or body so called can claim immunity from a system like that; let no one suppose that this has no voice for him or her. There is nothing that can so infect the heart even of a Christian, a real child of God and a true follower of our Lord Jesus Christ, nothing that so stealthily gets into the inner being and permeates it as unreality. I am assured that it is just one of the things that Christians have to be on their watch against at the present moment. We have to take heed lest we should be tinged and characterized by it. Thank God we do not need to go to human histories or human records to prove this. I often think what a mercy it is that it is not necessary for us to have to wade through the vulgarity of modern print and paper to find out what the true real condition of man away from God is: we have the record of it in the word of God. This abused, hated, slandered book has the whole record in it, not only of all that man is, and of all that man has done, but of what he will develop into.

Am I challenged as to development? I reply, I believe in the development of man, but in every kind of evil. I believe also in succession, but in succession of evil. Let those who will, grasp at both development and succession; I fully admit them; but that is the side on which they are. In the simple but very striking story that is told in the gospel history, and which we commonly speak of as the good Samaritan, do you observe the way in which that great truth is set forth by the Lord? “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” That is man’s course; that is the development that is marked out in scripture, and that we can see in the world all round about us at the present moment. Man’s course has always been down; he never went from Jericho to Jerusalem, from curse to blessing; he always went the other way; and more than that, he always will go the other way. There is that in him by nature, call it by what name you please, that he always goes from blessing to curse. It matters not whether it is internal blessing or external privilege, that he is introduced into, that is his course; his way is ever to go down. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” And so in the passage before us, we have not only what we have already called attention to, this external attention to lip service and mouth homage, but the heart far from God.

And observe now one thing more which marked this terrible state and condition of man, viz., that there were certain inventions of man in connection with religion, which in their entirety set aside the word of God; and that is the reason why the Lord lays such stress upon it here. He says, You have made the word of God of no effect by your traditions. There were the traditions of the elders, human traditions, and inventions, which might be perhaps in themselves harmless, as we would say; but it is most solemn when we perceive how cleverly the devil works to get all these things in between the word of God and the soul. The first thing we shall find is, that these traditions of the elders or human traditions were at the commencement taken up as supplementary to scripture. You will never find that the devil in the first instance faces you with the thing he wants; he always has a bait, and you know what a bait is, a bait is something that covers a hook; and so the first thing here is
that this tradition, useful in itself, said to be exceedingly helpful, and ancillary to the mind of God, was supplementary to scripture. That being admitted by any one, that these traditions of the elders spoken of here were supplementary, and had their place and were of value; then comes the next step, and the person that gives way to the first is prepared under a very clever process for this, that they are of equal value with the testimony of scripture. That is the next thing: it would not be the first; as such it would not succeed; the mind is persuaded to believe them very helpful and supplementary first, but as soon as ever it becomes accustomed to that, then comes the next step. I trust you will allow me to speak plainly, because I think these processes of departure are very solemn, the ways by which we become accustomed to things that perhaps at first we would shrink from. A person would at first reject the idea of a tradition of man at all; he would say, Not so, I cannot consent to aught but scripture. But the devil is very clever and very persuasive, and if you argue with him, he will master you before you know where you are. If you debate with him, presently he will deposit his seed; he will gain his point, and having vanished you there he will use the vantage ground to work upon and he will bring you to his side without your intending to go, and with a kind of reserve and resistance in your heart at first, but overpowered by his skill, you will admit the very thing that at the first you shrank from. And lastly, observe, and that is the greatest form of it when it reaches its height, these traditions are put above scripture. Here then are the three steps first, supplementary, that is the bin edge of the wedge by which the position; eventually won; secondly, equality; thirdly, superiority. I think you will find all these steps in the way in which the word of God is set side; and thus this blessed book, this very lamp of life that is in our hands, this wonderful revelation that we have from God, is set aside practically, and when the things of man come in, the things of God go out. This then is the third great proof that the Lord gives here.

But there is one point more which I would call your attention to, and that is with regard to the question of defilement. I believe all these points are of the first importance, as bearing on the present moment. The Lord next deals with the question of defilement, about which they were all astray. They were wrong with regard to the external attention they paid to things, wrong with regard to the way in which they could traffic by religious fraud, wrong in the lip service which sprang from unreality, wrong in setting aside the word of God by human tradition, and they were wrong in regard to what defilement really was and where it came from; and therefore it is that the Lord shows here, in a very solemn way, that the heart of man is the real source and real fountain out of which the whole torrent of evil, as it was practiced by man in this world, came. The stream flowed from that fountain; what is false and empty would fain persuade you that it was something from without which defiles; and if you allow that principle, that something from without corrupts and defiles, then you deny that man is in the condition in which God has declared in His word that he is; you remove the source from where the source really is, namely, the heart, the seat of everything that is foul and filthy. And therefore what the Lord does here is to bring us face to face with this: He says, “Out of the heart.” You observe the difference; there is immense force in the words, “There is nothing entering in that can defile”; it is not from without, it is from within, “out of the heart,” out of this corrupt fountain, out of this filthy cesspool of the first Adam, out of all that is here, proceed the thirteen outgoings which he enumerates, thirteen symptoms of the vileness and pollution that is in man’s heart by nature.

Now I have noticed often that there is a sort of modern sentiment (and there is very little more in modern times than empty sentiment) that rejoices in such a description as this for instance, “a noble profligate,” or of a ruffian who is said to have “kindliness of heart,” but whose real inner being is as gentle as his hands are red -- there is a kind of sentiment of that nature popular in this degenerate age but for all that, the solemn words of our Lord Jesus Christ which lie embedded in this unfailing guide that we have from Him, remain true, and are evidenced by testimony that cannot be broken: “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, covetousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” These are the things that defile. Dwell upon these words and see what an exposure they are, what a revelation they supply of all that man is in his own nature, even if he be in the most favored position on earth, externally blessed and privileged as the Jew was.

Let us now turn to the second which is a far brighter one. There are two instances given under this second head, of mercy and kindness, of the grace and goodness revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, as in God’s heart, towards poor, wretched things here in this world: namely, the Syrophenician woman, and the poor deaf man with an impediment in his speech. Observe the way in which the Syrophenician woman is brought before us, the way we are introduced to this subject. First of all, the Lord, in consequence of the implacable hatred and deliberate refusal of His own countrymen, seeks retirement, and goes into the border country. But there is a little word added, “He could not be hid.” There is a preciousness, a divine sweetness about that word as regards our Lord Jesus Christ that is beyond all expression. I believe that is the doctrine of all scripture, Jesus never could be hid. I believe all scripture witnesses to that fact: the types, the promises, the prophecies of the Old Testament could not conceal Him, “He could not be hid” -- blessed, precious words! As we stand now and look at them from the blessed vantage ground on which Christianity sets us, as we look back over these holy writings and survey their depths, that which meets us continually is how His Person runs like a golden thread through every part; and so here, literally and in fact, while He is in this world, though He retired, “He could not be hid.” And oh! there is something so interesting to the heart and its affections in the fact of this retirement. The activities of Christ and His withdrawals into the isolated places are all perfect in their place they give us an insight into who He was, and what He was, and what moved and actuated Him as the Servant Prophet, the character in which this gospel sets Him forth. Never did He press Himself
into notice; withdrawal and retirement were what marked Him, specially in His service. Would to God it marked His people more in their Christian life and course! “He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the street” -- lowly grace, lowly retirement. And yet there was a glory of goodness, a glory of kindness, and a glory of grace in His Person that burst out from all retirement; though He went away, “He could not be hid” I bless God for those words, and what they set forth to my heart as to our Lord Jesus Christ. Here “He could not be hid.” A poor wretched woman comes with one of the heaviest domestic trials that could bow down a human heart. His fame had reached her, she had built on what she had heard of Him; she had listened to the report with regard to Him, and on it she ventures to come. There are three things. said about her: I believe her creed and language are set before us in the fact that she was a Greek; and her nation comes before us in the fact that she was a Canaanite or Syrophenician, that is to say, a reprobate of reprobates, for that is really the meaning of it. Do you know that the Canaanite will be extinguished in the day when the Son of David is in power? And therefore this very striking case comes before us in order to bring out the wonderful mercy of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. A person that was unentitled in every sense of the word, and had no claim whatever; neither her race, or language, or creed, or origin entitled her in any sense to consideration. It is one of the strongest cases that could be brought before us in scripture to prove a little word in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, “abundance of grace.” Ah! this the case to demonstrate “abundance of grace” for one that had no title, one who was externally and in every way repulsive.

Further, observe what is said about her; she came, and she besought Him, and she fell at His feet. Thank God for those words! A poor Canaanite, a poor creature that had no claim at all, can come and beseech Him and fall at His feet. The fifteenth chapter of Matthew, where this incident is recorded according to the character of that gospel, furnishes the detail of the threefold test which she was passed through. If you examine it, you will find she was tested in three ways; first of all, she was tested by silence. “He answered her not a word.” Has your faith ever been tested in that way? Do you know what it is to have cried day and night to a silent Christ? “He answered her not a word.” Oh what a trial of faith that was! Could it be possible that He did not hear, or that He heard without attention? Could it be possible that His heart was not capable of being touched by her misery? “He answered her not a word.” But there was more. It was not only that He was silent, but the Gospel of Matthew gives us His positive refusal. What was that? It is not right, “it is not meet,” it is not just, “to take the children’s bread”; you have no title to it. She came as a child, that is to say, by using the term Son of David she came to Him under a relationship that she was not in, and He says, As Son of David I refuse you, it is not right to take the children’s bread. But there was even more than that, there was reproach -- “and to cast it to dogs.” Thus she was tested in this threefold way, silence, refusal, reproach. And the word the blessed Lord uses is a very remarkable word; I do not think it is used anywhere else in the original of the New Testament except here. The word is the diminutive, which means “a little dog” the very lowest of its species, “It is not right to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to little dogs.”

So now faith is proved -- through some test very much akin to this. I have met with Christians who have been sorely tested and tried in their faith. Peter tells us that faith will assuredly undergo trying, “That the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be proved by fire.” The allusion here is to the proving of gold, the metal is subjected to the fire, and the flame is increased and increased until the image of the refiner is reflected in the coin. There is, observe, no mitigation of the fire, no reduction of the strength of the flame, until the image of the one who is dealing with it is seen in it. Faith is always subjected in that way to testing; and so this poor woman’s faith was proved in this threefold way.

But there is a beautiful little word here which is peculiar to the Gospel of Mark, which I must take notice of, taken along with the Gospel of Matthew, they make a beautiful whole. The Lord says to her, according to this Gospel, and this may have helped to keep alive the flickering flame of faith in her heart -- “Let the children first be filled.” That left a little ray of hope for her poor heart. “Let the children first be filled.” And so she might have said to herself, “Well, there is a little reserve there; there is a crumb let fall on purpose for me.” As Boaz had said in other days, “Let fall some handfuls on purpose for her.” “Let the children first be filled”; and so her hope would rise and her heart would live on through the fire of testing, and her faith be nourished by His grace and kindness. And then it is beautiful to think how that may have given the first flush of hope to that poor broken heart, and she would reason somewhat like this to herself, “Surely He does not mean to refuse me altogether, surely He means that I should prevail, surely He intends to be overcome by my misery.” I can conceive how all that would pass through her mind as His gracious words first fell upon her ear.

Next observe her answer to Him, and it is very beautiful; she says, “Yea, Lord”; she takes up the very word in the original that He used, or at least the root of it, and she says, “True, Lord, I am only an unentitled, miserable, wretched dog.” She takes that place, this was her soul’s “Amen,” she accepts His verdict, she stands before Him unentitled, but her faith still cleaves to Him for the absolute goodness that was in Him. Behind all that dark cloud of testing that light was there, and it is lovely to think that it fell upon her heart. God grant it may be in your souls and mine when we are tested, to be able to say, like the patriarch of old, “When I am tried, I shall come forth as gold,” having the refiner’s image and the refiner’s likeness stamped upon the purified coin.

And now mark the word she gets from Him; “For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.” He did not praise her adroitness or her humility, but He commended her faith, the faith which the goodness of His own Person, as He stood there before her, kindled and kept alive: “O woman, great is thy faith.”

Now let us turn to another instance of the mercy and
goodness which were manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ in this poor man that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. We shall only notice two or three points. First of all, there was the faith of the persons that brought him, for they came and besought Him. I have no doubt that what kept alive that faith in their hearts was just the goodness that shone in our Lord Jesus Christ. The friends of this poor man, for he was powerless in speech himself, came, attracted by this. Just look what He does; He takes him aside, out of the town. Have you not found in your history that He has done that to you oftentimes? Do you not remember that time you were ill? That time you were laid low in fever? Have you forgotten that time when the heavy blow of affliction came into your house? He was then taking you aside out of the town. I believe the Lord when the heavy blow of affliction came into your house? He was then taking you aside out of the town. I believe the Lord in special dealings with us takes us thus aside. Of Jacob it is was then taking you aside out of the town. I believe the Lord

First of all, He looked up to heaven. What does that convey to us? Is He not here seen as the perfect servant, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” He says, as it were, I have come from heaven, I am the Servant-Prophet out of heaven for God and men. How blessed, “He looked up to heaven.” All mission, all power, all grace is from thence -- there is nothing except from heaven; the second Man is out of heaven; the true Servant was the One who was in the service of heaven. “He looked up to heaven.”

Then there is another word, “He sighed,” or as some have translated it, “He groaned.” Here then is the compassionate Servant, here is the tender heart that felt for all, that was touched by human misery, the One who passed unscathed and unmoved through everything, but felt it all. How blessed to have before us such a Christ, and to have revealed to us how He felt! how He groaned! how He sighed!

And then lastly, there is the word of power. The true Servant, the compassionate Man, and yet at the same time, blessed for ever be His name, the mighty God. “Ephphatha: be opened.” “He spake and it was done”; He had but to utter the word, and the result was there.

And then He sought retirement again; He commanded them not to make it known; He did not seek publicity, or popularity, blessed be His name -- all that prevails in the church-world and world-church of to-day, was far away from the mind of Jesus Christ. No; He was the Servant out of heaven, that came to do the will of Him that sent Him. But they could not keep silence; their tongues must speak His praise. And I am sure that we, through grace can add our hearty amen to the words that went out concerning Him on all sides, “He hath done all things well.” How blessed to say that, as we have often sung it. And even though it may be through tears, and loss, and sorrow, through weary days and weary nights, still the heart that knows Him and that He has touched can say, “He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.”

The Person and Office of the Spirit

No. 2

It is very blessed and interesting to the heart to observe the position His own are found occupying in Acts 1, in relation to the promise of the Person who was coming, of whom we were speaking in our last.

First, they were in His own company, as the risen One, for forty days; He had fulfilled to them His promise ere He left them, “I will see you again” -- their hearts were glad in having Him once more, the sorrow of their loss by His death was now behind them; it was the very same Jesus on whom their eyes rested, only He was with them in risen power, He had left behind for ever the sorrow of His path on earth -- the cross, the grave; He was there before their very eyes in very truth as the risen One out from among the dead. Let us try and think what a blessed moment that must have been for Him and them. He, the blessed One, was there in the new estate of man beyond the bearing of sin, beyond death and the grave, risen from the dead, not yet “taken up.” They, His brethren now, were there with Him, fruit of His victory and triumph over every hostile power, owned by Him, as such to themselves, through the lips of the woman, to whom the world was but a tomb without Him; what blessed memories of the past, and realities of their then relationship with His Father now their Father, His God now their God, must have been present to their hearts. Further, they were expectants of a new and heavenly power they were to receive from Him when received up into glory. Let us observe here the beautiful intimacy that is brought before us in the words, “Speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.” (R. V.) He is here in all His resurrection life and power, first fruits of them that slept, yet His heart, full of divine love, is not removed, is not any the farther away from His own. What an immense blessing to the heart to know the risen Lord near us, that He holds us as friends and loved ones still. But further, observe we are told what was the subject of their conversation; the character of it was as we have seen intimacy, the subject of it, was “concerning the kingdom of God.” We find that this was preached afterwards by His servants, and among them by him who was especially the apostle of the Gentiles; in proof compare Acts 20:25 and chapter 28:31. There are three words here to which I would very particularly direct attention, as illustrating their position at this time in relation to the promise of the Father.

First, “wait.” They are therefore set as expectants of this heavenly endowment. This shows the very opposite to settling down here, out of which He their Master had died and risen again.

Observe the word here translated wait (περιμενειν) is the same word used in Gen. 49:18 in the Septuagint, and the connection there is very beautiful. Jacob’s blessing of the tribes, as in that chapter, refers to responsibility, and when he came to Dan, though owned as a judging tribe, and so Israel in him, yet he marks out that apostasy and power of Satan in Israel, which led the remnant to look beyond the portion of the people, unfaithful in every way, to Him who was the
salvation: “We have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah.” This marks expectancy here as the position of His own in Acts 1.

Second, “power” (Greek, δυνατίν). This was a new power with which they were to be filled, heavenly power; as we have seen, they were set by the risen Lord as expectants of this, and so they were found here in weakness, yet in dependence, out of the world and all that pertains to it, in an upper room, in prayer and supplication, “with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” What a lovely picture these verses display before us! and does not this upper room here fit well in with that other recorded in Luke 22:12, where we see Him, a Stranger in this world, with His own?

Then let us also observe those words “with one accord”; how blessed as the result of risen life in each, not yet united, for the Spirit had not yet been received, still as such expectants of the “heavenly gift.” This expression, “with one accord,” recurs eleven times in the Acts, and nowhere else, except once, in Romans 15:6. Third, “witnesses” (Greek, μαρτυρεῖ). Our English word martyr is derived from that translated witness. The qualification for a witness was this heavenly endowment for which they waited; they were to receive power at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them to this very end. It is of the deepest moment to us to understand that a witness of Christ, was and is, of Christ rejected, yet risen, despised of men, but now exalted of God in heaven. If His testimony ended in martyrdom, as far as man’s wicked hands were concerned, they were to look for a similar end, and as a rule they so terminated their course, so that we may say, in a certain sense, for any witness of a once crucified and martyred Christ, or as Stephen was of a glorified Christ, to die a natural death is unnatural, and so of life as of death, to be a witness of a rejected Christ, one must be unworldly and unearthly.

Further, it is interesting to note the contrast between this and what we have in the Revelation; there the kingdom in manifestation is introduced, and the saints are kings and priests unto God and His Father, but when Acts is opened, manifestation is introduced, and the saints are kings and what we have in the Revelation; there the kingdom in application in a certain sense, for any witness of a once crucified and martyred Christ, or from twelve to seven has a divine purport in it. I would therefore invite you to think for a moment of what is conveyed to us in it. If we study and search for ourselves and examine the scriptures elsewhere in a bad sense, the perfection of what is superhuman, good or bad. Twelve is the human number and therefore it was seven here, because it is no question of what comes from man, or of the instrumentality which God is pleased to find and use in men, making them the subjects of it. But here, where the Lord is rejected (and that is what underlies the narrative in a very striking way), refused by the people as their Messiah, refused as the One who really had rights and claims over that nation -- His own goodness and His own grace rose above all the need that was there, went beyond all the rejection which was in their hearts, finding the motives entirely in Himself, so that, rejected though He was, He still feeds them. Hence, I believe, the word “seven” is used because it is the perfection, fullness, and completeness of what is divine. And it is not contingent upon man’s reception at all; His own blessed goodness, that which was inherent in Himself, and found its springs entirely in Himself, rising triumphant beyond and above all the evil that was in man, acts in a grace and love entirely His own. How blessed to think of it, and to dwell upon it: rejected though He was, refused and cast out by that people, despised and disowned, still mark those words, they are precious words, “I have compassion.” Compassion for those that would not have Him; compassion for those that rejected Him; compassion, though He was an outcast and despised in the midst of His own! We in our littleness would have had the smallest of our compassions dried up; we could not have lived through the scorn that Jesus Christ received from men; however true the grace that was in us, feeble and small in itself it would have withered before the contempt of men. It shines out all the more blessed and more perfect in its own nature in Him. Do we enjoy the contrast? Do we respond to the blessedness that was seen only in Jesus Christ? Have our hearts dwelt on those words, “I have compassion on the multitude”? I will not send them empty to their homes, because they will faint by the way. Think of how He entered into everything! I do not think we take in sufficiently how the grace and kindness of Christ and of God come out even more in little things than in great things. And

Mark 8

Dalmanutha

There are really four subjects in this chapter, namely, the feeding of the four thousand, the instruction at Dalmanutha, the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida, and the incident at Caesarea Philippi. I desire by God’s help to engage your attention with three of them, at this time.

First of all, with regard to the feeding of this multitude. You will observe one little word here that, I think, gives the key to the understanding of what was intended by the incident, and that is the word “seven,” for there are not only seven loaves multiplied, in the Lord’s grace, so as to meet the need of the four thousand, but the excess was seven baskets; therefore the word “seven” (though I do not desire to lay any unnecessary stress upon numbers), is, to my mind, deeply interesting in the incident. Elsewhere there were twelve, indeed the Lord alludes to it here Himself when He is instructing His disciples. He says, “When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.” Now I believe there is a divine intention in every word of scripture, and that the alteration from seven to twelve or from twelve to seven has a divine purport in it. I would therefore invite you to think for a moment of what is conveyed to us in it. If we study and search for ourselves and examine the scriptures where the words occur, I think we shall find that where it is a question of human instrumentality twelve is always the number used; twelve is always the completeness of man; whereas seven is certainly here, as I suppose it would be elsewhere in a bad sense, the perfection of what is superhuman, good or bad. Twelve is the human number and therefore it was seven here, because it is no question of what comes from man, or of the instrumentality which God is pleased to find and use in men, making them the subjects of it. But here, where the Lord is rejected (and that is what underlies the narrative in a very striking way), refused by the people as their Messiah, refused as the One who really had rights and claims over that nation -- His own goodness and His own grace rose above all the need that was there, went beyond all the rejection which was in their hearts, finding the motives entirely in Himself, so that, rejected though He was, He still feeds them. Hence, I believe, the word “seven” is used because it is the perfection, fullness, and completeness of what is divine. And it is not contingent upon man’s reception at all; His own blessed goodness, that which was inherent in Himself, and found its springs entirely in Himself, rising triumphant beyond and above all the evil that was in man, acts in a grace and love entirely His own. How blessed to think of it, and to dwell upon it: rejected though He was, refused and cast out by that people, despised and disowned, still mark those words, they are precious words, “I have compassion.” Compassion for those that would not have Him; compassion for those that rejected Him; compassion, though He was an outcast and despised in the midst of His own! We in our littleness would have had the smallest of our compassions dried up; we could not have lived through the scorn that Jesus Christ received from men; however true the grace that was in us, feeble and small in itself it would have withered before the contempt of men. It shines out all the more blessed and more perfect in its own nature in Him. Do we enjoy the contrast? Do we respond to the blessedness that was seen only in Jesus Christ? Have our hearts dwelt on those words, “I have compassion on the multitude”? I will not send them empty to their homes, because they will faint by the way. Think of how He entered into everything! I do not think we take in sufficiently how the grace and kindness of Christ and of God come out even more in little things than in great things. And
that is just where the contrast is with us. Somehow or other we rise up to great occasions, but very often little things unman us. Somehow we make a great effort and great attempts to match some great occasion that is upon us, but little circumstances, little difficulties, little besetments in ourselves, or else little things, little trials, little sorrows in others, seem to be so small that they are beneath us. But it was not so with God, it was not so with Christ, and therefore you observe the same thing exactly, not only in the Jehovah of the Old Testament, but in the One who was God manifest in flesh in the New. “I have compassion on the multitude.”

Notice the way in which that is met by the disciples; see how little it touched their hearts, how little they entered into it, how little they were set on fire by the goodness of Jesus Christ; how little they were really moved as He was pleased to express the boundlessness of the grace that was in His heart. Mark what they say: “From whence shall a man?”. They never got beyond man; human resource measured all that was in their hearts. “From whence shall a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” They owned no source from whence anything could come but man they were tied and bound down to man. Is not the generation we are living in very like that? This is the day of human resource, the day when man brings into operation all that he can in connection with needs and wants, whether in the church or the world; the day in which the strength of man, the arm of man, the energy and wisdom and power of man, are all looked to; and the danger is that God is outside, and that faith is lost in Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, and in what is divine. I see it in connection even with the work of God. I gladly and willingly rejoice to own any desire there may be in the hearts of any to bring the truth of God to bear upon perishing men and women; but faith in the old testimony of this word, faith in the message itself, faith in the power that is behind this word to apply it, faith to make it palatable, faith in it itself because it is attractive and has sweetness in it that no human power can add to -- that is lost, that does not exist in this day. It is attempted to make it attractive, to mix it with all the miserable ingredients that man brings to bear upon it And why? Because the simple, old, blessed truth itself, the naked power of that sword that is in our hands, and the almighty power of God the Holy Ghost in using it, is lost sight of or given up, and man is turned to, just as here, “From whence shall a man?”. It reminds me of the words of the poor impotent man in John 5; he was lying there round the pool of Bethesda with others, and he says, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.” “I have no man.” Oh, how blessed it is to go back on these compassions, and on these resources which are here! How blessed to draw out of the fulness that is in Jesus Christ! And how easy it is for us to forget, as they did, past deliverances. Memory is but a poor help in the things of God, because memory fails and droops. There were past deliverances by Jesus Christ, and past interventions of power through Him, but yet the disciples had forgotten it all, lost sight of it, and turned to man.

Now mark the result for a moment. The Lord feeds them, blessed for ever be His name, and gratifies His own heart too. That is what is so comforting; He gratifies His heart in doing good to the poor, wretched people who would not have Him! But there is this remarkable word of the Spirit of God with regard to it; He feeds them and the need is met; but I desire we should get the sense of that little word, which expresses so much, “They did eat and were filled.” That is the result of having to do with Jesus Christ; here is the result of the opening out of His own blessed hand for us, whether temporally or spiritually.

In this we see the consequence of the bestowment of His grace when it is taken in, because it is said, “They did all eat” ; and that is the word that is used in scripture for the appropriation of Christ by our souls. The very same word which we can understand in connection with taking in food for the body, is the word that is used for the appropriation of Christ in connection with our spiritual need. He says in John 6, for instance, “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” “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.” That is to say, there must be the appropriation in faith of Christ. But when there is that, whether it be in the case of the bodily need, as here, or whether it be in the case of the soul’s need, wherever Christ is appropriated, there is fulness and satisfaction as the result of it. Have we proved that? Are we filled? Am I asked, What is meant by that? I mean this, are we satisfied? Has He in His infinite grace so met us, just as He satisfied the hungry bodies of these four thousand, that we can say in the words of Psa. 23, “He maketh me to lie down in pastures of tender grass”? That is because the soul is filled; it is the result of satisfaction; further, it is rest, repose. We know very well how that is just the crying need of God’s people at the present moment; there is but little rest or repose. It is all so like those instruments of two wheels, the only principle upon which they can go is motion, restless, often tumultuous, motion. And why is all this? Because the heart has not come to anchor, has not come to rest in the satisfaction that Jesus Christ alone can give to it. This sweet Test will never be found anywhere else; we may search and traverse the wide world round and over, but in vain, it never can be found in another. But, thank God, it is there in Him; thank God, there is rest there, satisfaction there. And it is not only in what He gives, but in what He can be to the soul. Here it was the bestowment of His grace and favor to meet the hungry bodies of men, and to satisfy their temporal needs; but what was true in bodily want is true spiritually. And therefore, having through grace to do with Him to-day, having personally appropriated Him for the wants and cravings and longings of the heart to-day, we can antedate that time that will come even for this earth, of which it is said, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountain of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” That will be a scene on this earth by-and-by; but that truth may be known spiritually in the soul to-day, in the midst of desolation and
misery and wretchedness all round about. Let us, then, remember those two things, the seven loaves that were multiplied to feed the four thousand, and the seven baskets of excess over and above the necessity of the persons which were fed. I believe those two circumstances in the history give us the key to the understanding of the spiritual meaning of this incident, the fact that the provision was divinely perfect despite His rejection, and that the excess was perfect also. I love to think of the excess. We ought, when we bestow a favor, to do something further in the way of excess, to show that we are not exhausted by the gift. But I see that no one does that but God; when we show kindness we exhaust our resources, because our resources are finite; when He expresses His goodness, His resources are never exhausted, because the need could be no measure of the supply that comes from Him. We are finite, and our resources must fail; He is infinite, and finite need cannot exhaust infinite resources. The second subject we have here is the instruction by the Lord at Dalmanutha, which was based on this miracle, and on the audacious opposition of the Pharisees. The Pharisees came and got into conflict with Him, demanding a sign from heaven; That was audacious, bold unbelief, and He felt it, as He felt everything; “He sighed deeply in His spirit.” First of all, their hardened heart of unbelief touched Him; secondly, I believe there was also in it that He felt what, the influence on others would be of the religious leaders’ blindness and darkness. I have no doubt it was a forecast of His own cross and suffering. And then notice the words, “He left them and departed.” That is very solemn; it is final rejection; some one has called it “justas severitas” (hard justice); they rejected Him, He rejects them. And what makes it very solemn is that He never came back publicly there again; I do not say He never came back again; but as the great Prophet in works of mercy, He left them for ever, He never publicly appeared in the goodness and grace of His heart in that region any more. He instructs His disciples afterwards in connection with that incident in two ways. First of all, He says to them, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.” Observe where they were when the Lord spoke those words. He had gone into the ship, the disciples were with Him, and they had forgotten to take bread; and He says to them, in connection with this terrible unbelief of the Pharisees, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.” It is amazing that any person who has at all searched prayerfully the scriptures, should have any difficulty or doubt about the meaning of the word “leaven,” namely, that leaven in scripture is always and universally the symbol of what is evil. And yet you know the way it is used, and the extraordinary meaning that is put upon it, contrary to the whole tenor and teaching of God’s word. “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.” What was the leaven of the Pharisees? It was that hypocritical, two-faced appearance of holy zeal for God, with desperate unbelief in their hearts; externally the appearance of great zeal, but inwardly the very opposite, yea the contrast of it in every sense. That was the leaven of the Pharisees. What was the leaven of Herod? Servile cringing to the world: Herod was the very creature of worldliness and worldly circumstances. And there is another leaven spoken of that is not noticed here, and that is the leaven of the Sadducees, which is what is called at the present moment rationalism. The Sadducees were the rationalists of that day, and the Pharisees were the ritualists of that day, and the Herodians the worldly party. You get the three things, fleshly religion; occupation of mind with the things of God, as if the mind could grasp them; and the deep-seated, deep-rooted love of the world which marked the Herodians; those are the three. But the Sadducees are left out in Mark: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.” I desire particularly to call your attention to one thing in connection with this, namely, that when the Lord used those words they were not in a position to profit by the meaning. Was He to be blamed for using the word “leaven” to them? God forbid the thought in any heart, or that He ever used any word or expression save what was absolutely perfect and blessed, as coming from the lips of Him who was perfect God as He was truly and really Man. Yet He uses this word “leaven,” and He impresses the great truth of it upon them, and tells them to beware of it, puts them upon their guard, and yet they cannot profit. Here was the greatest of all teachers, here was by preeminence the great Prophet, yet His disciples, who were round Him and with Him, and were familiar with His utterances, were unable to profit by His language. Why? Just for the very reason many are oftentimes unable to profit by good, sound, wholesome words to-day. Why? They were not wilfully blind, but they were in fact blind; There is a great difference between a certain position in fact, and the will entering into it, so that the will as it were gathers it up to itself. The disciples were not wilfully blind, but they were in fact blind, because they took in so little of His Person, and of who He was and what He was. And hence we can see it is not enough to have good words, sound words, and words easily to be understood. But further, there is a moral condition and a moral state necessary to profit by the clearest words. There is a positive absolute necessity for a moral state, and condition, to be able to take in the instruction that comes from the clearest words. One of the most important things in this chapter is how they totally misunderstood the word “leaven.” How did they interpret it? Even that they had forgotten to take bread; they were in a ship at sea, and no bread; they connected the word “leaven” with the literal fact of the absence of bread from the ship, and therefore mistook altogether, and lost His instruction. But then this very position they were in here was the very suited one for this instruction; and I have no doubt in His blessed grace He had designed it all to lead them into the understanding of the great lesson He had for them at that moment. What was it? Why He was really leading them to understand what the heart would have in having Him. Oh that I had a better conception of it, so as to be able to convey it to others; but yet how blessed to be so led by Him, and to be so in circumstances for Him to lead, that we find out the absolute sufficiency and the absolute fulness there is in Himself, without anything else beside. How often we say, “That is indispensable.” But He would teach us there is nothing “indispensable” but Himself. He is the alone indispensable:
That, I believe, is the lesson here; they were at sea, had no bread, no provision; were utterly resourceless and utterly destitute, and the Lord brings before them one little, word, “I,” “I.” This is the emphatic word in the narrative. He brings Himself before them. What then if they had no bread? If the Maker of the bread was there, had they not all? What if no provision were there, if the One who did supply the need of four thousand and five thousand was there Himself? It is a wonderful moment when the heart is led into this great reality, the utterly resourcelessness of man on the one hand, the entire completeness and fulness that there is in Christ on the other; “Jesus, Thou art enough.” Another has truly said that what the Lord brings out here is that continent of blessing on which the heart of old Simeon found its rest in days before, when he had the child Jesus in his arms; it is the shore the dying thief landed on; it is the place, far better than all else, that the apostle speaks of. And it is that unknown region to which every one of us, everyChristian, must come sooner or later, either on a death-bed, or else as Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. We know if death were to knock at our door tonight, if we had Christ we should not want anything else, beside Himself and His work.

It is an immense thing for the conscience that the work of Christ should be before the soul. The work that was done on Calvary’s cross, and nothing else, it is this which alone gives title to the soul; but the heart wants something as well as the conscience, and it is not only that I am entitled in the work, but I have a new footing and sufficiency in Himself. That instance of Simeon is a beautiful one. There was a man with prospects, and it is said that prospects are far more dangerous and have far greater effect upon us than possessions, because you know the value of possessions, but you cannot tell what a prospect is. Simeon, the earthly man, had prospects, and he comes into the place where the child Jesus was brought in by His parents, and when he saw Him, he took Him up in his arms, and when he had Him in his arms, he just said what in principle poor old Jacob said when his eyes rested upon his long-lost son, Joseph, “Now let me die; since I have seen thy face”: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” His cup of happiness was full; he wanted no more; he had Christ. Have we? We know something of His work: we have got Himself, and got Himself in such present circumstances, without a loaf, without a meal, destitute of everything in this world, without a loaf, without bread, may we be able to say, “Thank God, He is there, and all sufficient as well. This is resurrection ground in figure; and when we reach resurrection ground there is nothing but Christ; and this is a large place, a wealthy place; Christ makes it this, and here we are outside of all else. It is possible for the conscience that the work of Christ should be before the soul. But I treat now of what relates to us ecclesiastically, of what belongs to us as Christians, members of Christ’s body. If there is one sphere in which the power of evil has shown itself with a firer hand than another at the present moment it is in the church of God. Alas! it is there the devil has wrought with tremendous virulence and created the most solemn confusion, scattering on all sides like the wolf that he is. We have stormy waters and elements lashed into fury by the rage of the enemy of God and man; the rolling tide terrifies many a timid mind, and the tendency is to forget the One who is in the boat: we think He is asleep, and, rudely oftentimes, we go to Him and say, “Master, carest thou not that we perish” This lesson comes to us wonderfully in this way; the person that in his own circumstances and history as a solitary individual is walking the highway of this world, has learnt this great lesson, Christ is enough for me, Christ is sufficient for my heart and soul, the person that has learnt His friendship, and His company, and the fulness there is in Him, that can say through grace, Well, thank God, Christ is all I want here, that is the person that will, stand for Him in the midst of present departure. It was so with Paul; he was forsaken by everybody: “At my first answer no man stood with me”; he was actually left alone; he had not a companion, he had not a friend, he had not one to stand by his side at that moment: yet he could face the most dreadful tribunal in the whole world, and did not quake before the thought of Nero’s judgment-seat. Why? Because in his soul he had found out for himself the sufficiency of Christ. That is the reason. Thank God Christ abides and is sufficient. And therefore amid the general departure and giving up of truth on all sides the heart finds its rest in Him who is ever the same, and its delight is the word, “Thou remainest.” Christ remains, the Holy Ghost remains, and the supreme authority of scripture remains; and as long as we have that trinity, as it were, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and scripture, may God keep us holding fast for Him.

You will find the sufficiency of Christ comes in in that way; it is Christ Himself in all His own blessedness. This is what the disciples learnt; they were brought into circumstances, into that very position most suitable, in His perfect wisdom and grace, to find out this, that having Him they had enough. Oh, what a charm to the heart to find out that Christ is enough! What a reality! It is nothing that we can see, we cannot show it to anybody; but it is a treasure that only our own heart knows; a secret, if we like to call it so, of our own souls with Him, with which a stranger intermeddles not. This keeps the heart, this steadies the soul; this is divine anchorage for the present moment.

May God in His infinite grace above all things lead us to know what Christ is. I feel it to be the pressing demand of the moment. How little we think about it! May our hearts more and more find out what He can be to us; and though destitute of everything in this world, without a loaf, without bread, may we be able to say, Thank God, He is there, and all sufficient as well. This is resurrection ground in figure; and when we reach resurrection ground there is nothing but Christ; and this is a large place, a wealthy place; Christ makes it this, and here we are outside of all else. It is possible
to truly love Him before this; I believe the disciples truly loved Him, but they had not yet learnt that having Him they had everything. And so now, there are those that truly love Him, but they have not found out Christ enough, Christ sufficient, Christ all. As the apostle expresses it when he says, “I have all and abound,” again, “Christ is all,” again, “I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ.”

This simple incident at Dalmanutha is full of the most blessed instruction in this way, teaching us what there is in His dear Son, of fulness, sufficiency for every want and need of the heart.

(Notes of an Address.)

**The Person and Office of the Spirit**

No. 3

But the moment of endowment had now arrived, and all was ready for the fulfilment of the promise, and the bestowment of this clothing of power. Pentecost as a fact is now before us, and it came between the Passover and Tabernacles.

It is well to observe that, as a Jewish feast, the feast of weeks, first it was dependent on the Passover, so that we may say, if there were no Passover there could be no Pentecost; further, it was supposed to mark the giving of the law, and it was beside the dedication of all the fruit of the land. (See Lev. 23.) But when we study it in all the deep and blessed connections in which it comes to us as the day of Pentecost “fully come,” as in Acts 2, how precious it is in all its surroundings and settings. Let us dwell for a little on the great face itself. Let us see what it means.

When the Lord Jesus was pleased to “become of a woman,” a great fact was present to faith wherever it was; Jesus on earth was Emmanuel, God with us; how blessed the precious memories with all their fragrance of His life of twofold witness on earth, how solemn that “His life was taken from the earth”; men crucified Him, but God raised and exalted Him. Then in the risen Lord we find the testimony of God for us. But this is not all, He who died and rose again has ascended into the heavens, is exalted at the right hand of God, and having received, as the exalted Man, the promise of the Holy Ghost for others, He in the “fully come” day shed Him forth, so that we have now in Jesus exalted and glorified, and the mission and pouring forth of the Holy Ghost by Him from heaven -- the great witness to the immense and wonderful fact of God in us.

Oh, how little the reality of this fact has laid hold upon the church of God, and even where there is more or less clearness as to the truth of it, alas! how little the living power of His presence in us is known or enjoyed.

Permit me to draw your attention for a little to certain surroundings of the great fact itself. First, let us note that the filling of the material structure with the divine glory was not new, for both the tabernacle and the temple were so filled (see Ex. 40:33-35; I Kings 8; 2 Chron. 5; 7:1-14); yet these, though striking themselves, are as nothing to what is set before us in Pentecost, for now the bodies of those who have been cleansed from their sins in the blood of Christ, are the dwelling-place of His Spirit.

Further, observe the blessed contrast with 1 Kings 8:2; there the divine Presence drove away the priests, so that they could not stand to minister in the presence of the glory; but now God in His infinite grace makes us His habitation!

Again, observe how that in Pentecost we have Babel reversed. (See Gen. 11.) There man had been scattered and his language confounded, there was, as has been said, no brotherhood as it were left in the earth, and all as a result of man having exalted himself, a bold and daring attempt, affecting divine rights; but now we find all the mournful consequences of this reversed, the second Man out of heaven came and humbled Himself, and being highly exalted, and a name above every name given Him, He had baptized with the Holy Ghost.

I would call your attention to the form the descending Spirit here takes, namely, “cloven tongues like as of fire” in the cloven tongues we have the symbol of diverse languages and far-reaching testimony, and in fire, grace founded on righteousness. There can be no doubt that the great point here was power for testimony; it was in the might of this heavenly power that the knowledge of Christianity was to be diffused even to the utmost parts of the earth; if concentration was the principle of Judaism, diffusion was that of Christianity.

Lastly, let us note the different form which the blessed Spirit took in descending upon our adorable Lord and Master; we read in Luke 3:22: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.” How blessed to see in this the Father’s seal of His own beloved One, the fitting type of all that the Lord Jesus was in His own precious Person the dove, the bird of heaven, the bird of love and sorrow, was the suited form and shape for the blessed Spirit to take in descending on Him. (See also Psa. 68:13.) And as we follow His lowly, lonely path of devoted service to His Father through this world, we see how in it all He was as under this heavenly dove, the meek and lowly and tender One, passing through all the scenes of human misery and sorrow, the willing servant of every need, soothing every broken heart, wiping away every tear, lifting up every fallen one, yet marked by meek retirement in it all, He did not strive or cry, neither was His voice heard in the streets. Oh that our hearts, as we better know Him now in glory, may more appreciate the precious testimony shown us in Him whom God the Father thus sealed.

Condensed Notes of an Address, No. 3.

**Bethsaida**

Mark 8:22-38

We have considered the first two incidents in this chapter, and I would ask your attention for a little just now to these last two incidents, that is to say, the healing of the blind man at
Bethsaida, and the circumstances connected with the Lord’s intercourse with His disciples at the towns of Caesarea-Philippi.

First of all, we have this gracious incident in His life in connection with this blind man, and I think you will see this stamped upon the narrative from the first, that such was the kindness and the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world that when need came to Him, He never repelled it. He oftentimes withdrew Himself from mere prurient curiosity and the idle gaze of men, but wherever there was need, felt need, and expressed need, in whomsoever it was found, there was the ready answer and the willing and loving response of His blessed heart. And I think you will admit that it was just that which accounts for the constant recourse that was had to Him in cases of distress like this. There was something about Him here in this world that drew the heart to Him. Now when I think of that, when I trace those wondrous footsteps of mercy, when I think upon that marvelous grace and kindness to all, even the most unworthy, I cannot help feeling how sadly in contrast with it we are; I cannot help being impressed with the sense, that we, Christians, are to a great extent repellent, that there is a sort of icy coldness about us, a kind of hard callousness, which drives away rather than draws. That is the first great impression that His lovely, blessed grace makes upon the heart with regard to His poor people in this world. We seem to have got His Spirit so little, and to reflect His love so little, and we seem so little to be in His, company, and in the atmosphere which marked Him in all His blessed ways here! It is that thought which impresses itself at once upon my mind when I read the words with which this incident opens, namely, that they brought this man to Him. Evidently the friends of this blind man felt, there is no one for us but Jesus Christ. Do we feel that, friends? You have got some case of distress, some case of want or sorrow; it may not be something connected with yourself, but it is near you. Where do you bring that case? Have we come so in contact with One whose equal is not to be found, the “One among a thousand,” verily, that we can say, Well, there is a heart that I can count upon for this distress, and can come to with this misery? I will bring my need, my want, my affliction, to Him. That is what drew these people here, they brought this blind man to Jesus. Oh they were wise in doing it! They did well; they counted upon a love that never disappointed, and a willingness that never refused, and so they come with their, burden. That is the way the incident opens.

What does He do? I want you to ponder the little things that are here; there is a sweetness about every word which expresses the ways of our Lord. First of all, He took this man away from all human influence; He took him “out of the town.” Let us learn something from that. There is an unhealthy craving for publicity at this moment; people seem to think that they never can do anything except they are under the blazing sun of men’s eyes. Ah! I do not see that in Jesus Christ. I see retirement; I see how entirely His whole heart was far away from all that kind of thing amongst men, idle curiosity, human influence; a harmful influence it is, too, man’s influence. He took him away from all this. And if you are to be the subject of the grace of the Lord Jesus, you must submit to be removed from human influence and from all curiosity of that nature. This action was just as if He said, I want to have you altogether alone, apart by yourself, with Myself. Are we ready for that? Are we ready to be blessed in that way, to get your sight in that way? That is the first action of the Lord Jesus in this case.

But there is another: mark it well, I beseech of you. “He took him by the hand” I do not know a picture in the gospel history that is more affecting to the heart than to see that blessed One taking the poor hand of a blind suppliant for His mercy. He took him by the hand. Oh the grace of it! Oh the blessed familiarity, as it were, the homeliness, of that dealing! Is not this a sight for angels and for men to see the Savior, He who was both God and Man, “God over all, blessed evermore,” that blessed One whose like was never to be found, taking the hand of a poor blind suppliant, and leading him just as tenderly and as graciously as you would see any blind man to-day led by his little daughter or his little boy? These are things that touch the heart, and give us to understand something more of His character who was “God manifest in flesh” down here. “He took him by the hand and led him out of the town.” He brought him away from all idle gaze and from all human influence; He led him forth Himself.

But now mark once more, and look at the verse for an instant further, that we may get distinctly the action before our thoughts. “He took the blind man,” we are told in verse 23, “by the hand, and led him out of the town.” Man made the city, the town, the public place, the place connected with all that is of man, his skill and power; He took him outside all the range of that influence, all the deteriorating effects of that influence, “and when he had spit on his eyes” — mark the words, He anoint those eyes with that which came from Himself. I believe that to point to the efficacy of the Person who was there; it was something that came from Himself that was applied by His own hands to those sightless eyes; there is a loveliness about that action, “He spit and put his hands upon his eyes.” What was of Himself, with all the virtue that it had, with all the blessedness that is in it, He applied to the blind man’s eyes. Do let us take that in, for I believe that is what it sets before us, the personal virtue that was in Jesus Christ Himself, that was applied by His own hands to the sightless eyes of this poor suppliant.

Mark the effect it had; there are two things I earnestly want to bring before you. Do you notice that this cure is a little in contrast with the Lord’s usual ways in the gospel history of effecting cures? I have remarked when speaking in this place before, that the characteristic feature of all the cures wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ in this world was the instantaneous effect of the exercise of His power, that He spake or He acted and the person was at once cured. Man is very well up in the healing art, but he cannot do that, he cannot effect a state of whole soundness at once, immediately, from disease or misery or wretchedness. Here it is gradual,
and this is the only instance where it was gradual. This is the solitary exception to the usual presentation of instantaneous power in the acts of the Lord here; there were steps in it. Now I am going to try and account for those steps for a moment, for I think there was a reason why this was not instantaneous as in other cases, and why it went on from one step to another.

The Gospel of Mark, as we have seen already, is the Gospel of the great Servant-Prophet amongst men, and particularly, I suppose, amongst His own people Israel; it is the Gospel of service. But I am not altogether contented with merely calling it the Gospel of service, I prefer to call it the service of the pre-eminently great Servant-Prophet. Of course it is the Gospel of service, but it is the Gospel of service of the Servant beyond all servants. Therefore you see service in Mark set forth in its entirety and divine perfection: it is the service of One who, though He was “God over all blessed for evermore,” yet was truly and really Man, and who rendered that service as Man here in perfection. It is the perfect service of the perfect Servant; the perfect Servant must render perfect service; no other can. And therefore when God gives us a picture of what service is, He does it by setting before us the Servant. And we get a better conception of what true service is when we have the true Servant before us.

Now you will observe all through this Gospel of Mark, in connection with the service of the great Servant, that step by step there was a growing rejection of His service, even by Israel and by men; that they refused the greatest service that ever was rendered in this world. It was not only that they refused His kingly rights; we have that elsewhere; but they refused His gracious ministry here, they refused the acts of mercy which He rendered as the true Servant here. And just as there was this growing rejection on the part of Israel and of man, so I see along with it (which, I believe, is inevitable and which always follows) the secondary means come in, and the spontaneous going forth of divine power in human sympathy and human grace and human kindness that marked Him, was chilled by the unbelief and refusal that were found everywhere amongst men where He rendered that service. And hence, I believe, in the very chapter before us, in this very instance, the gradual nature of the cure, and the secondary means employed in the cure. The others were instantaneous, as we have observed before; He spake the word and it was done; He put His hands upon another case and the cure was effected; but here it is more at a distance, and it is more intermediate. Now, I believe that accounts for the character and nature of the cure here.

But again, as soon as ever the spittle was applied to the eyes of this man, mark what the effect was. The Lord’s question to him, which was the next point, brings out the effect. He asks him if he saw anything. He says, “I see men as trees walking.” That is to say, that what he received was a faculty; he had not yet the power, the ability, to apply the faculty; he had got here the faculty of sight; he could see, but it was all confused, “men like trees walking”; nothing, so to speak, was in its right place; he could not see anything at all before; now he could see, but he did not see anything clear correct, right. Now let us learn this, from the incident, how that a man may be born again, but have as yet no power. Power always comes with the Holy Ghost; and when a person has the Holy Ghost that person has power, because the Holy Ghost is power. I do not believe in what is called a second baptism; I do not find it in scripture. I find in scripture that if persons have the Holy Ghost they have Him though He may be grieved. I believe that at the root of what is called a re-baptism of the Spirit of God, lies a grievous error. And I will tell you what it is; it is shifting the want of power over upon God, instead of taking the blame to ourselves, because we have grieved the Spirit of God. That is the secret of it, and that is a very serious thing. A grieved Spirit of God leaves you powerless, as far as action is concerned. Oh, dear brethren, the Friend within is sensitive. Watch: “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” He does not say, Look for fresh power, or fresh blessing. He does not say, Look for a fresh baptism. He says in effect, Do not grieve that power that dwells in you. If you are a Christian you have got the Holy Ghost dwelling in you. “Live in the Spirit.” “walk in the Spirit,” cherish the movements of the Spirit, minister to the Spirit, “grieve not the Spirit.” Observe how the other weakens all that, and therefore people cry to God to give them new power. If they would judge themselves the power is there.

Now I think we can understand the little lessons that we are learning, from the fact that here was a man who from being blind has got this faculty of sight, but as yet cannot see anything clearly, cannot put things together distinctly; “men like trees, walking.” The second thing which completed the cure is this: it is lovely to mark verse 25, “After that he put his hands again upon his eyes,” the Savior’s hands, the Lord’s hands; first there was the spittle, then the hands, “and made him look up.” Ah! Jesus never makes you look anywhere else; man will make you look within, he would occupy you with the floating feelings of your own poor heart within; but Jesus always by His Spirit makes you look up. There is only one place to which His blessed hand will point your eyes, and that is the place from whence He came; thank God we can say, the place where He is now gone. He came from it, He dwelt in it in heart and affection even when He was here; He was the “Son of man who is in heaven” even when He was upon earth; He was out of heaven as He came here, He was in heaven when He was here; He is in heaven now in body. And oh! where can we go, what place is there, I ask you affectionately worth our eyes being on, except there? He made him look up,” He put His hands upon him, He connected him with power. I notice that power always turns the eye there; weakness and self-occupation turn it within; that is the difference. Power connects you with that place; power turns your eye to that place; feebleness is in introspection; microscopic investigation of your own miserable heart and your own miserable feelings; the hands of Jesus, the power of Jesus always lead you up. He made him look up.”

And now we see another word. He “saw every man clearly.” It is a very strong word in the original; in the Greek
language the force of the word is “He saw everything far beaming, far shining, far and near.” (τοῖς ἡλίους) Now he can see everything; he has got power, he can concentrate his faculties; he has not only got sight but he can concentrate the sight, the thing is perfect and completed.

And then mark what the Lord says to him. O the blessed retirement of the Lord Jesus Christ! O the lowly, beautiful path that He walked in this world! He did not want popularity; He did not seek admiring crowds to come and own Him; He did not want to be lauded by men here as the great friend of every one’s need. “Neither go into the town” -- you will only get deteriorating influences there -- “nor tell it, to any in the town.” Do not go into the town for yourself, and do not tell it to anybody in the town for My sake: that is to say, do not you go into the deterioration of human influence; you have been under divine power, keep away from human influence; you have been the subject of divine blessedness, now avoid the town. O dear friends, would to God I could warn you as my heart feels I would like to warn you! The influence of the town is solemn! You will not think me hard, will you, if I say this -- I always feel, O what a struggle it must be with the children of God in London to keep out of the influences of a great city like this! There is a kind of influence that it has upon us almost insensibly to ourselves: it is not that we wish it; but it is exactly like the effect of an ill-drained house upon a man that lives in it; he is not conscious of the polluting influence of the gas that is there, yet he is affected by it. So, beloved friends, I believe it is with us; I read a great deal of the town in scripture; do not go into the town, take care of the town. The meaning of it is, beware of human influence and its deteriorating effects upon the soul. And then one word more; “Do not tell it to any one in the town.” He did not want to be popularized, did not want the laudation of the crowd, or to pose as a great philanthropist or benefactor of mankind. “Do not tell it to any one in the town”; He sought retirement. Are not the ways of our Lord Jesus Christ here in this world lovely? The Lord help us to gather these things up and learn from them.

Look at the other incident. When He came to Caesarea Philippi, the first thing I observe in these verses is that He found speculations and opinions rife. That is just what it is today; there is plenty of speculation, plenty of opinion, of reasoning and argument. It is a day of speculation. We want to know God’s thoughts; man’s opinion is not worth much. It is a wonderful thing to see that there is no subject under the sun that people are so ready to speculate, and reason and argue about as subjects connected with the truth of God; and those are the very subjects of all others where their opinions and arguments and reasonings are entirely out of court. I beg to say affectionately to you that we are not competent to form an opinion at all about those things; they are out of your range and ken. It is idle work, and yet people are indulging in it continually every day. So it was here. What was wanting, but what was absent, was just this -- faith. And that is what is wanting today; alas, there is but little faith. What is wanting is faith in His word. I bless God with all my soul for grace to believe every word that is in that book; be it foolish, weak, senile, contemptible as much as ever you like, I believe every word that is in that book. And more than that -- and I am thankful for this opportunity to avow my faith in it -- I not only believe what is in that book, but I believe that in the language in which God has been pleased to communicate the subjects that are in that book, He chose the words and gave the words to the persons who communicated them. I do not believe that it contains the word of God; it is the word of God. And there is where faith rests. It rests on that which is the word of God. Oh, thank God for that certainty; I see people positively driven about like leaves before the wind on every side; they are all adrift, they do not know what to believe, and it ends in their believing nothing at all. Why? Simply because they have got away from the word. And that is exactly what it was here at Caesarea Philippi; opinions, speculations, arguments, reasonings, and no faith at all. There are two circles, you observe: first, the outside circle, “Whom do men say that I am?” Well, say the disciples, one says one thing and another says another, and no one is right. Then He comes to the inner circle; “Whom do ye say that I am?” That is a home question, is it not? Supposing the Lord Jesus Christ were to come into this company tonight and put that question direct to each one of us here, “Whom do ye say that I am?” Personal, pointed, is it not?

And now mark; there is one man here who is taught of God, who has obtained his information, not from his brains, or his intelligence, or his education; he did not derive it from any human source or from any antiquated medium down here in this world; he received it direct from God, and his answer proves it. You are the Christ, he says; you are God’s anointed Man, that is the meaning of “the Christ” It is interesting to note, in passing, the difference between this gospel and Matthew in this incident. I believe you get the whole confession given, but one gospel records one part and the other gospel records the other. Matthew records what suits his gospel, Mark what suits his. What Matthew records is, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That is what Matthew specially lays stress upon, and therefore you get the very truths that are connected with that revelation to Peter and that confession by Peter. “Son of the living God” pointed to His triumph over death and His resurrection glory; and therefore the Lord unfolds to him then and there the great truth of the church. That is not here at all, because that is not the subject of Mark; that would not be in keeping with the object of the writer of this gospel, though It was in keeping with the object of the writer of Matthew. What was in keeping was, “You are God’s anointed Man, the anointed Servant-Prophet of God; you are the Christ.” Now the Lord says, The time for that testimony is past, do not tell anybody of it. That testimony was fully rendered, and therefore it ceases now. They had rejected Him; the thing was over; and He falls back upon another glory, a glory that was connected with another title that belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ that is used here, and He speaks of Himself as “the Son of man”: He does not say “the Christ,” but “the Son of man” (v. 31): “And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”
Now it is the rejection of this blessed Son of man here in this world; it is His suffering path that comes out; it is not the revelation of His glory as the Son of God, victor over death, and the founder of the church in its appointed time. No; here we find His path of scorn and rejection and shame and martyrdom at the hands of man; they should cast Him out, and refuse Him, and hate Him, scorn Him, and kill Him.

Then the man that was taught of God, the man that had got this divine revelation really, that knew who He was, that said He was the Christ, Peter, His own Peter, “took him and began to rebuke him.” Now, is not that a very sorrowful thing? Do you know what it came from, what made Peter do that? The Lord treats it in a very solemn way; “You are Satan,” “Get thee behind me, Satan.” What was that principle in Peter that led him to that action? It was inherent worldliness that stumbled over the cross; it was the unchecked and unjudged worldliness of heart that could not bear the shame that came upon the Master whom he loved. O dear friends, how solemn it is to think of it! I believe that is one great lesson we learn from this incident. A man may be very sincere, may have true faith, may truly love Christ, and yet not know himself at all, and, as we find here, the flesh within not be judged so as to use in faith the revelation he had got, and to understand the deep meaning of it in Christ’s path. That is what affected Peter. Worldliness always shrinks from the cross. Ah! friends, the cross is the test today. Talk to people about heaven, or about Christ and His grace and goodness, and they are very glad to hear it; tell them what He speaks of here, tell them of His scorn, of His shame, of His rejection, of His murder by men, tell them of that cross, and they shrink from it. I beseech of you to weigh these things over and look at them. It is very solemn. Do you want to be a follower of Him? I hear people ask that question sometimes, Are you going to be a follower of Jesus Christ? Are you going to be a servant, a true servant through grace in your measure, of that blessed One? Do you long to serve Him and follow Him in this world? Do you want to have your feet in His footsteps? I cannot conceive that any child of God would not say, “I want to have my footsteps down in the footsteps of my dear Lord and Master? Then let me show you the path now for a moment. We will just read the verses, and they will show it to you; I do not need to say one word on them (v. 34): “And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” I avow to you, I am profoundly impressed with the sense that popular Christianity will not have this at any cost. We are very glad to have the cross for salvation; how do you like it for your path down here? You are glad to have it to get your sins forgiven, glad to have it as a passport to glory and as the road to heaven; do you like it in your path down here in this world, Christ’s cross, Christ’s shame, Christ’s rejection? People have shrunk from it; they will not have it. On the contrary, what we find now is that the world, forsooth, is pressed into the service of Christ, and so we have that greatest of all contradictions, and that ugliest of all appearances, a thing called the Christian world. Oh read those verses, brethren in Christ, here tonight; I would put those verses upon our consciences and upon our souls: “If any man will come after me,” if you want to follow Me, to have your footsteps down in My path, to be in My circumstances, to be My disciple, “let him deny himself.” And that is a great deal more than self-denial; self-denial is a very good thing, but that is not denying yourself; many have self denial who do not deny themselves. To deny yourself is a very big thing. “Let him abnegate himself to death.” Let him be out of sight, and kept there, not under the water and out of it again, but under the water and kept there, kept out of sight, unrecognized, unrecognizable; “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” That is the path. There is no other for Christians, there is no other for those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, as my concluding message to you tonight, I press it earnestly and affectionately upon all our hearts here -- Christ’s solitary, lonely, rejected, outcast, forsaken, despised, refused, scorned, hated, despicable path in this world, is the path of all that would follow Him. Now is that the path that you and I are on, that is the question? God meets us with it tonight. It is a very easy thing to merely float down with the stream of current Christianity, and there is a certain amount of credit attached to a great deal that is done, a sort of applause, a kind of “well done” from this world; as if it were capable of judging or appreciating anything at all that is of God! But oh! to be hated for Him, scorned and rejected for Him! As the Lord says to that church amongst the seven churches, to that one feeble, weak little company, that just had strength enough to keep their heads above water, so to speak, “I know your works”; as much as to say, nobody else would recognize them or give you credit for them: “I know your works; you have a little strength and you have expended it upon Me; you have kept My word and not denied My name.” Well, I could not wish anything better for you, beloved friends -- and I do wish it with all my heart and soul -- that His path might be your path and mine through grace. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

The Lord Jesus Christ grant that His own words may stick fast in our souls tonight, that what we have learnt from this beautiful instance of His grace and goodness here may really be revealed to us by His own power, so that we might more truly and really and whole-heartedly be found in His footsteps and in His path, for His name’s sake.

(Notes of an Address.)

The Person and Office of the Spirit
No. 4

We have had before us the endowment of the Spirit in fact and the form in which He was pleased to descend and abide on the Lord Jesus, and on those who had received the remission of sins through faith in His death and resurrection. We also observed certain marked surroundings of the great fact itself, and the contrast presented in the effect produced by the divine presence in the Old Testament (1 Kings 8:2) and on the day of Pentecost, when God in His infinite grace was pleased to make the redeemed His habitation. Let us now, as
the Lord may be pleased to help us, meditate upon three things which the believer is said to have as the result of the heavenly gift.

First, it is said we are sealed. (See Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22.) Now it is very clear that persons were and are born of the Spirit, but the Holy Ghost Himself coming down and dwelling in those who had already believed on Jesus, putting them consciously in the place in which He was with God, is quite another thing; it was the immediate result of the perfection of Christ’s work and glory, where there was faith in it, and observe it was no question of experience or a work within, it was the seal of faith, and this sealing gives the intelligence and consciousness of the new position the believer is in before God in virtue of redemption. It has been well put thus — “The sealing of the believer with the Holy Ghost on the ground of his faith in the Person and work of Christ, who has accomplished the work of redemption and sits on the right hand of God, so that he knows the efficacy of that work and his place before God, as a son and in Christ, is a truth as clearly stated in scripture as can possibly be, and constitutes Christianity and the Christian as a present state of things: certainly as to guilt removed, present sonship in divine favor, and joy in hope of the glory of God.”

There is another truth brought before us in the sealing with the Spirit, namely, God taking possession of us as His own, it is the mark of His ownership of us; He puts his signature on what is His. How blessed thus to be His, and to sing --

“Since Thou hast borne sin’s heavy load
My guilty fear is o’er;
Made Thee by virtue of Thy blood,
I’m seal’d for evermore.”

Next let us consider as to anointing, which is also in connection with the Spirit. (See 2 Cor. 1:21, 22.) I would first say that sealing and anointing are, I believe, coincident in a sense, sealing being more personal, and anointing having a more general bearing. It is well said that “Sealing is the act of giving the Spirit. I put a seal on a document, and that is the same idea. The anointing was putting oil on a man’s head, and it is the general fact that the oil is put there; but the sealing is the effect on the individual. If I say at a coronation, ‘The Queen is anointed,’ it is a simple fact; but that fact secures her there as Queen. The anointing is a great deal more than the sealing.” There is another very precious feature of the anointing or unction, and shows how the blessed Lord Jesus Christ has associated us with Himself, for it is His own anointing which is the testimony to our being baptized by the Holy Ghost, “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:33, 34). It is very blessed to recall our own precious Master’s words, after His baptism and temptation, in the synagogue of Nazareth: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.” (Luke 4:18) Further, we find the word used in reference to the blessed One twice in the Acts, namely, “Thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint” (Acts 4:27). Again, “Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power” (Acts 10:38).

It may be clearly seen how that, as another has remarked, “The ceremony of anointing was related to all important offices and ministries of the servants of Jehovah under the old covenant. The priest was anointed that he might be holy unto the Lord (Lev. 8:12). The king was anointed that the Spirit of the Lord might rest upon him in power (1 Sam. 16:15). The prophet was anointed that he might be the oracle of God to the people (1 Kings 19:16).

Oh that our hearts may enter into the blessedness of all this, as it is said: “But ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1 John 2:20); and “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27).

Condensed Notes of an Address, No. 4.

“The Holy Mount”

(Mark 9:1)

I desire to bring before you only the first part of this chapter, that is, the magnificent scene of the transfiguration. The first verse properly speaking belongs to the previous chapter. In the last verse of that chapter, which has been already before us, the Lord says; “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” Now I believe that the transfiguration of our Lord was a specimen and example of the coming kingdom and glory and power of our Lord Jesus Christ; indeed, Peter in his epistle tells us distinctly that this was made known, and that it was made known on the holy mount. The light that is thrown upon the transfiguration by the utterances, through the Holy Ghost, of the apostle Peter leads us into what the real object and purport of our Lord was in bringing up His disciples to witness it; and it is that scene I desire to fix your thoughts and minds upon during the little time we are together tonight.

First of all, you will notice that the same companions of our Lord who afterwards witnessed His agony in Gethsemane, are the chosen witnesses of His glory upon Tabor. Now that brings together two things that are kept together, and which are blessed for our hearts continually to keep together, that is, the suffering and the glory. The very same chosen witnesses of the glory here were the witnesses of the suffering afterwards. O what different scenes they were! The Lord was the subject of both; He was indeed the central object of both; but think of what a contrast there was between all this transcendent brilliancy of light and glory which shone out from Him even to His raiment on Tabor, compared with all
the depths of the loneliness of His agony and passion in Gethsemane! O how blessed to keep both together! And how privileged these disciples were to witness both, to see in the first place the height that He reaches as a man; because that is really what the transfiguration is; He reaches the very highest point in the glory of His manhood on the holy mount. Have you noticed, that with the Lord Jesus Christ as a man here in this world, the path was always an ascending one till this point was reached? Born in Bethlehem, brought up in Nazareth, His path inclined, He went on step by step in that wondrous elevation that belonged to Him until He reached the very highest summit of glory as a man on Tabor. From that point it was descending; He goes down from the scene where He was glorified, where He was saluted by the Father’s voice as supreme in His affections and in His heart, He goes down step by step from the height of the holy mount until He reaches the deepest, darkest depths of Calvary. It is different altogether from the way in which sometimes the Lord’s path is presented when we speak of Him as going from the cradle to the cross. Hardly that; He went from the cradle to the holy mount; as man on earth, His path was one of transcendent glory to the cross. From the highest point it was descending; He goes down from the scene where He was saluted by the Father’s voice, where He was pre-eminently glorified as a man on Tabor, who descended to the lowest depths of Calvary’s cross. From that point He descends. When we think of the close of the pathway of suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is really what the transfiguration is; He reaches the very highest point in the glory of His manhood on the holy mount. As man on earth, His path was one of transcendent glory to the cross. Now the disciples that witnessed the one witnessed the other; they were the chosen witnesses of His sorrows and of His glory.

But mark how they were introduced to it. We are told in verse 2 of our chapter that “He leadeth them up.” I believe, that for every sight of this kind, that character of leading must be known by us. It is not only that He leads them, but He leads them “up”; and I believe it must always be so. The reason that we see so little is that the elevation upon which we stand is not divine; we must have the divine elevation to understand all that is connected with the divine. To see the glory of this blessed One we must be led “up.” It is interesting that that word “leadeth” is in meaning akin to the word that is used in chapter 24 of the Gospel of Luke, after the Lord had made Himself known to those two poor disciples in the tender way in which He did make Himself known to them on the road to Emmaus. The way that the Gospel of Luke ends is very touching and sweet to think of; it says, “He led them out as far as to Bethany.” “He led them out.” Here it is “He leadeth them up.” Those two little words have a very deep significance for every heart that is open to receive them: “up” and “out.” “He led them out as far as to Bethany.” To get that kind of blessing, we must be led out. He led them outside of all, so to speak, that pertained to the scene here, to the one spot that was the sequestered home of Jesus upon earth. “He led them out as far as to Bethany,” and then “lifted up hands and blessed them.” The Lord grant that you and I may be led out for that blessing; I do not believe we ever get it except as “led out.” I do not doubt for an instant that there are blessings from God on all sides; but oh! there is a special character of blessing which no soul ever gets save as “led out.” Are you ready for that? Are you prepared to put your poor, trembling hand into His, and to say to Him, “Now, Lord, lead me where you will and as you will, but O lead me out to where this blessing falls.” So here the Lord leads them up out of the range of all human influence; He leads them into a high mountain, He gets them above, so to speak, the atmosphere of earth. He gets them outside the atmosphere of the city and of man, He leads them up to a high mountain.

But there is more in the verse even than that. Notice the words, “He leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves.” I have been so struck with that peculiar action of our dear Lord and Master in every case in which He conferred special and peculiar blessing upon His disciples. And in every case in which He conferred the like blessing upon us, I believe that we are made the subject of a gracious leading of Himself outside and apart, into a holy solitude and loneliness with Him, apart from every influence. Are not you aware of this, that the blessings so easily spoil, the color fades so soon? We need the privacy of His solitude to have this continued and fastened deeply in our souls and as well as apprehend it. Hence it is that they are taken up by Him and taken apart by Him themselves; and there, when all influences were aside and when man and man’s contrivances were all distanced, then we get the word, “He was transfigured before them.”

Now I would like you specially to notice that this word transfiguration is that which really gives us the English word “metamorphosis.” He was metamorphosed. It was a distinct change of the whole form and visage of the Lord Jesus. I believe that it was the brilliancy of light, the divine glory, if you please, that which came from God Himself, that but that it worked from what was inward in Him out, even to His raiment. Mark in a very special way notices His raiment. If you compare the gospels -- do not try to harmonize them, they never differed; you need not try to harmonize friends that were always in agreement: it will yield blessed fruit to you -- if you compare Matthew and Luke with Mark, you will find that Matthew and Luke refer rather to His Person, and Mark lays more peculiar stress upon His raiment. Notice the words, for every little word is important in scripture; he says in verse 3, “His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” It is His raiment to which Mark particularly calls attention. I suppose it fell in with the object of his gospel to display even the exterior of the great Servant-Prophet Son, to show the brilliancy and the power of that light, which whilst it burst forth from within, as I believe, yet shed its own bright rays upon every part even of His clothes. And if you keep the thought of each gospel in your mind as you read it, you will find it an immense help in seizing, by the Holy Ghost’s ministry, what the purport of each gospel is. Here it is the Servant, the great Servant-Prophet, the Son in sovereign goodness, divine goodness, among people who refused Him and despised Him. Therefore even that which was external in connection with the Lord Jesus, His very garments, reflected the brilliancy of that glory that put into the shade all human splendor.
There is another little thought in connection with the word that is used that I would call your attention to, because it will help you to see the beautiful accuracy of each part of scripture, and the design of the Holy Ghost in inspiring the vessels of revelation in the communications that He made. You will notice when you read the Gospel of Luke that the word “transfigured” or “metamorphosed” is not used at all. Matthew uses it, Mark uses it, but Luke, though he speaks of the fact just as the others do, does not use that word. Do you know why? For this reason: it is pretty clear from the internal evidence of the gospel that Luke wrote more especially, primarily at least, for Gentiles, Greek readers. Now the use of that word would in all human probability have connected the minds of those who had been Greeks with the old heathen mythology, and therefore, I believe designedly, that word is omitted. Because there is a design in the omission of words from scripture, just as much as in the employment of certain words of scripture; and therefore designedly on account of those for whom Luke was specially chosen to reveal the mind of God in the gospel entrusted to him with regard to the manhood glory of the Man Christ Jesus, he omits a word which would not have fallen in with the divine thought and mind in the communication of God’s will in his gospel; whereas the other evangelists, Matthew and Mark, used it because the readers of their gospels would be under no liability or temptation to be lured away into the darkness and even the vileness of heathen mythology. So far with regard to this word “transfiguration”; and my only reason for mentioning it is that it shows the guiding hand of God, not merely over the subjects of scripture, but over the words of scripture. I have said before, and I say it again, and from the very bottom of my soul, and delight to say it, that I believe as profoundly as that I am in the presence of God, that the very words were given to the vessels of revelation as much as the subjects were communicated. It was not merely that they had got certain things to communicate, which we call revelation -- revelation relates to the subjects, inspiration to the words -- but they got the very words; they were not left to use what they thought the best word in their judgment, they were dependent upon the Spirit for the words. I Cor. 2 leaves us in no doubt with regard to that; “Which things,” says the apostle, “we also speak ;” that is the vessels of revelation; “not in the words,” mark you, “which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, as our version has it; “communicating spiritual things to spiritual persons” is the real meaning of it; cast on God for the very word that would convey the revelation that God was pleased to give them, so that they not merely received directly from Him the revelation of His mind, but they got the proper vehicle whereby to communicate it. I hold, that there is no possibility of escape from it; if words mean anything, 1 Corinthians 2 means that; and if you and I are at liberty to take out of scripture what we think God has put into scripture, to form our own thoughts and opinions as to what is of God in scripture, and to reject on the other side what we consider is not of God in scripture, we are making ourselves superior, in what is called our verifying faculty, to scripture. The judge must be always superior to that which is judged; that which we pass the sentence of our minds upon must of necessity be inferior to our minds, if our minds are to be the discerning power so as to say. This is of God, and that is not of God, or the one is of God and the other is not of God. The truth is, it is all of God, in the subjects and in the words in which the subjects are conveyed. And this very omission here in the Gospel of Luke of the word “transfiguration” is a witness simply to that fact.

The next point here is, who His companions were: not merely who were the witnesses of His glory, but observe, His companions here. In verse 4 we are told that “there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.” These two were the ancient fathers of the Old Testament; there was the great heroic law-giver, Moses, and there was the great lion-hearted prophet, Elijah, the typical chiefs of the ancient dispensation. O what a wonderful thing to see not merely the disciples of His love and choice, but to see who of olden times were the companions of this blessed One in this effulgence of His glory as a man here upon Tabor. Do you think there was distance there? Notice what is said: “They were talking with Jesus.” How blessed the intimacy, the holy familiarity of that word! We talk with those we are intimate with; we commune with those that are beside us, so to speak, in the same position. This blessed One is pleased to grant this intimacy to these Old Testament saints; they talked with Him. Do you and I know what that is? I daresay you know those sweet words --

“A little talk with Jesus,
How it smooths the rugged way!”

but do you know what it means? Do you know this holy nearness, so that you can talk with Him? It does not say that He talked with them; that would not be the same thing: I could quite understand that, but it would not convey to our hearts what this word conveys, “They were talking with Jesus”; they were in nearness, in intimacy, there was the absence of all reserve, they were outside everything that could check; they talked with Him. Lord give us to understand the blessedness of talking with Thee.

May I say to you in passing, that you will find it an immense comfort to your heart if you are pressed down with difficulties or trials or sorrows, to have One you can go and talk with about it. How many times I have heard the lamentation of many of God’s dear people when they have been sorely pressed, and the heart well-nigh burst, and they longed for some one to whom they could speak, and failed to find upon earth one to whom they could tell the depths of their hearts. And you know this, I suppose, it is only to your most intimate friends that you can tell your sorrows; you can tell your joys to anybody, but it is only to those that are close to you, and in all the nearness of affection and intimacy, that you can tell your sorrows.

Now I speak to you in this way because I have no doubt there are many who have -- who of us is there here that has not some time or another, and God knows it may be now -- some crushing weight of sorrow or trial or some pressure upon their heart. Go and talk to Him about it. O what a reality it is to talk to Him about it! He loves to hear. Talk
with Him: find the relief there. You will find what a floodgate that will be to let that bursting heart of yours out to Jesus. He will keep the secret; He will never break faith with you. O how I love to hold a brief for Him in that respect, so to speak, and to plead for Him with you that you might know the blessed, precious relief it is just to go and tell the whole thing out. You cannot inform Him about anything that He does not know; but as you talk with Him just like these chosen witnesses of the Old Testament here, your heart will find a solace, you will find a pillow for your aching head and your weary heart. Now just go and unburden it, open it out, and talk with Him as they did. They talked with Jesus.

Now we are not told here, but we are told elsewhere, the subject of the conversation. A wonderful thing to think of; the subject of the conversation was “His decease.” A very remarkable word is used to convey that to us, the word that gives the English word “exodus”; they spoke of His exodus. He came in and He went out. I love to think of Him going out in that way. One of the Gospels always presents that; you will be struck with it if you carefully study it for yourselves; but I believe I am correct in saying that you will hardly find in the Gospel of the Testament here, your heart will find a solace, you will find a precious relief it is just to go and tell the whole thing out. You cannot inform Him about anything that He does not know; but as you talk with Him just like these chosen witnesses of the Old Testament here, your heart will find a solace, you will find a pillow for your aching head and your weary heart. Now just go and unburden it, open it out, and talk with Him as they did. They talked with Jesus.

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Now I would like you to think over this for a moment. Is it not blessed to know that the subject of the glory is the cross? And there could be no subject more suited to the glory than the cross of Jesus. How wonderful to have the cross and the glory brought together like that! They speak of His decease, the accomplishment of the exodus that was yet to come. They spoke of it; there was communion, so to speak, of its kind and up to its measure there between them and Him; “they spake of His decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

We come now to a solemn part of this scene. While that was in progress, Peter who was always ardent, always ready, always quick and foremost in everything, makes a suggestion. Notice what it is. I can quite understand how his heart was oppressed with the thought of the transient nature of that converse and the fleeting character of that scene. And it is so like us, so natural to us, to long to perpetuate seasons of blessing; we long in some human way, to hold these moments conversely the Father; “When his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father”; “I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.” And it is lovely to dwell on it in that way; that was His exodus. He came in and He went out That was the subject here of the conversation in glory.

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While that suggestion was being made, and just as it passed his lips, mark the way it is met. (v. 7) “While he spake there was a cloud,” “a bright cloud,” Matthew tells us, a brilliant cloud, a bright shining cloud, a cloud that was illuminated with the brilliancy of light, a privacy of light which overshadowed them; it was the shekinah, the visible display of the Divine presence. That is the first answer to Peter’s suggestion; the bright cloud overshadows them. Is not there something very remarkable in that? God heard Peter’s words, the Father replies to Peter’s desire, and at once suddenly shows Himself; a cloud overshadows them.

And not only was there this overshadowing cloud, but mark, “a voice came out of the cloud.” You “will observe that three times during the progress of His blessed pathway upon earth that voice was heard; it was heard at His baptism, it is heard here, and it was heard also as He stood upon the threshold of His passion: in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of His blessed pathway, the voice from heaven was heard. There is a sweetness about that. O how the Father loved to let it be known what His heart found in His blessed Son! What was this voice? First, “My beloved Son.” O how blessed it is to think of that! It is the expression of the tenderest and dearest and closest and nearest affections of the Father for the Son. Some one has said, and I accept it, that the moment you come to the expression “Father and Son,” you touch the fount of love, you get to the source, the great fountain head, of love. I believe it is true. So here the voice from the cloud says, “This is My beloved Son.” O, He says, I must have him all up for My own heart and My own affections. Thank God, He gives Him out to us; but He must have Him all up for Himself. His whole heart’s deepest, tenderest out-goings found their answer in Jesus as a man here. I believe it was in connection with His service specially -- as the Gospel of Mark is in
connection with service -- that this beloved Son was the Servant Son here. “This is my beloved Son.” Put Moses and Elias on a level with Him? Put three tabernacles over them to bring them into equality? “This is my beloved Son,” He says. And now there is another word: “Hear him.” Silence every voice, silence every note, silence every song, silence all earth; “Hear him.” I ask you affectionately tonight, is that enough for you and me? Are we satisfied, beloved, just with that? Can you in the depths of your soul, and I ask myself the question with you, can we take those words up and use them?

“I have heard the voice of Jesus, Tell me not of aught beside.”

Fine poetry! Is it true? That is the question. That is the Father’s thought, at any rate, that is what is in the mind and thought and heart of God; “Hear Him.” And that is what He wants us to hear. He calls us apart from this scene, apart from the din and the strife, and the turmoil, and the upheaving and the crashing of all that is round us in this world; He calls us to hear Him. Bend your ears to catch the sound of His voice. “Hear Him.” O, what sort of people should we be if we were only better listeners of Jesus Christ! What sort of Christians should we be if only we heard Him! What sort of testimony should we bear in this world if His voice entered into our ears and into the caverns of our souls! “Hear him.”

Now look at the effect of it? There is an effect produced, not only by this cloud, but by this voice, and a very blessed effect too; and therefore we read, “And suddenly when they had looked round about,” -- because it all took place in divine rapidity -- “they saw no man any more.” O what a mercy it would be if we saw no man any more! What an exodus that would be if men only retired and Christ only was heard! “They saw no man any more.” "Well, alas, we cannot help seeing men until God clears the scene. It is a great thing not to hear them at any rate. “This is my beloved Son: hear him.” And thank God there is a moral effect, not a literal one, but a moral effect produced, where Christ alone is listened to, that you will find human sounds and human voices and human thoughts retire. And I believe that as the voice of Christ is heard, that as the face of Jesus by faith is seen, there is a moral retirement from the whole scene, and we walk in sweet forgetfulness; as another has said, “Too far for some, not far enough for others, but with Him.” That is the secret of it; with Him. “Hear him.” “Suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.” Thank God it does not say “Jesus only,” but “Jesus only with themselves.” There was the abstraction of His own blessed presence, and they were, so to speak, absorbed with Him. “Suddenly, they saw no man any more”; all disappeared, the scene was cleared; no man any more was seen but “Jesus only with themselves.”

Now, what a thing it would be for us tonight, if by grace and sovereign goodness we only heard that blessed One, if only we answered to the Father’s desire to hear Him, if only we let the sound of His own sweet voice into our ears and into our souls, and made this scene and the strife of it retire from our hearts, and we “saw no man any more save Jesus only with” ourselves! Do you think we should be losers? We should be immense gainers! O the gain, the bliss, the blessedness of it! Why, it would be just a foretaste of heaven; it would be heaven begun now! Because that is what will constitute heaven. People are very fanciful in their ideas about heaven. We go to meet Jesus. If you ask me what heaven is, I think I told you once before and I tell you again, I believe heaven is the place where Jesus Christ is praised and praised for ever; it is full of the presence of Christ; it is Christ. You will not find one syllable, not one single word, ever spoken of in connection with it but that. Says the great apostle, whose heart and soul was formed by Christ in this way, “I have a longing, an ardent desire” -- for what? To be at rest? That is the way people talk. Why? Because they are not at rest now. “O to be gone!” Yes, that is to escape out of the troubles and difficulties of the world. Self will hold fast in our hearts as long as it possibly can. Not a word of that do we find in “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.” “Absent from the body,” -- to be out of all its aches, and its groans, and its pains? No; “present with the Lord.” May the Lord in His infinite grace give our hearts to taste and know a little of what it is to listen to the Father’s voice now. “Hear him.” Then we shall find that there is a moral clearance of the scene, and it is Jesus only with ourselves. May God command His blessing, and bring His blessed Christ and fix Him more distinctly and livingly and powerfully in the affection of our souls, for His blessed name’s sake.

(Notes of an Address.)

The Person and Office of the Spirit

No. 5

We have been dwelling upon the deep realities conveyed to us by the expressions “sealed,” “anointed,” in connection with the blessed Spirit of God; there is another word used in like connection, namely, “filled”; only observe that whereas being “sealed” and “anointed” is God’s act toward us, the being “filled in the Spirit” (πληρωμα από τὸ Πνεῦμα) (Eph. 5:18) is the believer’s privilege, and lies on his side in faith’s submission: it is not in any sense prayer, it is in every sense reception; the passive verb here employed is very suggestive, and seems to point to that which is the true condition to the Spirit’s incoming as filling. I believe that condition to be, the constant mind engrossed, the body yielded as a living sacrifice, and the heart the seat of the affections, submissive, meek, the great Redeemer’s throne.

The effect of the Spirit’s filling is set forth in what follows, even as the effect of wine drinking is said to be excess or riot (αἰσθήσεως). Do you ask what is meant in simple words by being filled with the Spirit, I would say, I believe it to be this, that the Holy Ghost takes possession in such wise, and is the only source according to His energy of the believer that all else is shut out. How blessed to be so controlled by the Spirit, that we pour out our hearts in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord.

Now it is important to distinguish between the gift and the gifts of the Spirit: these do not convey the same thought, though they might both be given on the same occasion. The gift of the Spirit is Himself given, the word for gift being δώρον, this is never confounded with gifts (χαρισματα), these were powers with which people were invested for special purposes;
whereas the gift of the Spirit was a common blessing, the portion of all who had been washed in the precious blood of Christ.

It is very interesting to the heart to see in what respect the blessed Spirit may be said to be a gift, I would say for two reasons:

1st, as given by the Father, for others, to the exalted, glorified Christ. (See Acts 2:33)

2nd, as received by the believer in faith when he has been washed in the precious blood of Christ. (See Gal. 3:2.)

How blessed to have on the day of Pentecost the very explanation given by the Lord Himself of all that was taking place there and then, and that too from the lips of His servant freshly anointed with this precious heavenly unction.

Note the one little word, the basis on which it all rests, namely, “exalted.” Christ set up on high, after all that had happened to Him below, is the divine explanation.

What could be more sweet to the heart that had tasted His love than to have Himself thus brought before it? And so it is here in Acts 2, Peter opens his mouth and delivers a precious sermon on the glories of Christ, as embosomed in scripture; under this anointing he finds Christ everywhere; another has so sweetly thus expressed it: “A very blessed thing it is that the Spirit should begin His work by testifying to the glories of the rejected, crucified Christ. Not a word as yet about grace; but going into the bosom of recondite scriptures, in Joel and the Psalms, and finding Jesus of Nazareth there -- the rejected, crucified Christ. Not a word as yet about grace; but going into the bosom of recondite scriptures, in Joel and the Psalms, and finding Jesus of Nazareth there -- the crucified One, of whom the rabble of the earth had said, ‘Crucify him, crucify him’ -- the Spirit takes up and says, He is the God of heaven and earth. He goes to Psalms 2, 16, and says David is not in that Psalm; and He goes to Psalms 110, and says, David is not in that Psalm. It is Jesus of Nazareth whose soul was not left in hell. It is Jesus of Nazareth to whom it is said, ‘Sit thou on my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool.’ It is admirable beyond all thought to find such an opening of a freshly anointed lip.”

Lastly, let us notice well here the very intimate connection between the heavenly power and the heavenly object. The blessed Lord Jesus had said: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” -- it is very evident that this means of Me in heaven, and Peter’s testimony in Acts 2, showing us Jesus made Lord and Christ in heaven, is supplemented by the fuller revelation given to him whom we may appropriately designate as the apostle from the glory.

May our hearts ever more and more rejoice not only in the heavenly comfort of the blessed Paraclete, but also in His heavenly testimony to Himself, the living One on high in the Father’s glory.

Condensed Notes of an Address, No. 5.

“Bring Him unto Me”
Mark 9:14-34

There are two subjects in these verses of scripture that I will call your attention to this evening. First, there is the scene after the transfiguration, after the glory that He was exalted to upon the holy mount; there is the scene on earth, indeed, there is what we might call earth. We were dwelling upon heaven last week, and I trust through grace we got some little of the blessedness of heaven, the glory of Jesus, the Father’s voice singling Him out as the special object of His own ineffable delight, His beloved Son. But in our verses tonight we are in a different position altogether; we are on earth, earth with its discordant sounds, its miseries, its sorrows, its griefs, its heart breaks, for that is what goes to make up this earth. Do you not know it? Are you not passing through it? Do you not know that in this world death and sorrow are always at home? Ah, friends, we have got to leave it to find where true joys are; they are not here: we have got to leave the place here in spirit and in faith to find the joys that never fade, the place where the sun never goes down at noon; it is where Jesus is. How one’s heart enters into the saying of a poor coloured woman that I read of some time ago to one that was in constant distress, and whom in her simple way she tried to comfort. Her heart never was in the clouds and gloom of earth, it was always bright; in her deepest distress there seemed to be sunshine ever in her heart; and her owner (for she was a slave) asked her once how it was that she seemed to be so little affected by all the difficulties and trials through which she passed; her simple reply in her own native way of expression was this, “Massa, it is always bright where Jesus is.” Oh friends, to live there! Alas! we too often visit there; some of us perhaps do not even do that much. But oh! to live there, to abide there! Now that is what this scene on earth brings before us; but I would like to say one word before we look at it together about the Lord’s charge after the transfiguration was over, so as to complete what we had before us already.

You will observe in the closing verses after the account of the transfiguration, when the Lord came down from the mount He charged His disciples that they should not speak of those things that they had seen till after He was risen from the dead; and then we are told that the mention of the resurrection seemed to have been like a piercing sword that went through their hearts. They reasoned with themselves what the resurrection from the dead must mean.

I believe there were two reasons in connection with that charge. First of all, He enjoins the silence which would deepen in their souls the impression of the scene of glory that they had just visited There is a wonderful power in silence; we lose so much by the noise and clamor of sounds either of others or of ourselves. There is an expression in silence far more eloquent than the sweetest notes that ever passed from mortal lips: and I believe He desires to leave, in that enjoined silence upon their hearts, the deep impress of the scene He had passed through. They were not to speak of it; it was to permeate down, as it were, into the very depths of their moral
But there was another reason, and that was, it was introducing that great subject of the Son of man’s rising again from the dead, and it was that which had pierced them through. It was not the mere fact of the resurrection in itself there would have been no question whatever in their minds with regard to resurrection; every well-taught Jew and every good and pious Jew believed in the resurrection; but it was the fact of His resurrection; “till the Son of man be risen.” It was not the fact of graves being burst open, or what is called, and indeed very incorrectly called, the general resurrection, for there is no such thought in scripture; I am quite aware there is in popular thought; but we have to learn from scripture. More properly speaking, there is a sectional resurrection: there is a resurrection of the just and there is a resurrection of the unjust; but a “general resurrection at the last day,” you will not find within God’s word. What really touched them and moved them was the fact of His resurrection; and I will tell you why. It scattered the dreamy thoughts of their hearts; it blasted their illusive hopes that all was to be made good by a living Christ, a Messiah known after the flesh amongst men. That death of His of which He spoke before, which was so abhorrent to their nature, which they stumbled over just as much as some stumble over His glory today, that death of His was implied in His resurrection. It slew the living hopes of their hearts, it broke up all their vain dreams, it brought this great fact to them with its momentous consequences, that their Master after all was to die. They could not understand it, they could not conceive such a thing. It threw their hopes the other side. God grant that, through His grace, you and I may so enter into it that it may have the same effect with us, a more real effect than it had with them. The purpose of it was to turn the mind the other side; and that is where He wants us. His resurrection opens up glories beyond; it closes all hopes this side the grave, shuts out all expectations this side the tomb, but it opens up vistas of glory, scenes of permanent blessedness beyond. Do you enter into that? Do you appreciate it? Does your soul take in that fact? Thank God, our blessings are beyond. How little it is entered into! Now that was the Lord’s purpose, in connection with this charge, to throw their hearts the other-side. And I believe He wants to do it now, and we are very slow to let Him do it, and slower still to follow Him. But these two things connect themselves with the charge: first, the deepening of the impression of the scene of glory upon their hearts; and secondly, to throw their hearts and expectations beyond the grave to the other side into which resurrection introduces them.

We have got now to the verses we read; we have left Tabor and we have got down to the bottom of the mount -- come back, as it were, into this world. I have spoken to you a little, and I will not dilate on it longer, of the contrast between earth and heaven. That is the first thing that strikes the heart in reading these verses. We must know a little of heaven in order to be able to form the contrast and appreciate it. We do so cling to this earth; I do not say the world, I am not speaking at all now of the moral character of things, of the moral stamp that is upon all that is here since the rejection of Jesus Christ; but I am speaking of the solid, literal earth that our feet walk on. We are drawn to it and we cling to it with an awful tenacity; slow to let go, slow to allow the moorings that tie us there to be parted. We must know something of the joys of heaven, the scene on high, in order to form the contrast. But when we do, when the contrast stands out before us, it is then we are made sensible of what this world is. You know we form our opinion of everything in the way of contrast. There is something bright and blessed and beautiful, and you contrast it with all that is passing and transitory and gloomy; but you must know what you contrast with. And therefore I say we must know a little of those blessed joys to be able to form the contrast with the scene that is here and its sorrows. That is the first thing in these verses.

The second thing that comes before us, and very blessed it is to think of it, is that when they came down from the mountain, and got into this place of distress and misery that is around us here, the countenance of Jesus -- I say it with holy reverence -- was resplendent with the glory that He had just been in; His face retained the traces of that glory which He had readied as a man in all its height upon the holy mount. That is what those verses really bring before us, and hence we read, “And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. That is the first thing in these verses.

And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him” -- "did homage" is really the force of the word. They were struck; there was a grandeur, a dignity, and a glory, that still lingered over that beautiful face. Oh, how little we are up to a scene like that! Amazement seized them; the force of the word is “exceeding terror,” “great dread laid hold upon them” when they looked at the reflection of the glory of Tabor still lingering upon that blessed face, as He came down to the bottom of the mount. I do not say for a moment that there were not glories that belonged to Him in His own Person, glories that were specially and peculiarly His own in connection with what He was. But as I was saying last week, He reached this eminence and height of preciousness to God on the holy mount; it was an ascending scale with Jesus Christ from Bethlehem to Tabor, up and up, until He reaches the very highest point, and then it was descending, down and
down, to the depths of Calvary. And when He comes back from that scene He still wears that glory, and it was that which struck terror into their hearts. I have been greatly interested in looking at the disciples in the opposite scenes of His life. You will find that in Gethsemane they slept, and on Tabor they were afraid. Oh, how little up to His sufferings and glories we are! We hardly ever seem to be at home in either scene. In His sufferings they slept for sorrow. So do we; it is nature’s resource, selfish sorrow, self-consideration, self-ministration. They sought the resource of sleep in their sorrow; on the mount they were afraid, His visage terrified them, the glory repelled them. I think it is very convicting to our hearts to think how little we are up to either of these things. There is one great reason for it. No one could be at home in the glory till the Savior was there. And He must be there as having finished the great work done on the cross; He must be there as the Man who bore sorrows and griefs and pressure and judgments unutterable, to make that glory a home scene for you and me. It is not the mere fact of glory in itself, but it is who is there. If my Savior is there, the strangeness of the scene is gone. Is your Savior there? Is your great and mighty Friend there? Is the dearest object of your heart there? Is your portion there, Christian friends? That is the question. If the One who is One among a thousand, who is “chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely” to your heart, is there, the strangeness is out of the glory scene. That is the reason why they were afraid here; that is the reason why terror settled upon their hearts; there was no one there who had borne the judgment first. Afterwards it made all the difference. I bring that in because I believe it is a very important point in connection with it. The cross underlies everything; there must be judgment borne, death vanquished, the grave robbed of its victory, the whole question of sin settled, man as a responsible being ruined and lost, displaced, before our hearts can be at home in the glory of the One that has done it. When it is done, then you will find the contrast. I give you Acts 7 as an illustration of it. There is a man at home in the glory, in fact he has got no other home. Stones on earth, the hatred and malice and sullen malignity of hearts that could not do anything too much against Jesus Christ, were Stephen’s portion; but he found a home where no stone could ever reach him, he looked up and saw Jesus in the glory of God. You see the contrast at once; there was a Savior in glory then. In the scene we are looking at tonight there was no Savior as yet in glory; He was on the way to it, He was not in it yet; and hence they were afraid.

The next subject is His question. He witnessed the disputation that was taking place between the scribes and His disciples, and He asked this question: “Why reason ye with them?” There was a moral dignity and glory in the putting that question; and silence meets it; no one replied; there is not one that breaks that silence, but at last misery breaks it. I do love to see the way in which misery broke silence upon earth. Here it was a poor broken-hearted father with not only a son, but, as the Gospel of Luke tells us, an only son. Ah! these “onlys” of scripture are very touching to the heart. Here a poor broken-hearted father in the misery and distress of his need, with his only son before his eyes in a sort of living death, a state to which death would be any day preferable, breaks the silence of these wretched scribes. I have a most profound contempt for scribes -- I believe the world is full of them in principle today -- they are as clear as the moon but as cold as ice. Look at them in the account of the birth of the Lord Jesus. They had the scriptures of the prophecy at their fingers ends as we say; they could quote them, but they had not a bit of heart for Christ. There are people like that today, friends, do not be deceived about it. They could quote the scriptures; it was demanded of them because they were the exponents of the mind of God in scripture at the time, and they quoted it all correctly, too; I venture to say there was not a prophecy misplaced nor a word out of its true order; but there it began and ended what did they care about Christ? He did not warm up their hearts; there was no fire of holy love to burn upon any altar to the new-born babe there; not a bit of it. God keep us from being scribes; it is a despicable miserable sort of character. Here when He challenges them, there is not a word in reply. But reply comes from where His heart was far more gratified; reply comes from need and distress. And how many a case there is like it in the world tonight, cases of moral possession. Here is a case of literal possession; here was a poor child, an only son, afflicted with a dumb devil; that is to say, a devil who could give sounds, but nothing articulate in them. That is the meaning of “dumb” there, because you will find sounds and cries uttered, but entirely inarticulate. This poor father comes and says, Look upon my child, my son: and then he relates the malignity of the devil. “Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.” I want you to fix your thoughts for a moment, dear friends, on these two things here; I would to God that we thought a little more of the terrific blinding power of Satan, the malignity of the devil, the sullen malice of a vanquished foe but with the most tremendous power. You little know the power that is exerted in Satanic wickedness in the world today. Now along with that, observe the weakness of Christ’s own, the inability to grapple with Satanic virus, the inability to use the power which they had so as really to act for Christ in such a scene as this. I beseech of you to think of it. I must say it plainly to you with deep grief, that I believe if there is a picture in God’s word which describes more solemnly than another the people of God, it is just that picture; “I spake to thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not. O how solemn it is! Satan’s power, Christians’ weakness, the feebleness of Christ’s own! And there does not seem even to be a sense of it: would to God there were. If you saw people lowly and humble and broken-hearted because they were so little able to stand against Satanic power, your heart would have some little cheer; but when you see them elated and heady and self-satisfied and self-laudatory, it just simply breaks the heart. Those are the two things that come together in proportion to the virus of Satan is the weakness of Christ’s own people. “I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.” They had no power.

Now look what follows. There are two things, of which
the first I am going to speak to you about is too often passed over. Look at verse 19 for a moment. I do not interpret that verse in the way that people often read it. “He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.” I see two things there. I do not believe that that was intended by the Lord of life and glory in the least degree as anything like a reproachful chiding of His poor disciples. I do not believe He intended, when He used those words, to send any iron or dart into their souls, however much they deserved it. But what I read in the verse is the suffering, and the grief, and the anguish, and the pain, of the heart of Christ “O faithless generation.” Ah! it was His own heart that was panged and pained. The dart went through that tender heart; as the verse of the sweet hymn expresses it: --

“That tender heart that felt for all,  
For all its life blood gave,  
It found on earth no resting place,  
Save only in the grave.”

I read in that verse the griefs of Jesus, the pain of Jesus. And it is blessed to see it in that way; how He was touched, how He felt everything, how He was not unmoved by the circumstances through which He passed, how it entered into Him. In a Christian way it will help to illustrate for you a passage of scripture which is full of the deepest blessedness for our souls. It is put strongly in the epistle to the Hebrews; it is put in a double negative, and you know a double negative is far stronger than an affirmative. It says, “We have not a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses.” The double negative makes it so strong there, as much as to say, “Thank God, we have a High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.” Now this verse in Mark helps to cast some kind of light, by way of illustration, upon that beautiful verse in Hebrews. Here were His compassions, here was His heart touched and moved with the sense even of the inability of His poor disciples, as well as of the misery that they could not meet.

But now look again for a moment at the last two or three words of that verse; they are very sweet. If we have the sorrows of Christ, thank God we have the resources that are in Christ. Listen; “Bring him unto me”: think of that! Of brothers and sisters in Christ here tonight, you have had some case of distress or sorrow or pressure or anxiety, you have had some loved object that your heart has yearned over, and case of distress or sorrow or pressure or anxiety, you have had some loved object that your heart has yearned over, and you longed to see emancipation for them from the power and thraldom of Satan, and you thought, perhaps, I will take him to that person, I will take him to that man, he is a devoted brother, he is a mighty preacher; or, I will take her to that sister, she is a devoted woman, a prayerful woman; and you have gone and have come away heart-broken. Listen; “Bring him unto me.” O the blessedness of that! Let us learn where to take our difficult cases, dear friends; let us learn where to take our impossible cases, the impossibilities to our hearts, and the impossibilities to the hearts of others. Let us learn the resources that we have in a living Christ, a present Christ, a loving Christ, a mighty Christ: “Bring him unto me” He says. Thank God for that word! The Lord in His infinite grace give your hearts and mine to enter into the preciousness of it; “Bring him unto me.” Come direct; failure and breakdown and sorrow all round about, disappointment and vanity all round about, not a green spot, yet thank God Christ remains; He never disappointed anybody yet; “Bring him unto me.” All I can say in the face of that verse is, we are fools if we do not take Him at His word.

Well, they brought him, and no sooner did they bring him than the devil shows his power more. You may be assured if you want to get anybody to Christ, if ever the devil roared he will roar then. There is nothing that stirs up the fury of the foe, and there is nothing that moves his malignity like getting some one into connection with Christ. You try to bring an object of misery and wretchedness to Christ, and you will move all the hatred of hell and all the malignity of the arch-fiend. It was so here.

There is another little word. The Lord asks a question in verse 21, and I believe there was a deep tenderness in His heart as He asked that question of that father. I believe it was the probing of faith, the trial and testing of the man’s faith. “How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.” Now see the effect here of that little probing by Christ upon the heart of the poor father. He says, “Of a child,” and then from giving the information he bursts out into a passionate appeal which his broken heart stirred up, and he says, “Ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” That was a little bit more disrespectful in mode than it really was intended; yet, beloved friends, I am bold to say it is far more true, weak though it was, than many a prayer which you hear from the lips of people today, because it was real; there was downright reality of heart in it. It was not a made-up prayer -- there is so much of made-up prayers, you know -- it welled up from the soul of the man who, though weak in faith, still was genuinely true in the bottom of his heart. “If thou canst do anything,” he says, “have compassion on us and help us.”

Now mark the Lord’s reply; “If thou canst believe”; it is a blessed thing that He says, everything is possible to belief. The possibilities of faith are wonderful; I know no limit to them. “If thou canst believe”; it is not a question of My having power, but it is a question of your having faith. See how He brings the thing into its true place, its right position “If thou canst believe, all things are possible” -- I am not disposed to limit that; I thank God, with all my heart for it; “all things,” not “some things” -- all things are possible to him that believeth.” The poor father has the need of his own heart stirred now. It is not merely a need in his affections for his poor son, but now the need of his own heart expresses itself: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” I do trust you, I take you at your word, I cast myself upon you; but I know I am very weak in it. “I believe help thou mine unbelief.” O beloved friends, to me that is perfectly lovely, perfectly beautiful. There is a moral beauty and a moral grandeur about this moment that is reached in the history of this man that is beyond anything I know.

And now comes the moment of power. When you come to the end of yourself, then comes the moment of power. And
this moment of power is grand; there is wonderful glory about it. Look at the difference. There was excitement in the multitude; and that is what you will find in people today; it takes very little to excite people; it is an excitable age and an excitable moment we are in. But look at the quiet grandeur, the dignity, the glory of Jesus Christ here. He turns to the devil and He says, “I charge thee,” I whom thou durst not disobey, I who have all power over you, I who bound you by My own intrinsic perfection in obedience, and who will break your head in death by-and-by -- “I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” That is the moment of divine power; He spake and it was done. And then the foe shows his sullen hatred again; for he does come out, he could not do otherwise, he must obey, he must yield, he has met his conqueror; he does come out, but he leaves the traces of his malignity behind him.

And that brings out one other little word here, and it is very sweet; “Jesus took him by the hand.” I love these touches. The very hatred of the devil is the background for the tenderness and compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ. He that commanded something to be given to eat to the daughter of Jairus, He that ordered the restored son of the widow of Nain to be handed over to his mother -- I read the same heart here. You know that beautiful little touch in the Gospel of Luke, “He delivered him to his mother.” There is a sweetness in that; the raised up son is passed over to the poor widowed mother that had lost the last thing of all she valued in this world. So He stretched out His blessed hand here, and He raised him up. O blessed Jesus, would that we knew Thee better, would that we looked to Thee and that we clung to Thee more!

Now that is the scene at the bottom of the mount, and I pass over with only one word, the Lord’s instruction to His disciples as to their powerlessness. In verse 29 “fasting ought not to be inserted -- you noticed that when I read the verse I left it out -- it is a mistake of the translators to have put it in. It occurs in Matthew but not in Mark, and I will tell you why. It says, “This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer,” that what they lacked was simple, whole-hearted dependence, real surrender of everything for complete dependence upon Him; that was the lesson. And that is the lesson of service, that is what service means; and the Gospel of Mark is the gospel of service. Service is successful where it is dependent, and what awaits power is dependence. “This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer.”

The last subject is the way the Lord announces in the closing verses His coming passion. And when He speaks of His death as He does, what was to happen to the Son of Man, what He was to pass through, do you notice what is said? They did not understand it, and they were afraid to ask Him. And then a little while afterwards we are told He brought it out from them. “What were you disputing about by the way? what was it occupied your thoughts by the way,” He says to them. O, by the way they were occupied with what I am afraid occupies a great many Christians now, which of them should be the greatest. Ah that comes very home. Many a charmed circle on earth is supposed to be outside the region of that sort of thing is just the very arena of it. Eminence, position, that is what they wanted a human elevator to get a little bit high up in this world, that is what was in their mind. Now I want you to put these two things together for a moment. Mark what He says; He brings in the cross. The mind and thoughts of Jesus were upon the cross. The accomplished decease, the ignominy and the shame that He was to undergo at the hands of man, that is what was in the Savior’s thoughts. What was in their thoughts? Why, to be somebody; “who should be the greatest.” Do you notice how the two things come together here? O what a revelation, what a search-light the cross is! That is what searches us, and finds us out. I know no searchlight like the cross: it casts its bright flash on all that is within, sealed and hidden up, and often dressed up in some pious guise and form. That was the awful revelation that came out here; they were powerless in the presence of the devil, and they were faithless under the search-light of the cross; and all those awful principles that obtain in the world, ambition, jealousy, envy, variance, emulation, strife, all that was at home in their bosoms and in their hearts. That is the reason why the cross is brought in here. O what a detector! What an exposér! How it scattered their illusive dreams! How it broke up all their cherished projects! O what a revelation of them! These are the things that come to us. I am convinced this is the want, next to being established in the work of the cross, is to have a little more of the cross itself. It is the great need of the moment. Flesh can delight in glory, can talk even of perpetuating it, as Peter did on the mount; he could say, “Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias”; do not let this be too transitory the flesh could even find its pleasure in it. But the cross: that is where the rub comes, that is the great detector, the great searchlight; it brings out everything. The Lord in His own infinite grace just bring His own blessed Christ and His cross before our hearts tonight, that as we look at Him in all these beautiful scenes we have traversed, the kindness, the sympathy, the pity, the consideration, the goodness of Christ, we may think of all these things. And do not forget that little word, “Bring him to me.” I am speaking to somebody here tonight -- somehow or other I have a sense of it in my soul that there is somebody listening to me -- who has some life sorrow, some impossibility. Listen to those words. “Bring him unto me.” Remember the love of His heart; remember the pang that went through His breast -- “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” -- I feel your faithlessness I feel this misery; I feel the wants and pains of the distressed I feel for the weakness of the church but the resource is in Me; “Bring him unto me.”

I leave that word with you. The Lord in His own grace apply His own word to our hearts this night, and draw us closer to Christ, and give us a better sense of what there is in Him, His infinite resources in the resourcelessness that we find in ourselves: for His blessed name’s sake.

(Notes of an Address.)
The Person and Office of the Spirit

No. 6

I would now as briefly and as simply as I can bring before you some of the operations of the Spirit. Let us guard against the tendency, too common at the present time, to both separate and on the other hand to confound too much Christ and the Spirit; I mean, to separate Christ and the Spirit in operation in us too much, and to confound the work of Christ for us with the Spirit’s work in us.

Now, the first operation of the Spirit to which I would draw your attention, is what is called new birth, and set forth in detail in John 3. Let us observe how it is introduced. In John 2 we have man set forth on his own side, and also in relation to God; the wine is out at the wedding feast -- “they wanted wine”! What a revelation! Man’s brightest day is a failure; this sad picture is completed in the record given in the close of chapter 4, where we are given the story of the nobleman’s son who was sick at Capernaum: all this tells us what man is on his own side, how it is with him there; but we have him also exposed in relation to God in verses 23, 24. Even faith in Jesus, as founded upon a demonstration which could be addressed to human intelligence, was worth nothing. Men might be truly convinced (there were such at that time and there are such still) whether by education or by the exercise of their mind; but in order to be in relationship with God, there must be a new nature -- a nature which can know Him, and which answers to His own. Many believed in Jesus when they saw the miracles that He did (v. 23); they concluded, like Nicodemus, that a man could not do what Jesus was doing if He were not what He pretended to be. The conclusion was perfectly right. Passions to be overcome, prejudices to be laid aside, or interests hard to sacrifice were not concerned in the question. Man’s reasons judged rightly enough of the proofs given, the rest of his nature was not aroused. But the Lord knew man; He knew with divine intelligence what was in him. There was no lack of sincerity perhaps, but what there was with these men was but a conclusion, a human conviction, which had no power over man’s will; nor against his passions, nor against the wiles of the prince of this world. “Jesus did not trust himself to them.” There must be a divine work, and a divine nature, to enjoy divine communion, and to walk in the divine path across the world.

Now it is in connection with this that we find the revelation of the first operation of the Spirit; it is sovereign, it is irresistible. Observe the comparison to the wind, and the force of the little word “so” in verse 8.

Further, it is well to see the three main aspects of this divine operation.

1. We have secrecy of process, it is an invisible wave or current, and not the keenest sight or wisdom can penetrate or understand it; it is in fact inscrutable.
2. We have no thought of man’s will in the in mystery of the new birth, but entire independence as to it; it is in fact sovereign.
3. We have set before us distinct evidence in result, illustrated also in the wind; it is in fact in its nature irresistible.

This operation, then, is inscrutable, sovereign, and irresistible.

Let us now just simply state what is wrought in this inscrutable, sovereign, and irresistible operation of the Spirit.

It is, in the words of the blessed Lord, a being born again, and “this life is a beginning again of life, of a new source and of a new nature -- a life that came from God . . . We receive a new life, which is really Christ Himself in power of life in us, that which Adam innocent had not.”

How blessed, then, this operation. May our hearts take in somewhat more of all that is conveyed through it.

Condensed Notes of an Address, No. 6.

The Person and Office of the Spirit

No. 7

In our last we were considering the operation of the Spirit known as the new birth -- “born of water and the Spirit.” We shall conclude this short series of papers by dwelling upon His blessed work in us. His operation is in the power of life, producing conflict, labor, discoveries of sin, and need of mortifying our members which are upon the earth; and the more all that Christ is is revealed to the soul, the more we find out what we are, and with it the deep need for humiliation before God. It has been well remarked, that “When the fulness and finishedness of our acceptance in Christ is not known, anxiety and spiritual despondency arise, and doubt sometimes issuing in a very mistaken and evil reference to the law -- a sort of consecrating the principle of unbelief, putting the soul (on the discovery, by the Spirit, of sin working in it) under the law and its condemnation, and not in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free . . . The Spirit of God judges sin in me; but it makes me know I am not judged for it, because Christ has borne that judgment for me. This is no cloak of licentiousness. The flesh would indeed always turn it to this -- it would pervert-everything. But the truth is, that same Spirit which reveals the Lord, who bore my sins, as having purged them, at the right hand of God, and which therefore gives me perfect assurance of their being put away, and the infiniteness of my acceptance in Him -- that same Spirit, I say, judges the sin by virtue of its character as seen in the light of that very glory; and when this is not done, the Father, into whose hands the Son has committed those whom the Father has given Him to keep, as a holy Father chastises, and corrects, and purges as a husbandman the branches.”

Now in John 3, 4, and 7, we find the blessed Spirit set before us, as is said, in His characteristic living operations, and the three chapters stand thus:

1. Chapter 3 -- He quickens, gives life.
2. Chapter 4 -- He is as given, a well of water In us, springing up into everlasting life; connected with this, we
have grace and riches in their fulness, knowledge of the Father as seeking worshipers to worship the God of love in spirit and in truth.

3. In chapter 7, the blessed Spirit is spoken of as flowing forth from us, “rivers of living water” -- heavenly refreshings indeed, connected, too, with His glory as Son of man glorified; and along with this we have the earnest of glory, the power of refreshing, as well as the blessed testimony that man in Him prevails and has the glory; though yet he must needs be an expectant till He Himself is manifested to the world, then in its true order in that feast of tabernacles.

There is one point of great moment, to which I would earnestly call your attention, namely, the individual nature of the blessing; the words of another set this forth so blessedly that I would, while quoting them, adopt them as my own:

“‘He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ Here again you will remark, it is an individual matter -- the believer’s portion, however it may be ministered. ‘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.’ Now this statement (as I think we shall see) is one of extreme importance, and connected with the whole character and state of the dispensation, except the fact of as being that of God’s blessings, which are beyond all dispensation, giving the Spirit as the power of divine life and worship, inasmuch as they lead into communion with Himself.”

Again, the same writer further says: “I feel it very important to remark here, the individual character noticed before, because it is the saving principle in the midst of desolation and evil, whatever common good it may produce; it is not they shall drink of the river from the rock, or drink of some common river, but ‘Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,’ it is the personal possession and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. So the Gospel of St. John, which gives what is essential and uniting and not consequences, continually treats it.”

May our hearts more and more delight in Him, the heavenly Operator in us as well as towards the world; if we would seek Him out, it must be by His own gracious help in holy scripture, wherein He is set forth as the Comforter sent by the Father and the Son.

Condensed Notes of an Address, No. 7

“A Child Is Born” --
“The Mighty God” . . . “Emmanuel”

(Isa. 9; Matt. 2)

It is a very significant fact, that the test of every one and everything is Christ; doctrines do not test in the same way as the Person to whom, no doubt, all the doctrines of scripture relate.

The great question now, as in the days when the Lord Jesus was here, is: “What think ye of Christ?” Thus it is that here where we have the record of His advent into the world, all classes are manifested in their true character in relation to Him. In Matthew He is presented as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Messiah the King; hence it is in this connection all through this gospel we ever find Him, and the presentation of the truths found here are ever set forth in this connection. There was a spot on earth -- the place of privilege and blessing -- a favored place, the city of the great King. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Sion.”

Now it was to that spot every eye was turned, wherever expectation was alive in any true heart, it was from thence its hope sprung; hence it is that we find these wise men coming from the far east to Jerusalem, with the language of affection and earnestness saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” Thus were their hearts moved by His birth, it is the King of Israel. They come to seek all about Him who has a claim upon them, they leave their own and distant country, guided by His star, if only they can reach Him; this is the first class or company whom His advent into this world brings, as it were, to the front. It is a lovely picture this for faith to look upon. Oh, how Christ can engross heart and mind! Does He command ours? How much would we go through if only we might reach Him? Then observe their attitude on arriving at the place where He was -- “they fell down and worshiped him” --

“Jesus is worthy to receive Honor and power divine,”
is in reality the language of their willing hearts; how blessed to see faith at its goal enjoying the prize! Is it not lovely to see how His Person, having won their affections, commanded their adoration and opened their treasures? They had nothing too costly to withhold from Him, precious as were their gifts -- “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” -- He was far more precious still. Oh, what a sight for faith, child though He was here, an infant of days as to His humanity, yet He was their all! He had but just come, yet it was Himself who had come and Himself in person was there before them.

It is lovely to trace in the scriptures how His Person ever addressed the faith and affection of which He was the object; here it was in the first moments of His birth; later on, as we know, in the close of His days on earth and in the face of the hostility and hatred which beset Him, there was found a Mary, who would expend on Him what the Holy Ghost was pleased to call “very costly,” and as she placed it on His body, perfumed the house with its odor. Oh, how at the beginning and at the end Christ was all to faith, whether in the Magi or in a Mary, it found in Him its satisfying portion, and the hatred and violence which marked both the scenes to which we have called attention, could not hinder it in its devotion and affection to Him. Is it so, may I ask, affectionately, with us?

I would not leave this beautiful scene without a word on
another subject -- truly the center of all we have had before us. Let me ask you to think who is this wonderful Child, whose advent seems to touch and test all hearts? Who but Emmanuel, God with us! He was none less than God manifest in flesh; the mighty God was there. Oh, what grace and love, that He who was “in the beginning with God,” was God, should thus come down to become Man! Most affecting it is to dwell in thought on circumstances in which He is here found as having become man: a little child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger -- lowliness, poverty, and rejection are all found in His birth: well may we sing --

“Rich in glory, Thou didst stoop,
Thence is all Thy people’s hope;
Thou wast poor, that we might be
Rich in glory, Lord, with Thee.”

Again, it is striking to note how from the first moment of His advent He was a sufferer; in different ways and at different times He was such. Oh, how it does appeal to and attract the heart! It is a suffering and sorrowing Christ which does this; in His humiliation He wins, in His glory He satisfies: His humiliation and His glory are the two great powers which work upon our hearts. Then see how Israel suffers too in connection with Him. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.” Oh, what an expression of suffering and death, “they are not”! What a sense of desolation these words carry with them!

Thus we have looked at, in this first class, the faith and affection which found its all in Himself, and expended it all on Him, and we have also looked at who He was, the Object of such faith and love.

We must now look at the second class we find here, whom His Person and presence bring out. We find then a striking contrast to the Magi in the king (Herod) and all Jerusalem with him; Herod is a sad character, full of pride, vanity, and worldly lust; besides he is a foreign king, who is here seen usurping the allegiance of Messiah’s people, while He the true King, owned by the Gentiles, as represented by those wise men, is cast out and refused, His own people being entirely indifferent to Him. Oh, what a sight is here presented in the distress and trouble which His advent brought upon Herod and all Jerusalem! I need hardly dwell upon the moral state here presented. May I ask you how far you suppose things and people now are changed? Is there any more heart now than then for Christ? Alas! the answer is but too distinctly stamped upon the vast scene of profession around, where there is no more room for Jesus now than on the morning of His birth.

But suffer me to bring this question nearer to our own doors, and to ask how it is with us in relation to Him? Another has so truly said, that what marked the man who then had possession of the throne of Jerusalem was “victorious love of the world.” Now how far are we free from a like influence? Is it not this we have to watch against on every side? Oh, the inroads and encroachments it has made in our midst! We are looking at a moment when Christ was “an exile in Egypt, and then a Nazarene in the earth”; what is He now, may I ask? And what are we in relation to Him and as His disciples in this world that thus hated and rejected Him, and that hates and rejects Him still? Oh, be assured this is the question of questions, now as then Christ determines everything. How much there is in that name Emmanuel, and what power there is in it to set aside present things: these are surely some of the thoughts the Holy Ghost would press on our souls as we dwell upon this precious page in His history upon earth.

But there is another class represented here, to which I would earnestly call your attention for a little. These scribes are a miserable company; they were conversant with the prophetic scriptures which told of Messiah’s birth, when appealed to, they reply at once; but having said this we have said all: information they had, but no more; they could tell of His coming, who was Jehovah’s Shepherd-King, to come out of Bethlehem, the house of bread but their hearts had no interest whatever in Himself.

Oh, what a picture of a heart unmoved were they, no cravings, and longings, and yearnings were theirs, which nothing and no one but Jesus could meet and satisfy; no desire to see or hear this wondrous stranger-child had they; if they wished for a reputation for clearness as to the prophetic word, it was theirs; if they desired to make capital out of their knowledge of the sacred writings, none could dispute their claims; but no more than this could be said of them, “like lifeless finger-boards they point along a road in which they neither lead nor follow”; the place of the birth of Jesus, and the character of Him who was coming, they can announce, and then settle down into an indifference in which Christ is unnoticed and unknown. Alas these scribes of other days are but the prototypes and precursors of those of a like class in this day -- hearts where there is neither welcome nor room for Christ, any more than in the inn at Bethlehem.

Oh, how all this speaks to our hearts this day! I press it earnestly upon every conscience and heart; let us each take it to ourselves as to how we stand in respect to Christ, What is He to us? What is He worth? These and suchlike as to Himself are the questions of the moment.

There is one word of very deep and precious blessedness in the first chapter of this gospel, and having looked at it a little we shall close our meditations for the present. The word to which I refer is “Emmanuel,” which being interpreted is, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). What an announcement for any who had heart for it is in such words; and what an unfolding of the heart of God, too! Oh, the living grace that would indeed come down and tabernacle among men, so that they should know in very truth, “God with us”; and not only this, but God among men in the circumstances we have already had before us, and meeting with such a reception at their hands, coming to His own and His own receiving Him not. Oh, what grace and goodness! Then again, think of the power of that name, Emmanuel, think of its attractive power, think of its displacing power, has it such with us? We who know it now in all the endearment which the name of Jesus brings with it to our poor hearts? If indeed we have heard His blessed voice, is He not able and worthy to make room for Himself, whoever and whatever else would have to stand aside? May the Lord, by His Spirit, so endear Christ to each one, that nothing else will be
of any value comparatively in our eyes, that our testimony in word and act to Him, the true wisdom may be thus expressed.

“It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, and the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be measured out, either God-given or God-permitted sorrow.

Our Father and God knows exactly what His poor vessels are able to bear, all goes on under His hand; while passing through the fire or through the water, He is no uninterested looker-on, be assured.

Dear reader, is the night long and dark with us? Do the floods of adversity and trial lift up their voice and waves? Look up, hope, and wait. Let us assure our hearts He is near us, and sees us, it may be, toiling in rowing against contrary winds and tide. (See Mark 6:48) Let us remember the darkest part of the night is not only that which is near the dawn of day, but it is then that He cometh unto us walking upon the very elements that we dread, then it is that immediately He talks with us and says, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”

May we take courage from all this, and even though our case be described in the words, “No rest,” “troubled on every side,” “without fightings,” “within fears,” still there is “Nevertheless God.”

“Nevertheless God”

“No rest” . . . Troubled on every side; without fightings, within fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down” (2 Cor. 7:5,6).

These words might be well ruled out of season in this self-sufficient, boastful day. That they are so in fact, if not in terms, is more than evident to all whose eyes are opened and anointed.

One thing is clear enough, the apostle, blessed, man, was not like some who are not apostles. But then, it is true, modern ideas and scriptural revelation are in direct antagonism. Paul was not the man who carried everything before him, applauded and made much of by those who are led by wisdom of words, excellency of speech, or intellectual prowess; on the contrary, weakness, fear, and much trembling marked him. It is an immense comfort, in the inward storms and conflicts of the heart, to be able to say, “Nevertheless God.” Oh, what a divine solace there is in Him, now made known to us in Christ. Not only our Father, but “The Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” Whatever of mercy is needed for His poor servant, our God is the Author of it. The connection of Father with mercy here, as with glory elsewhere, is very blessed; whatever of comfort, the heart oppressed in the cloudy and dark day, longs for, is all treasured up in God Himself, He is the God of all encouragement (παρακλητείον): the thought of strengthening is involved in the word, because properly it is the act of calling some one to our side to aid us.

It is both interesting and comforting to the heart to see that in the first chapter of this epistle the apostle begins with the source of all cheer and solace, while in the verses we are considering he turns from the no rest of his spirit, the fightings without and fears within, to God Himself in those words, “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down.” The words “cast down” are expressed in the original by one word, which means, being made low (πατερινώς); for this use of it see Luke 3:5. There was only One who had unmeasured trouble and sorrow here, the blessed, precious Lord; to us all is measured out, either God-given or God-permitted sorrow. Our Father and God knows exactly what His poor vessels are able to bear, all goes on under His hand; while passing through the fire or through the water, He is no uninterested looker-on, be assured.

Dear reader, is the night long and dark with us? Do the floods of adversity and trial lift up their voice and waves? Look up, hope, and wait. Let us assure our hearts He is near us, and sees us, it may be, toiling in rowing against contrary winds and tide. (See Mark 6:48) Let us remember the darkest part of the night is not only that which is near the dawn of day, but it is then that He cometh unto us walking upon the very elements that we dread, then it is that immediately He talks with us and says, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”

May we take courage from all this, and even though our case be described in the words, “No rest,” “troubled on every side,” “without fightings,” “within fears,” still there is “Nevertheless God.”

“We Beheld His Glory”

It is blessed beyond all expression to remember that the servants of God, as well as the great apostle of the Gentiles, are not only “ministers of Christ,” but also “stewards of the mysteries of God,” and as stewards our great delight should be to keep incorrupt and inviolate the precious peculiarities of divine revelation. The mind and reason of man will no doubt not only refuse them, but in the absence of affection, will speculate in the region of notions and theories. It has been very beautifully remarked that “The guardianship and witness of the personal glory of the Son of God is a chief part of this high and holy stewardship.”

A mere journeying from Egypt to Canaan would not have constituted true pilgrimage. Many a one had traveled that road without being a stranger and a pilgrim with God. Nay, though the journey were attended with all the trials and inconveniences of such an arid, unsheltered, and trackless wild, it would not have been divine or heavenly pilgrimage. A merely toilsome, self-denying life, even though endued with that courage which becomes God’s stranger on earth, will not do. In order to make that journey the journey of God’s Israel, the ark must be in their company, borne by a people ransomed by blood out of Egypt, and tending in their faith of a promise to Canaan.

“This was the business of Israel in the desert. They had to conduct the ark, to accompany it, to guard and hallow it. They might betray their weakness and incur chastening, and discipline in many a way and on many an occasion; but if their direct business were given up, all was gone. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, and the star of Remphan; and this was despite of the ark of Jehovah; and the camp had therefore their road turned away from Canaan to Babylon or Damascus” (Amos 5; Acts 7).

Assuredly, beloved reader, what the ark was to Israel, the name and Person of the Son of God is to us, the very mystery committed to His people today.

It has often been observed in how many different respects He is called the Son of God; as born of the Virgin (see Luke 1:35); as in resurrection. (See Acts 13:33.) “He is the Son, and yet has obtained the name of Son (Heb. 1:1-3). Matthew and Mark first notice this sonship of God at His baptism. Luke goes further back and notices it at His birth. But John goes further back still, even to the immeasurable, unspeakable distance of eternity, and declares His sonship in the bosom of the Father.” The same writer adds what will surely find a responsive echo in every heart that truly loves Him.
“We must not, beloved, touch this precious mystery. We should fear to dim the light of that love in which our souls are invited to walk on their way to heaven.” Oh, that all His own might better learn and know the manner of the reverence that our God and Father delights to see given to Him who is His beloved Son, in whom is all His good pleasure. May we not our God and Father delights to see given to Him who is His might better learn and know the manner of the reverence that the Comforther has come, even as the blessed Lord Jesus Himself said, “He shall glorify me.”

It has been blessedly said by another in words which one’s heart gladly adopts as its own “In the form of God He was God indeed; in the form of a servant He was a servant indeed. He ‘thought it not robbery to be equal with God,’ exercising all the divine rights and using all the divine treasure and resources with full authority; and yet making Himself of no reputation, emptying Himself and being obedient. This tells the secret.”

“All that appears in the history is interpreted by the mystery. It is as the glory in the cloud again. The companion of the camp, in all its afflictions, afflicted was the Lord of the camp.”

How blessed to think of Him in this way, to dwell upon the preciousness of Him in whom we see the veiled glory all through all His lowly life here on earth, to honor, worship, adore Him.

I would in conclusion quote the beautiful words of another, who has long since gone to be with Himself for ever: “His glorious meeness (to use very much the language of another) for all the acts and duties of His mediatory office is resolved into the union of His two natures in the same Person. He who was conceived and born of the Virgin was Immanuel, that is, God was manifest in the flesh: ‘To us a child is born, to us a son is given: . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ The One who spake to the Jews, and as a man was then only a little more than thirty years old, was before Abraham (John 8), the perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do is the act and work of His whole Person. This is the mystery. Faith apprehends it in the full certainty of the soul.”

I would here add another word, in view of rightly distinguishing between His Person as God and Man, and office, which in various aspects He was pleased to undertake. His subjection, it has been well said, is that of office, the subjection of Him who had all things put under Him to Him who did put all things under Him. “It is the mystery of mysteries, the Person we are here looking at. When we think rightly of Him, even all the brightness of the coming kingdom will be seen but as a veil. Can the splendor of the throne display Him? Would not the honors of Solomon, yea, of all the kingdoms of the world, be a veil over the glory of the Son, as really as the scorn of Pilate’s judgment-hall, or the thorns of Calvary? Is the Bethlehemite the measure of His personal worth, a single tittle more than the Nazarene? Therefore to faith it is easy to see the servant still, in days of exaltation as in days of sorrow. He served as servant, He serves as a Priest, He will serve as a King.”

With all our hearts we say --
“O Lord, we adore Thee, For Thou art the slain One, That livest for ever, Enthroned in heaven!”

The Cross, the Grave and the Glory

How blessed to have found in the cross and grave of the Lord Jesus, the burial place of all one’s sinful doubts and fears; but more blessed still is it to look up and see the bright morning of our hopes, beyond the possibility of a cloud. The glory of the Father, came down to the very spot where the blessed One, our own precious Lord and Master lay in death, that death too wherein God was perfectly glorified, and “Set him 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, 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.” Now how blessed for us to learn power in that redemption and resurrection of Christ our Lord, and also to see in them the very expression and model of the action of the same power working in us, to put us in association with Him where He is, that we may have part in the glory of this same precious Lord and Master. Oh, how near to each other have death, the grave and glory come in all that He passed through and has now gone into; how blessed to think of Him on high, the man who is worthy; we never get that in the Old Testament; to Abraham, the father of the faithful, God was Almighty, and he was blessed, Solomon too was in his day in a wonderful way endowed, but in Christ God has found a man who is worthy, who has prevailed, who has a claim. May the hearts of all who love Him and know His love, find their increasing comfort and rest in Himself, amid all the wild storms that sweep over time’s pathway, may His peace (“my peace”) ever rule in their hearts.

Finally

This word, used by the great apostle of the Gentiles five times in his letters, is suggestive in its connections of the close of another year, and of the termination with it of the writer’s service in connection with this serial.

The word, as it stands by itself alone, outside of all connections, is a sad one as we use it in ordinary conversation: it indicates the end and wind up and finish of things here, all this belongs to that which is seen, to that which is temporal and fading away; it speaks of change and decay in all around, the dying year is the ‘finally’ of 1895; how blessed to know we are thus far nearer to that bright and blessed moment when His shout of relationship (κελεύω) will put in motion by His word all His own, living or sleeping in the tomb, so that raised or changed they rise to meet Him and to be with Him for ever. Thank God, there will be no finish to the rest and blessedness
of that.

Let us just look at each of the five passages where we do find this valedictory exhortation.

1. Eph. 6:10: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord.” This exhortation is in its own appropriate place where fighting is in question; you will find the same exhortation to being strong in the Lord in the Book of Joshua, spoken to him, too, by Jehovah Himself -- it was not spoken to any other man in the history of Israel; they were then in the very circumstances to have it addressed to Joshua: they were on the eve of taking possession of that which was then possessed by the enemy’s gods. Further, that in which their strength alone could lie is very blessedly expressed in the words, “in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

2. The second passage in moral order, too, as I judge, is Phil. 4:8. Here it is the power of the heart being occupied with good, the Lord knows the terrible tendency of our poor hearts to be occupied with evil, hence the apostle’s exhortation. It is very blessed to have the habit of living in what is good in this world, where we are constantly compelled to have to do with what is evil, to have the heart toned and tuned to take delight in those things that God delights in. Further, you will notice here that this walk in the delight of heart in what is good, is in the power of the life of Christ given, and the flesh reckoned dead; another has said: “If I look to walk after Christ, I must reckon myself dead. I never say I must die, because this would be to suppose the flesh there working; of course it is there, but I say it is dead... The spring from which all power is, that you have died.”

3. If you turn to 2 Thess. 3:1, you will find the third instance of the use of this word in another connection. “Finally, brethren, pray for us” Here it is the desire of the apostle’s soul to be upheld by the prayers of the Thessalonian Christians; it supposes their habit of dependence on God, by which he longed to be sustained in his ministry; it is very sweet to see here the expression on the one hand of confidence in God, in seeking to be thus remembered by them before Himself; and on the other; the confidence of his heart in their love and affection. “Finally, brethren, pray for us.”

4. This instance is in Phil. 3:1, it is “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” It is such a suited termination of an epistle, where the word joy (χαρά), in many variations of the word, is continually found. This is made all the more striking when we remember that the letter is from prison, so that every external circumstance which could in any way be supposed to contribute to this blessed servant of Christ in his exile was excluded; there was nothing in the prison walls of Nero’s dungeon to minister to his joy; but there are three little words here which reveal the secret and explain the word always in chapter 4:4: these are golden words, may we take them in and prove their blessedness and power -- “in the Lord” -- here is an unfailling and unchanging ground of comfort and delight, here are no clouds or shadows, here it is all clear shining of the sun. Dear reader, may we know and enter into it.

5. The last instance is 2 Cor. 13:11. Here it is what we may call purely valedictory, his loving farewell (χαίρετε) “Finally, brethren, rejoice.” This is one of the foremost among those described in Gal. 5:22, as fruit of the Spirit; but he says further, “be perfect” -- the meaning of this is the fitting together as the pieces in a mosaic (καταρτίζεσθαι); but there is more, “be of good comfort.” This is as in the midst of many dangers, temptations, and sorrows around them. Alas! there is on every side abundance to cast down and overwhelm the spirit, how blessed to find even the smallest encouragement (for that is the force of the word παρακαλέω) in the sense that there is one who is called to your side, and is on your behalf and for you through it all. Oh, that we may rejoice in all the blessed consolation this imparts. Further, he says, “be of one mind” -- “that is, think the same thing (τὸ αὐτὸ δύναμις). What an exhortation! And who but the blessed Spirit of God, in ungrieved power in the souls of His own, could bring about such sameness of mind and heart amid the endless contrarieties and divergence of thought and view existing at this time.

Once more mark his words, “live in peace” -- that is, let peace be the atmosphere of your life. It is well to remember that peace without with others flows from peace within; it is thus that we are sandaled as to our feet. May it be so with all who read these words. Lastly, note the promise, “and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” His companionship and presence are thus pledged all along the way.

The Lord grant to all my readers a very distinct sense of such blessed help and stay, for Christ’s sake. “Finally, brethren, farewell.”

“Stand Fast,” “Hold,” “Himself”

2 Thess. 2:15, 16

We are rapidly nearing the wind up of the last days, and the tendency of the moment is to remove from under our feet the foundations of truth. There is nothing that the enemy has not assailed in his supreme hatred of Christ, thank God, he has not in the most remote degree touched anything in this assault; the truth abides and shines even more brightly when the din of the attack is over; there is never any fear as to the faith, the danger lies in the direction of our not standing fast as to it, of our not having our feet, as it were, firmly fixed upon that firm foundation of God which abides. In the case of the Thessalonian believers, to whom the epistle was written, the words derive special force in connection with what had been spoken of in verses 11, 12, concerning the Antichrist -- the “lie” -- in which all previous delusions of Satan are consummated in view of his coming, the Holy Ghost through the apostle says, stand firm.

Again, he also says, “hold fast.” The great aim of the enemy is to induce us to surrender, whatever may be the plea or pretext; these are various and most skillfully adjusted to the particular time and occasion; the devil’s great effort is to seduce God’s people to let go what they have, for something supposed to be far superior; “clearer light” and “advanced truth” are, alas! too often the bait that cover his hook. Oh, may we be on our guard, watchful, not ignorant of his service, and seeking grace and strength from Him persistently to hold fast.
It is interesting to note that here, as well as in 1Cor. 15:58; Col. 1:23, hope is the great incentive to steadfastness.

The last word which heads this paper is the sweetest and most precious to the heart that has known and believed His love; that word carries with it all the blessedness of a Person who is worthy to entwine all the affections of His people’s hearts -- “Himself.” Ah, how well we know there is no other than He, Himself, “Jesus himself,” “Himself the Lord.” There is no coldness or distance in that unfolding, it is a revelation to the heart of a Person such as the heart alone can appreciate with delight. Yes, thank God, “Christ IS all things.”

That which adds to the tenderness of these words is the use the blessed Lord made of what is so connected with His own Person in His converse with His disciples, both during His blessed life on earth as well as after His resurrection; for instance, how comforting and soothing it must have been to the sorrow-stricken hearts of the poor disciples, to hear Him say to them in John 14:3: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” Was not that just the very balm for their grief at that moment? How well we can conceive that one of the pangs that pierced their hearts at that moment were such questions as these, that would rise continually. Would they ever see Him again? Would that blessed intercourse of three years be ever resumed? Would there be recognition and association in the new and unknown world into which He was about to depart from them? They did not know where He was going: “Lord, we know not whither thou goest”; “Lord, whither goest thou?” These words tell the secret of the cloud that spread its cold damp over their broken hearts. He Himself, and He alone, knew how to meet that, and hence He says that if He went away, He would come again and take (παραλήψωμαι) them to Himself -- the very word for that moment for them was just that -- “MYSELF.” Oh, how it would not fail to distill its own healing, soothing cheer; He would come again and take them to Himself.

Observe the word rendered receive is really take, it is παραλήψωμαι from two Greek words, meaning ‘to take near with,’ or ‘to one’s self.’ It implies He would take them into all the nearness and affection of His own blessed Person. Further, observe what He says later on in this chapter as to manifesting Himself. To the faithful, dependent one He says, “I will manifest myself to him.” I dare not say a word as to my poor apprehension of all that is implied in that one blessed word, “manifest”; but I believe that it conveys this, that in manifestation all is gone but Christ Himself. Oh, how blessed that would be; the heart conscious of nothing but Himself. But after His great atoning work was finished and He was risen from the dead, we find the same thing. In Luke 24:39 we hear Him reassuring His poor disciples in these blessed words, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.” How blessed to see Him in resurrection thus assuring His poor, timid, trembling ones in those blessed words, “it is myself”; so that before He departed out of this world to the Father, He tells His sorrowing ones that He would come again and receive them unto Himself; then having died and risen again from the dead, He stills their fears by pointing to Himself, and now while the church is still expectant, and His own who are devoted to Him in His absence

eagerly look for the bright morning to dawn, the blessed Spirit announces the consummation of all true expectancy in these words: “Himself the Lord 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” -- Himself (1Thess. 4:16, 17).

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God even our Father, which hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
The Great Servant-Prophet:  
Being Addresses on the Gospel of Mark

Introduction

These Addresses on this most blessed portion of Scripture, are commended solely and exclusively by their subject. The object of the preacher has been to set before his hearers the *unwearied servant* in His labor of love in a scene of refusal and rejection; how poorly and feebly he has done so, no one could be so intensely conscious as he himself is.

If in setting forth the doctrines of grace, and expounding the truths of God’s holy word, one is made to feel one’s utter feebleness and incapacity, how much more so when the subject is Himself -- very God and very Man. In this gospel we have set before us the great Servant-Prophet, hence it is we do not find the history of His birth, but are at once introduced to His service and ministry.

That God the Holy Ghost may be pleased to use this poor attempt to exalt Christ, and bring Him in His blessed service before the hearts of His people, is the earnest prayer of the preacher.

W. T. T.

57 Park Road,  
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Chapter 1:
“Behold My Servant”
Mark 1:1-11

I feel, beloved friends, led, I trust of the Lord, to bring before you, even though it be only partially, something of the ministry and service of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. That subject could never be an unimportant one, not only from the preciousness and blessedness of the ministry itself, as I trust we shall be able to see, but also because God was pleased in His grace to devote one of the four narratives concerning the life of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world, distinctly to that purpose -- and so distinctly, as I hope to show you, that it characterizes the whole of Mark’s writing from beginning to end. The omissions, the additions, put entirely out of the question that which used to be a very favorite occupation in past times -- harmonizing the gospels. It has been well said that they never disagreed; you cannot harmonize that wherein there never was the absence of harmony at any time. But I tell you what happens in connection with it when you do not read by the gracious teaching and leading of the Spirit of God, you lose the distinctness of design of the blessed God Himself in presenting in each gospel history the features and the characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all the various paths and positions that He was pleased to walk in and fill in this world. I know of no gospel wherein that is more distinctly manifested than in this very Gospel of Mark. The first verse, for instance, carries with it convincingly to the heart at once the theme, the great thesis of the Spirit of God through this gospel, namely, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Nothing could be more simple than that, if our hearts were only simple to take it in, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” That is the whole pith and substance of this wonderful epitome of His service and work done here in this world.

But before we look a little at the way it is introduced in the verses we have read in this first chapter, I want you to take into account two or three facts that we must ponder over and dwell upon for a moment before we can rightly understand it. It is a great thing rightly to apprehend the bearing and meaning of words, and when we speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as the great servant-prophet, and as the great minister and teacher, we must remember this, beloved friends, we cannot speak of Him as our servant it would lower His dignity and His glory to speak of Him as our servant. Granted that He serves us, and He served all here; yet He was the servant of God, He was Jehovah’s servant, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” And you will find that distinctly throughout this gospel, He is the servant-Son; servant is the great characteristic that marks all His path throughout this gospel; and when we come to it presently I will give you a very striking instance of that in the record. But I say again we could not speak of Him as our servant. We can rejoice in His service, we can bless and praise Him for the manner and way in which He served us here in this world, served us all through His life, served us on Calvary’s cross, and serves us now from glory, for He is the girded servant. He came down here and became a man that He might be a servant, and He has taken manhood up to the throne of God in the heavens and will never cease to serve in heaven. You have one blessed remarkable instance of this in the Gospel of Luke, when He says to His disciples, in that beautiful ch. 12, that in that day when He will have it all His own way, when all the present order of things is passed and He will have everything according to His own mind in glory, He will come forth even then as the girded servant to serve those whose hearts were so captivated by Himself that they watched for Him, and waited for Him, and served Him in that watching spirit here. It is not here, beloved friends, that He leads us to expect anything from Him except the joy of walking in His path of rejection, and scorn, and shame; but in that day which is coming, in that bright glory to which He has given us through grace a title to be with Himself, in virtue of all His work, when He has everything there according to His own mind, and most of all when He has all His own there around Him in that scene, could anything be more affecting or more touching to our hearts than that even there in that glory He will come forth girded? “Verily, I say unto you, he shall gird himself” are His own words in that precious chapter; there is the servant distinctly, servant attire, servant form, servant manner, servant way -- and will come forth, and serve them.” I take it that having that combined with the Gospel of Luke, where He is most of all presented to us as the man, it is the man who is the servant; it is He who became a man amongst men, and whose genealogy in that gospel as you remember, is traced up to Adam, so that we have His connection through incarnation with the race of men, albeit it was in that miraculous and peculiar way in which God has guarded the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the man who is the servant. And, beloved friends, that is very wonderful for us to think of, because God has ever had servants; there are the angels that do His pleasure, and we are told of those angels in Heb. 1 that they are all “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” but what ministry of angels can come up to the ministry of the man, the servant, He who having taken part in manhood, having become a man, being truly and really a man here in this world, the One that came from heaven -- shall I say it, beloved friends? I will say it with joy -- the heavenly Man here in this world, the Man out of heaven, yet truly having become a man -- oh what ministry, what service like the service of that heart to us, what ministry of angels what ministry of creatures far in intelligence beyond us, could speak to our hearts, could be so affecting to our hearts, as the ministry of Him who became a man, and who, in all the blessed tenderness, and grace and sympathy of His heart, let out here in this world those perfections of feeling, of sympathy, of tenderness peculiar to a man. It is this combination, I repeat, which is set forth in the Gospel of Luke, where He is the Man -- and which we have often had before us here in times past, it is the combination of His manhood with His service, although it was performed in divine power, as I hope to show you, and
although He was when a man just as truly as He ever was, “God over all blessed for evermore,” still, in that character of service and ministry which He rendered here, it is that combination, beloved friends, which is one of the most precious and one of the most comforting things to the heart that I know of; that He draws near to us in all the grace and love which in the first instance brought Him down here; that, as we have often said, He did not love us at a distance, and He does not serve us at a distance. It was not mere power bestowing upon us that which our needs called forth, but there was love. I quite grant you there was omnipotence of power, but there was omnipotence of love in combination with omnipotence of power. Therefore, when we think of Him as servant, we must always think of Him as God’s servant, Jehovah’s servant, “Behold my servant.”

Now, beloved friends, I think that is a very important point for us to keep in mind, so as to guard and protect by God’s grace everything like a true and proper estimate of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you one instance from the history of this gospel just to sustain that thought, that He was not our servant, though He served us; but He was Jehovah’s servant here in the midst of Israel, and also serving man, but always Jehovah’s servant, serving in power. If you compare at your leisure the account of the transfiguration for instance -- or rather, not compare, but contrast, because that is really the word -- if you will contrast the account of the transfiguration: as it is given us in Matt. 17, with the account given us in Mark 9 you will see a remarkable instance of just what I am about to bring before you now. In the Gospel of Matthew, when he recounts the transfiguration, he does so in connection with the subject which it was the design of the Spirit of God the evangelist should relate. And hence it is the manifestation of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom here in this world; it is the manifestation of the kingdom; “kingdom” is the ruling word in Matthew. Whereas when you come to Mark you will find that left out altogether. What you find in Mark is this, There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. “Power” is the word in Mark. Why? Because it is connected with His ministry. “Kingdom” is the word in Matthew, because it is the dispensational record.

Now that is exceedingly interesting, and puts its character at once upon both the writings. I have spoken of His love, I delight to dwell upon the fact of His power, but the power is what you find continually all through the Gospel of Mark. And therefore you will find the miracles, those marks and signs of power, you will find, I say, the place they get all through the gospel, you will see how continually miracle after miracle is referred to and brought before us. Why? Because it marked the wonder-working power of the great Servant-prophet in the midst of men. He was the One who was there in wonder-working might, in omnipotence of power, but in all the omnipotence of tender love as well in the midst of men, and hence the prominence that is given to all this, which is characteristic of this gospel throughout.

There is another observation I would like to make in connection with the gospel, which will also help to show how distinctly this is ever the subject. Have you ever thought how striking it is that the very one who was selected by God and by His Spirit to give us this ministry and service of Christ, was the man who in his own first essay at service broke down? For this Mark was the very one who turned aside from the service and from the testimony which he was going to carry forth with the others, and went to Cyprus, his native place. And I think it is very striking that this is the one who writes the history of the service and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. And why? Do you think there is no design in Mark being selected? Do you think there is no distinctly important point in Mark being the one that was fixed upon to give us this account? I believe the reason of it is simply this, that we might be able to see the contrast between Jesus, the Servant-prophet and all else beside. There is a touch in that very fact of great preciousness to my heart -- Jesus is supreme wherever you see Him, Jesus is unique wherever you see Him, Jesus is perfect wherever you see Him; not merely in His manhood, not merely in His path, and walk, and testimony here, but in the distinctive features of His service. He is the perfect servant, and (I say it with all holy reverence) He is the ideal Levite, the One who served in all the truth and reality of service in the tabernacle among men, and finally, voluntarily laid down His life as the greatest act of service that He performed either to God or to men in this world. I believe that is one reason, beloved friends, if not the main and principal reason, why the person who was selected to give us this ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world, should be the man who broke down and failed himself, and whose history is beautifully presented to us afterwards, when the apostle says, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” Thank God for that! Because, I may add in passing, God records in scripture not merely the failures and the breakdowns, and the imperfections, and the shortcomings of His servants, but He records as well their restoration; for, beloved friends, it is His grace that secures the one, as it is His power that can rescue from the other. That is the reason, I have no doubt, why Mark’s history is brought before us there.

Let us take one other point which comes to one’s heart at once in reading this gospel, and which I would like to dwell on for a little, and then we shall pass on to look at three great points in the verses themselves; and it connects itself properly with what I have already said with regard to Mark. If you take the work and service of men here in this world -- it matters not who; take the apostles, or take Paul, who followed the Lord Jesus Christ nearer, not only in path, but in testimony, than any man before or since, and whose path was closest, we might say, in tread upon the path here of our blessed Lord -- we find that we cannot too microscopically examine the service of any man, we cannot look down, so to speak, into the minutia of the service of any man; it will not bear it, the blots are too many, the failures are too great. We do not well, beloved friends, when we commit ourselves to that. And I am pressed in spirit to say this to my beloved brethren to-night. If we do so, it is because we have but a
poor idea on the one hand of the perfection of the only perfect servant, and on the other hand, of the feebleness of an earthen vessel. And again I say, beloved friends, let us not take the microscope and examine too closely into the particulars of a man’s service; but remember that what you cannot do with regard to mere human service you can do with regard to the service of Christ. Now here is what is so precious. You cannot examine His service too closely; it will bear the closest examination, the strictest scrutiny, because it is perfect. I do not know anything that is more comforting or precious to my heart than that I can look over all His blessed service and see in every part of it the perfection of the One who was perfect. Let the objects of His service be ever so difficult subjects, let it be that the objects of His service are ever so far away in need and want, let the case be ever so trying, let the need be ever so great, let the opposition to His gracious ministry be ever so increased, let all the hindrances be ever so magnified, yet they will only bring out in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ the perfection of His service and the perfection of the servant. Now that brings me back again for a moment to that beautiful verse I have already quoted in part,

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

Oh what a contrast to every other man in service! What a contrast in His position is the beloved of God! What a contrast as well in His place of lowly retirement amongst men! What a contrast in all the silent power that marked Him, so that as He passed along in this poor world, there was no voice, no cry, no sound, nothing, as such, to call attention to Him; it was all patient, retiring, blessed, unwearied ministry, yet in power. I love to think of that verse, I was thinking of it only a little time past with great delight and comfort, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth” -- the man, as far as this world was concerned, out of the despised region and place -- “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” O how blessed to dwell on that, beloved friends! how blessed to be allowed to contemplate this ministry of our own dear Lord and Master here in this world, to see what it was to God, what God received in that -- not merely what man got, but how God was served by Him, the true Servant.

Now let us observe one important feature in what I have already spoken of. If there is anything that comes out distinctly in His service, it is this, that just as truly as He ever kept His place as man, having been pleased to become man, so He ever truly kept His place of servant, having taken upon Him the form of a servant. Let us never forget that. Let us cherish, beloved friends, these touches that we find in scripture that set our adorable Lord and Master before us in the truth of His Person as God and Man. Do not let us look at one part of His glory and lose sight of another part of it. And do not let us allow ourselves to be entrapped by the enemy, that because He was “God over all blessed for ever,” that He was not equally man, as truly and as really a man in perfection here as He ever was God over all. Let our hearts by grace adoringly embrace both and adore Him as both, as we see that He who was God was pleased to become man, and also equally see that He, having become man, and taking upon Him the form of a servant, as man kept that place of service and subject to the very close.

Now for one proof of it, and then I pass on. And this, beloved friends, is one of the most striking proofs of it I know of in the gospel, and it is both interesting and arresting as I believe we shall find. You remember now that the blessed Lord, when speaking of the day of His coming, the day when He should be manifested, says in the gospels. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven” -- Mark alone puts in this, and it gives its character to his gospel -- neither the Son, but the Father” {Mark 13:32}. Now why is that omitted in the other gospels, and inserted in Mark? Do we read carelessly, my beloved friends? do we read without divine intelligence or thought? That is the way, I am grieved to say, a great many read the word of God, as if there were no design in its additions and omissions in various parts. Do you read it with the eyes of God the Holy Ghost, or do you read it according to the bias of your own mind? There may be a great deal of will in the way we treat scripture -- do not let us forget that. You may have the fixed determination in your own mind to find so-and-so there. I remember well, years ago, how when I read the word of God, I never could divest myself of the idea that I saw things in it that I know now are not in it at all; and yet you could not persuade me that they were not in it. Why? Because my will was to have them so; and my will being determined to have things so, I saw them in the light of my will here in scripture, as I vainly thought, instead of really reading according to the instruction and guidance and direction of God the Holy Ghost. Now how striking this instance is, “neither the Son.” Why, beloved friends, is that brought into Mark? Because the Son in Mark is the servant-Son. The very essence of the perfection of a servant is simply to be at the absolute control of the Master. The very essence of a good servant is not to have a mind of his own. I should not apply to the blessed Lord the word “will of His own,” for He had no will but the will of God as the secret motive and spring of all that was in His heart; but He received everything direct from God in the servant character, and He was distinctly energized by God the Holy Ghost, as we shall see presently in His servant character. Mark those words I have already quoted, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil” -- why? because they needed it? no; but because “God was with him.” There is the servant, He is Jehovah’s servant, He is upheld by Jehovah, He has got Jehovah’s Spirit on Him, and He moves through men, through their needs, their sorrows, their wants, and their woes with a heart that felt for everything, a heart that was touched and that entered into everything.

I have often said here -- and I feel it now more than ever -- that we all live too far away from human misery to know
much of what it is. We do not know what the desolations of this world are. What do we know about the heart-breaks, the sorrows, the griefs, the blighted hopes and blasted prospects found in it? We could not endure it. It is a great mercy of God that we do not know it; it would be enough, perhaps, to send some of us away entirely out of the haunts of men, it would be too overpowering. But oh! what a comfort it is to think that there was one who passed as servant through it all, knew it all, measured it all, entered into it all, understood it all, felt for it all, and knew how, as God’s servant, to meet it. That is what you have in the ministry and service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord by His grace and Spirit grant that these few introductory sentences may help us in connection with our gospel as we turn for a moment to study the way in which His service is introduced here. Now I am about to speak of three points, and I will be as concise and brief as I can.

The first great point that I see in the verses we have read is that the service is introduced without any formal array of any kind. It is what we might call suddenly introduced; there is no preface; it is all very concise; “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God that is all. Now, beloved friends, there is something very blessed in that expression. I think God, in His infinite grace, would give your heart and mine just to recount here a little of the treasure that is in that expression, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” How blessed that is! It is the good news. “O yes,” you say, “good news, that is the meaning of the word gospel.” But contrast it with what is past. There was no good news in Judaism. Is there any good news in the modern inventions? Judaism had a killing law; that is all it had, a condemning letter, a claim that left man more hopeless than he was before it met him. I do not stop to inquire about what is suggested at the present time, beloved friends, it is too puerile, too contemptible, to waste a thought upon. But mark this for a moment. The greatest comfort to the heart when I read that verse, “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” is that now here is something that comes from heaven. You say “it is good news,” but let me ask where from? From heaven, and that, beloved friends, is what is so blessed and so wonderful about it. This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, this precious Servant, but this divine Servant, the Messenger who has come from heaven, and has come from heaven with good news. Do not your hearts rejoice in that? It is not a claim, it is not a demand, it is not a fiery law that strikes terror into the soul, but it is the announcement of glad tidings; and that which is so precious, it is the announcement of it in His own person, even Jesus Christ the Son of God, it is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And therefore, observe the way in which His service is introduced to us here is by making Himself prominent and we are left, as it were, with Him in that way. If I know anything of the glory of His Person, I know what to expect from “the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.” If I know anything of the love and tenderness of His heart, I know exactly how to fill in that expression, “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” I do not know whether I have conveyed to you, beloved friends, the thought that is in it, but it is to me an exceeding precious reality, that whilst it is the gospel and the service, as we have said, it is so connected with the Person who was rendering it that He is made prominent, and you are allowed to form a divine conception by the Spirit of what that good news would be in fulness, and in plenteousness, and in blessedness, when it is so connected with Himself, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Now that is the first thing I see here.

Secondly, you have in the verses we have read what I may call, I think correctly, the preparatory messenger. I will not dwell very long upon that, because we have had it before. But there is a preparatory messenger who goes before the face of the One who is coming, according to the prophetic scriptures. There are two scriptures quoted here, Mal. 3 and Isa. 40, and those two scriptures pointed to John the Baptist, who was to go before the face of the One that was coming, “to prepare his way,” that is the expression, and then when John utters his message himself, he says, make his paths straight.”

Now the first thing that comes before us in that preparatory message is a very important one for all our souls, and I desire earnestly to dwell upon it. God will have, however great His grace in meeting us, and however full and large the manner of His service towards us in His blessed Son, but let us never forget this, beloved brethren, God will have in our state reality. I know very well, and feel it too, that in our ministry and service, if there is anything we overlook it is just that. I believe in my soul that the deficiency, the disappointment, the little effect produced by servants of God, should be laid at that door, that they have not considered the state of those they minister to. If we do not take it into account, I believe we shall find that God always takes it into account. Do you think He is purposing to have a great mass of unreality? Do you think that the blessed God will, as it were, send out His message of love and of truth, and communicate His mind, to a great mass of unreality? Do you think it is the hard, dry brains of men He wants? I tell you He would have us think of their souls. Do you think it is the mind of man that God desires? He works on his conscience, He wants his affection, He wants his heart penetrated by means of his conscience. And therefore, when God sends His blessed Son into this world, and the Lord Jesus Christ comes in this ministering servant character that we have spoken of, the very first thing you find in the forerunner is this, John’s whole ministry was to this effect, -- You people of Israel call yourselves the people of God, you count up your genealogy and trace yourselves up to Abraham, you are proud of Abraham, exactly as people now live upon the respectability of their ancestors who have no respectability themselves; so you go back to Abraham, and you say. “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” Do you remember what the Lord’s answer to them was? “He that committeth sin is sin’s slave.” And that is exactly what their moral condition was, they were the slaves of sin. It is a great thing to give words their true and proper meaning, they were the Roman
slaves in one sense, politically; they were sin’s slaves and the devil’s children morally. That was their condition. Now, beloved friends, you see what a solemn order of things that is. Do not let us think for a moment, “Oh! well, of course that was the condition of Israel, and I quite understand how solemn that is, and quite enter into the distinctness of it”: but do not let us think that it has no voice for us. Do you mean to tell me that there is no danger in that very direction for Christians at the present moment? I dare not hold back what I believe to be the truth of God to please any man, and therefore I avow that I believe God has a controversy with us Christians because of our moral state. You know there is one thing we seem to be wonderfully clever and wonderfully skilled in, and that is, to put the cause of feebleness and departure anywhere and everywhere but where it really lies; we like to find it away from us, of course we do, I can quite understand that. “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” It is as old as Adam, the principle of removing the onus, the weight, off ourselves, and to try and find some cause that will liberate us; that is quite natural. And therefore I see here a very solemn voice, that before this blessed ministry is accomplished, before the Lord Jesus Christ Himself exercises it directly in person, this preparatory messenger announces this great fact -- God must have, and God will have, reality as to moral condition before Himself. Hence he talks of “straight paths.” Why? Because theirs were crooked paths, deceitful ways; but he goes down to the root of the matter, and touches the hidden things and the people really where they are.

And more than that, observe how the preparatory messenger not merely announces this by word of mouth, but that he himself in His own Person was the expression of it. I think that most interesting and solemn. When John the Baptist occupies this place of breaking up the way and making the path plain, it is not merely by his word and testimony, but in his own person. Nay more, first of all he is in his position here the testimony of it personally; secondly, he is in his apparel the testimony of it; and thirdly, he is in his diet, his manner of life, the testimony of it. You find all those things here. He is in the desert, not in Jerusalem, not in the city but outside. Beloved friends, let us take that to heart, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” Why not in the city, why not in Jerusalem, why not amidst the haunts of men? Clearly, that standing outside he might be in his position there the living testimony of how God regarded the state of things in the city that is the reason why. Then it is not insiginificant to point to his apparel; the man is dressed suitably to his occupation there is a severity about him; it reminds one when we read it of the asceticism of the Essene. You will say, What an ascetic he is, how severe the man is in his appearance, his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins. And why? Because God would have reality in His people, that is the reason. It is indicative of their moral condition. Even his dress is to be bear testimony to the terrible low state of God’s people. And then we find the diet of the man, his meat was “locusts and wild honey,” the plainest fare that could be conceived. And then you have further his, even a call to repentance a breaking up of the fallow ground.

Now it will, I believe, strike you in looking at it, how John’s testimony exactly brought out what the prophet Jeremiah complained of in ch. 8. You remember what the prophet says of this subject. Let us never forget it, for it is amongst the most touching words of the Old Testament scriptures. It is the lamentation of the prophet over the condition in which the people of God were during the time of his ministry. “They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, where there is no peace.” The prophet brings home this great fact to them; there is a wound there, and there were ecclesiastical nostrums and quacks of that day who attempted to heal slightly that wound. And how? By presenting a message that was not in keeping with the state. If God comes and deals with us, beloved friends, He must have reality, He could not add to a festering sore or wound, if it is there, in our moral being. “Peace, peace,” was building up a rotten order of things, and God is too faithful, and too holy, and too gracious not to meet exactly the condition of things as it really is before Him. Hence John’s ministry was in that sense preparatory to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just one other point. We have that ministry closing, as it were, and Jesus Himself directly introduced to us. Hence we have Him coming down and accepting John’s baptism, or rather, inviting John to baptize Him in the river Jordan. I trust most here understand what the meaning of it is, for it is very precious, because it shows out His grace. If there was a listening to the preparatory message of the servant, if there were any hearts touched and wounded with the true sense of their whereabouts, if there was any turning to God in the midst of His own people, if there was any looking at things really as they were -- and John’s baptism was the expression of it on the part of all that came -- Jesus Himself must be there too. O what grace! He associates Himself with the returning remnant of God’s people, with that which is really of God. He fulfils righteousness where they confessed sins: “thus it becometh us,” we read in another gospel, “to fulfil all righteousness.” That is the meaning of His baptism. He identifies Himself with the first effect of grace in His people, and He goes down and submits, for the fulfilment of righteousness, to baptism at the hands of John in the Jordan.

Now you get that word which is peculiar to Mark, “straightway,” “and straightway coming up out of the water.” It is striking how often the word occurs in Mark, and that under various significations: it is characteristic of the gospel. There is one Greek word all through, but various translations of it: “immediately,” “straightway,” “instantly.” “And straightway coming up out of the water,” now mark the expression that is used, “he saw the heavens rent asunder, that is the meaning of the word “opened,” they were rent asunder. I could not convey to you, beloved friends, the preciousness of that expression to me. It was as if God hasted to proclaim what His heart had found in His own Son; He rends the heavens. I have thought of that word many a time, “O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down.” But look here, the heavens are rent asunder to let the whole mind
of heaven out in its ineffable delight in Jesus Christ. It is one of the most striking and beautiful expressions I know of anywhere in scripture, “the heavens were rent asunder.”

And then you have the seal, the Holy Ghost descends on Him. Mark the words, “the Spirit like a dove descending upon him,” that is the form the descending Spirit took, no doubt expressive of what He was in His own Person. The dove, as you know, was the bird of sorrow and the bird of love, and therefore it was a fitting type of what our Lord Jesus Christ was in His own holy, precious, glorious Person. He is marked off by even the bodily shape that the blessed Spirit was pleased to take. Some one has observed, and I think it is a very precious thought too, that not only was this sheen of gold there. But I believe most of all and first of all, there were in the dove the silver wings, and there was also the Spirit was pleased to take. So me one has observed, and I He is marked off by even the bodily shape that the blessed love, and therefore it was a fitting type of what our Lord Jesus Christ was personally set forth in the dove-like form the blessed Spirit was pleased to take.

But not only this, but now we have the Father’s voice, and that is one of the most beautiful things connected with His coming up out of the Jordan. “There came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom is all my pleasure.” Now, beloved friends, there were two precious realities in that. First of all -- and I know nothing more comforting to the heart to dwell upon -- there is the intimation which He gives us in that blessed scene, this proclamation that comes from heaven, this utterance of the Father’s voice. Could anything be more blessed than that He should be pleased to let us know how that Jesus is everything to Him? Have you the sense of this in your souls, that you and I are privileged in that beautiful scene to be the intimates of the blessed God, that He allows us into that nearness so that we should have communion with Him in His thoughts about His beloved Son, that Jesus is the Father’s object, that Jesus is God’s delight, that Jesus is all His pleasure, that He finds all in Him. I believe that is the first great thing in that intimation, that God Himself in His grace is pleased to bring us into this place of holy intimacy and holy communion, that we can share the Father’s delight and the Father’s thoughts about the one in whom the Father found all His pleasure. There is only one thing more, and then I finish. There is our place now that redemption has been accomplished according to all the grace and goodness of God. Jesus has that place Himself; the heavens were opened to Him, the Holy Ghost descends in a bodily shape like a dove and abode upon Him, and the Father’s voice proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son.” Oh! beloved friends, is not the veil rent for us, and have not we got the Holy Ghost, and cannot we say, Abba, Father? It is the very figure of our place as Christians, it belonged to Jesus in virtue of what He was and who He was, and He has in infinite grace made that place true for us by His redemption.

Well now, I only pray that the Lord in His grace would be pleased to bring those things before us, and connect our hearts in living power with them. Most of all do I press those two points, that which relates to state I earnestly press upon you. I feel that there is a crying voice of God at this present moment as to our state. Believe me, no amount of religiousness, or quasi-piety that has at the bottom of it a desperate amount of flesh, will do for God. There must be reality; God will have reality, and therefore there is the breaking up, “break up your fallow ground.” The fallow ground of the heart must be broken up, and when it is, then comes, as I trust we shall see another evening, the suited condition for that most precious of all ministries, that He can minister, namely, He has “sent me to heal the broken-hearted.” Ah! but God must break down first, though, “to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

The Lord in His infinite grace grant that what has passed before us may be for profit to us as we dwell upon it, and ponder over it, and meditate upon it. If I am made a means in God’s hand of supplying you with food for meditation, how thankful I shall be. I feel how poorly I have presented it, but if any little thought should be in His grace food for this, so that your heart should get the comfort of it, to Him be all the praise through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2:
Sealed With The Spirit
Mark 1:12-20

We were looking, beloved friends, last week, at the end of the time we were together, at that wonderful, marvelous display of divine favor to Him, the blessed One, in His path and place as a servant here -- the opened heavens, the Father’s voice, and the descending Spirit, all setting Him forth, and expressing to Him, in that place of service which He was pleased to take, how perfectly and how fully He had met all the mind, and all the heart, and all the affections of God. He was sealed with the Spirit, He was anointed with the Spirit, the heavens opened to Him, and the Father’s voice from those heavens saluted Him as His beloved Son, in whom was all His pleasure.

Now we have another expression in the verses we have read this evening which I desire to call your attention to for a little, and to connect with that one which we dwelt upon last week. You will notice in v. 12 the very remarkable way in which it is said -- and it is peculiar to this Gospel of Mark also -- that “immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.” Now I think it is important, to the right understanding of the position the blessed Lord was pleased to take here, really and truly as with God, to apprehend the divine significance that is attached to His being sealed with the Spirit, and His being driven, as it is said here, by the Spirit into the wilderness, and tempted of the devil. I want to call your attention to both those expressions, not merely because of the expressions themselves, but because I believe a great deal of truth, and of truth that very deeply concerns the glory of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, hangs upon these expressions. And I am certain, beloved friends, that if we do not, as by the teaching of God’s Spirit, rightly understand the application and the meaning of certain words
that God has been pleased to use with regard to His own blessed Son in any place or position that He was pleased to take here in this world, we shall lose an immense amount of blessing. Because you must remember this, that blessing does not only connect itself with the things that relate simply to us. I believe that is a very great mistake. I am quite certain that persons have lost an immensity of blessing because they have imagined that unless they themselves were prominently the subjects treated of in any given portion of scripture, there was no comparative interest attaching to that scripture with regard to them. That is a selfish way of looking at the things of God, and that is moreover a sure way to lose the blessing after a divine sort. All real blessing connects itself with this -- that we see how everything in scripture, and everything in the mind of God, relates to Christ, and there is rich blessing as we see how Christ is set before us; first of all how He is before God, and as to the mind of God, and then how God has been pleased to present Him to us in scripture. And so here. Let us look reverently and in God’s fear for a moment at these two remarkable expressions.

I need not go over again, for we looked at it last week, the form that the Spirit of God was pleased to take when He descended in a bodily shape like a dove and abode upon Him. But I particularly want to press this point upon you, beloved friends, that we ought to jealously hold and tenaciously guard in our souls this great fact, that though He was sealed by the Spirit, and anointed by the Spirit (for you get both expressions in scripture, “Him hath God the Father sealed,” and how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power”), yet that it was simply and only in relation to the ministry and to the service that He was pleased to undertake and to perform in the position which He took when He emptied Himself to become man. Now I feel that is a very important thing to press, and I will tell you why in a moment. I do not see how any person could traverse or challenge it with the scripture so plainly before us. But there is a danger, and I maintain it has increased of late (and I am responsible simply to God, beloved friends, for my utterances), that whilst we through grace understand and appreciate the wonderful place of favor that we have been brought into, there is a danger of our putting ourselves on an equality with our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us note that, beloved friends, for I believe it is a very important point to keep before us. I repeat it, that is a very real danger, as we see through grace the blessed position He has won for us and has set us in before God; for His place before God is, through His rich grace, our place. He won it for us; it was His by virtue of all His own glories and rights; redemption secured it in sovereign grace for us. But while that is perfectly true, do not let us speak of it in such a way as to equalize ourselves with Christ. We have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us if we are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ, and it is that which constitutes us Christians; and you cannot speak of any persons properly in scripture language as Christians until the Holy Ghost is dwelling in them -- scripture never does. I do not for a moment mean to find fault with the conventional use of the term Christian, but really I think it is of the deepest moment that, whilst we understand one another in the conventional use of language, we should also try to encourage one another to speak of things in the language of scripture. For instance, we say, “Such-and-such a person is a Christian,” to distinguish that person from one who is not moved, or touched, or turned to God at all, one who is really unconverted; that is, the term Christian is conventionally applied (and rightly enough, I do not find fault with it in the least) to a converted person in contra-distinction to an unconverted person, to one who has no interest at all in the things of God. But let us not forget this scripture in its use of terms is far more defined and far more distinct and pointed than perhaps we think; and when the word of God speaks of a person as a Christian, the word of God has marked out that person as sealed with the Holy Ghost, as the result of the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, beloved friends, that is a great thing to hold fast. The Lord in His infinite grace grant that the simplest and feeblest of His children here to-night may plainly understand, that if our sins are washed away in the blood of Christ, if we have through grace the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins through faith in Him, the Holy Ghost dwells in us, the Spirit of God takes His place in us in virtue of accomplished redemption. But observe this, and that will bring us to our passage, our position is marvelously changed by the fact of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, but the position of our Lord Jesus Christ was not changed one whit by the fact of the Holy Ghost coming upon Him. Now I want those two things to be held, but I want you to keep them distinct. Hold the Christian position, and that which gives it, tenaciously, but do not let us hold it in such a way, or speak of it in such a way, as to equalize ourselves with Christ. Christ had the Holy Ghost who descended upon Him, He was sealed by the Spirit of God, He was anointed by the Spirit of God. Such is the way scripture speaks of this great reality. He had the Spirit of God on Him, that is the scripture here, the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove and abode upon Him for service, as a servant, but not to add to His person, not to communicate anything that was not there before.

You see, I trust, beloved friends, the immense importance of all this.

There is a great difference in the Christian when he has the Holy Ghost from what he was before he received the Spirit. His position is changed. Until a man has the Holy Ghost, I repeat, you cannot speak of him in scripture language as a Christian, you cannot speak of him as a son, and you cannot speak of him as being united to Christ. Therefore, the position of one who is washed in the blood of Christ, and sealed by the indwelling of the Spirit, is in consequence changed, it is a change of position; and that is the very thing that comes out in connection with the fact that Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost, because the whole new position is involved in it. The baptism of the Holy Ghost brings the Christian into a wholly new position before God. But you cannot speak of our Lord Jesus Christ in that way. If you do, you lower His person; and I am jealous about that,
and I warn you as to it, because latterly there has been a
tendency to do it, to bring down His person to the level of the
position that God in wondrous mercy has put us into in Him,
the risen glorified One before God.

I was reading not very long ago a passage of scripture
that conveys the very same thought to one’s mind. When this
new position was first unfolded by the Lord Jesus Christ
Himself, you remember the language in which He made it
known, the wonderful communication He passed on to His
disciples through the woman that broke her heart because she
could not find where His body was in this world -- to whom
the world was only a tomb because she could not find Jesus.

Do you remember the words He used when all the work was
over? “Go to my brethren” -- the new relationship -- “and say
to them” -- now mark the words, does He say, “I ascend to
our Father and to our God”? You see, beloved friends, the
object I have in bringing that before you -- “I ascend to my
Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Now
if you were to put in that word “our” there, and think it is all
the same, it is because Christ’s unique, special, peculiar place
and glory have not got their distinct prominence in your soul.
And therefore I feel it is of the deepest importance to
understand the difference between the Holy Ghost dwelling
in us as the seal of redemption and the Holy Ghost coming down
upon the great servant-prophet as the power of ministry; and
this is what we have here in this scripture.

Now we will go to the other expression for a moment,
and I think you will see too, the force of the word here,
because it is a very peculiar word. In the other gospels.
Matthew and Luke, you will not find it used; it is only in
Mark. “Immediately” is the word characteristic of Mark; it is
constantly used. I believe it is the urgency of service, and
everything is in the rapidity of the demand of service.
“Immediately” He goes into the house; “immediately” He is
here; “immediately” events take place as He moves; He does
a thing, it is done; “immediately” the Spirit drives Him into
the wilderness. That word “driveth” is a very strong word.
This is the only gospel where it is used with regard to the
Lord Jesus Christ. Why? For this reason, that the first great
work and service of our Lord Jesus Christ as the prophet-

servant in this world was to destroy the works of the devil. It
is exactly what it is said He came to do -- “to destroy the
works of the devil.” Therefore, in the first instance, He meets
the great adversary Himself. The first great part of His
service in connection with His ministry here in this world is
to meet the great adversary of God and men before He
destroyed his works. That is why you have the expression
used here in the gospel of Mark. And I will tell you what
even adds to that, and gives it a sweetness, I think, beyond all
conception. You find this very same word -- and those who
understand the original language can consult it for themselves
-- in Matt. 9, where the blessed Lord says to His disciples,
The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labors are few; pray
ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will drive forth
[or thrust forth] laborers into his harvest.” There
unmistakably it is the service of His servants in this world. He
does not say choose out laborers, or educate laborers, or raise
seminaries or colleges for laborers; but He says, “Pray ye
therefore the Lord of the harvest” -- the harvest belongs to
Him -- “that he may thrust forth or drive forth laborers into
his harvest.” Here the word is distinctly connected with the
service and ministry of the Lord in this world. And is it not
very precious to our hearts to see the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ, and to see how our God brings the Lord Jesus Christ
as the great Servant before us? -- because the very same
word, the identical word, is used here in the gospel of Mark,
in connection with His first meeting Satan, and conquering
and vanquishing him, as is used for what they were to pray
for, that God would send forth in His own power laborers into
His harvest.

Observe this too, “Immediately the Spirit driveth him
into the wilderness” does not go beyond His service and
ministry. And it brings before our souls this great fact, that
this great prophet-servant, this servant beyond all other serv-

ants, was so distinctly in the place of servant that it was part
of what He became. You remember that blessed word in Phil.
2. He took upon him the form of a servant.” What does that
mean? That everything that belonged to a servant as such,
maintaining His own unique position and glory (ever keep that
clear and distinct) -- but all that belonged to a servant, acting
in subjection to the One that sent Him, ministering by the
power of the Spirit as servant of God here, Christ, in the
perfection of the place that He took, maintained that, and that
it was part of the emptying that He was pleased to undergo.
I think some of my beloved brethren forget that word and the
force of it -- that He emptied (ἐκένωσε) Himself. We all
know what it is, and glory in the fact, that He humbled
Himself, but do not forget that He emptied Himself. You find
both there. As God, He emptied Himself; as man, He
humbled Himself. He emptied Himself as God to become
man, to enter into that position to take that place, and to
become flesh -- because that is really the word. It does not say
He was “made”; I do not believe He was “made” anything --
He was pleased to become (ἐγένετο) flesh and tabernacle
amongst us, and we beheld His glory. But, beloved friends,
all this here is closely in connection with that position which
He was pleased to take, and therefore be careful and jealous
to maintain both.

Now so far with regard to those two points, and I think
there is an immense importance in both of them -- the fact
that He was anointed and sealed by the Holy Ghost for service,
and also the fact that the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness,
that He might there meet the great enemy of God, and might
meet him in conflict there, and that in the first instance,
before destroying the works of the devil, He might bind the
strong man and then spoil his goods.

Now let us look at the position that is defined here; and
it is very touching to the heart to think that the blessed One
was pleased to take it. It says that He “was driven into the
wilderness,” that He was in “the wilderness.” That is what
everything had become here in consequence of sin. Sin had
reduced this fair creation of God to a wilderness, and the
second Man is found in the wilderness which the fall of the first man created. The departure from God of the first man made the circumstances into which the second Man was pleased to come -- namely, the wilderness. You cannot conceive anything more desolate, or more dreary, or anything that more appeals to your heart as to the loneliness and the solitude that this blessed one was pleased to undergo in His preparation for service. For all that is here is preparatory to service.

And then, in order to increase and enhance that picture, there is another word, also peculiar to this Gospel of Mark, and which you will not find in the other gospels, that is, He was “with the wild beasts.” O beloved friends, think of that! Men were not His companions there; we do not read of human beings surrounding Him in that dreary solitude where He underwent all this; but He was “with the wild beasts,” in order to give our hearts a deeper sense of the loneliness and isolation through which the great servant-prophet passed in this preparatory moment ere He definitely began His ministry. I believe all this is crowded together into this scripture. He was in the wilderness, and alone with the wild beasts.

And now you get another word which I want you to meditate upon for a moment -- “forty days tempted of Satan.” I take it that the evangelist brings our hearts into connection with this fact, that during the whole of those forty days He was under the fierce fire of the great enemy of God and man, alone in the desert, “tempted of Satan.” O beloved friends, may our hearts get, as it were, the sense of that. Think of the grace of Him going into such a position, that He might be the true and real servant, that thus He commenced -- because we have not as yet touched a single part of His ministry directly. And I believe you will find the ministry in the Gospel of Mark is more of deeds than words, that is to say, his gospel took the character more of action than of words. You will assuredly find His preaching, but generally throughout the gospel it is His mercy, His releasing mercy, His showing forth kindness and grace to every character of need that He came in contact with, loosening every chain, drying every tear -- it was the acts of Jesus. I fear we forget that sometimes, when we are thinking of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, because when we speak of ministry it is more by word of mouth than it is in act. But with Him it is more acts of mercy and of kindness, acts of grace and of power, in a scene of need and desolation. And therefore I believe all this is heaped before us, as it were, in these verses.

There is another word I want to call your attention to for a moment, and I do not think you will say it is unimportant when we look at it. Notice the expressions that are used. And oh! beloved brethren, do let us note these expressions of scripture, and that there is a design in using expressions in certain places and changing them in others. Look at that verse again, “He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.” In the other gospels, Matthew and Luke, it says, He was “led up” in Matthew, and “led by the Spirit” in Luke, to be tempted, not “of Satan,” but “of the devil.” Now you think perhaps that is unimportant and you may think, also, such a distinction is a little fine-drawing, and a little harping upon words? Well, beloved friends, it cannot be if God is pleased to use one word in one place and another in another. And more than that, you must recollect that there is a different meaning attached to the word. And although it speaks of that most hateful of all beings, and I believe in my soul the most miserable of all created beings as well, the devil, still “Satan” conveys to the mind and to the heart a different aspect of his vileness from what “the devil” does. Satan is the adversary -- that is the thought here -- he is the adversary of God and man. Whereas the devil is the slanderer and the accuser; he slandered God to man in Gen. 3, and he slandered man to God in Job 1. He does both, he is the slanderer both of God and men; he is not only the father of lies, but he is the great engine for propagating slander. And that suggests a very solemn reflection to my soul when I think of it. A slander emanates distinctly from the devil. He is the father of slanders as he is the father of lies. Now God help us to remember that, beloved friends. When you or I unwittingly, if God in His grace does not keep us, permit ourselves to pass on a slander, we are doing the devil’s vile work, we are, unwittingly perhaps, allowing ourselves to be his emissaries and his agents. How solemn! I do not for a moment mean to say, nor do I think that any one of us, through God’s infinite grace, would willingly permit it. I should not like to think that of any Christian, and by God’s grace I do not think it of any Christian. But then, beloved friends, there is a point as to which our souls need to be on the watch, because if you are not with God, you are very likely to be used by the devil. That is the point, and therefore it raises the question as to our moral condition of soul. Because you may depend upon it that if there are lodgings to be let in your heart, the devil will find persons to take them, mark that! There is an immensity in it -- I am speaking now in relation to ourselves -- there is a great power in being occupied with good. If the heart is under the power of another object, and is in the interests of another Master, and in the secrets of another Lord, it is saved, not by anything that is in itself, but by the One who retains it in His interests. If it is not, then there is one who is the most acute and skilful observer of people’s ways -- thank God! he does not know our thoughts, only God knows the thoughts of the heart -- but the devil knows your character from observing your ways; and if he sees that there is that about you which he notices in your actions, he says, That is the man that will suit me for this vile business I have in hand. Now that is very solemn for us, and once again I ask you earnestly to watch, remembering there is this adversary; he is against God, he is against Christ, he is against us, he is against the truth, he is against all that is good. It is a solemn and striking word, “Your adversary, the devil” -- the slanderer, the propagator of slander -- “as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Now here it is Satan, the adversary, and suitably so in the gospel of Mark; and he confronts Jesus in this very moment when He was anointed by the Spirit and saluted from heaven; here in the wilderness too, with nothing to minister to Him, in isolation and in dreary circumstances, then it is Satan comes to oppose every inch of the way with Him. I can well conceive how he would have said to himself, as it were: No man has ever yet been able to stand before me; I worsted man in innocence, and I overcame servants of God afterwards, and I am the conqueror of all. I have no doubt he thought that in his
heart, and that all that is in this thought of the adversary here. But now he meets One who, whilst He is truly and really man, was a contrast to all men as such. I love that hymn of Hart’s, though it speaks of Him as a man in heaven. “A man there is, a real man.” Ah! there is a real man in glory, as there was a real man on earth, and the real man in glory to-night is the Man that was down here in reality on earth; now, then, Satan meets One who although He was a man, very man and very God, was as a man a contrast to every man. Mark does not give you anything more than the mere fact, he does not give you the details of the temptation, he merely announces this fact, He was for forty days tempted of Satan; because, I believe, the great point here was to show that Christ went through it before His direct service commenced. You get the details in Luke in connection with His perfection as a man in dependence and obedience, and in Matthew you get the details in relation to Him as Messiah; but in Mark it was enough to say that for forty days He was tempted of Satan. The fact was that before He dealt with people under Satan’s power, He had confronted the great adversary Himself, and He came away victorious.

Then notice this -- it is a beautiful touch, “the angels ministered unto him.” Now that did not go beyond His body and His service, but note in connection with it the contrast between the defeat of Adam and the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Man out of heaven, over Satan -- a contrast, let me say, not only striking and glorious, but full of comfort and consolation to the heart. You remember how, when Satan bore away the palm of victory in Eden, the angels were, so to speak, the ministers of that which followed in consequence of that defeat; there were cherubim, and the “flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life,” to bar man’s return, so to speak. Here, the second Man is the victor, and the angels come and minister to Him.

O beloved friends, these contrasts of scripture are most blessed and most precious; they set Jesus before us, even as man, in all the priceless preciousness of His Person.

“This strong man in his armor
Thou mettest in Thy grace;
Did’st spoil the mighty charmer
Of our unhappy race.”

He was truly and really man, in Him was seen manhood in perfection, a man according to all God’s thoughts and purposes, a solitary man in all the blessedness of the perfection of His perfect human nature here in this world; thus angels come and minister to Him. This, then, is the preparation He was pleased to go through and accept for this service.

But now note for a moment more, the next point here. He begins His ministry at once. John is removed off the scene, as far as the history is concerned, I mean in the record of it, though not really till afterwards. But the blessed Lord comes Himself, and you will notice how beautifully He commences His ministry. There is a little word in the verse which gives great emphasis and force to it. “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

This is the first precious note of His ministry. And it is exceedingly interesting, too, in this way, because He says, “The time is at hand.” There was no more need for any delay; He does not bring in the law, John came in the way of righteousness to call attention to Him, but you could not have any one calling attention to Him when He appears on the scene Himself; Jesus bears witness to John: Jesus is “the truth.” You will never find any one else said to be the truth except Jesus. God is true, but you will not find in scripture God spoken of as the truth. Jesus is “the truth”; that is, He is the declaration and display in His own Person of everything that was according to God. John was not that, and no man was that; but Jesus is that, and therefore Jesus does bear testimony to John, but John is not said to have borne testimony to Christ; he called attention to Christ, and his ministry was preparatory to Christ’s coming, being that of the messenger before His face, and also because of the moral condition in which Israel was. But Jesus is the One who bore testimony. “I receive not testimony from man,” He says, but He bare testimony to the truth. He is the truth, He is the One who displays things as they really are. Now He says, “The time is come,” there is no question of law now, there is no reason for delay. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel” -- literally, “cast yourselves on the gospel.”

It would be beside my purpose to pursue this in detail; but I will say this, it is very important to distinguish between the kingdom of God and the perfection of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ once for all. Do not confound those two things, because they are quite distinct. I will say enough in passing to convey the distinction to you. For instance, in speaking of the gospel of our salvation, no person would ever say, The gospel of everlasting salvation is at hand. First of all, it would be unmeaning, and secondly, it would be untrue. You can say, “The kingdom of God is at hand,” because it was not yet established, and His rejection put it, so to speak, in abeyance. I do not go into the dispensational aspect in which it is set forth in the Gospel of Matthew after His rejection, but I am speaking of what the Lord speaks of here. He does not speak of the kingdom of heaven as such, but of the kingdom of God, “the kingdom of God is at hand” -- it had not come, it was about to come -- “repent ye, and believe the gospel.” But now, beloved friends, when we come to speak of the gospel of our salvation, or the gospel of eternal salvation, that is not a thing that is at hand, that is a thing that is accomplished, that is a great reality that subsists in virtue of what our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on Calvary’s cross. There is no question of “at hand” now; that is the great eternal “now,” and the great effects of that “now” for all that believe. “The kingdom of God” means that God has claims and rights upon men, and God will have that kingdom, His own kingdom, established in power, and His rights set up by and by. But meanwhile, there is the gospel of your salvation, which is entirely distinct from the kingdom of God. “Repent,” He says, “and believe the gospel.”

Now that is the first note of the Lord’s ministry; He begins it now; He preaches; He is the great preacher. It is very blessed to think of the Lord Jesus Christ preaching. I think there is not a preacher here to-night whose heart ought not to
be touched with the blessed thought, that our blessed Master and Lord was before us in this great work. I think it is a wonderful thought -- the great prophet is the great preacher in this world. What a wonderful thing, and how little we think about it oftentimes! People talk about preaching, and say, “Oh! that is only the gospel.” I am always grieved when that is said. There is a solemn misapprehension somewhere low down with those who say such things. It could never be a small, light, insignificant thing, that which is so distinctly the display of His own nature who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

There is one thing more I would dwell on before passing to the next point. You do not read of preaching in the true sense of it in the Old Testament. You find a law given there, and you find the proclamation of the law and the heralding forth of the commands of God upon men. But I do not believe you read of preaching. Why? Because there was nothing to preach. God was claiming and demanding from men, and establishing His rights in the claim; but when God comes out, the whole thing being completely ruined and all gone, and when in the grace of His own heart He brings in good news, then you have something to preach, and then you get preaching -- I mean in the sense of evangelizing. There are two words in the original -- one is to proclaim as a herald, and the other is to bring good tidings, and that is what I mean by preaching, it is evangelizing. You may do that to one person. Philip opened his mouth in the desert, and evangelized Jesus to one man. And the Lord was specially and distinctly in that sense the great evangelist -- I say it with all reverence -- He was the great preacher.

Now the third point is to me very blessed, even that now He associates others with Him in that work. Now that ought to have a great charm for every servant of Christ; it has, may I say, an unbounded charm for my heart. He is pleased to associate others with Him, and I want to call your attention to the way in which He does it, and to see the difference between it and all that prevails in the world, and almost amongst ourselves.

It is not a personal call here; that is elsewhere; here it is the ministerial call, the call to service. I beseech you earnestly to take note of that. It is not the call of persons to find their part in Christ and to find Christ everything; it is the ministerial call. You find the personal call in John 1, and the ministerial call is here in Mark. And notice what it says -- a beautiful word. Is it, “Go out and preach ye”? Not a word of it. “Go out into the streets and lanes”? Not a word as to that yet. “Come ye after me.” O the sweetness of that! And mark what follows, “And I will make you to become fishers of men” -- how instructive that is to us! -- that is to say, I will train you. There is only One that knows the art, and that is Jesus. There is but one blessed Master of the art of catching men, and that is Jesus. Thank God that He trains others in His grace, “I will make you to become.” But it is “after me” where all that intuition is gone into; it is “after me” where all that is picked up, where all that is learnt He educates, He is the One that initiates, “I will make you to become fishers of men.”

I do not dwell upon the figure, but I am sure you know the pains, and the care, and the patience, and all that is necessary to make a man a really good skilful angler. And do you not know what a difficult thing it is to win persons? Is it not too often that we try to drive people? God knows it is not very difficult to repel people, though sometimes it would seem from the very earnestness with which people set themselves to it, that they think it is a hard thing to do. It is very easy to wound, to repel, to knock down; but to win, and, may I say also, to warm, and to catch -- these are the words here in the gospel, “I will make you to become fishers of men.”

And observe this one word of the Savior here, “come.” That is a word you constantly find, “come.” Oh the power that there was in that word! And I will say more -- oh the charm there was in that word! How that word must have fallen on their ears! Some of us, I fear, prefer the word, “claim”; but as for me I love that word “charm.” But I think I hear you say, Does not the Lord claim you? Ah! but does He not charm you? They were charmed, and that is exactly what you find. And “immediately,” you get the word of Mark again, immediately they left property, ship, father, nets, everything. Now take particular note of this. Do not think for a moment that those men were idle, men that had nothing to do. I was struck with this in coming along to speak to you to-night -- all these men were busy men, every one of them was occupied; it was not that they were do-nothings; for my part, I cannot, beloved friends, see where the virtue is in people that are do-nothings. Not one of those men were of that character; they were all engaged with their nets, or their fishing, or with their father, either drawing the nets, or mending the nets; they were all engaged in some way or another with their occupation. But oh! there was a heavenly charm in that come from those precious lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, “out of heaven,” and so all was left -- the father, the nets, the fishing, everything.

Again once more, remember they were not called to great office, to a high position, nothing of the kind, beloved friends. Assuredly catching fish was a great deal more lucrative than catching men, as far as that goes, far more would be made out of fish-catching; but that was not the point.

There was no consideration with regard to the lucrative of that, or with regard to their position. As a matter of fact, the position was a far lower one than the one they were leaving, for they were to be the off-scouring of all things -- despised, rejected, hated, like their Master, to receive the portion He got in this world. But that only enhances this to my heart, for though they were called out into a position which would expose them to all the hatred that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had, and to all the thanklessness of this world, sad though it be to say it, even of those who profess to belong to
Chapter 3:
His Ministry
Mark 1:21-38

We have arrived, beloved friends, this evening, by God's help, at the actual ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. We were considering together the last two evenings His preparation for service -- not only how He was greeted from heaven and sealed as Jehovah's servant in relation to His service, but how also He specially met Satan at the commencement of it, in the wilderness, with the wild beasts, in all that made the scene itself weird and desolate to Him; further we thought of the contrast to the manner and way in which we find Adam the first man presented to us in Genesis in the garden of Eden. And more than all, we dwelt on the contrast in Jesus the victorious Man, and the ministry of angels to Him, which did not go beyond His body, as soon as ever the temptation was ended. And then we had last week as well how He associated others with Him, and how His call (and I love to dwell upon it again for a moment) charmed them; “Come ye after me” was enough.

And I would again repeat, beloved friends, to you, a point I think of the very greatest moment, and specially for us to remember, and that is that not one of those whom the Lord calls ministerially here were idle men. I tried to show you that this is the ministerial call, not the personal call. The personal call of course must precede the ministerial call. Does that sound strange? Is there then such a thing as a call to the ministry? Assuredly there is. There is such a thing as being sent on the service of the Lord, “How shall they preach except they be sent?” Sometimes, I think, beloved friends, that is in danger of being a little forgotten. However genuine and however true a desire may be -- and God fosters it and may He foster it more in every heart -- yet a true desire does not of necessity suppose a divine call. I quite admit that there would be, along with the divine call, a genuine and truly spiritually fostered desire, but there must be a distinct call, there must be a distinct mission.

And more (and may God help us to remember it in these days) this mission is a mission distinctly from heaven. And if you want to find the great type of it, and the one in whom it was first of all, so to speak, exhibited, take the history of Saul of Tarsus, and see what was said to him, and how he recounts it in the first moments of his conversion, when God said to him, “Taking thee out,” that is the force of the word “delivering,” “taking thee out from the people,” that is, from the Jews, and from the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee.” So that he was positively cut off from all nationality upon earth, and from all connection, so to speak, with the scene here, before he was regularly sent back into it. But he came back into it from heaven, and in all the endowments of heaven; and that is what true ministry according to God is now. True ministry according to God's mind is a ministry from heaven for people down here in this world.

Now I am led to that, you see, in this way, in speaking of the Lord's call of these disciples here. He called them to follow Him in ministry, so that He associates them with Himself in the service that He came to perform for God, whose servant He was, Jehovah's servant specially, though the servant to all in this world as well.

Now we had that last Wednesday evening, how they went, how they followed, how they left. But let us dwell upon this one point still further for a moment, for I would like to reiterate it as earnestly as I can -- that all those persons who were thus called and sent by Him were every one of them occupied with something or another previously; they were not idle men that had nothing to do. One was casting the net, another was mending nets, others were, in filial respect and reverence, ministering to their father Zebedee; but whatever
it was, they were all found at some occupation, and they were called in the charm of that blessed word of Christ, “Come ye after me.” That indeed loosed all ties, and, thank God, it does so now. And, beloved friends, we do not for one moment question the claims of Christ; we know the word is a familiar word, and a favorite word in people’s mouths; but let us love to proclaim His charms; there are charms. No doubt there are claims; but charms -- O how blessed! “Come ye after me” was that charm; and they left everything, they forsook all, nets, fish, father, everything.

Now let us look for a little to-night at what we may call in these verses the ministry proper; we have reached the ministry proper now. And the first thing you find here is the directness, the rapidity, the quickness, the absence of all delay, that characterized Him as the great servant of Jehovah. And hence you find that word that we have seen is continually used all through this gospel of Mark; that is to say, “straightway,” “directly,” “immediately,” “quickly” -- there is only one word in the original, but it is translated in many ways; but it all points to no lingering, no hesitation, no procrastination, but to the quickness, the rapidity, so to speak, the directness of the true servant, whose whole thought, and mind, and heart is bent upon the service to be performed. And so we are told here that immediately He enters into the synagogue and teaches.

And look at the place spoken of, because it is not a little important to find this very place, Capernaum, coming before us in connection with the ministry of the Lord. It casts a very interesting light on the woes pronounced by the Lord on some of these cities, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida,” “and thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven.” Now it is a very remarkable thing to find, in connection directly with His service, that the very place that witnessed, so to speak, the first goings forth of His wonderful power, and also His words, the teaching, of the great servant-prophet, was this very place Capernaum. And it was that which peculiarly constituted Capernaum’s great exaltation; it was exalted to heaven -- how? Because it witnessed His mightiest works, it was permitted to see the divine manifestation of power that was in the words as well as in the works of our Lord Jesus Christ. And hence it was privileged. But Matt. 11, where this very verse I have quoted occurs, shows you how little they profited by it, and shows how it was all, so to speak bestowed upon them in vain. And it was at that intensely interesting moment of His blessed history here in this world, when, as it were, everything had failed around Him, when the cities where His mightiest works were done, did not repent, when John doubted Him as to whether He was really the Messiah or not, when there was not anything to minister to Him -- it was, I say, at that moment, which brings Capernaum before His mind, that Jesus says, “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. All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” You can see at once what a place of responsibility that puts Capernaum into, what exaltation it received from the very fact of this privilege. And, beloved friends, so it is now. Increase the grace, multiply the privileges, afford the opportunities, and you correspondingly lay those on whom such favors are bestowed under immense responsibility. It is always so; it is privilege that really creates responsibility. You must ever keep the two together. Let privilege be bestowed, then responsibility is created. Increase divine opportunities, and favors, and blessings, and you correspondingly must look for all that which would naturally be expected to come forth from them. So it was here with Capernaum; and I only mention it because I think it is striking to find this city confronting us at the very first in connection with the great service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now mark what is said directly about His ministry there. It says, “they were astonished at his doctrine.” Why? What was there peculiar to the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ as the great servant-prophet? This -- that He taught with authority. Now I believe, beloved friends, that is peculiar to Christ. I do not question for a moment that every servant of Christ to-day is bound to speak according to the written word of God; and if there be any power or any force in the utterances of any of God’s messengers, that force and that power are all derived from the fact that they are giving utterance to what God Himself has propounded in His own word. This is the true force of the testimony and witness of every faithful servant of Christ to-day. It is very different with the words of the prophets in olden times, though I could not say they spoke with authority as our Lord Jesus Christ did. For instance, how interesting it is to remember that prophet after prophet gave forth their utterances in this way, “Thus saith the Lord,” “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” They begin and they end the whole roll of their prophecy with utterances of that kind. You never find that in our Lord Jesus Christ’s words. “Verily, verily, I say unto you” -- is very different, that is what I mean by authority; and that I believe is the true signification of authority here, namely, that He spoke, not merely as the servant of Jehovah in this world -- because He is the servant-prophet in this gospel -- but albeit that He was the true servant-prophet and maintained that place distinctly all through, and never left the place of subjection and dependence as man or as servant, yet, at the same time, He was “very God of very God.” And even in the lowly place He was pleased to take in the grace that marked the humiliation of the position and the servant’s form that He was pleased to assume there was this grand and blessed contrast between His utterances and those of every other servant before and since, that Jesus spoke with authority, because He was God. And that is what amazed them and aroused inquiry here in their synagogue. Mark what they say, “What new doctrine is this?” Now it would not have been a new doctrine to them, to hear a person saying, “Thus saith the Lord God,” or saying, “This shall come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” But to hear One speaking as the Great I Am, as God, commanding as God, announcing as God, revealing as God, uttering as God, that was what was new. And oh! it is well we should cherish in our souls these contrasts between Christ and all else. I long that we should be equally balanced,
for I confess to you I am afraid lest we should lose it on one side or the other. Let us always hold fast -- and we cannot hold it too tenaciously fast — what I am pressing upon you now, but let us equally hold fast the other, that although He was the mighty God, and spoke as God, and revealed His mind, yet still He did take the place and position of servant as Man, and that whilst He was never less in the glory of His divine nature as God, He was equally never less than the perfect subject Man.

Beloved brethren, our place by His grace is, neither to confound the person, nor divide the substance, but reverently to hold fast both. Now what we find is, that there are those who are ready to part with either the one or the other. And I believe that, where the spiritual mind, the mind of the Spirit of God in the child of God, shows itself is, in being able to see where He is presented in the glory of His person either as God or man. I believe true spirituality consists in the adoring discernment by the Holy Ghost of the mind of God, specially in relation to the presentation of the truths that lie around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let me call your attention to another word for a moment. It is said that He "taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." You will bear with me in saying it, but to my mind the most contemptible kind of people that were ever in this world were the scribes. And I am prepared to tell you why. I was reading not very long since, and the passage struck me greatly, the account of the birth of Jesus, they were conversant with all the facts of the birth of Jesus, they could quote the very words of the elements of misery and of wretchedness about this poor demoniac, he is an emissary of the devil, an emissary of the devil! I believe there are many demoniacs, but there is only one devil. Therefore this man is spoken of as a demoniac, he is an emissary of the devil, an emissary of the great opposer and slanderer of God and man: as I was saying to you last week, Satan is all that. And so here you find all the elements of misery and of wretchedness about this poor demoniac, a poor devil-possessed man. Look at the words of misery for a moment. "He cried out," O the awful despair of devils and of the devil! I believe there are many demoniacs, but there is only one devil. Therefore this man is spoken of as a demoniac, he is an emissary of the devil, an emissary of the great opposer and slanderer of God and man: as I was saying to you last week, Satan is all that. And so here you find all the elements of misery and of wretchedness about this poor demoniac, a poor devil-possessed man. Look at the words of misery for a moment. "He cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." -- a recognition which the Lord does not accept. He will not accept such homage, the acknowledgment of the devil. I believe the example of the servant that refused to be announced about the place by the girl possessed with a spirit of divination. "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation;" and the blessed servant, following the example of his Master, acts there just as Jesus does here. Jesus says, and it is a very strong word, an important word, Hold thy peace," literally, "Be muzzled." You will find the
same word in Mark 4, used in another connection, in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ stilling the tempest. He binds the winds, as it were; precisely the same word in the original. “He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still,” be silent. And so here, just as if it were a wild beast that was being subdued and overmastered by a superior power, He who was ever tender and gracious in all His ways and works and words in the midst of men, speaks with a stern coldness here to Satan, “Be muzzled ἄγητα, and come out of him.” (See 1 Cor. 9:9 and 1 Tim. 5:18; the citation is from the LXX. of Deut. 25:4.) And so you have in act and fact the display not merely of the word of authority, but of the work of power. The word of authority called attention to Him, and now the outstretched arm is as mighty to deliver from Satan’s power as the lips of grace were ready to proclaim grace on every side, “Hold thy peace and come out of him.”

Satan, the devil, bowed before that authority, but yet exhibited the frenzy that is peculiar to him, whilst owning the defeat that he suffered at the hand of the God Man. We read that when he had torn him, he came out; that is to say, he exhibited the hatred of his nature, the terrible violence of his will, both against God and man. Satan always does that, and yet at the same time was overpowered and bound. Because the obedience of the perfect Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, binds the strong man, and then his goods are spoiled. The strong man owns the power of the binder, and is obliged to let free the captives of his hands, and to loose the chains that he had tied around them in this world, though at the same time exhibiting all the malignity of his nature: he tore him.

Now observe one thing more. “And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.” Oh how blessed, beloved friends, it is to think of Him! How blessed it was even when the unclean spirits, and it was not said what the nature of the fever was; Luke 4:38, with the exact diagnosis of one who was a physician, still guided by the Holy Ghost, calls it a great μεγάλη θερμή fever. It is enough for us that it was a severe sickness, and that all sickness and feebleness of disease are part of the fruit and misery of sin in this world. But this I do know -- and that is what I think is so blessed, however grievous the case might be, and however difficult, or as men would say hard, there was no case that was not all easy to Him. And therefore we find what might be called the most extreme cases, the most severe cases presented where His works of mercy and of power are before us, to show the blessedness and the might, as well as the grace, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are two little touches here that are peculiar to Mark, which I should like to dwell upon for a little. “Anon they tell him of her.” O how sweet that is! I know nothing more precious than the holy familiarity that existed between the Lord Jesus and poor things like ourselves in this world; and not only that, beloved friends, but His precious accessibility. A man has a sick mother-in-law, or a sick child, or a daughter dying, and they are all welcomed to the most accessible of men here. They can all go to Him; there was nothing about Him that repelled, I say it with all holy reverence, there was no cold distance or reserve about our precious Lord Jesus Christ. Truly He was, even in His human nature here, in its perfection, very man amongst men, a solitary man as well, yet was He the most accessible of all who were by this, as it were, attracted to Him, all were made to realize how welcome they were to Him; there was that confidence which I am convinced was impressed upon them by the perfection of His own nature and love, so that they
could go and pour out their plaint into His gracious ear: “Anon they tell him of her.” Now I would ask our hearts here to-night, if we are practiced in that holy confidence in Him now? Do we know what it is to tell Him of our sickness and our weakness, of our sorrows and our trials, of our pains and pressures? Do we bring them to Him, as far more interested in them than even we are. It may be that we might think, who could be so interested in a dying wife, or a sick child, or an aged father, as a husband, or a father, or a son, or a daughter? Ah! there is One more interested, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. “Anon they tell him of her.” O the beauty of those words! Do they not remind the heart of another portion of this blessed book, which has been such a prop and stay to many an anxious and sorrowing heart, namely, that precious passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle by the Spirit says, “Be careful for nothing”; difficult words we often think, as many a time we have looked at them, “Be careful for nothing.” Now, perhaps, I may be speaking to some poor afflicted heart here to-night. There may be just such a pressure as I have described hanging upon your poor heart, or you may have a greater sorrow than that pressing you down perhaps, God only knows. But I am conscious of this, that there are numbers of people in this great city to-night whose circumstances are such as at any rate humanly speaking to cause them abundant anxiety, and yet if they belong to Him, here is His word, “Be careful for nothing!” Then, do you ask, how can that ever be brought about? What panacea is there that can discharge that load of care from my heart? Here it is, beloved friends, “In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” I think “made known” there is exactly like “anon they tell him of her” here. There is a heart up there in heaven to whom you can communicate it all, and all you need is, in the confidence of the love that is there, just go and tell Him of it. Remember this, He knows it long before. Do not be under any deception as to that. You are not informing Him as to anything; He knows it. But yet tell Him of it, He loves to hear, make it known to Him, pour it out to Him. O, beloved friends, we would encourage one another a little more in those holy exercises. O, that we knew what it was in our distress, and wants, and needs, just to turn to Jesus in the first place! How often we think of human aids, and human helps, and human arms. Alas! these are the first things that come into our mind oftentimes. If we are in distress, and difficulty, and sorrow, we think of what we can do, and how we can get help, and we run here and there and everywhere else; but how blessed: “Anon they tell him of her.” Now that is peculiar to Mark, and I earnestly call your attention to it.

The other word that is found here is also peculiar to Mark, and is one that shows the beautiful perfection of the servant -- the man, and yet the servant. It says, “He took her by the hand.” Oh! that is so exquisitely tender; and yet there is a power too -- there is also a skill about it. Did not He know how to grasp that hand? Do not you think that that touch was the tenderest touch that could be conceived to that poor, sick, fever-stricken woman there? I have often thought when I have been speaking about the good Samaritan -- the Lord Jesus Christ in figure, the unknown stranger, out of sight and out of mind -- a certain Samaritan, “as he journeyed” -- from heaven to earth, “came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine” -- I have often thought there was only one hand that could touch those wounds, the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I believe that little word is brought out here, and it is exceedingly precious, “He took her by the hand.”

And then we read of her, that “immediately the fever left her.” Now man is pretty well up in the healing art, but he cannot do what we have here. There is an immensity of skill in healing just now, but there is nothing like this “immediately.” That is peculiar to divine power, though it was divine power ministered by and witnessed in the servant-man.

One word more before we leave that -- “she ministered to them.” I do not believe she went about the place as a great preacher. I do not believe there was anything of that kind. The words have not got that on their surface or in their substance; but I believe that she arose in all the beautiful simplicity, but in all the beautiful reality, and in all the beautiful retirement that marked her position, to minister to them, and now she that was fever-stricken is relieved and raised, and instead of being ministered to she is ministering.

And then we read of the other cases. There were numbers brought when the sun was down; and there is one point in the verses I desire to dwell upon. “And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.” So that you find what I have just referred to, namely, how perfect all His works of power were -- just as perfect as His words of authority. Works of power and words of power marked His ministry.

Now the last point I will bring before you to-night is this. In the middle of that activity, and with all that pressing, surging need of men upon Him, we come to one of the most beautiful of touches, one of the most beautiful of scenes, “Rising up a great while before day” -- ah! what a rebuke to many of us that is. I know all are not able, beloved friends, I do not want to be extreme, I know all cannot do it -- happy the man that can, that is all I say. “Rising up a great while before day” -- “a great while” -- do you see the way Mark puts it before you? Distinctness of narrative is one of the peculiarities of Mark, he lets you into the scene, as it were, he makes the thing living before you. Hence you get “rising up a great while before day,” going into a desert place, there alone, and praying. You see how he draws attention to all the important points in this great retirement of Jesus Christ here! And how suitable that the one who depicts for us His activity should also show His retirement, His solitude. How blessed to dwell upon the solitude of Jesus! God in His infinite grace and mercy help us to tread softly here. Let no rude step
intrude here, and no speculation. But what I do say to you -- and to myself -- is this; and I believe it is the lesson God would have us learn from it -- If He who was very God as well as very man, but who ever kept the place of perfect man in this world, and perfect subjection as servant as well -- if He, in the midst of His activities of mercy, in the midst of His wonder working powers of grace here in this world, sought the solitude of the mountain side, and the lonely place, and the desert, and prevented the dawning of the day if He, who possessed all things, bent His knee and prayed, how much more you and I! To me it is a wonderful thing to think of the possessor of everything, bowing His knee in prayer. I go no further than that. I confess to you honestly, it is a subject where one takes one's shoe from off the foot, and worships. But this I do say, and I feel certain, that this is its voice to us. I see His perfection in it, I see the perfection of the place He took in this, I see the glory of His dependent manhood, and I see the glory of His perfect subjection as servant in it; but speaking now of ourselves, and speaking especially of those who serve the Lord in any way, but speaking to all, I say, O, dear friends, how is the river of life in us to be supplied, what springs are to feed it, if we neglect this? Where is the supply to come from if we do not have it first given us? That is what I think is so solemn, and particularly in this busy day, when everything is at high pressure speed, and when there is no time almost to draw one's breath. Ah! and that too gets into the church of God just as much as it pervades the world. O, what a thing it is to "prevent," if we can, the dawning of the day. I love that word in the Psalms. "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." And here we find the great prophet, "a great while before day," seeking the solitudes of the desert and there praying -- how blessed! May God give us to lay that to heart and think of it, and to adore Him for the perfection of the grace that is presented in such a scene.

One word more on this point. Not only do we find this here in the progress of His ministry, and in the midst of His activity, but you remember the very same thing in the garden of Gethsemane, "He kneeled down and prayed." Would to God that we kneeled down a little more in our public meetings and prayed. It is not without reason that that is presented. "He kneeled down." "Oh!" you say, but you are making a great deal of the attitude." Am I? Is there nothing in it? Could I make too much of it when He did it? Is it for no reason that it is said, "He kneeled down"? -- are not subjection and dependence expressed in attitude as much as in fact.

And then I call your attention to one other point for a moment -- He is here intruded upon. And there was always that rude want of spiritual refinement which constantly broke in on the blessed Lord and Master in the course of His ministry here. And so here a very strong word is used. Simon and others pursued Him, for that is the meaning of the word. The word that is used here only occurs in this place in Mark in the whole of the New Testament. It is, generally speaking, used in a bad sense. The only place that I know of where it is used in a good sense is in the Septuagint version of Psa. 23, "Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me." It is the same word here that the Septuagint translates "pursue." They broke in on His retirement. And do you notice what they say to Him? "All seek thee." There is a sort of sadness about that, just as if -- though He was in retirement, and solitude, and prayer -- just as if He could forget any one, just as if He could neglect any one. There is something peculiarly sad to me in that word of Peter's to Him, "All seek thee" And mark, beloved friends, His reply, I think it is very significant. He says, "Let us go into the next towns." How different that is from what pervades so-called Christendom today! O, how different! He would not be made the center of admiring multitudes. He would not be, as it were, placed upon a pinnacle by men for fame in that way. I feel that I have His authority from His word for saying this, that nothing repelled the Lord Jesus Christ more than mere sensationalism. Misery attracted Him, wretchedness drew Him, but sensationalism, and all that spirit that works in so-called religion today, repelled Him. And is it not well for us to remember that word in these days of demonstrations, and conventions, and missions, and armies, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth"?

May God, by His grace and Spirit, just give our hearts to ponder and weigh these beautiful ways of the great servant-prophet, for His name's sake!

Chapter 4

The Leper Cleansed

Mark 1:40-45; Leviticus 13:45, 46

There was nothing, beloved brethren that was more dreadful to a Jew than leprosy. The very mention of the dreaded name produced a horror in his mind. It was stealthy in its beginning, but it was irresistible in its progress; and the peculiar nature of it was, that it thoroughly and entirely mastered the whole subject of it until every part was corrupt. And another feature likewise connected with it, that is well for us to bear in mind, that so we may learn a little as to what is presented in scripture by the disease itself was this, that at first it seemed trivial in appearance, that of which we might call small consequence and small moment in the appearance; but with the deadliest and most awful results sooner or later to be developed. And more than that, the children of the one afflicted with leprosy were doomed to the disease. Now what do all these things point us to? Be assured it is not merely the question of the disease itself, or of how the blessed Lord here, in the wonderful grace and mercy of His heart, dealt with it, as we shall see presently but there surely is a spiritual voice in it, there is a moral lesson as we think of it and dwell upon it, that speaks loudly to us. I suppose it can hardly be questioned for a moment that leprosy in scripture is the picture, the type, of sin not so much, perhaps, in its condemning character as in its utterly defiling nature. And all those peculiar characteristics of the disease, and especially the ones I have just touched on, help in a very distinct way to bring before us the truthfulness of the moral nature of sin, what sin really is to us. No Jew could contemplate the fact that the children of the leper were doomed
to be the subjects, sooner or later, of the disease, without at
once being reminded of this great fact, that the taint of Adam
and all that was connected with that taint, as the result and
consequence of the fall, permeated the whole race, and was
transmitted through the whole human family.

And then, beloved friends, there is more than that, though
I put that first, because that is one of the most important
features in connection with sin for us to bear in mind, and all
the more because at the present moment there is a very
vigorously attempt by the enemy to get rid of the reality of that
taint, and to destroy, if possible, by getting rid of it, not merely
the fact of the moral disease of sin itself, but by destroying it,
to thrust if possible at God’s marvelous provision in our Lord
Jesus Christ to meet it. I think it is Calvin who says that the
three great chapters of the Bible go in threes: the third of
Genesis, the third of John, and the third of Romans. He labels,
so to speak, those chapters in this way -- the third of Genesis,
the total departure, the utter ruin of man before God; the third
of John, the necessity for regeneration (that is the way he
speaks of it, and we can accept it knowing exactly what the
meaning of it is); and the third of Romans, the great chapter
which unfolds to us propitiation by the blood of Christ. Now,
beloved friends, that in principle is true, and I do not think any
severe criticism of expression, if I may so say, ought to hinder
us from accepting a statement such as that, that has, on the
broad issues of it, truths so vitally important at the present
moment. Those are really the three great chapters of the Bible,
and they are what is commonly called a test whereby the
orthodoxy of persons with regard to the great foundation
truths, so vitally important at the present moment. That is why
we are what is commonly called a test whereby the
orthodoxy of persons with regard to the great foundation
truths, verily it is worth our while to hold them fast by
propitiation truths, verily it is worth our while to hold them fast by
propitiation truths, verily it is worth our while to hold them fast by.

That is one reason why I lay stress on it for a little this
evening, because this leprosy that meets us here in the first
instance is in scripture constantly and continually set before us
as the great picture and type of sin in its defiling nature and
character. And that is the reason I read from Lev. 13. Leprosy
shut the afflicted person out from the haunts of men, and all
intercourse and all communion, so to speak, was interrupted
where that disease asserted itself; and the man that was
afflicted with it proclaimed to every one who, far and near,
approached him, not only in his person but by word of mouth
in his testimony, the fact that there was that upon him and in
him, preying upon his vitals, which was loathsome and hateful
detestable both to God and men. That is how our scripture
opens to-night. It brings before us the great fact of leprosy.

Now, beloved friends, there is another point that I would
like to interest you with for a little. I do not for a moment enter
into any detailed argument whether the leprosy of scripture was
contagious or not -- we can leave all that aside. But this is clear
at any rate, that amongst the Jews to be afflicted with the
leprosy was to be ceremonially unclean, that a person who had
leprosy was ceremonially shut out from intercourse with God’s
people and intercourse with the camp. And that prescription of
the law is one of the most remarkable exceptions to its kindness
and its consideration. The very fact that a poor creature in the
condition of a leper with an incurable disease eating away his
very life, as it were, and with no possibility of any relief or
cure, being brought to him from man (for no one but Jehovah
Rophi could deal with the leper), the very fact that such an one
was shut out by the law and placed alone, outside, to be in
miserly and wretchedness, that very fact brings before us how
loathsome, and how detestable, and how hateful in its own
nature that disease was.

Now, having stated that by way of introduction, let us look
further for a little at the particular case that is brought before
us here. You will notice the way that the writer of the gospel
presents it. He says, “There came a leper to him, kneeling and
beseeking.” What an object of misery! And I am anxious,
beloved friends, to press it upon all our hearts this evening, not
merely the picture itself as it is here, but that we should learn
by God’s grace a little of something that is practical in relation
to misery as it comes before us here in scripture, and as we see
it in this world. Just look at this object for a moment, a
repulsive object, and I suppose up to this moment in despair,
that there was that upon him and in him, preying upon his vitals, which was loathsome and hateful
detestable both to God and men. That is how our scripture
opens to-night. It brings before us the great fact of leprosy.

I would like to say this to you, for I have thought of it
very much of late. I think there is a way in which we may look
at human wretchedness and human misery very different from
the way in which it is, generally speaking, regarded, even by
persons who are more or less affected and touched by it. You know there is a sort of philanthropy abroad that I am perfectly certain is not the philanthropy of the New Testament, and is not the compassion of Jesus Christ nor of truth. But there is a sort of pity and a kind of compassion attempted to be created in the heart of men by presenting pictures of wretchedness and of misery; persons are supposed to be more or less touched by these pictures as they come before them, and out of this consideration and out of this compassion, as is supposed, for such objects, they are to address themselves in some way or another to their relief. I do not see that in scripture, beloved friends. Yet what I see is the most unbounded compassion and the most unbounded kindness in our Lord Jesus Christ. But this I see, and I thank God for it, and I have seen it recently, perhaps, more than ever -- that there is a bright side to distress and to human misery and human wretchedness. Oh! beloved friends, if we could only get one another a little under the light of this for an instant, so as to read the blessing that is in it! I believe that God has, in His wonderful grace, permitted the misery and wretchedness of mankind, and the desolations that are upon hearts, as a rebuke to the awful selfishness of our nature. Take, for instance, this great city, completely surfeited with luxury as it is on the one hand, and yet at the same time completely steeped on the other in misery and wretchedness. What do I see in it? I see this, that God in His infinite mercy has allowed all that as a rebuke to the awful selfishness of men. And I believe that is one of the great things that He would impress upon our hearts at this present moment, that He leaves these objects amongst us, and that He brings these cases of wretchedness before us, in order that this principle, this hateful selfishness of our nature, may be rebuked and checked as we see these cases day by day. So that it is not merely the fact of pitying a man because he is a man like ourselves, afflicted with these trials and pressures and wants and woes -- this, I think, might very soon sink down into a sort of sentimentalism that would be of very little use or practical good -- but I say this to my brothers and sisters in Christ here to-night, we are brought positively into contact with the misery of this world that we might be here, through grace, the reproduction and the continuation of the life of Jesus Christ in mercy in it. It is not merely that men might be relieved -- though I fully admit men are relieved; it is not merely that misery might be alleviated -- though I fully admit misery is alleviated; but that His own blessed life of those three and thirty years might, at least in the shaded and dim distance in which it could be represented in any of His poor people, be continued in His saints, now that His blessed Son is no longer in this world. So I see these two things in it, and this picture brings it before me -- I see in misery a rebuke to human selfishness, and I see in the wretchedness in which mankind are held in consequence of sin, that God has left us in a world where sin is rampant that we might, even in regard to the bodies of men, and not merely their souls, be here in some little way to set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as He was here in this world.

Now see how this comes out in connection with this case. This poor, wretched creature comes, and kneels, and beseeches Him. Now here is another thing, in the attitude itself, the condition of the man, the place he takes. And then look at his words for a moment, "If thou wilt, thou canst." Oh what words these are! You see I am passing now from the literal object of distress to look at the moral state, for I believe we find both here. And, beloved friends, I am able to say this to you to-night, that the moral state is far more affecting to me than the state of his body. The state of this man's mind touches me a great deal more than the state of his poor frame. I admit everything that you can put with regard to his body; but look at the state of his mind! The malice of Satan and the cruelty of man had sowed in that poor heart distrust of the heart of Christ. That is what you find here.

Ah!" he says, as it were, "I do not question your power; I have seen that. I have witnessed your works of greatness" (as I have no doubt he had, for they were in abundance; Jesus was ever working in grace in this world); "but," he says, "I doubt the will, I doubt the love, I doubt the interest; I know you can do it, but I call in question whether there is sufficient readiness of heart and willingness of mind, whether, in other words, there is sufficient interest in my case to lead you to bestow upon me in my misery the mercy which I know you have."

Now, beloved friends, how very instructive that is to us! Do you not see that brings us back exactly to what was the root of the beginning of all sin? And I am thankful to be able to say a word about that this evening, because we are met at the present moment with very crude thoughts, superficial, shallow ideas about sin (that is one of the things that are pervading the people of God on every side), and consequently shallow, crude, superficial thoughts about holiness. They always go together, false and shallow thoughts of sin are sure to precede shallow and false thoughts about holiness. Hence you have them going hand in hand; the one paves the way for the other. And when I say that, it is in order to bring your thoughts for a moment back to the very root-principle of sin. What is it? You have got it here in this poor leper -- I do not mean in his disease, but in the wretched state of his mind. I trust most in this company tonight remember what the principle was that the enemy sowed in the heart of the woman at the very commencement of the history of our race in the garden of Eden. It was just exactly that. The serpent said, as it were, "Ah! but you see there is one tree God has kept back from you." "Yes," she says, "we may eat of all the trees of the garden but one." "Ah yes," he says; "you may eat of all the trees of the garden, but there is one tree your Maker has kept back; you have got all the rest, but still there is one reserved." Do you not see there was direct and deadly insinuation against the heart of God? an insinuation against his kindness and goodness and wisdom; all His being was called in question by that insinuation. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took and she ate -- that is to say, she helped herself to that which she did not believe there was goodness enough in the heart of God her Creator to give her. Ah! there is the root-principle of sin, and there is a lesson to those who talk to-day about its being discernible in its acts. There it is in its root, there it is at the very bottom, there it is in the beginning of its history. What is sin? Now, you know how it is brought down to mere acts; it is spoken of as gross acts, and so forth. Sin is in the creature, a
will independent of God. And when people say -- well meaning, I have no doubt, God forbid that I should say a hard word with regard to any; I fully admit the good intention, though I see the falsity that is at the bottom very often -- but when it is said, “The way for a Christian to get free from all this is to put his will over on the side of God,” the advice that they are giving you is simply this, to put over on the side of God, as they say, that which in principle is sin. Let us never forget that, beloved. Because the will of the creature is sin in its essence, sin in its principle. The principle of sin in the creature is a will of its own. And, beloved friends, how that came and how that was sown in the woman, was by a slur upon the character, the goodness, the kindness of God. The leper has it here, and he comes out with it in his distress and misery. His heart, I believe, is more leprous than his body. The moral state of that man is a great deal more leprous than his external condition. “If thou wilt, thou canst.” Oh, dear friends, what a picture we have before us!

And now let me say to my brethren (and that will bring it a little more home to all of us; and let us search our own hearts and allow the word of God to search our hearts to-night), have we not often said that in our hearts? Have we not, my beloved brethren, oftentimes been brought into circumstances in our history, circumstances in our family perhaps, or in our business, or in our daily life, circumstances of difficulty when we have come to what is called the parting of the ways, and we do not know what will come next, and have we not often thought, Well, I know that He has got the power, I know He has the ability, “I know thou canst do all things,” as Job says -- but, but! Ah! that is just where this poor leper was. Oh, dear friends, let us through God’s infinite grace learn how ready we are to reflect on that heart! Oh! how ready we are to discredit that love, and oh, what love! to discredit the goodness, the kindness, the compassions that are not small, the compassions that are “new every morning.” That is what confronted the great Servant-Prophet here in the very first instance in connection with this leper, “If thou wilt thou canst make me clean.”

Now how is this met? That is the next thing we have to look at, “And Jesus, moved with compassion.” I love that word, the “compassion” of Jesus Christ. O the compassion of His heart! If it had been anyone of us there would have been a shudder, a shrug of the shoulder, as we retreated from the revolting object of misery. You see we cannot avoid contrasting ourselves with Him. I think that is one part of the blessedness of our blessed Lord’s ministry and work here in this world, that the contrast between Him and every one else stands out so wonderfully before us. I know well how we should have turned away from an object so loathsome, and if there had been ever so little a trace left of the kindness even of human nature in us, the refusal of this poor man to acknowledge the goodness of the heart though He owned the power would have left us without a shred of compassion for him, and we would have turned away to leave him in his wretchedness still more wretched. But ah! that is not what we read here, “Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him.” He put forth that ever open hand of kindness, and mercy, and goodness, and touched that death in life (for that is what it was), and said, “I will.” Oh, what was there not in that sentence! Oh, what those two little words brought home to the heart, “I will.” You doubt my affection? “I will.” You doubt my readiness? “I will; be thou clean.” Now do you notice, beloved friends, the two blessed points that come before us in the act and word of Jesus here? It is a great thing to dwell upon the acts and words of Jesus. The act spoke of the love of His heart in a way that no word could. Oh, the touch of that hand, that blessed hand, that hand of mercy! Oh, the tenderness of that touch! Do not we know something about it when it comes and touches us? If there is a tried or an afflicted one of the Lord’s people here to-night cannot you witness to the tenderness of that touch? When He touches you, how tender His touch is! -- no roughness in it any more than in His voice. It was not even like Joseph. Joseph spake roughly to his brethren, and it was good for them to be probed to the bottom of their hearts with regard to their state; but though he did speak roughly his heart was breaking over them all the time. But oh! beloved friends, Jesus neither speaks roughly nor touches roughly. God help us to remember that. Sometimes I think some of us imagine there is something very noble in rough speech, or unloving look -- that it is Christlike. Do not let us falsely consecrate things that are not after Christ. It may appear very clever to be severe and cutting in tongue, and it may appear very exalted to be haughty in bearing, but you will look in vain in the history of the great Servant-Prophet Himself to find that. I dwell upon it, beloved friends, because I love to think of it. “He put forth his hand and touched him.” Now I say the act proclaimed the heart in a way that no word could. The word proclaimed the mighty power of God, “Be thou clean,” and the touch, too, for who could touch a leper without being defiled unless He was God? A mere man would be defiled at once. A mere man like any other man would have carried away the defilement of the leprosy with him. What happened with the touch of Jesus was not what would have taken place with anyone else, God forbid such a thought in any heart; cleansing to the leper was what happened. “He put forth his hand, and touched him and said, I will, be thou clean.” “He spake and it was done.” It is the mighty God, beloved friends, manifested in a man. I know no scripture that more beautifully and more wonderfully presents Him in His Person as God and man than this does here. Do you not see the tenderness of the man in that touch? Do you not also see the compassions of Him who was perfect man? As the old confession rightly and truly says, “very God, and very man”; but do we not also see here the mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth? Do we not see Him who made the worlds by His word? “I will, be thou clean.” What a new thing on earth this was! What was it? Was it law or was it love? What is it that is brought before us here? These two things come before me, beloved friends, in this little scene in a wonderful way -- the divinity of love, if I may be allowed to use the expression -- and the divinity of power. I see the divinity of power in the “Be thou clean”; I see the divinity of love in “I will,” with a touch.

Now for a few moments more, just look at what we may call the attendant circumstances. I will not dwell long upon some of them, because we have already had them before us, but we get the word “immediately.” I have pointed out before
how that is the characteristic word of the Gospel of Mark, occurring frequently under different names, not always translated “immediately,” but “instantly,” or “quickly,” or at “once.” But it is the urgency and the absence of all delay in the rendering of service, or in the effect of the works of mercy, whichever it may be. And so in this case, “Immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed.” As I was saying on a previous occasion, man is very well up in the healing art now, but he cannot do this, he cannot bring about a result like this at once. There are stages of cure, and progress, just as there are stages of disease; but instantaneously the whole order of things changed — that is the mighty power of God. And that is what this word “immediately” brings before us.

There is another point of great beauty here — indeed there are two points. Observe what he says to this man. “He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away, and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.” Now first of all we learn from this, beloved friends, how the Lord Jesus never left and never surrendered the place of servant that He was pleased to take. That is the first great thing that comes before us in connection with the case of the leper here, how entirely He maintained the servant place. I need not say to you that we find elsewhere how entirely He always maintained the place of man that He was pleased to become in this world; indeed He will never give up manhood, He will never cease to be a Man; having become a man, He is a man for ever, a man in glory; but I do not dwell on it now, we shall have another opportunity; but what is so blessed is that He is set before us as a girded Servant in heaven, He says so Himself in Luke 12, that in that scene when He will have it all His own way, He will make those who have followed Him, and waited for Him, and watched for Him, sit down, and will gird Himself, and come forth and serve them. But what we see here is, on earth He never ceased to be a servant. No effects of His ministry, no consequences of His works of power were ever claimed by Him so as to reflect any honor or any glory upon Himself To me that is one feature of His ministry which is most precious.

“I came from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that is one feature of His ministry which is most precious. And hence you see Him here sending this poor leper to the priest in order to fulfil the requirements of the law of Moses, and that he might go and offer for his cleansing, and might be a witness really to them of the mighty power of God who was still Jehovah-Ropheka to His people. Observe how the blessed One does not claim any honor for Himself; but this poor leper lost the opportunity of carrying out the thoughts and wishes of our Lord Jesus Christ, and went and proclaimed everywhere what Jesus had done; and the retiring, gracious, blessed ways of the great Servant-Prophet were broken in upon, and He could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. You see how entirely He kept His retirement. And I commend that, beloved brethren in Christ, to all our hearts. The very essence of a good servant is to render service and to retire into the servant’s place. And you see the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ in this very thing that so distinctly and peculiarly marked Him as the great Servant-Prophet in the midst of Israel — that having become a servant, and taken the servant’s form, He never departed from it.

But now there is another point that is even more touching, and that you will find all through His history — He never claimed for Himself, on the score of His services, any one whom He had healed, or relieved, or blessed. It is beautiful to trace the history of that in scripture. See, for instance, how the daughter of Jairus was left in the bosom of her family. See how the son that was healed at the bottom of the holy mount was handed back to his father. See how the widow of Nain’s son was restored to his mother. And you remember how He would not let the poor Gadarene follow Him or be with Him, but sent him home to his friends. I do not know any thing that is more precious than that aspect of our blessed Lord’s ministry in this world—that on the score of mercy given He never claimed. It was as if grace would be offended not to confer the thing sovereignly, without the surrender of any other thing in return; that is what I see in it. May I say with all reverence — it has been said before, and I therefore only repeat it — that He did good, hoping for nothing again. In that aspect you see it in a wonderful way in our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He had rendered the most wonderful service — a leper cleansed, a dead man raised up, a poor dumb creature with her mouth opened, no matter what it was, excessive though the case might have been in human wretchedness and human misery, still the Lord Jesus rendered His mercy and His grace “freely,” as He said to His disciples, and I believe it was the spirit He put upon it, “Freely ye have received; freely give.” The Lord in His grace give us to take that in. I believe it is a great thing not to hamper grace with any conditions in the shape of a return. There is one scripture that throws immense light on that, and that is in the healing of a leper, too. Do you remember in the case of the prophet Elisha, how he resented it with Gehazi? Do you remember what Gehazi said? Gehazi was very like the people of the present day. He said, Naaman is not going to get everything from my master without paying for it; he says, My master has spared Naaman, this Syrian, I will go after him, and I will take somewhat of him. And you know what he did; I need not go into it. But do you remember the words of the prophet? Is it a time to receive garments, and silver, and so on. “Is it a time?” after the display of such marvelous grace of God, the sovereign pure grace of God, “without money and without price.” “The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave to thee, and to thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.” And why? Because with an avidity and a greed for money, and a lie to sustain it, he sought to hamper grace and to tarnish the free sovereign cure of God through His servant the prophet.

See how beautifully the opposite principle shows out in our Lord Jesus Christ. The contrast in Him is so beautiful in all these instances; and not only that contrast, but the blessedness of being permitted to dwell on that side of His character and nature, the perfection of the man. I do love to dwell upon the perfections of the Man Christ Jesus; I love to sit down and think of them; I love to go over them in my own heart; I love to think of Him handing over that poor young man to his mother. Is it not blessed to see the perfection of His heart, the
perfection of tenderness, even that of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so you find it, beloved friends, everywhere throughout in every instance.

But there is one other point. Some one here might object, and say, Well, but what do you make of this? Had he not servants, and did not He call His servants? Were you not speaking to us about the call of the apostles a few evenings back? Ah! but that is quite a different case. These were not persons that had received any favor from Him; He did not heal them; He did not bestow bodily strength, or power, or cure upon them. They were called, of course; that is quite clear; but how were they called? His charms called them; He charmed them to Him; He never made a claim; He charmed them; they could not help coming, the charm of His call was irresistible for leaving everything in this world and going; for leaving net, and fish, and father, to follow such an one as Jesus Christ. The point, beloved friends, is this, that they could not resist it; there was an attractiveness about Him, He drew; He was the point, beloved friends, is this, that they could not resist it; there was an attractiveness about Him, He drew; He was the great heavenly magnet here, even as a man in this world, that drew hearts after Him, charmed them, kept them, sustained them, held them. It was not merely that they went out after Him, but they stayed out after Him. Do we? that is the question. I was reading the other day, and was struck with it afresh, what is said of Abraham. It was the God of glory that charmed and called him out, and you admire his going out, do you not? We often dwell upon it. How beautiful to see Abraham rising up and going forth, and the God of glory, as it were, shining him out of everything, and death removing the hidden difficulties out of his way. Glory and death conducted him out. Glory beckoned him out, and death took the great tall cedar trees, as it were, out of the path. But, beloved friends, there is something else in the history, even this -- he stayed out. Many a one has gone back; that is what is so solemn. Many a one has gone out, and the going out has been beautiful, but the staying out has failed. Ah! it is the staying out. Now I tell you nothing will keep you out but the heavenly glory of Jesus Christ. A great many things may call you out in the first instance. Oftentimes, in the history, particularly of young Christians, there is something that looks to them very beautiful, and somehow the more it is in the distance the more beautiful it looks; it is not perhaps quite so beautiful when you come near to it, but, as is said, “distance lends enchantment to the view.” But oh! nothing will keep you out but the glory of Jesus Christ.

I just say that, beloved friends, in connection with this little history. He did not claim any one whom He served in the way of mercy for Himself, but He called His servants, and charmed His servants, and His heart educated them, and they learnt -- poorly, I admit -- the art of Jesus Christ in mercy, and in kindness, and in goodness, by being with Him. God in His infinite grace grant that we may learn the art by being with Him. You never can educate a person to be kind, and gentle, and affectionate, and forbearing. You cannot cultivate and educate a hard, severe nature into a kind, gentle, tender nature. There is only one thing can do it. If you keep the company of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will learn it by being in His company.

May God, by His grace and Spirit, read those lessons out to us this evening, that we may understand His compassions. And this I say to my beloved brothers and sisters here to-night -- bear with me as I press it upon you -- let us go into this world, and seek by His grace to continue that life of mercy. And of all things, may the Lord keep us from being hard and censorious. This is the serious part of it, for us there is plenty of talk, a great deal too much boasting of our wealth, and yet very little done. What we want is this -- practical manifestation of the mercy of Jesus Christ, not only in word, but in deed and in truth. Oh, that He in His grace might use His word to call us near to Himself, to sit before Him and learn that grace a little more, for His Name’s sake.

Chapter 5: The Palsy and the Publican
Mark 2:1-17

I desire, beloved brethren, to bring before you this evening both these cases. They are very different in themselves, so much so that it would be, perhaps, difficult at first sight to discern what the real connection is between the cure of the palsied man and the call of the publican; and yet I think we shall find that there is a much closer connection between the two than you would at first sight suppose. In the one case it is a diseased man, in helplessness, and weakness, and powerlessness; in the other, it is a man, as esteemed by his fellows, disreputable, without character; because that is what the publicans were; they were, as you know, the leviers of the Roman tax, and were detested by their own people, partly because they were the standing witness of their subjugation to the Roman yoke; so much so, that none but the very outcasts amongst the Jews, and those who would be supposed to have lost all sense of respect, not only for themselves but for the dignity of the chosen nation, would be found occupying such a position as a levier, or perhaps more strictly a farmer, of this Roman tax. Now I think you will see in a moment that there is a great point in the Spirit of God putting both these cases here, in close position, in connection with the ministry of the great Prophet in the midst of God’s people: because whether it was the case of helplessness in a man’s body -- which, after all, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ here, proceeded from the great root of all, which is sin -- or whether it was the position of disrepute and lowness of character which a man was supposed to occupy before his fellow men in this world, the same grace and kindness, and the same consideration and tenderness that dealt with one dealt with the other. And that is a reason, I believe, why they are put together in this occasion, to show that, in the great Prophet -- and that is who Jesus is, as presented to us in the Gospel of Mark -- there was not merely tenderness of heart for the needs and distresses and wants of the bodies of people, but there was also consideration, kindness, grace, compassion, and even more than that, beloved friends, there was that which was bestowed upon a man who was supposed to be, by his occupation and by his position amongst men, outside all consideration of every kind. Hence, I believe, you have them both linked together.

And I will further tell you why it seems to me to be so.
Oftentimes we are affected by sights of misery and distress in this world; the sight of a person with a weak and helpless and worn-out frame and body would affect wonderfully some people who seem to be insensible altogether to a condition of things, which is just as great, only it is moral. You will find that there are persons who are greatly affected by the external bodily wants of those in distress in this world, who seem to have no sense at all of the desolations oftentimes that the souls of men are in; and that is a reason, I believe, why both these are brought together here. He can touch the one as He can touch the other; and it matters not how varied the kinds of distress are, nor how diversified the kinds of desolation that came in His blessed pathway as He moved through this scene; still there was a heart in Jesus Christ that entered into all the circumstances and all the sorrows and all the difficulties; and everything that made men what they were before their fellow men. He entered into it, He saw it, He touched it. Hence, I believe, you have both these apparently diverse and opposite kinds of cases put in juxtaposition, as it were, in our scripture to-night.

Now I want you, beloved brethren, to look with me, seeking God’s help, at both these for a moment or two. And first of all, when we speak of this man with the palsy, it is exceedingly solemn and interesting to remember where it was. He was at Capernaum. Every time that word comes up before us we seem to have an exceedingly solemn voice in it to every one of us. Capernaum, you know, was the most exalted city of its time; as He says Himself, exalted to heaven; “Thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven.” It was privileged; it witnessed the greatest acts of Christ, and the most marvelous displays of His goodness and kindness here in this world; it was at Capernaum that some of His mightiest and greatest works were accomplished. Now ought we not to remember that? Quite true that we do not live in the days of the ministry on earth of the Son of man; quite true that we do not live in times when He might have walked even through this great city, and when His works of mercy and His acts of kindness might have been witnessed in this great city; but, beloved friends, we live in this time when God in His infinite grace and mercy, has unfolded to us not merely the goodness and kindness of God manifest in flesh in Christ incarnate here in this world; but when God has unfolded to us the glories of the exalted, heaven-crowned Son of man. And remember that that title, Son of man -- and it is used here for the first time in the Gospel of Mark -- Son of man, takes in not merely all that He was in lowly grace here in this world, but Son of man is equally applicable to Him in the place of glory and the circumstances and scenes of glory in which He is. There Stephen saw Him when he said, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man,” &c. So that in a certain sense, and I would like to press that upon my brothers and sisters here to-night, we really are in this day in the full blaze of the light of truth as God has brought it out (and there never was a time when truth was more distinctly brought out in all its fulness and brightness than at the present moment), I say, we are solemnly responsible; increased privilege is increased responsibility; never let us forget that. For mark this, if we forget it, the tendency of the heart is to pride oneself upon the acquisition or the possession of the truth; and if we do not allow our hearts to come under the full weight and full influence of the fact, that to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required, and if the closer and the nearer we come to the truth and light of God, and the more it shines round about us, and the oftener we see it, and the more we read of it, if, I say over and over again, if we have not the sense in our souls that it lays us under the most weighty responsibility, we shall certainly turn round and pride ourselves upon the possession of the truth. And that will be no better than the Jews were in their day. Did they not turn round and cast it in the face of the Lord of life and glory when He was here, “We be Abraham’s seed and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou then, Ye shall be made free?” Where did that come from, beloved friends? It came from the terrible pride and vanity, of their hearts. They could pride themselves upon being the genuine descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the very offspring of the patriarchs, and of Abraham especially, the friend of God, and could turn it round to their own purposes without a sense that the people of God in origin are expected to be the people of God in practice. And I see the same danger now; and therefore I think this word Capernaum has a loud voice to us; it was “thou, Capernaum,” of all cities and of all places “exalted to heaven.” So much on the place, and on the way the second chapter opens.

Now I want to call your attention first of all to another beautiful touch here of the writer of this gospel, and it is how this chapter brings us specially into contrast with the attractiveness of Jesus Christ. I wish I could -- I know I cannot, but I long that I could -- give your hearts some little sense of the precious attractiveness of this blessed One. O how He drew poor needy hearts to Him; how there was in Him a response to every desolation that could sweep its withered leaves over the heart! And mark how beautifully you have it here, “there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door,” the press was so great. What made it? Ah! there was One there whose fellow was never to be found, whose equal was never known, who was, in every sense of the word, a stranger here. That is what it was. I quite own that there was need and want and difficulty and distress; but do you think you would find need and want and difficulty and distress collected round the door of the great magnates or potentates of the earth at the present moment? Never. What brings need and want and distress into circumstances such as are depicted in Mark 2, is that there was a heart there who could enter into all the details of the need. And I want to press that upon you, my beloved brothers and sisters, here to night; there is in that blessed heart in heaven in heaven that which no other heart has; you can go and confide in Him when you feel as if you deserved the earth to swallow you up; you will never find a reproach from the lips of Jesus glorified, any more than from the lips of Jesus humbled; you will find in Him One that will enter into all the circumstances and details and history of your sorrows; One who can guide you out of them; One who can comfort you in them; One who will receive you, One who will welcome you, One who will be gratified by your confidence. That, beloved friends, is what is so wonderful to me, One who is gratified by the confidence of an outcast! Think of that! And that is what collected this company of people round the door here.
My mind is called back, when I think of that scene, to that touching incident in the gospel history, when the poor man, with his child torn and lacerated by a demon, came to the disciples of the Lord, supposing that men that were in such close proximity to the great prophet would imbibe something of His spirit and something of His power; but he was bitterly disappointed. “I spake to thy disciples, that they should cast him out; and they could not.” Ah! dear friends, that is the history, not merely of the people of God ever since, but that is the sad history, alas! of the church of God. No ability to use the power that is there. But this is the word that always attracts my heart in that scene; He says, “Bring him to me.” Thank God! Now do not despair, dear brother or dear sister here tonight; if you have an aching brow, a broken heart, if you have sorrows or desolations or pressures upon you, and nothing has ever relieved you, do not despair; there is One that says, “Bring him to me.” Now, beloved friends, that is a great thing for our souls, and I feel that is just what we want. Woe be to us if the day should ever come that in our extreme clearness of for our souls, and I feel that is just what we want. Woe be to us if the day should ever come that in our extreme clearness of our minds we should lose the sense of a living Christ! And I feel that in this lies our great deficiency; we do not seem to get hold of His Person. It is the common condition and state so often of the church of God everywhere, a living Christ is not known. People say, Oh! that is true of Him; these are wonderful things about Him. Yes, quite true; no question of that for a moment; there are wonderful things about Him in the past as in the future; scenes of moral glory in the days of His humiliation, and scenes of literal glory to be enacted and displayed in the day of His coming kingdom. But, beloved friends, that is not Christ; very blessed, but that is not Christ; and that will not satisfy your heart. Your hearts long for -- all hearts do, the human heart does, and He knows very well what our hearts want -- our hearts long for a Person, and that Person as the object. That is peculiar to Christianity. The whole power of Christianity is in an object, and that object is a living Person. Further, this is the attractive power of Christianity; it is the displacing power of Christianity; it is the forming power of Christianity, it is the strengthening power of Christianity. And where that is not really laid hold of in the heart, you find desolation and trial and defeat and disappointment and vexation. And here it meets us exactly; here was a living person, a living man: He was the great Prophet-Teacher, but it is the Person.

And another thing, it is not only that He gives the instruction, that is the second part, but I do not think it is the greatest part. It is a peculiar word in the original, it is “He preached the word,” it is more the sense that He spake the word; still it is set before us in His ministry in a very blessed way that He was a preacher; and it is a great thing to think of, that our own blessed Master was the great preacher in this world. But this point I press on you, the accessibility of Jesus Christ is so wonderful. He was the most accessible of men; any one might go to Him; there was an open door for all who came to Jesus Christ; the vilest was as welcome as the least vile; indeed, the greater the need the greater the welcome; the greater the vacuum in the heart the more the excess of the grace there to fill it immediately. That is what meets us here, the accessibility of Jesus Christ. He instructs, He teaches, He preaches; but there is many a man who stands upon a high elevation, as it were, and does that, but you could not approach him in the least. Here is One you can always approach, and He will never misunderstand you, never put a different meaning upon your words from what you intend, never keep you on the torture and the rack of a hard, cold suspicion; He is gracious, accessible, tender, considerate, long-suffering. Oh! how blessed it is to think of Him! That is the scene of Mark 2.

And now let us look at this first case. There comes into His blessed presence a most harrowing, a most depressing case, that of a poor, needy creature, who is brought to Him. And, beloved friends, what I think is so interesting, at least to me, was that this case was one amongst the poor. What proves that beyond question or doubt is that the word that is employed for “bed,” or “couch,” is the word that is always used to describe the miserable pallet upon which the poor lay; therefore it is a case of extreme poverty. I say, Thank God for that: because, you see, that brings the grace all the more clearly out before our souls. Look at it for a moment; look at the many things that combined; look at the remarkable way the Holy Ghost, by the evangelist, throws them into what I call a divine picture in these verses. Here was a poor, powerless, helpless frame, a weak, shattered, palsied body, and there were willing hearts that brought this case of distress to Jesus. Look at their earnestness; they do not adopt any ceremony; they do not ask any permission, as if they were intruders; the place was full and He was occupied, but they read that heart so well, and understood the affections of that heart so clearly, that they knew that all times and circumstances were alike to Jesus to show mercy in. And these men come without ceremony, without leave, without formality, and break up the roof in the earnestness of their hearts, to get the case of distress into personal contact with the great Prophet, and they lay him down there. It is one of the most wonderful scenes I know of in scripture! Oh! dear brethren, would to God we could do that with our cases of spiritual palsy and spiritual distress. O that we had such a sense of the heart of Jesus Christ, and the readiness and willingness of Jesus Christ, as well as the power of Jesus Christ, that we could go and break through all difficulties and all opposing things, so as to get the objects of mercy into personal contact with the only one that can bestow mercy. That is what they do here. I do not question for a moment that the sick of the palsy had faith himself; I believe “their faith” alludes to all, takes in all: “Jesus saw their faith.” Do you not think that was grateful to Him? Do you not think that sorrowing, lonely heart, that found so little comfort in this world, that met so little response to the grace and the kindness that was in it, was pleased by any confidence? I am sure He was. I love to think of how that confidence gratified the heart of my blessed Lord and Master here. What it was to Him to be trusted, to be looked to, to be used by distress and misery! “When Jesus saw their faith,” look how He vindicates it. What a comfort to us! May we learn from this. “When Jesus saw their faith” what does He say? The first word that comes from His blessed lips is “son.” Oh the sweetness of that! Did not that fall like showers on the parched grass on the ears of that poor, helpless man? “Son, son.” What divine goodness and divine grace were there! I was speaking to you last week about
the divinity of love as well as the divinity of power; here is the divinity of kindness. Oh! dear friends, let us learn, through grace, to be kind, for I must say to my brethren tonight, I think if there is anything we are deficient in, it is just in that -- kindness. I fear there is a solemn lack of it amongst Christians, a sorrowful want as to it somewhere. Indeed, some people seem to me to think that there is some sort of merit attached to being hard; where it is, I cannot divine nor understand. It requires no great effort or self-denial to be a stick or a stone; I doubt not it is more or less according to our nature: but, O to be like Jesus Christ! O to have the compassions and the tenderness of Himself in our souls, and to have been so touched by it ourselves, to have come so in contact with it ourselves, in our own histories, that we understand what it is to deal with others in the same way that we ourselves have been dealt with by Him. And this is where the great want is, a personal dealing with a personal Lord -- “Son.” Beautiful word. And there is not merely that beautiful expression which implies relationship and which carries love with it -- because this word of relationship has words of grace and love and kindness couched beneath it. But mark how He goes to the root of the disease that is here. There is no question about the palsy, because He deals with it; but first of all the great Physician and the great Prophet deals with the root of the thing, and therefore He goes at once to the needs of the man’s soul. Now we are living in a day when the needs of people’s bodies seem to have a greater interest to many persons’ hearts than the needs of their souls, and I think we have to watch much about this. It will be a poor thing for us merely to be philanthropists in this world; it would be a poor thing for us if we merely thought of the needs and distresses and wants -- though I know they are many -- of the bodies of men in this poor scene; of the desolations, and the death, and the woes, and the pain, and the rack, and the misery that abound all around us, and especially in this night, I think if there is anything we are deficient in, it is just in kindness. I fear there is a solemn lack of it amongst people from the Roman yoke, and the pressure of their enemies, under which they were lying under the governmental hand of God; but, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” The miseries of men’s bodies do not shut them out from God, but the weight of their sins would. “He shall save his people from their sins,” because sins unforgiven, unwashed, unpardoned, will shut for ever a person out from God. Therefore that comes first, because, as I have said already, it lies here at the root and is the producing cause of all the misery that is in this world, even with regard to people’s bodies. Sin entered into the world, and all the sins and woes of men’s bodies and death along with them. And therefore it is so blessed to look at it, and to think of the great Physician here of both the souls and bodies of men, for He applies that title to Himself. It is not like what some one has said of the physicians of the world, namely, that they are men who put drugs that they do not know much about into bodies that they know less about; but observe what we have here; mark the wonderful skill, how every part of the divine blessedness and perfection of this blessed One is displayed in its proper place; how the inward state, the inner man, so to speak, is dealt with, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

Then you get the reasonings of the rationalists of that day; and the scribes were the rationalists of the Lord’s days, the most heartless of people, and they began to talk about blasphemies. And it is a wonderful thing to me -- I cannot help saying it in passing -- how quickly and readily people can use that word; there seems to be a marvelous acquaintance with it with some people. “This man speaketh blasphemies.” Ah! many a word of that kind is a revelation of the state of the person that utters it. How little people think of that! “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” And mark the way the Lord meets this. He says, “Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man” -- now mark this, I beseech you; the title is used here for the first time -- “that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth.” I suppose the Jews would own there was power in heaven; of course they recognized that God only could forgive sins, and so far they were right; but they were blind to the very last degree in not seeing that Jesus was God. The fact was that the blindness of their heart would not permit them to see it, and the obstinacy of their will, that awful tyrant of man, which you cannot put over on God’s side and which you cannot subdue, and which will not resign nor abdicate -- that fierce, unsubdued tyrant of man, his will, so blinded and deceived them that they could not see in that lowly Man who was before them the veiled glory of the Godhead. Hence they say, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” Perfectly true; but He was God. But mark what the Lord says further. “But that ye may know” -- that ye may have the tangible, visible proof before you -- “that the Son of man” -- that title, “Son of man” is connected with the place He was pleased to take as becoming a man here in this world -- “that the Son of man hath power on earth” -- wonderful words these are -- “to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go into thine house.” And “immediately” -- you get not merely forgiveness, but healing for his body, and power; you get forgiveness, healing, and power, all combined here, “Son, thy sins are forgiven,” “take up thy bed” -- healing; “go into
the lowest class of society, the publicans and sinners. How Master according to His own heart, than to bring together the Levi says, as it were, Well, I could not get together a entertain people suitably to what we know of them; and so responding to that call? No, what I admire is said unto him, Follow me." Do you think I thank that man for Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom, and see here. And mark what He says: "As he passed by, he saw it speaks of His grace; and how well that man read the heart tax gatherer must have had of Jesus Christ when He in such a company as that, and the knowledge that this Roman reformer, that Jesus Christ received the devil's outcasts. is not too bad for me. It was a saying of Luther's, the great grace. "Follow me," He says to one esteemed as a doors broken up and be let down into the midst before Jesus, it is not like a man that had to be borne forth, and have the roof in his weakness and feebleness, but here is the case of a man who was engaged in the most detestable of all occupations amongst the Jews, and therefore would be looked upon as a man that had lost his character. He is a publican, the tax gatherer, the levier or farmer of the Roman tax. And Jesus passed by and called him. What a comfort that is to our hearts, to think that Jesus Christ calls disreputable people. What a comfort for you and me to-night, beloved friends; disreputable characters, people without name, are welcome to Him! And not only that, but He actually calls them, as you see here. And mark what He says: "As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me." Do you think I thank that man for going after Him? I do not. Do you think I admire Levi for responding to that call? No, what I admire is the grace that called him, the kindness that could look upon him and say, He is not too bad for me. It was a saying of Luther's, the great reformer, that Jesus Christ received the devil's outcasts. Thank God, He did; it marks the exceeding riches of His grace. "Follow me," He says to one esteemed as a disreputable man engaged in a detestable occupation. Do let our hearts just drink in the sense of grace that is in that.

And not only so, but look how He proceeds further in it, because a little while afterwards we find Him actually sitting down in company with publicans and sinners. I do not know anything more sweet than to see the combination set forth here between the grace of Christ that would accept hospitality in such a company as that, and the knowledge that this Roman tax gatherer must have had of Jesus Christ when He entertained Him suitably to that knowledge. You know we entertain people suitably to what we know of them; and so Levi says, as it were, Well, I could not get together a company with which to entertain more suitably this blessed Master according to His own heart, than to bring together the very lowest class of society, the publicans and sinners. How it speaks of His grace; and how well that man read the heart of Jesus Christ; how he had profited by all the grace that shone in Him. How precious are those words that we often were blessed in hearing from a tongue that is silent now, "there was not a grace in God that He did not bring down into man, and there was not a sorrow in man that He did not take up into God." He brought every grace in God down into man; He took every sorrow in man up into God. O how blessed to think of that, and how blessed to see the effect of it upon hearts where it entered in and abode!

And mark this, too, a moment more; now you have the devil's congregation. The devil always has his congregation, and here it is. What do they say? Now mark it well, I beseech of you. First of all, they hurl the charge of blasphemy at Himself, and now they seek to undermine the authority of Jesus Christ with His disciples. These are very sad yet instructive ways of evil for us to get before our thoughts. These wretched scribes and self-righteous Pharisees, these proud sticklers for the law, actually now in an underhand way attempt to undermine the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ with His disciples. And I believe, beloved friends, all mischief more or less is underhand; spite and malice and hatred are all underhand, crawling things; and that is what you find here. They come to the disciples, and they say to them, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" That is an insinuation, designed to cast a slur upon the authority of Christ with His own disciples. His answer is perfectly lovely. He says, "They that are whole have no need of the physician." It is beautiful that He should apply that word to Himself. I think that there is a reference there, which you can search out at your leisure, to a verse in the fifth and sixth chapters of the prophecy of Hosea, and that it was in the Lord's mind, too where it is said of Ephraim that Ephraim was conscious of his wounds and of his sores, but that he flew to other resources except to God; and then when God wrought upon Ephraim's soul, according to the first verse of Hos. 6, they say, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us." And I believe the Lord had that prophecy with regard to Israel in His mind, and that He applied this word to Himself, "They that be whole have no need of the physician." It is the sick man that needs the physician; it is the man that is sick in soul that needs the great Physician of souls; it is the man that is diseased, that has got festering wounds and sores, either in his body or else in his soul, that needs the great Physician. "They that be whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And how welcome that must have fallen on the hearts and ears of poor things that were there. If there was a weary, broken, miserable heart, just think of what that must have brought to it. Think of the warmth and comfort and cheer those words must have brought to a poor, disconsolate one. Beloved friends, I know I am speaking to saints of God here to-night; but believe me, we need that too for our poor hearts, just as much as poor, wretched creatures out in this world need the grace of Christ. Do you think saints do not need the grace of Christ? It is just the very thing they stand in need of. And I will give you a touching little illustration that came before me
a short time ago, which will help to show the blessedness and kindness and goodness that were in that heart, that made every poor, needy thing welcome. I believe it is an ascertained fact, and naturalists will tell you so, that sometimes in the state of the atmosphere in storms, small birds are driven very far out to sea, and get out of their reckoning altogether, and almost lose themselves. It is related by a traveler, who was crossing the ocean, that on one occasion, after a very severe storm, there was a little lark seen hovering over the vessel, as if weary and worn out and longing to descend and rest itself, but seemed too afraid. At last, through sheer fatigue, the little creature did alight upon the deck of the vessel, and was in such a state of emaciation through fatigue and hardship that it was easily captured. But when this little bird was in the warm, kind, gentle hand that grasped it, the poor little thing, after a moment or two, began to enjoy the warmth of that hand, and sat down upon it, and got its poor little frozen feet under its feathers, and looked about with its sharp eye without the smallest fear. And there is a hand, my brother and sister, that you may go into tonight, in the fatigue and weariness and sorrow and trial of your heart; and there is a warmth, a tenderness, a gentleness in that hand; and not only that, but there is a protection too. It is the very figure that He uses Himself. He says, “I give unto them eternal life” -- what a precious gift that was -- “and they shall never perish, neither shall any” -- it is not any man, but neither devil nor man -- “neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

The Lord in His infinite grace just give our hearts to take the color of this grace, first of all to enjoy it for ourselves, and secondly, to remember His own words -- and I leave them with you -- “Go and do thou likewise,” for His name’s sake.

Chapter 6

The Cure and the Call

Mark 3

I am anxious, beloved friends, to bring before you this evening the two subjects which go to make up this chapter, the cure of the withered hand and the call of Christ’s chosen witnesses. They are very different subjects, but still they are both found in the chapter, and there is a kind of connection between the two. I name them in that way, because, with the Lord’s help, it may enable us to grasp a little better, perhaps, the order of the truths that connect themselves with both these subjects.

And first as to this cure. In the gracious ministry of the Lord, and in His gracious works of kindness and mercy here in this world, it came in, in connection with the dispute in the end of the previous chapter about the Sabbath. Now we need not enter into the question at this moment with regard to the Sabbath; but this you will find closely connected with it, that Christ’s rest -- shall I say His Sabbath? for Sabbath is rest -- Christ’s rest in this world was in works of mercy; in the gratification of the love and goodness of His heart He found His rest in a world of sin. God grant that you and I may find our rest in that way. And that is true rest, that is to say, where there is divine love. You remember how He said, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” I wish I could press that home upon my brethren here to-night: “I work.” I am afraid, beloved brethren, that too often we are more disposed, and have a greater tendency and proclivity, and find it a greater attraction, to reason and speculate and argue and hair-split than to work. “I work.” And you will find how that marked in a very peculiar way all the blessed grace and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. It was the activity of divine love in a world of evil and sin; and therefore this case, you see, was peculiarly suited to that disposition, while it was also suited to the purpose of the scribes and Pharisees, who were the legalists and Judaizers of that day, and who would be glad to stand for the Sabbath and all that was connected with the Sabbath in that way, but who had no feeling for misery and wretchedness in a right way in this world such as Christ had. And hence this case fell in exactly to the point; and not only was it apparently a seasonable case for them, but it was the very case for Him. And I think that is one of the instances in which you find how opposite principles come out so constantly in the characters and persons that are shown to us in scripture. He found in this poor helpless man with the withered hand the very case wherein to show the mercy and goodness and love of His heart. They found in the same case the very one that suited them -- mark the words here -- “that they might accuse him.” They caviled oftentimes, and when they wearied in caviling then they gathered up fresh strength for accusation. That is what we find here; “they watched him.” The word “watched” is a very peculiar word; it is a strong word, implying hatred, purposed malice, intent on malice, hostility of the deadliest nature against Him -- “they watched him.” Now it is a wonderful thing when you think of it; here were they, positively assured that the Lord was about to work this work of mercy, because their whole plot was founded on that knowledge; they knew He had the power to heal; they knew He was about to do that which showed that God had come down in lowly grace in His Person into this world, and they, in their malice and in the hatred of their hearts, desired for their wicked intent, the cure of that man, that the mercy of Jesus was about to bestow upon him. Now can you imagine anything like it? They wanted him to be healed, they wanted that work of mercy to be wrought. For what purpose? In order that they might have a handle, in the maliciousness and hatred of their hearts, to level an accusation against the Lord of life and glory. That is the scene that is brought before us in the opening verses of this chapter.

It is a very remarkable thing to see how you find certain touches in scripture in the description of cases that came before the Lord. This is an instance in point. Luke, for example, when he speaks of this case, says the man’s “right hand” was withered; Mark simply speaks of “a man with a withered hand.”

Now, beloved friends, it is a great thing just to catch these little differences that we constantly find in the accounts given us in the gospel history. Why does Mark simply relate
the fact, while Luke goes into the details? I believe for this reason: that first of all, the right hand being withered made the object of misery, so to speak, more apparent. A man denuded of the power of his right hand would be far more helpless than a man who simply had not the use of his left hand; his right hand was that which spoke of power, and of the ability that belongs peculiarly and specially to the man. Therefore in the gospel which presents the Lord Jesus Christ to us in His human nature, and in all the tenderness and goodness and love of it, the objects that arrested His compassion and pity are always presented in the extreme; and the detail, which would not come into Mark at all, or serve the purpose of Mark, is in the Gospel of Luke. Further, I have no doubt that Luke, having been himself a physician, would be led by the Holy Ghost thus to describe the case. And therefore he adds, “Whose right hand was withered.” But I put first the chief, and before all, the fact that the misery and wretchedness and helplessness and need are brought out stronger in the Gospel of Luke, where the kindness and goodness and compassion of the man Christ Jesus are set before us at every turn. Now it is a great thing for us to notice all these little points and features in the ministry and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; because we thus get to know Him in His service by grace, and we get a little into His blessed company when we watch Him in the details of His beautiful shining path and ways of mercy in this world. Now we read that “they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse him”; and He, knowing what was in their hearts, knowing the movements and motions of their minds and souls, He who was the searcher of all hearts, and knew exactly what passed within every breast, anticipates their malice and puts this question to them, whether it was right to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy on the Sabbath day. You will observe the skill, in grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ in all this; and you will observe more, how nothing turned Him aside from His wonderful works of mercy and goodness here. The cavils of His enemies, the danger even (as we speak of it) that beset Himself, He was regardless of, nothing turned Him aside; if the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes of that day hated mercy and goodness in Him, if He was exposed to malice and hatred at the hands of men so that they sought to stone Him and lay hands upon Him, yet nothing turned Christ aside from ways of kindness and works of mercy in this poor dark scene. I do not know anything that speaks to our hearts in such intense distinctness as this. Alas! that we are so selfish; it seems to me to take so little to turn people aside from the path of service for Christ and for God; a little fatigue, a little pressure upon one’s poor body, a little of what people call over-doing it, and see how very quickly the whole thing is given up. I feel greatly touched when I see in the gospel this peculiar feature of the service of that blessed One who was the pattern servant, the chiefest of servants here, how that nothing stayed Him. I see His unwearied path pressing on through everything; neither fatigue, nor cavil, nor malice, nor scorn, nor danger, ever hindered Him from His works of mercy; and so you find it everywhere.

Now just look for a moment at the method of the cure, the kind of way in which the cure is effected. First of all, He says to the man, “Stand forth.” That is a very important word, “stand forth,” because the great thing is to have the object of helplessness and need plainly apparent before every eye. I have no doubt that was the Savior’s object in bringing this man forward so that every eye should rest upon the helplessness. That poor, helpless, impoverished man had lost the use of that which so peculiarly belongs to man, and is so characteristically his power, that the right hand becomes the emblem of, and is constantly used in scripture for, power and ability, and favor too. The very place that He is occupying tonight “at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens,” “being by the right hand of God exalted,” speaks to us of the favor and power and might that has taken the Savior from this world, and set Him there before His God: and this man with the right hand withered was to be seen by every one as an object who was in his own condition and circumstances perfectly powerless, so that every eye should form its own conceptions of the dire need that was there before Christ. “Stand forth.” And he stands forth, and then He puts this question that I have already spoken of, this searching question that goes down to the very depths of conscience. Because there is conscience there; that conscience which man acquired as a fallen being; it was conscience under the searching word and power of Christ that compelled those men to be silent. What could they say? Their own consciences, in the presence of that word, were obliged to bear witness to the truth that He pressed. There is a silence of conscience that is far more expressive than the most loud-sounding voice, the silence of a conscience that is arrested by the word of God, arrested by the word of Christ, laid hold of by that power that searches men through and through. Oh! dear friends, there is something in this silence -- shall I call it the sullen silence -- of a conscience that cannot stand the piercing power of the Savior’s words. They hold their peace; and then in this silence, when conscience is obliged to give that tacit witness to the truth (and He was “the truth” there before them), He says to the man (and I call your special attention to this for a moment), “Stretch forth thine hand.” Do you observe that there was no touch, no burden to be laid down there by the man, there was no claim upon him, so to speak, to alter anything; the Lord did not anoint this man’s hand as He anointed the blind man’s eyes in John 9 with the clay which His own spittle had moistened, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam: that scene has its own beauty and its own moral characteristics in its place in John; here we read of no work, no touch, no burden laid down, no clay applied, no remedy used. What is it? “He spake and it was done.” There is nothing that so beautifully and wonderfully brings out the power of the great Servant like that word, “Stretch forth thine hand.” The whole power is in that word, “Stretch forth thine hand.” What I press upon my beloved brethren tonight is, it was a word of power; there was power in that “Stretch forth” that relaxed the muscles and freed that limb from its atrophy; that “Stretch forth” was exactly the very opposite to his condition; it was the very thing the man could not do of
himself; his powerlessness to stretch forth his hand marked exactly the phase and condition he was in; and therefore, as I said before, the Lord’s words were words of power, and those words -- not works -- of power, accomplished the whole thing. It would be simply impossible for that man not to stretch forth his hand; that is the point wherein the truth lies. And I look upon all the speculations that sometimes have been crowded around cases of this kind in scripture as mere idle, shallow perversions of the truth. Sometimes, you know, they say that the man stretched forth his hand and joined his faith with the word of Christ. I believe the simple word accomplished everything. I should like to know what there was that joined its faith with this word, “Let light be; and light was.” It is the simple fiat of the great Creator, that is what it was; it is the simple word of the One who can speak and the thing is done. You know it is exactly the opposite with men; it matters not how great a man may be, or how small a man may be (though I suppose very few men are small in their own estimation), but you will always find that what characterizes man as such is a great ado, a certain amount of noise and trumpet blowing; attention must be called to his acts. I was struck the other day in reading the account of the cure of Naaman the Syrian, how clearly that comes out. The word of God, through the prophet Elisha, to him was, Go, wash seven times in Jordan, and your flesh shall come again as the flesh of a little child, and you shall be clean. And the great captain was exceedingly enraged. I thought, he says, that he would surely come out, and would have passed his hand over the place, and recovered the leper: I thought he would have done something in keeping with the dignity of the person that is come to him for cure: I thought he would have accomplished something in keeping with all that is supposed to go along with the wonder-working power of a great man, that there would be the externals to mark the thing. You never find that with Christ, beloved friends; that is what marks man in his littleness, his emptiness, his bloated vanity. But where there is divine power it is silent, noiseless, mighty; “Stretch forth thine hand.” How blessed it is to think of it. I will show you where faith took that up if you like, and faith in a poor Gentile, too. You remember the case of the centurion: “Lord,” he says, “I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.” May God grant us a little more of that kind of faith, lowly faith, self-emptied faith, the absence of that wretched, miserably small self esteem that so settles upon us oftentimes, and is in very truth contemptible in its littleness -- “neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” What does the Lord say? “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” There is where the faith came in; there was faith that recognized the mighty power of Jesus as God, and knew it was not necessary for Him to come down to the house, and felt he was not worthy to entertain the Savior under his roof; but all that was needed was a word, “Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.” You have the principle of that here, too, hence the Lord says, “Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other.”

Now note the effect of this cure. The effect of it is increased malice, increased hatred of Christ, showing itself in these wretched enemies, these hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, in their attempt now to plot. Notice these things, beloved friends, they always go together; cavil, accusation, scheming, and plotting. Wherever you find them they are deeds of darkness, and the devil’s hand is behind the scene. Look at the kind of plotting it is; and I beseech my brethren’s earnest attention to it for a moment. They “took counsel with the Herodians.” The Herodians were the ancestral enemies of the Jews; of all people that were opposed to each other were the Jews and the Herodians; but they would go down to their own enemies, the people that were positively against them, the people that they had the greatest hatred towards and the greatest possible dislike and fear of, they actually put their heads together and shake hands with them, so to speak. Just as Herod and Pontius Pilate did over the murder of Jesus Christ, so scribes and Pharisees are prepared to amalgamate and shake hands with the Herodians, that they might destroy Jesus. How one sees that awful principle in the world to-day! If there is anything to be done against the truth, and against Christ, and against the testimony of God and the word of God, the most opposite people will shake hands over it together, and merge their common differences, to blot out and obliterate the truth. And it is very interesting, though solemn, to remember this, that it was a Herod who sought to get information from the wise men when the infant King of the Jews was born into this world; and the very spirit that struck at His cradle in that day is revived here in this scene that we are looking at in this scripture. The same principle that sought to slay Him when He was born, is ready now to assert its malignity and hatred against Him in His deeds and acts of mercy. That is how the Herodians were called in. I believe they were far more a political sect of that day than a religious sect; I believe, indeed, that they were, characteristically political; but at any rate, they are just at the hand of these scribes and Pharisees to plot together with them, in order to destroy Jesus.

Now, beloved, that is the effect of mercy upon a wicked man; there is nothing that brings out sin like grace; there is nothing that stirs up the hatred of the devil or the hatred of the votaries and slaves of Satan more than the mercy and goodness and character and nature of God exhibited in this world. Hence, though there was this cure, though this poor man was relieved, though that withered hand was restored, and the man had the use of it now, and from being powerless has now got that which specially belongs to man in his strength, still nothing will stay and nothing will stop the awful malice and hatred of men against Christ, and His truth and ways of mercy here.

And there is another little word which I think very instructive and very blessed for us. When this plot is sought
to be entered into and this combination is on the eve of being made, it says, “The Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him how they might destroy him. **But Jesus withdrew himself.**” I think there is something so blessed and so exceedingly touching to the heart to observe the ways of the blessed Lord, even when He was thwarted in His works of mercy in this world. It brings to one’s mind the beautiful words of the prophet about Him, “He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets.” He was Lord of all; true, He had become a servant, He had taken human form and become a man; yet He was Lord of all. If ever there was one who might have asserted His power to hold His position in acts and works of mercy, it was Jesus Christ: if ever there was one who we might think was called upon to defeat every opposition to Him that this gracious ministry might not be impeded in the midst of Israel, it was Jesus Christ. But you never find that, beloved friends; He always withdrew, He never strove. May God help us to learn a lesson from that; may God, in His infinite grace, give us to take in that word (it is a blessed word), “The bondsman of the Lord must not strive.” That is a great word, my beloved brethren, servants of our Lord Jesus Christ here to-night; God help us to remember it: “The bondsman of the Lord must not strive, but be patient to all.” It is very easy to be patient to a person who does not make much demand on you; it is very easy to be patient when everything is going smoothly; but, oh! not to strive even when you think things are crooked, and even where you think things might be better. How blessed to know that there is One who has it all His own way, and always has and will have the last word. How blessed just to be able to leave things. I mourn in my soul that some of us act as if God was not able to order things without us: I cannot help feeling it when I see the way things are done sometimes; it looks as if God wanted us to help Him to carry out His purposes. But where there is faith in the living God, that His eye and hand are over all -- not merely where you have all correct at the back of your head; I do not count anything faith if you are not prepared to act upon it; it is credence; but faith acts; that is the difference between mere credence and faith -- but where a person has faith in the word of God, he says, I am going to act that out, by God’s help and grace. And how are you going to act it out? “I am seeking grace to be patient, I am going to leave things with God”; and He will settle them a great deal better than you can. You may think it is a platitude, but it looks sometimes as if we did not think so; I suppose no one would dare to say so, but do we practice it, that is the point? I leave that with you, note it well how in the ways of the Lord Jesus in His service, “He withdrew Himself.”

Having explained the cure as far as I can see it, and drawn some lessons from it, I desire to ask you before I enter on the second subject, whether you have thought about the spiritual meaning of this man with the withered hand. Here was a case of healing and cure and mercy bestowed by the Lord upon the earth; but is there not a spiritual meaning, a deep spiritual lesson, lying couched in the fact that this man’s hand was withered? Now I believe that it does point, in a very peculiar way, to service. And I not only say that with regard to the subject itself, but it is entirely in keeping with this gospel, the gospel of service. I think it is striking that it should be the hand; we have seen that there is every phase; we have had before us the leprosy and the fever, now we get the hand. And is it not true (oh! will you not bear with me if I speak a little more strongly and earnestly), that some of God’s people are perfectly paralyzed as to Christian service? Is it not true that there are withered hands amongst us? Would to God that there were more withered tongues! but O to have the hand untied. It speaks to me so loudly and so distinctly with regard to positive acts of mercy and goodness for Christ, labor for Christ, zeal for Christ, energy for Christ. Why the fact is -- there can be no question or doubt about it -- there are numbers of people who do not even seem to have a passing thought that Christ has something for them to do! And that is just how I look at this withered hand: it speaks to me of the perfect paralysis, of the positive spiritual atrophy, that I see in too many with regard to service for our Lord Jesus Christ in this day. And I see no cure for it except the cure that is here; that is to say, we must be assured, have to do with Christ to get that order of things rectified. No one can possibly release from the paralysis of the hand in service, to the bounty and goodness of that hand in dispensing God’s favor and mercy here in this world, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And we must be ready -- and I put it to my beloved brethren here to-night as to whether we are ready -- for Him to say, “Stand forth.” Are you ready that it should be perfectly plain that you have been, so to speak, a poor spiritual idler, as far as the service of Christ in this world is concerned, selfishly thinking of your own interests, and talking about them, and not one thought of showing that mercy which you profess has flowed into yourselves? Are you ready for Him to say “Stand forth”? It must be perfectly patent and plain before all, first as to the disease, and then as to the blessed cure. You remember that word from His own lips, “Stretch forth thine hand”; and oh! my brothers, do not be unwilling for Him to say that to you: then only you will go and stretch forth your hand to the needy and to the miserable and lost and destitute; and you will stretch it out, filled with the grace and kindness of Christ, and remembering this word, “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” Bear well in mind that is not money only. I remember long ago one used to think it applied only to money, and how one used to treat that passage, too, whenever there was need to beg. But it is a different thing entirely from that; it is the whole range of Christian service first to Christ and then to all under Him, seeking to do the best you can; as He said of the woman, “She hath done what she could.” What a wonderful thing! May God in His infinite grace give our hearts to desire He should say that to us, Well, it is not very much, but you have done what you could.

Now look for a moment more at the second subject, this call of the chosen witnesses. And the first thing in it I ask your attention to is the place where the call is heard. I do not think it is without reason that we are told He went up into a
mountain; because, beloved friends, that points to the fact that ministry comes from above, and is not in any sense from men. That is the first great thing, ministry according to God comes from above. “He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would.” Not only that, but look at the sovereignty of it; it was “whom he would.” I do not dwell upon it to-night, because time would not permit; but I believe there was what we might call a double election; “He called to him whom he would,” and they responded to the call; how could they help it? All that He called answered, and out of those whom His sovereign grace had thus brought around Himself, He chose twelve, He elected twelve. Now that is exceedingly instructive for our hearts; it is an immense comfort that whilst on the one hand we positively refuse, and I trust we always will tenaciously and stoutly refuse to own any source of ministry except the ascended glorified Christ, yet on the other hand He calls as His servants whom He will. I believe it is a great thing to hold this fast, namely, that there is no other source of ministry in this world except what comes from the ascended, glorified Christ, Head over all things to the church His body. Now do not think for a moment that I am extreme in that statement; I hold that there are servants of Christ, called by Him, gifted by Him, and sent by Him, too, scattered up and down in all the sad disunion and ramifications of Christendom: I have learnt through grace and I trust I shall always hold it fast, that the gifts are in the whole church, and not in part; that God is pleased in the sovereignty of His grace and goodness to work where and how and by whom He wills. Still, I also know how spoiled and deficient as to the prime thought of Christ is their service and ministry, by reason of their position. My business and your business, beloved friends, is to be sure that our feet are treading in the path that He has marked out for us; but it is a great thing to keep the balance of truth and not to be one-sided, and not to exaggerate on the one hand, or come short on the other. It is a great thing to maintain the largeness and width of divine truth in our souls whilst walking in the narrow path. I see then that He calls to Him whom He will; and I believe He does so now, that He has His servants scattered up and down through this world. Alas! how many of them are not in their true place according to scripture, but they are His servants for all that, and let us take care how we interfere with them. When we speak of ministry in that way, it is a great thing that we should plainly apprehend and understand the distinction between ministry in its intense individuality, and the assembly with its collective privileges and duties. The two things are quite distinct; there is no such thing according to scripture as a servant of Christ who is little better than a slave of what they call a church or an assembly or a meeting. All that is man’s invention and to be refused. I quite admit that Christ’s servants are amenable to the discipline and the order of the house of God; but for direction as to where they go, or when they go, or to whom they go, they are individually and only responsible to their Master and their Lord.

Now all that comes before us here in the fact that He went up into a mountain; it points, as I have said, to the divine source of ministry. And there is a beautiful little touch in connection with the call; it says, “He appointed twelve.” “Ordained” is the word used here in the Authorized Version {KJV} of the scriptures; in reality there is no such thought as “ordained,” as men now say, at all in it; “appointed” is the force of the word. I have no objection whatever to the word “ordained,” provided it is used in true sense. “He appointed twelve, that they might be with him”; that is what I want our hearts to take in; it is so blessed to know “that they might be with him.” Oh! beloved brothers here to-night, those who through grace can put their hands upon their heart and say, I trust the Lord has called me to the ministry, and sent me to minister for Him, think of this; first, “with him.” Let us never forget that. In this lies the power of all service, and in this as well is the savor of all service; this is where the joy of service is; “with him.” “He appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them.” Mark the order, for it is most important; first, “with him.” What rest and peace! How could one oftentimes ever go forth to others if one were not first with Him? Ah! and most with Him, too. Beloved friends, you may depend upon it that when ministry, however earnest, however assiduous, however constant, however unflagging and untiring it may be — I say, when ministry to others outstrips and outsteps “with him”; it has lost its savor, and its power, and its real effect and influence. May God help us to keep that clear. “He appointed twelve, that they might be with him.” It speaks of communion, of intimacy, of intercourse, of divine and heavenly familiarity, of nearness; of all that is bound up in these precious words, “with him.”

And then, observe, “That he might send them.” Now that is a great thing; we must through grace be able in our ministry to prove that we are sent. “How shall they preach except they be sent?” I do not believe in any being self-sent. I do not believe in self-constituted servants; I think all that kind of thing is just as bad, if not worse, than people-made ministers.

I think one of the most miserable beings in this world is a man-made minister; but I think it a far more miserable thing for a man to hold no commission save from himself; I believe that is the worst of all — it is consecrated self-will. But we must have this, “He sent them.” And when I speak of that, I am not speaking of it simply because of the words, but I delight to think that this is exactly the character He took Himself in this world; it is precisely what He continually said with regard to His service here. I did not come of Myself, He says, blessed Lord of life and glory though He was: “Neither came I of my-self, but he sent me.” “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is by interpretation, Sent.” “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” How blessed that is! The Lord Jesus in His service and ministry exhibited that very character here below, and His servants must exhibit the same. Hence it says, He sent them forth to preach. He did give them power to work miracles, and power over demons, but their great service and great work was preaching: He sent them forth to preach. The word that is used for preaching here is a word that implies preaching as a herald. You can preach as an evangelist, you can preach as a herald, or you can speak in a kind of conversational way, and thus convey the mind of Christ; but here it is the herald; they were to be heralds of grace and the heralds of His glad tidings.

And then we get their names. I do not dwell upon that now, but what I am struck with in their names is this, that they
were men of every conceivable kind of natural characteristic, and there were not two alike. They were simple men that were away from all the prejudices and passions of men; they were humble men, men that led a homely life, most of them Galilean fishermen. The more one thinks of whom He surrounded Himself with as servants of His own pleasure and choice, the character and kind of persons they were, the more one’s heart is struck with the beauty of it all. There is nothing so blinding as prejudice; they were free from that. I was struck with what I was reading only this very day, namely, that in the seventeenth century Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood; there is not a man in his senses at the present moment who would deny it, but there was not a physician forty years of age that believed it at that time. Why? Under the blinding power of prejudice; and if that has such a wonderful effect in things terrestrial and secular, we know to our cost how perverting and darkening and deluding it is in things spiritual. You might as well try to get sense into a wall as try to get a truth of God into a mind that is darkened with prejudice. Now what I notice is that these men were simple men, and the first men to whom the message of mercy and greatness and goodness in this world was made known were “shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.” Dear men these were, apart from all the ways of the city that man made, and lovers of the country that God made. So here were these Galilean fishermen, simple, humble men in life. These are the chosen disciples and the chosen witnesses to accompany the Lord of life and glory in His service in this world. O that we may learn to admire His blessed words, and to adore Him for His blessed ways.

I must say in closing one little word more, and then I will return to it, if the Lord permit, next week. You find how little man understands -- friends and enemies are all alike in misunderstanding -- the ways of Christ. You find here that His friends actually thought Him beside Himself. Blind nature, that it may come out in us practically to His praise and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 7
The Sower And The Rester
Mark 4:1-23; 35-41

I am anxious, beloved friends, to bring before you a little this evening the blessed Lord in both these scenes here. In the first part He is the unceasingly laborious Sower of the word; in the last part He is the weary, resting man. You find Him perfect in both positions. It is very striking to see Him setting forth the new place that He had taken Himself consequent upon the breaking off of all earthly relationships with His own people, and no longer looking for seed or fruit in this world from men, but now Himself sowing it to produce fruit by His doctrine and teaching in this world; and as we have noticed in the other scenes of His blessed ministry and service that we have looked at, sowing it assiduously, unweariedly, in acts of mercy and ways of goodness on every side. Then in the close of the chapter we see Him, I have no doubt, seeking for rest and repose as far as His blessed frame and body was concerned. He says to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” I have a little word to say as to what I am assured is a deep moral and spiritual lesson in it for us, but still the fact was that for Himself, as a man, he would rest. I am speaking of Him now as the servant; He was wearied with His journey, as we know He was when He sat on Jacob’s well. He proposes to them to go across to the eastern shore of the lake. We will, by God’s help, look a little afterwards at the circumstances with regard to the storm, how it found Him and how it found them.

First of all, with regard to the seed-sowing. Notice the way it is introduced; it is the first beginning of His ministry in parables. What we have had before us up to the present have been works of mercy, ministry in acts rather than in preaching, though there was preaching as well, there was also teaching; but still, for the most part, what we have been considering these weeks past have been works and acts of mercy in which His goodness was displayed. But here now you have, more properly speaking, ministry itself, and ministry after a peculiar form, even after a parabolic method; He is teaching by parables. I think there was an especial reason for His doing that. First of all, as the opposition to Him in His service is increased (for we find it increasing as we go on in the gospel), as this opposition was growing on every hand, and the hatred and dislike of His enemies met Him more at every turn, He has recourse in the wisdom and blessed knowledge of His own mind, to this method of imparting instruction in the face of the opposition. Also, I have no doubt at all, it was the governmental dealing of God with a people who had always rejected the plain words and plain truth that had been set before them both by His forerunner and Himself. Hence this passage quoted from Isa. 6 is a very solemn passage; He gave it as the reason why He taught them in parables; He expounded them to
the disciples, but He taught the people in parables: “That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand.” That is to say, there was, in the manner of instruction, and in the mode of conveying the doctrine, as far as the people were concerned, a judicial dealing with them. The people had positively refused Him. You must remember that His forerunner had set Him forth in the plainest way, and His own acts and works of mercy declared distinctly who He was, and yet He was rejected; and as we saw last week, He rejects and breaks off all associations with His own people after the flesh. He says, “Who is my mother and my brethren? And He looked round about on them that sat about him and said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother.” That is to say, He recognizes in a self-willed generation and in a self-willed time, when all minds passed over to their own way -- He recognizes, I say, as in the dearest and tenderest ties to Him those who were governed by the will of God. Now, beloved friends, that is very blessed for our souls, even that He counts in the dearest and tenderest and nearest relationship to Himself in that way the one who by grace does His Father’s will. You can see at once how this opened distinctly the way for what we may call this new action here. He is not looking for anything from man; after that I should not expect that He would seek to find anything, even in Israel here. Now He takes this entirely new place; He is now the producer of what He would have; He is not seeking for it now, He is about to sow; He takes the place of Sower; He sows this seed, falling upon different soils, and with different effects.

He begins it with this: “Hearken.” And that is a word that is peculiar to Mark; you will not find it in the other gospels: “Hearken.” I believe He had a reason for using this word; first of all as a caution against anything like levity of mind with respect to the simplicity of the figure under which He would convey the most profound truth -- “Hearken” -- He has something to communicate which, perhaps, at first sight would be of little account to those who listened or heard, and therefore He would impress upon them the importance of what He is about to convey.

Then there is another word, and all these are important to notice -- “Behold.” I think that justifies the inference that has been drawn from it, that there was such a scene going on there under their very eyes, that is to say, there was a sower sowing his seed. The Lord was in the boat on the sea, and the people were on the land, and it is more than probable that there was such a scene before them there and then, for we know how often the Lord drew His parabolic instructions and lessons from things in nature as they passed before the eyes of those to whom He was communicating His mind. So it might be that there was within their sight a husbandman engaged in his field with his seed, and therefore the Lord says, “Hearken, behold, a sower went forth to sow.” Yet it is His own case; it is the place He has taken in this world.

But there is one other little word before we pass on which connects itself with that. We must remember, beloved friends, that the seed here is distinctly the word of God, the word is what is really sown, and sown broadcast; He preached the kingdom of God, His servants since have preached; but that was what was really sown here broadcast in this world. And that which makes it so very important, is, there is no expectation now from man at all, there is no looking that anything could now be produced even from Israel, which was the best specimen of humanity in this world; it must be now an entirely new and divine thing, that is, as it were, planted in this world. Hence you get seed, heavenly seed, if you so like to call it; because everything in that sense that really is for God in this world is heavenly, has come from heaven; you cannot get anything from man or from the earth, it must all come from above. And hence it is not only a new action, but there is an entirely new seed now which is about to be sown, which is the word of God: “the seed is the word of God” He tells us Himself when He interprets it.

Now we have the different classes, and I think you will notice three things in them. The first class is indifference; there was the wayside, and as the sower sowed, some of the seed fell by the wayside. The meaning of the wayside was the hard footpath that had been trodden down through the cultivated field, and which had become hard by the constant pressure of the feet upon it. Some seed fell upon this footpath and the fowls of the air came and devoured it: that is indifference, and that is what we see continually and constantly. But there are two things that are very momentous for us to take account of; there is not merely the badness and unprofitableness, so to speak, of the soil upon which the seed fell; not merely the sterility and hardness and barrenness of the soil, but there is a distinct power of the devil as well which acts here. You will observe the two things, the wayside and the fowls; and we must not forget that, because the blessed Lord when He interprets the parable tells us that the fowls really correspond to and set forth the evil influence of Satan, the devil, the adversary of God and men, the accuser of men too, the devil is watching and waiting at every moment to snatch away the seed that is sown. And, characteristic of this gospel of Mark, that word I have pointed out to you as so frequently occurring in it is here; “immediately.” When this seed falls on that soil there is nothing in the soil that is in kindred character to produce anything from that seed, but on the contrary it is the very place where Satan can come and “immediately” snatch the seed away. That is the indifference one continually finds with regard even to the truth of God in this world; we are confronted with it every day, a sort of callous, cold, hard, stoical indifference to the whole thing. There is a very remarkable illustration in the apostle Paul’s ministry of this “wayside”; I was struck with it in looking at it recently. Read at your leisure Acts 17, when the apostle was at Athens. What did he find at Athens? That they lived simply to cultivate some fantastic novelty for their mind, and to listen to and gather up some new thing, but there was the most absolute indifference with regard to truth. When the apostle pressed it upon them you remember what they said, “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.” And not only
that, but they mocked, and they were perfectly ready to defer the preacher of that gospel to another time. It was “the wayside.” The word was sown by the servant of God; it fell upon a surface trodden down by the feet of natural interests. That is what the wayside hearer is; it is a surface of mind that the feet of natural interests have trodden hard. That is what the Athenians were; the devil came and took away the precious seed at once, and there was nothing at all produced. What a word it is! And it is for us as Christians and believers in our Lord Jesus Christ to learn lessons from such a word as this. You see, beloved friends, what indifference leads to; we can see it, perhaps, a little more plainly in its wide general sense in the world; but the same thing, the very same principle, will work with us as regards the truth of God, that affects the worldling and unconverted person. If you get to be a wayside hearer, if you get a hard, stolid, stoical mind and heart, so that the word falls on it and produces nothing, but on the contrary is snatched away by Satan, you will find the very same thing in principle; you will find that there is a measure of indifference.

If you hang your hands down in slothful ease, if you simply give yourselves to this principle which has been promulgated to a very great extent of late, and which is considered to be a very good and just thing to press upon people, that you have nothing to do but just simply to open your ear in a sort of listless way and take the thing in, that there is to be no exercise of soul or heart, no subjective process in your heart by the Spirit of God, you become practically in principle wayside hearers of the truth of God. I do not say in fact, because of course in fact we are speaking of that which is outside; but the principle of it. If your heart is uncultivated, if there is no tenderness and softness of soil there, if it is merely trodden down by those feet that constantly pass over it every day, there is nothing to receive the seed; and not only that, but the devil is at hand; and mark this, the very best bit of truth that falls upon your heart, if it does not receive through God’s grace a lodgment there, and if it does not by His mighty power get a place in the soul, that is the very truth the devil will take from you. Therefore you find these two things (I am speaking now to saints for a moment, to try and draw lessons from this), there is the state of the mind and the state of the heart, and there is also the bird of prey that is ready to take the seed away. And I have often seen as you pass through the country, but here it is a hard surface or bed of rock, over which there is a slight coating of earth. And the Lord says in His parable, there is no depth of earth, there is no root. Look what happens; the seed falls there, and -- it is a very remarkable thing -- immediately it springs up. Now, beloved friends, we have often seen that; and we have to watch against that kind of thing. Immediately it springs up; that is to say, that the growth in the first instance is as rapid as the withering at the close. It springs up with a rapidity in proportion to the absence of depth. I daresay there may be a great deal of feeling about it, but it is only feeling; and there may be a great deal of sentiment connected with it, but it is only sentiment; the solemn point here is, that there was no depth of earth and no root. Now what is that, beloved friends? I believe firmly if there be any truth that needs pressing more earnestly than another upon our consciences and hearts it is this, that there must be a deep root in conscience, a work in conscience in our souls before God. Oftentimes you will find that people take up a thing for the delight and joy of it, and, as has often been said, give it up afterwards for the trouble it may bring; the conscience has never been penetrated and pierced through and through, it has never been pulverized by light. Conscience must be gripped and grasped by the light and truth of God; that is the way it enters in; if it does not enter in that way, it may perhaps affect a man in two other ways, both of which are profitless. If it enter in merely by the mind, it remains a cold, icy, powerless, unproductive, unprofitable thing; if it enter in merely by the feelings, that perhaps will express itself like the noisy pebbles of the brook, loud in proportion to its shallowness; there is a great noise made, but there is no depth of water. It must be deep down in the conscience, for in that is the root and foundation for all the truth of God; conscience is the avenue to the soul; there is no other way by which truth can really get into our souls except by the conscience; and therefore the first effect of the truth of God upon a person when it comes in divine power, is to make a person not glad, but greatly cast down, not to lift a person up or to elate him; it is not to make a man go about and say, What a beautiful
word this is, how lovely it is, how precious it is! and so forth. That is only vox et proeterea nihil -- a sound and nothing more. When the word and truth of God reaches our consciences in divine power it must judge us; the entrance in of light must find out the darkness that is there; we must be subdued by it. The stony ground hearer is exactly the opposite of all this; the whole thing is rapid; the process is rapid, growth is quick, externally it looks beautiful to an untutored and unpracticed eye; but mark the effect, “They have no root in themselves”; and observe the interpretation the blessed Lord gives of this, “These are they likewise which are sown on stony ground, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.” How often, beloved friends, if we take that out of the parabolic representation that is given of it there, how frequently have we found that principle working. It is not merely in regard to the truth in the world and the consciences and souls of men in the world, but how often have we found that working in ourselves. Perhaps there is somebody here to-night to whom this word comes, and fits them exactly. How often have I heard people say with regard to the truth of God, “Oh! I thought it was all so nice, it sounded so sweetly, it was indeed as a lovely sound and as one who can play well on an instrument, but now the whole thing is changed as to my judgment, and I give it all up.” Do you see the shallowness and emptiness of the way in which the truth -- any truth you like, whether truth about the church, or truth about Christ, or whatever else it may be -- the shallow way, I say, in which the truth has got hold of a person, the entire absence of all real root and depth of earth there? The consequence is, the moment trouble comes and there, how frequently have we found that principle working. The stony ground hearer brings before us; the shallowness, the emptiness, the rapid growth that so quickly passes away.

We have an illustration of it in the Epistle to the Galatians, as well as Paul’s ministry at Athens in Acts 17. I think his ministry in Galatia strikingly illustrates the stony ground hearer, and is it not quite evident that in Galatia there was very great exuberance of feeling and heart? Does he not say, “I bear you record that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.” They seem to have been perfectly entranced with the truth he brought before them; but now he is obliged to say, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another.” He says, as it were, You have given it up, or were on the eve of giving it up.

Now let us look at the third class here, that is, the thorns. In the thorns I see the effect of mixed motives. I believe the first is indifference, the second is shallowness, and the third mixed motives. “And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.” The Lord explained it in this way, “These are they which are sown among thorns, such as hear the word” -- now mark -- “and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” There is a double action in the thorns; there is the light-excluding power of the thorns, and there is the terrible grip which the thorn growing up has over the plant, so that it chokes it; it has neither light nor fruit. The light is excluded from the plant by the power of the thorn, and it is choked before it can produce fruit under the enormous tenacity and grip of the thorn upon it. Now mark what the Lord calls thorns when he takes this out of parable and puts it into reality for us. It is a very strong word that is used in the original for “cares,” the very strongest word that can be used; it means corroding, perplexing, care, and so to speak, would cut a man in two! I believe that is really the thought of it, “the cares of this world.” I want to press that earnestly upon hearts to-night; because you know we should all accept the other part of it, we should all say, “I know something about the deceitfulness of riches,” though we might like to have them for all that, and I quite believe there is a danger of the “lusts of other things” coming in; but I am quite sure many of us tonight might speak humbly before God about cares, for we know what it is to pass through terrible anxiety about cares till God in His infinite grace freed us from them. But there is nothing that has so destructive an effect upon a Christian as care, and for this reason, because we think in a kind of way, and reason to ourselves, that we have a right, and that it is correct and proper for us to have cares.
Now where have we learned that it is right and proper for us to have cares? Oh, the terrible pressure of anxiety and fretting and trouble and difficulty that too often settles down upon us, “the cares of this world” do indeed corrode. Have we not a Father in heaven whose heart delights that we should roll our burden upon Him? Is there not a bosom and a heart where if you put your head you can lose your care? Does not He invite us in the love of His heart really to cast the thing upon Him, really to roll it upon Him? As the apostle says, “Casting all your care upon him.” Why? In order to get free from it? No, but because “He careth for you.” “Be careful for nothing,” that is the same word.

Do you say, How? “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts.” It is these cares that wear people out, these anxieties that press upon us. And more than that, often it is not so much cares about the present, but cares about the future. How do you know that you will have that future? What right have we to talk about to-morrow? Than that, often it is not so much cares about the present, but understanding, shall keep your hearts.” It is these cares that are the same word.

Do you say, How? “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts.” It is these cares that wear people out, these anxieties that press upon us. And more than that, often it is not so much cares about the present, but cares about the future. How do you know that you will have that future? What right have we to talk about to-morrow? Look here, beloved friends, we oftentimes put before our minds a to-morrow with some sort of perplexing worry we have to meet, when today or to-night we might be with the Lord. It is not to-morrow and the burdens that we imagine, but it is to-day. How do you know to-morrow will ever come. Alas it is not only to-morrow, but we hear people constantly say, “I do not know what I shall do next year.” Why should we trouble ourselves as to next year? Rather let us hearken to what the scriptures bring before us, “Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him.” This is the proximate, immediate hope before us. We have to do with Him to-day, and He may be here before to-night. A person said not long since to me, “I did not think of that.” The Lord help us to think of it, how it disposes of all anticipations. May we not well dread about ourselves, and fear as to how far the truth and doctrines we assert are practical with us? For instance, this very truth of the Lord’s coming, that precious, blessed present living hope for our hearts. What is the value of our assertion of it in words, if by it we are not delivered out of this wretched, miserable, corroding care with regard to the future? If it were in our hearts in power I believe it would thus work. I say I may not be here, yet if I am here, and if the trouble is there, thank God, there is One whose heart is sufficient, whose tenderness is unbounded, whose power is unlimited, and whose grace knows no end and no let; and is He going to desert me?

I believe in my soul it is a simple question of our knowing Him, and knowing His heart, so that we can trust Him. To know Him is to trust Him. I see all that in connection with this word, “the cares of this world.” O my dear brother or sister, perhaps you have cares in your family, and cares in your household; beware that they do not press you down; do not let them be like the thorns that choke the living truth of the word of God in your soul. “The cares of this world.”

“The deceitfulness of riches” I need not dwell upon; but I remember being struck with the fact that cares are put here with these things, and put first, too: “The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in; choke the word and it becometh unfruitful.”

Now I think I see a very remarkable illustration of that, too, in the apostle’s ministry; I believe his ministry at Corinth was a perfect illustration of the thorns. If you make yourselves acquainted in detail with the circumstances of the assembly at Corinth, and with all the things that were there, you will see how striking it is. There they were at Corinth, setting up factions and rival teachers, as if they wanted to bring the schools into the church of God: one said he was of Paul, another said he was of Apollos, another said he was of Cephas, and most sad of all, another said he was of Christ. To make Christ the head of a party was disgusting and revolting in the extreme. Not only that, but they got drunk at the Lord’s supper; there was at Corinth immorality and drunkenness, faction and party spirit; and together with all that, when you come to the end of the epistle, you find that they were positively wrangling and disputing about the resurrection. If ever there was a thorny field it was Corinth; there was every sort of evil there, “the deceitfulness of riches,” “the lusts of other things” -- because lust was rampant at Corinth -- and there was the apostle’s word choked in that assembly, and it became unfruitful. God in His infinite mercy and grace wrought through His servant, and brought them to their bearings; but it is a striking illustration of the thorns. I think those three illustrations are most illustrative of those three conditions -- his ministry at Athens of the wayside hearers, his ministry in Galatia of the stony-ground hearers, and his ministry at Corinth of all that takes place in the thorns.

The Lord in His infinite grace give us to be exercised before Him, that we may not have the word choked. How many a one I have seen where alas! it is so. It is a most expressive phrase, “The word is choked, and it becomes unfruitful.”

Then we have the last, namely, they upon good ground. "Other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred." Then He gives the explanation of it, “These are they which are sown on good ground, such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit.” I need not dwell upon that, only this, that what marked those on the good ground was loyalty to the truth. Mark the three things that are said here, they heard, they received, and they brought forth; three very important realities. They heard; many a one hears; do you receive? They received, and then they brought forth fruit, that is to say, they practiced it: they heard it, they received it, they practiced it; some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred fold.

One little word more, and then we will look at the last scene. Why does this next illustration follow the parable of the sower? He says in v. 21: “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed? and not to be set on a
candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.” What is the meaning of that? Why should it come there? What connection has it with the sower? You observe how He passes from the similitude of the sower and seed and various kinds of soil to a lamp-stand or candle-stand, and He says, “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed?” I believe it was the custom amongst the Jews to have in each house one bushel and one bed. It comes in very strikingly, and to me it means not only has the Lord sown the seed in this world, but His intention is that it should shine, and that it should be openly seen and manifested here, so that the light of it should spread on every side. Hence He says, If you light a candle, you do not go and put it under a bed or under a bushel. I am afraid some of us are inclined to do that: what is wanted is that the light should be seen, that it should shine, that it should go out on all sides. If you light a candle, you do not put it under a bushel or under a bed, you put it on a lamp-stand, that all may see the light. I think it is most remarkable that that symbol and that figure should come in immediately after the sowing of the seed, indicating to us, that His truth is to be continued in this world as a light that everybody may see, and that it should shine out, blessed be God, through His people; through us, if it has got into us and that people should see it, and that it should not be hidden away, as it were, but brought out in open day, shining before men. How blessed to see the clear, bright light of truth shedding its own rays on all around. Oh that it may be so placed, as it were, on a lamp-stand, that it may give light to all that are in the house. I think that is the connection between the lamp-stand and the sower.

Now let us look for a little at the end of the chapter, because the varied glories of our dear and precious Master are so comforting to the heart to dwell upon. We come now to a different scene entirely. After all the instruction given by Him here, and after all His toil, He says a little word that has a great deal of comfort in it; He says to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Beloved friends, I believe He says that to us, and I do not believe there is any rest elsewhere but “the other side.” I believe this side is for toil and I would to God it was the other side. Oh! dear brethren, do we not want Him to say that to our hearts often? Our hearts are at times far more perturbed than even this lake; waves and winds are often there. How we need that He should say that to our poor wretched, troubled hearts; “Peace, be still.” Oh! dear brethren, do we not want Him to say that to our hearts often? Our hearts are at times far more perturbed than even this lake; waves and winds are often there. How we need that He should say that to our poor wretched, troubled hearts; “Peace, be still.” And there was a great calm.” Now I tell you what comes before me very much in this. There is something so divine, and supernatural and blessed in the scene; because after a storm at sea, you do not get a great calm at once; you know very well that after a storm of great violence has swept over the sea or the ocean, it takes often days before the sea or the channel or the ocean returns to its usual serenity; the water has to go down, as it were. But there was nothing of that here; it was a “great calm.” “Peace, be still.” And there was a great calm.”

Now observe what happens. (Of course I am taking the thing out of figure to press the great truth and reality upon you.) They crossed this lake, and as they crossed it a great storm arose. Mark how it found them; you get the contrast between Jesus and His disciples in a remarkable way here. There He is; it is a picture that causes the deepest homage and worship to spring up in the heart, to see that blessed, weary, lonely, perfect man asleep upon a pillow. Oh! to think of it, beloved friends, the perfection of the God man in His manhood glory! He was asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship; no storm could disturb Him. No waves and no wind could wake Him out of His sleep: He rested there in the perfection and blessedness of all He was. Now let us look at them! They were in a panic -- that is the word I feel which describes them -- a perfect panic. Of all the dreadful things in this world is a panic: may we be kept from panic. The panic that some people raise is ten thousand times worse than the trouble that caused it; the panic-stricken condition in which we find the children of God about things, is far worse than the danger which is dreaded as ahead. The disciples then are in a panic, and they come and rudely and roughly awake Him out of His sleep, and with what I believe must have touched and wounded His heart to its very depths, “Master” -- (Luke repeats it in a very striking way, “Master, master”) -- “Master, carest thou not that we perish? Then He arose, and rebuked the wind.” Now look at the contrast, from a “great storm” there was a “great calm”; you get the two “greats,” a great storm and a great calm. “Peace, be still.” Oh! dear brethren, do we not want Him to say that to our hearts often? Our hearts are at times far more perturbed than even this lake; waves and winds are often there. How we need that He should say that to our poor wretched, troubled hearts; “Peace, be still.” And there was a great calm.” Now I tell you what comes before me very much in this. There is something so divine, and supernatural and blessed in the scene; because after a storm at sea, you do not get a great calm at once; you know very well that after a storm of great violence has swept over the sea or the ocean, it takes often days before the sea or the channel or the ocean returns to its usual serenity; the water has to go down, as it were. But there was nothing of that here; it was a “great calm.”

Look at them for a moment more. They are full of astonishment: they might have worshiped, but they are astonished; instead of being worshipers, they are confounded; they fear. Is it not a wonderful thing to think how men are afraid? They are not afraid of the devil; they are not afraid of evil or sin; but they are afraid when God comes near them. What a remarkable thing it is! They fear. We find the same thing in the history of Jacob; when Jacob found God was there, he says, “How dreadful is this place.” Why? God had come near; he was not afraid when he was alone there, with the stones of the earth for his pillow, although it must have been a dreary, desolate spot for him, all alone, overtaken by darkness.
and night; but when God came near and made Himself known, and when he heard that wonderful voice, and saw that ladder from heaven to earth, then awaking, he said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” So here the disciples were afraid; and their word is, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” Our hearts reply, “Yes, they do”; and we bless Him: we do not say, “What manner of man is this?” We say there was never one like Him; He is matchless; His equal is not to be found, the Man that came from heaven and the Man that is gone to heaven now! And what is so blessedly comforting to the heart, He is the same Jesus to-night, the same in His tenderness, the same in His love, the same in His kindness, the same in His pity. O that God in His infinite grace might just acquaint our hearts a little better with Him, and that we might have recourse to Him, and use Him, as we know Him, and know His accessibility in every distress and need of our hearts, for His blessed name’s sake.

Chapter 8:  
The Demonic of Gadara  
and the  
Ruler of the Synagogue  
Mark 5

I desire, beloved friends, with the Lord’s help, just to bring before our hearts this evening three incidents in this chapter; the power of Christ, His gracious, wonder-working power over demons, disease, and death. And I think you will find as we study it together that there are peculiar voices of God to us of a very practical nature in connection with each case in the chapter. First of all -- and I need not dwell long upon this case -- we have the demon-possessed man. God only knows whether there is anyone here to-night morally like that, but it is the picture of a person who is entirely and completely under the enslaving power of the enemy. I have no doubt whatever it is the picture of a man who is not merely in his sins, but who in his sins is peculiarly a slave of the devil. Now there are characters of sin amongst men very diverse in nature the one from the other. The leper, for instance, is a type of the sinner in one aspect, the blind man is the type of the sinner in another. We might go through all the various cases that came in contact with the Lord of life and glory in this world, and your feelings would be very differently moved in each case; you would not have the same kind of feeling with regard to a man blind as you would with regard to a leper. But when you come to a case like this, a man that was possessed with demons, a man distinctly under the mastery and dominion of the devil, bound as we would say hand and foot by his power, one shudders with horror at a case of that kind. I believe such cases morally abound: I am not prepared at all, beloved friends, to deny that there is a peculiar power of Satan at the present moment. I see, for instance, in the New Testament scriptures that long after the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and long after the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost, there were persons who were distinctly under the blinding, tyrannizing power of the devil. If ever there was a time when one would expect to see the power of Satan entirely broken and annulled, so that persons should not be subjected to his thraldom, it would be immediately consequent upon Christ’s victory and His resurrection, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost. But you have only to study what is called the Acts of the Apostles (really the Acts of the Spirit through the servants of God, and you will find a very solemn power of the devil in those days. Now observe, I do not speak at all of that power in any other sense save after a moral and spiritual nature; I do not speak now of a person’s body being possessed, as we know this poor wretched man was possessed with a legion; I am speaking entirely now, as I have said, of the moral power, or what we might call the spiritual power that Satan exercises; a power that we see is positively in progress to an enormous extent at the present moment. If ever there was a time that was a witness to the tremendous exercise of Satan’s virulence, and his hostility both to God and man, the day that we are living in is the witness to it. It is increasing, and it will increase; and persons are now in their souls and in their minds (I have come in contact with them myself) as distinctly devil-possessed as surely as ever they were in their bodies in past days. Now that is a very solemn reflection for us all. You remember how the apostle describes it, for instance, in Eph. 2, when he says, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,” I now mark the words -- “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Now that is very striking and very solemn: that is development, beloved friends, and that is the development that we avow. I fully admit development, but development in what way? Development in evil, and in the exercise and display of Satanic power; and that we have all round us. Here is a striking case that comes before the Lord in Mark 5; and all through this chapter, the details which the evangelist presents are positively appalling. This man is described in this way: he “had his dwelling among the tombs”; “no man could bind him, no, not with chains”; and that had not been untried, for that means to restrain, to keep in subjection, a person under this influence had been attempted; “he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him; but always” -- not on one isolated occasion, but as the habit of the man’s life, the perpetual, dreary, wretched position that this man ever occupied -- “always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” And there is another word in the verse which follows which brings it down as applicable to the state in which we find people under the power of Satan as sinners to-day, and that is the little word in v. 6: “Jesus afar off.” I know nothing that more accurately and minutely describes the position of the person who answers spiritually to that state. God alone knows if there be such a person here to night; “Jesus afar off.” That is exactly what is true of every person who is under this power spiritually in their souls. If any one here to-night is under the power of Satan, in our natural state, that is exactly where you are: Jesus is for you “afar off.” The apostle uses the expression
dispensationally in Eph. 2, “Ye who sometimes were far off”: that is dispensational. But here in our chapter it is a moral distance from God and Christ. How solemn, friends, such distance. Do I address one this evening whose state is thus set forth “afar off”? Let me entreat of you to weigh it well. Think of what it means, what it involves, I beseech of you. Further note here that which always marked demoniacal possession, a kind of mixture of adjuration and of prayer; that was always the consequence in the gospel history of persons being possessed in their bodies by demons; there was adjuration, “I pray thee,” or “beseech thee” “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God! I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.” There is something weird and miserable in the extreme in this howl of despair of this poor wretched man. And therefore, beloved friends, it is the exact picture of the condition in which souls are found at this present moment, they are positively under the tyranny and power of the enemy; they are in death and darkness, out of all restraint; they are positively spiritual suicides, “crying and cutting themselves with stones.” For them Jesus is “afar off.” What a picture! Who can deal with that case? You cannot deal with it by anything that has been previously; restraint will not do for it; law or ordinances will not do for it, any more than they did for the poor wounded man that we read of in the Gospel of Luke, to whom the good Samaritan came. The priest and Levite passed by on the other side; what they said practically was, That case is beyond us, we cannot deal with that. “By chance”; it says, “there came down a certain priest that way, and likewise a Levite, when he was at the place”; these were powerless for help to one in his state. So here, no restraint of man, no power brought to bear upon a slave of Satan, no iron fetter of law, no ordinances, no restrictions, could in any way succeed; he brake them entirely in pieces. But mark how one blessed word of power from the One who was there accomplishes all, and that word of power is uttered here, in the clemency and kindness, in the compassion and goodness, and in the tenderness of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, unsought, unasked, unlooked for. It was sovereign goodness and mercy that operated in this case of distress, and met this dire need and necessity just where it was; “Come out of him,” was His word; and He spake and it is done. O how blessed that is! No one could so work but our Lord Jesus Christ. No one can dispossess a soul under the tyranny and bonds of Satan but Satan’s conqueror, the One who has broken in pieces the power of the enemy; He who bound Satan by His obedience in life, Himself who has annulled Satan’s power in death, the One who has triumphed over him in the place of his greatest display of power; “That through death,” says the apostle, “he might annul him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.” One word from Him when He was here, one word of power in the sovereignty of His goodness, entirely alters the whole condition of the man; “Come out of him.”

And mark for a moment in connection with the delivering of this man out of the terrible bondage that was upon him; He asks him, “What is thy name?” Look at that for an instant, because it helps to give the word a power, and to throw it into very great prominence; and I have no doubt that was the intention the blessed Lord had in the bringing out from this man’s lips his name. You remember how He asked Jacob, “What is thy name?” And I believe the Lord makes us answer that question; and perhaps He may be asking some of you here to-night, “What is thy name?” I am perfectly certain He asks that of every one of us some time or another, “What is thy name?” He knows, but He will have it from your own lips, “What is thy name”; This poor man had seen the awful power of the Roman legion, that terrible instrument of oppression, and he could not conceive any word that would describe more exactly where he was. The word “legion” was a word that struck fear and shame into the heart of the oppressed Jew; the Roman legion, composed of thousands of men, was a great terror to every conquered enemy that came under their power; and so, in order that he might with his own lips convey what his name was, he uses this word “legion.” “My name is legion.” Now, beloved friends, I believe that is the reason why “legion” and “come out of him” are here found together as it were, how wonderfully it brings out the power of our Lord Jesus Christ; He broke that power; “Come out of him.” Verily it is, as we were saying a few weeks past, “He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.” The Lord of creation Himself, the Creator, the One who by His divine power could bring everything into existence out of nothing, by the same word and by the same divine power — though He was down here as the servant of need and distress — set free this poor demoniac from that bondage and tyranny which was upon him, brought him into divine liberation.

Now I would call your attention for one moment to the contrast of his former position with what we find now. They come and see this man out of whom the devils were cast, “sitting” — he had never known a moment’s rest before — they see him “clothed” he was in nakedness and in the wretchedness of the possession of Satan previously — and they see him “in his right mind” — for he had been as one demented — “and they were afraid.” I do not know anything more solemn to me than that; man is not afraid of the devil; he is afraid of God in goodness, afraid of Christ in mercy. How striking that men are afraid when God comes near to them! They are not afraid when the devil is at their right hand, they have no fear of evil, sin, or wickedness, or the innate vileness of man; but they are afraid of God, and afraid, as I have said, of God in goodness, that is the most solemn part of it. It was not a display of God in judgment, or in wrath, or in the fiery thunders of His vengeance; but here was the most blessed and gracious kindness and goodness that could be conceived, and a mercy that pityed and a compassion that looked with tenderness upon every conquered enemy that came under their power; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. One word from Him when He was here, one word of power in the sovereignty of His goodness, entirely alters the whole condition of the man; “Come out of him.”
when he dies he shall not go to hell, but it puts a person on this earth into a position of unparalleled blessing. But do you say, Is that the gospel? Yes, we gladly reply, it is the gospel that puts us into that position. Can you conceive anything in this world more blessed than that which brings you into rest in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and fills your soul with the comfort come now to a poor woman whose body is under the power of disease? The Lord is asked by Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, to come and heal his little daughter, his “only daughter,” Luke says, but who was at the point of death; and when He was on His way to the house of Jairus to bring relief and comfort to the heart of that poor oppressed father by raising up his child, He meets this poor woman. And I must say this affectionately to you to-night, I am convinced there are people in this company whose case answers exactly to this woman, not in their bodies, but in their minds. I know I am speaking to some here to night who have a care and a sorrow locked up in their breast. This poor woman was distressed in her body; she had a terrible disease; if you refer at your leisure to Lev. 15, you will find, I believe, a light shed on the disease this woman was suffering from. I believe it was a disease that made her ceremonially unclean; and therefore she was shut out from intercourse with her fellow-creatures and from their privileges. But there are three things said about her: first, she “heard of Jesus,” and it was not that kind of hearing that you continually find with people, which leaves no result behind it; she heard in reality, and hearing of Him she came; the hearing set her in motion; it was the right kind of hearing: it exercised her mind, and touched her heart, and moved her feet: hearing of Him, she, as it were, said, I must get to Him. She does not hear of Him and then speculate and reason; she does not hear of Him to dispute; she hears of Him to come to Him; He was the very one for her. And she came. And observe how that there were difficulties; there was what is called here “the press,” there was the crowd that encircled Him round, so to speak; but no crowd, no press, no people, no obstacles, no difficulties could keep her away from that blessed One; nay, despite it all, she came behind Him and placed herself -- mark it well -- in personal contact with the Savior; she touched His clothes. And why did she do that? She said to herself -- and here was her faith -- “If I may touch but his clothes I shall be whole.”

Perhaps there is some one here to-night who has spiritually something exactly corresponding to that “issue.” You have got some care locked up in your heart, some burden, some pressure, some difficulty, some weight upon your spirit. Is not that the reason of our sadness and depression? We cannot, as it were, sing; we did so once, as Israel, On the shores of the Red Sea; but the notes have died away, and there is no cheerfulness or brightness of Christ about us; moreover, we repel people too often, we do not impress them with the sense of true joy and rest of heart outside and apart from all the fading, passing scenes of earth; alas! that it should be so, when it need not be. Thank God, we Christians have not lost everything, poorly as we show it. We are going on into all that is bright and blessed, little as it is seen in us, and little as the sufficiency and satisfaction of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ is displayed by us. Why should we be this puzzle, as it were? Ah! there is a secret at the bottom of it all, there is a weight of some kind on your hearts; we have cares locked up there, we have burdens pressing us down, a wearing, gnawing distraction, tearing out, as it were, our souls, and hence our visage of misery. Oh if my poor words could lead us to do what this poor woman did; if I could but show you the blessedness of it; so that we would go through all the difficulties, through all the press, and in spite of everything that is in the way, get into personal contact with Jesus Christ. Remember, I am not speaking to unconverted people, I am speaking to Christians, to those who are children of God, here to-night. Do you not know, beloved friends, how possible it is to have truth as clear as clear can be, and yet not to have as yet a personal knowledge of a personal Christ! Now that is very sad, but it is to be seen, beloved friends, on all sides -- we may know about Him, but as yet never have come into contact with Him, never as yet touched Him. I was reading a little incident not long since, which will illustrate this point in a very simple way; it was about a poor Scotch girl who was being examined by the Presbytery before she could, as they say, “go forward” to the Lord’s table; and there were a great many, as she thought, hard questions and points of doctrine brought before her, and she could not satisfy by answers her interrogators.

But what did she say? Why just this -- “I dinna ken your questions, but I ken Himself.” Ah! beloved friends, that is the secret, I know Himself: I can tell you but little about Him, I cannot tell you much about the wonders and glories of which He is the center, His acts of power and His deeds of might, I may be able to tell you very little about all that; but she could say, “I know Himself.”

Now this is what I find in this case I am speaking to you about. Here was a poor woman with her issue of blood and her body of disease, she heard of Jesus; it does not say she heard about Jesus, but she heard of Jesus; it was the Person that came before her mind, the report of the Person reached her, and she resolved in herself that she would go to Him. And she came in the press behind, undeterred by the difficulties and impediments that stood in her way; she says, as it were, I must get into personal contact with Him, I must touch Him even at the very extremity of His clothes, the hem of His garment, the fringe of blue which they wore. I believe that is what it was. Ah! it was a fringe of blue, without any question in His case: He was the Man from heaven, the heavenly Man. O how blessed the thought! If I may but touch, she says, the fringe, the hem, of that garment, I know there is virtue in Him, I count on His love, His goodness, His
kindness, His willingness, His power; and if I can only, though it be on the extremity, get into contact with that, I believe “I shall be whole.”

Let me tell you to-night, brethren, if you have in your hearts and souls what that poor woman had in her body, if you get into contact with Jesus Christ to-night, your face will shine, you will lose your care, you will lose that burden that is pressing you down; the furrows on your cheek will fill up, the careworn look on your face will depart. This is the only cure for it; doctrines, however you may reason and speculate about them from morning to night, will not do it for you; nothing can avail but personal contact with a personal Savior, having to do with Him. Now let me try and encourage your faith for a moment. There is an ear there into which you may pour what you would not tell into any ear on earth; and there is a heart there with its love, and compassion and kindness that invites you to come. O do come to-night! I know there is a heart there that is tenderer than any heart on earth.

“That tender heart that felt for all,
For all its life-blood gave,
Yet found on earth no resting-place
Save only in the grave.”

There is a heart there with its love, and compassion and kindness that invites you to come. O do come to-night! I would speak to my brethren who may have cares and worries and burdens and anxieties and difficulties, let me entreat you to come like this poor woman and get into personal contact with Christ, and your issue of care, or trial, or sorrow, that pent-up lake that is in your heart, will be relieved. You know very well the illustration, that as long as ever the walls or borders or boundaries of the lake hold, the lake is well-nigh ready to burst; but if they give way, there is relief. And there is only one place where you can get that relief. Go to Him, and open out and pour out your breaking heart; touch Him, and in that way you will get relief. The Lord in His infinite grace grant it. I know perfectly well from contact with people’s souls the need of it; I know very well that I never got relief or comfort for my own heart till I got to Him. You might get relief for your conscience by the knowledge of what He has done for you; but you are not a person with only a conscience, at least I hope and trust you have a heart, that you have affections but you will never get relief for your heart till you get to Him.

One word more, and then we will look at the last case. The woman got what she looked for and wanted at once; the cure was immediate: “Immediately her issue of blood stanched.” It is very blessed to think of what happened after this: “she knew in her body she was healed,” Jesus knew that virtue went out of Him. You could not persuade that woman, if you were talking with her from morning to night, that she had not got the relief: you might say to her, You cannot be sure you have got the relief; but she knew she had got it: she knew by the reception of the blessing. He knew it because the virtue went out of Him into her. He knew it intuitively, she knew it receptively; I put those two things together. “Jesus, knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him.” He knew there was a poor body relieved and a poor heart comforted: don’t you think He was glad, delighted? don’t you think the heart of Jesus rejoiced? It just comes to my mind now what He said after His conversation with that woman of Samaria in John 4, His disciples had gone into the city to buy meat, and when they came back to Him with the provisions and said, “Master, eat,” He said, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of”; and they were all astonished, and inquired, “Hath any man brought him ought to eat?” “My meat,” He says, “is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” He had made a poor heart happy that day; He had communicated heavenly secrets to a poor, debased, degraded woman; He had refreshed her soul; that was His meat. Oh! how blessed! I do love to dwell on that, and to think how Christ was refreshed, and how His heart was ministered to, as He met needs and distresses in this world. And so it was here, I have no doubt when He said, “Who touched my clothes?” His object was that He should bring all this out. If it had been a stolen blessing, if she had received it furtively, as it were, still the moment was now come, she was blessed, and therefore the Lord would have the whole thing out. That was the reason that word was used. “Who touched my clothes?” “And the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth,” let everything out, although He knew it well; but she got relief by letting the whole thing out; she was not to take the blessing away as if she was not entitled to it; she was not to go away as if she had not full divine light to it; that is the reason why He brought her into His presence. She was healed and cured first, now she is brought to own all that was done, and to get the seal of His imprimatur upon it, and with the sweetest word, “Daughter.” These beautiful words bring forcibly to my recollection, though it takes me away from my subject for a moment, a little incident, I read of not very long ago, of a city missionary in this great city of London, who was visiting a very poor and degraded district. He found his way into a house peculiarly destitute, and went into a room where there was lying, on a pallet of straw, what looked to him much more like a bag of bones than a human being. A woman was lying there in the last stage of rapid decline, there was that bright look about the eyes, and that hacking cough, and that terrible emaciation of the worn-out frame, which all mark the fell disease. Thank God for the London City Mission, and the noble band of men who work in connection with it, in this great city of London. Let us not forget to think of them and ask God’s blessing on them, as they go into haunts and scenes where none else penetrate. This man stood in pity and compassion over this poor creature, and thought and heaks and scenes where none else penetrate. This man stood in pity and compassion over this poor creature, and thought
with her, everything was the most unapt that could be conceived, the surroundings were the most comfortless that could be supposed; but she had Christ, and she felt she was rich. You have got, perhaps, and I have got, everything she had not. Have we Christ? that is the question. I do not say, Have we Christ as our Savior from our sins? but have we Christ? that is the point. I have no doubt the reason of the Lord's action here was to bring this woman's case out. “She fell down before him, and told him all the truth,” and got this word, the seal, so to speak, of His grace upon the power exerted in her behalf. His power had acted for her, her faith had claimed it and received it, and now we have grace added to it in what I would call the divine seal: “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Now let us look at the last case for a moment. In this case the messengers had been quick to bring bad news; and whenever there is bad news to be told there are always people at hand ready to tell it. There are few comparatively to tell good news; the Lord raise up more such: we long to see the tellers of good news increased. But here were these birds of ill omen that came from the house of poor Jairus, and they say to him, “Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the teacher [or Master] any further?” Now, beloved friends, why I allude to this is, it brings out some of the most beautiful and tender touches of the kindness and grace and consideration of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ that I know of. The moment He heard that, He at once addresses Himself to poor Jairus, and you can understand how Jairus's heart was, as it were, swayed between hope and fear, a hope that had increased and been ministered to by the marvelous cure he had just seen take place in the case of the woman. His own little daughter, his only daughter, lay there a-dying, and the irrecoverable had happened, and she is dead. Now this is how it brings the Lord Jesus so preciously before us. When He heard this, He turns to Jairus and says to him, “Be not afraid, only believe.” How lovely that is; Be not afraid, Jairus, only believe. Now, beloved friends, it is these little touches that acquaint us with the Savior. Thank God, we can speak of His power; but how blessed to see His heart! What an encouragement! If I have a sick child to-night, and to bring His worthiness and goodness and kindness and tenderness and grace before us! How sweet those outlets of His tenderness, but He commanded that “something should be given her to eat.” What is that if we take it out of the figure and apply it? He is the one that gives life, and He is the one that provides for the sustenance of the life He gives. What is the something? Shall I tell you? Christ. Not doctrines, not theories, not notions, not thoughts, not opinions; Christ, that is the “something.” If you have been quickened by Him, if you have felt His touch of power, He commands that something should be given you to eat. And He commands that to His servants; He did not say that to the girl here, He commands His servants -- and, beloved friends, one feels the responsibility of it -- He commands that something should be given her, and that something is Christ. Nothing can sustain or nourish or uphold the soul but Christ.

I commend those three instances to you tonight. I think they bring out His power, His tenderness, His kindness, His goodness, His grace. O beloved friends, may God in His infinite grace be pleased to use His word this night to set Christ before our souls in such a way that our hearts may be drawn out in confidence, and that if, as I said at the beginning of our meeting, if we have burdens and cares and anxieties and pressures upon our hearts, we may carry them to Him, and leave them, that He may conduct our hearts into all the comfort and grace and blessedness of His love, for His name’s sake!

**Chapter 9:**

**The Unwearied Yet Rejected Servant**

*Mark 6:1-4, 7-9, 12-16, 30-37, first clause, 45-51*

I have read the different portions of this scripture, beloved friends, to which I invite your attention for a little this evening, intending that by the grace of God you should fill up the parts of it that are left out for yourselves at your leisure. I think you will find that the portions we have read are the portions that convey to us the three great facts or truths which
I desire to bring before you tonight. The first is the unwearied yet rejected Servant; that is how the scripture opens. He Himself is presented in His unwearied yet rejected ministry. The second is the mission of the twelve, and its effects; and the third is the Lord’s absence, and the vicissitudes and trials that His servants during that period have to pass through. These three subjects I desire to bring before you this evening as a kind of finish to that part of the gospel which has been occupying us these last few weeks, and may form a suitable termination to our thoughts upon it so far.

Now it is blessed to begin with Christ, and I need not say it is blessed also to leave off with Him. He is the first and He is the last; and this characterizes this chapter in a very remarkable way; it begins with Him and it closes with Him. It begins with Him rejected, and yet, as I have already said, unwearied. He is a contrast in that way to every other servant that was ever known in this world. When persons are refused in their service, a kind of mortification comes over them, a kind of spirit which is natural to us as fallen creatures with the taint and nature of Adam in us; so that we, as it were, retreat into our littlenesses when we suppose that there is some sort of slight passed upon us. If we are refused in our anxieties to serve, if the very persons that we delight to minister to, decline the purpose of our heart in it, the tendency in every man as such is to retreat into his own smallness in a sort of self-mortification. But you never find that with the true Servant. And, beloved friends, it is not only that there is that great contrast, and it must ever be so, between us and the One who was in His own blessed nature a man and as a servant in this world -- a perfect man, yet unlike all else, a man of His own order as a man, the one solitary exception to every other man here, the God-Man I need not say, blessed for ever be His name; but you find that combination in Christ that is peculiar to Him, and that is most blessed to dwell upon, rejected yet unwearied in service; and indeed, not only unwearied in service, but, if possible, more earnest; if possible, devising other means and other modes of expressing His goodness and kindness and grace in this world, even in this rejection; so that the very refusal of Him in His prophet character, which of course is the subject of the Gospel of Mark, elicited and brought out the infinite depths, the largeness, the fulness, the completeness that was in His heart; and therefore is recorded as such. I would say for myself that I feel increasingly in all that relates to our adorable Lord and Master, whether in His glory, or in the vail of His manhood, through which it shone, we do well to tread softly, with unshodden foot and reverent approach; let us never forget what has been so blessedly and touchingly thus expressed

"Love that made Thee a mourner,  
In this sad world of woe,  
Made wretched man a scion 
Of grace, that brought Thee low."

But if indeed it is so, if indeed He did work at the carpenter’s bench, and He was pleased in the grace of His heart not merely to take the lowly place which He did take, of being the reputed son at least of a carpenter, and the son of a woman that was poor in circumstances and lowly in origin -- if, I say, along with that He was also pleased to be a carpenter by trade and to work, then all I would say is, my soul adores Him for it when I think of it, I bow down in holy worship before Him as I contemplate it, and I say to myself that trade is to me for ever consecrated by the fact that the Son of God, my own Savior and Lord, having become a Man, was pleased to humble Himself so as to work at it. I feel that it is important that we should hold these things in that way, and that we should have in our hearts all that affectionate reverence due to His blessed Person.
Now look for a moment at another side of this. We are confronted at the present time with all kinds of divergence from the truth in various ways. Some, and perhaps they are a very large class comparatively speaking, and for a very considerable time, have hesitated and stumbled over His divinity. You know there are those who have not hesitated to refuse the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is now an old blasphemy against Christ as well as a departure from the truth. Such persons will allow Him to have been the first of teachers, they will allow that His moral instructions were magnificent, beyond anything that was ever known or heard of in this world; they say there never was such a teacher or such doctrine, there never were such words or such works of mercy and kindness but they limit the whole testimony that is conveyed in it to the fact of His position as a teacher and as a man here in this world; and they positively refuse to believe that He was, whilst man, truly and as really God. Now, beloved friends, I need not enter into any argument with regard to that, but I do earnestly press this one fact upon you: if Christ was not God, truly and really the mighty God, “God over all, blessed evermore” -- if it be not true that we --

“There see the Godhead glory
Shine through that human veil” -- if He was not really and absolutely and positively in His own nature very God, as we know He was very Man -- then all I say is, I cannot understand the argument which seeks to present Him as in any sense exalted; because, remember this, His whole claim, His whole testimony, His whole life, His works, His words, were always given as the proof of His divine origin. Therefore if any one rejects or has a question about the fact that He was God (though I trust there is no one here through grace that has the smallest tendency in that direction); then I say, beloved friends, you cannot dwell upon the excellencies and merits and worth of anything that is connected with Him as man, because all these were laid claim to by Him in proof of His divine nature. To my mind that argument is unanswerable; I do not believe it can be overthrown. Christ through His whole ministry, and in His whole life and testimony in this world, appealed to His works and to His words that He was God. Thank God, we know that He was God.

But look at the other side a moment more. What we are confronted with more in modern days is not so much a question of His being truly and really God; but, beloved friends, we have to grapple with another error and on another question of His being truly and really God; but, beloved friends, I need not enter into any argument with this. I earnestly wish to press it upon you, and it is a practical one, too. I learn the lesson of His grace as I look at this manner and way of refusing Him -- as I see Him rejected, as I see that they stumbled over His lowly blessed path here. Oh! the perfection of Christ’s humiliation, and the perfection of His abasement in this world! If He were not the mighty God, He could not have humbled Himself. Remember, the point of departure in His humiliation was Godhead; “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not an object of rapine to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.” Divinity was the point from which He came down to be a man; and they stumbled over the lowliness with which the Godhead glory was veiled in His humiliation. But apart from that altogether, I believe there is a wholesome lesson and word for every one of us with regard to that very fact. No doubt they were accustomed to come in contact with Him as a child at Nazareth; no doubt His blessed, holy, wondrous life both of childhood and manhood so far was before their eyes. I have no doubt they saw Him every day, they were witnesses possibly of the humility through which He passed; but mark this, there is a kind of familiarity which comes from an unholy and undue acquaintance with divine things; and I feel assured we need to guard against it, and I desire very earnestly to press that upon my beloved brethren here to-night. I believe we need to watch against this, we who handle so constantly holy things. You may rest assured of it, beloved friends, all undue familiarity of that kind with the things of God correspondingly weakens the effects of those things upon our souls. One of the greatest ethical writers and thinkers perhaps this country has produced, the great Bishop Butler, has laid down this as truth, that I do not think can be disputed, a principle of very great
importance, namely — that “passive impressions, by being produced, grow weaker.” By “passive impressions” he means impressions produced that have no active outlet, as it were, in the shape of relieving the distress which produced them or ministering to it, but simply and only the sight of it. The illustration would be that of a person every day accustomed to sights of distress; the first feelings that would be created by those sights of distress would gradually give way, and the tenderness created in the heart at the first, by constantly beholding them and coming into contact with them, would, without any active operation with respect to them, soon diminish. If you were to look at some terrible sight day after day, the first feelings of revolt or fear or terror or pity or concern that were in your heart would all gradually give way. So it is, beloved friends, with regard to divine things. If our souls are not maintained in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, the constancy of our occupation with divine things without this communion will promote in us a carnal familiarity. I feel that is a thing we ought especially to guard against, and therefore we can never touch or deal with the things of God apart from our own actual state and condition of soul. There must be a state of soul suitable to occupation with them, watchfulness and prayerfulness are called for, a sense of our own insufficiency to touch these things, a sense of their infinite nature, a sense of their being beyond us. Who am I, or who are you, or any mere mortal, save as God is pleased in His wonderful grace by His Spirit to reveal these things to our consciences -- who are we, to “rush in,” as the saying is, “where angels fear to tread,” to rush in with our minds and reasonings on the things of God as if we were competent to deal with them? And therefore we do need to watch, and I think this simple incident of our precious Lord and Master’s life at Nazareth, and His rejection by His own people, and His refusal by those who witnessed His holy childhood, and saw Him there every day before their eyes -- I say that incident has a very special and pointed voice to us, and is calculated to lead our hearts into deep exercise with respect to them, soon diminish. If you were to look at some terrible sight day after day, the first feelings of revolt or fear or terror or pity or concern that were in your heart would all gradually give way. So it is, beloved friends, with regard to divine things. If our souls are not maintained in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, the constancy of our occupation with divine things without this communion will promote in us a carnal familiarity. I feel that is a thing we ought especially to guard against, and therefore we can never touch or deal with the things of God apart from our own actual state and condition of soul. There must be a state of soul suitable to occupation with them, watchfulness and prayerfulness are called for, a sense of our own insufficiency to touch these things, a sense of their infinite nature, a sense of their being beyond us. Who am I, or who are you, or any mere mortal, save as God is pleased in His wonderful grace by His Spirit to reveal these things to our consciences -- who are we, to “rush in,” as the saying is, “where angels fear to tread,” to rush in with our minds and reasonings on the things of God as if we were competent to deal with them? And therefore we do need to watch, and I think this simple incident of our precious Lord and Master’s life at Nazareth, and His rejection by His own people, and His refusal by those who witnessed His holy childhood, and saw Him there every day before their eyes -- I say that incident has a very special and pointed voice to us, and is calculated to lead our hearts into deep exercise with regard to it, that we should be guarded and preserved and kept by His grace from all such unholy familiarity. That is the first thing which I see presented to us here.

The second is just one of those cases that prove His unwearied kindness and goodness though He was rejected; for in the mission of the twelve, you find that, though rejected, still for all that He is the patient blessed servant. Further, when we look at this mission of the twelve and see Him sending them out, and the character in which they are sent out, too, it is such a contrast, for instance, with the history of the fiery prophet of Israel of old. You know that when Elijah was threatened by a woman, he longed to die; he was no better than his fathers, he said, and he asked God to take him away. And it is one of the most remarkable instances of how the grace of God comes in and overrides all those unbelieving fears of our hearts; because he did not die, he got something a great deal better than death, he was taken up to heaven without dying; but you remember how chafed Elijah was, how he sat down under a juniper tree; you remember the sulk the prophet got into, how he was ready to give up his ministry and retire from it. But when I look at this great Prophet, this great contrast to all other prophets, what I find is, that though personally rejected Himself He continues His blessed mission in others. That, I believe, introduces the mission of the twelve, and they are sent forth.

Look, too, at the manner in which they are sent. I will only note one or two things I regard as exceedingly instructive about their mission. First of all, they are sent out two and two; that is the divine order, and I can well conceive what cheer and what help and what comfort two servants of God truly and really yoked together in His service would be to one another. It is, remember, a peculiar mission; it contemplates tremendous opposition, it contemplates a certain measure of solitariness and loneliness and isolation, which must ever be the case with the servant of God in a world like this. Therefore I see the greatest consideration for the servants in pairing them off by two and two in that way. That is the first thing.

The second is -- and here I must expect but little sympathy -- they were sent out in exactly the sharpest contrast to all modern modes of mission work: they were sent out bereft of everything, without the ordinary common provision of what people are pleased to call in these days indispensables -- though I do not know what the meaning of an “indispensable” is; I only know one “indispensable,” and that is Jesus Christ. What I mean by that is, that you may positively do without everything else but Him. O that we might believe so thoroughly in His divine sufficiency and power that we could go bereft of everything but Jesus Christ, and find in Himself our all. Now they were sent out without any supply; they were to have no scrip, and further they were to be without the great world power of to-day, namely, money. Money is what is worshiped by this world, yet they were not to carry that. Why? Because, beloved friends, they were being sent out by the One in whom all true provision was found. Would to God the church of God would awake up to the great reality and truth of that. O that the mission of God’s servants had in the eyes of the church a more divine character about it, that it is not merely that people go forth to preach or to work or to labor, blessed as that is, but that they are sent. Now I want to press that on you; I feel there is just now a sad lack of that amongst Christians generally. “How,” says the apostle, in Rom. 11, “how shall they preach except they be sent?” It is not enough for a man to say, I would like to preach. The point is, are we sent? Have we a mission? I join issue at once, for I am assured any thought such as the church sending persons to preach has no foundation or authority in scripture; the church is taught and is instructed, but the church does not teach or send to preach; it is the Master who sends the servants to preach, it is the Master who selects the servants, it is the Master under whose authority the servants have to act. It is a very important thing to hold these things in their true proper connection and order. Jesus Himself sent them forth, He was the Master of His servants, and therefore He both called and commissioned. If you will show me anything to-day that can positively claim His divine rights and authority in that respect, I trust one is gladly ready to own and recognize it, but, failing this, we must stick fast
to what the scripture saith, and again I assert there is only One who has divine right and title to send His servants in this world, and that is the exalted, glorified Man at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He is the source of all true ministry, it is with Him they who minister have to do. But this helplessness as to man’s resources, this absence of all human ways and means, so that they were entirely and wholly cast on Him, is to me exceedingly instructive.

Again, their preaching was not of a very ordinary nature either. They had neither money, nor purse, nor scrip, they were what would be termed destitute men; but yet they were the men that moved hearts, they were the men that got at people’s consciences, these were the men that smeared the seared conscience of that despicable man, the Ahab of the people’s consciences, these were the men that smote the coiled up and concealed like a snake, then how it has been brought out by the light and heat and power of the word of God? That was Herod: “It is John,” says he at once when the word reaches him. And what adds to the strength of that is this: that Herod was simply steeped in Sadducean notions, and the Sadducees believed in no resurrection or angel or spirit or anything of the kind. Yet, steeped though he was in those ideas, a very Sadducee in theology, as we should say, notwithstanding all, such is the power of the truth preached by these servants of Christ upon his conscience, that the witness within, now awaked, asserts itself and he says, “It is John whom I beheaded.” Ah! how God can bring men’s sins to light before them! How God can wake up a slumbering conscience, and can deal with people’s minds, this absence of all resources, this absence of all grace and mercy help this hardening process goes on; at last it ceases to sting altogether. I do not know how to speak of Herod of Galilee; I have the most supreme contempt for such a character -- an unmixedly wicked wretch was Herod. You see in him the first movements of terror and fear and of slavish horror when his sins have found him out; but mark what happens afterwards; how that is all lulled into quiet and into rest; and then what takes its place? Curiosity! First fear, and when fear is drugged or rocked to sleep in the devil’s cradle, then curiosity. Oh, what an amount of curiosity there is at the present time! Men that were once afraid are now curious. That is what marked Herod, a wretched, prurient curiosity. What he wanted was to see Jesus; he had heard often of Him and would patronize Him, he thought he would see some work of wonder, some miracle done by Him; and therefore he sent for Him to commune with Him. Now I want you to observe this. You may be deceived sometimes, perhaps, by mistaking mere curiosity for some divine interest; I am sure I have often seen it; people may mistake mere curiosity for some spiritual awakening, whereas it is only mere empty curiosity that has seized the person’s mind, just as it is in this world. Now mark what succeeds that -- you will be struck with it if you take the gospel history of our Lord Jesus Christ, especially on the very eve of His passion -- namely, mocking. Terror being quieted down, curiosity succeeds; that in turn changes into mocking. “Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.” Just think of these two men passing the Lord of life and glory backwards and forwards one to another! What a history it is! My brother or sister here to-night, let me entreat of you not to trifle with conscience; cultivate it -- thank God you have it; do not drug it; one of the most solemn things is not to have a good conscience. Every man and every woman in this world has acquired it by the fall. God in His infinite grace and mercy help us to be sensitive about it, tender about it. It can be lulled, it can be stupefied, until it ceases to act altogether, as in this sadly solemn case.

Now these are the great points which the mission of the twelve brings before us first of all, its divine character, then its effects, and its effects in a certain case, this case of Herod.

Now I want to speak to you for a few moments about the last subject here, that is our Lord’s figurative departure from the scene, and the vicissitudes of His servants. That is introduced by a most touching incident, and one that has a special voice to us to-night, which I want you distinctly to take in, through grace. There was a large multitude of hungry people around Him, and the time was far passed; circumstances were pressing, and the disciples come to the Lord and say, “Send them away.” Now I am afraid the disciples were very like some of us in these days. “Send them away,” they say; “we do not want to be burdened with this hungry multitude, we do not want to be troubled with their wants.” Observe how their wants are not questioned, their need is not denied, there is no doubt but that hunger and distress were fully represented. “Let them go,” say the disciples, “into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: there is nothing here; send them away”; which meant, send them away from Jesus. O beloved friends, do we say that now? Well, I am afraid sometimes we do. “Give ye them to eat,” says the Lord. May God make our ears hear that to-night. My beloved friends, do you ever think of giving other people to eat, or do you think only of eating yourselves? Have you ever thought that there are spiritually hungry men and women in multitudes at our doors, that there are people all round about you starving for the bread of life? And have not you heard the Master’s words, “Give ye them to eat”? These blessed, gracious words of His might well be
an everlasting reproach upon the church of God, an everlasting reproach upon the saints of God; words which might well ring in our ears for ever, “Give ye them to eat.” They were thinking only of their miserable provision, and they say, How can we poverty stricken people give to them? Then we find what is so blessed, and gives us the contrast between Him and all else beside. Hearken to His blessed words, “I have compassion.” I love those words; O the sweetness and tenderness of those words to the heart, “I have compassion on the multitude.” O that our blessed Master would give us more of His compassions! O to think of this great city, with its millions of immortal souls; here we are surrounded by a multitude of perishing ones; we are positively living in a kind of modern heathendom. Alas! that is what Christianity, so-called, is; thickly-populated places, cities and towns teeming with multitudes of immortal souls perishing for the bread of life. And think of our unconcern; I marvel at our little thought about it. I ask you affectionately to-night, do the walls of your room bear witness to your pleadings with God about it? I think I hear you say, “Oh! I am not sent.” Ah! what a very convenient way to escape from your responsibility; numbers of people think they get out of it like that. “I am not sent.” Shall I tell you what strikes me? It is this, whether you would go if you were called! Bear with me in the plainness of the state of soul. “Give ye them to eat” rings in our ears to-night. It could not be as to Him of whom it is so sweetly said, “That tender heart that felt for all,” that person would not go if he were sent. I see this very convenient way to escape from your responsibility; numbers of people think they get out of it like that. “I am not sent.” Shall I tell you what strikes me? It is this, whether you would go if you were called! Bear with me in the plainness of the words, but the one who says “I am not sent,” be assured of it, that person would not go if he were sent. I see this very same unwillingness manifesting itself in the excuse. But what I do press upon you is this, while I fully grant we are not all sent to do the same kind of work, and are not all sent to preach, what I maintain is, that if the love of Christ were in our hearts as the grand constraining power, no need, or misery, or distress, however great or pressing, would hinder us from seeking in every way to give the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the true bread of life, to every hungry soul with which we come in contact. I confess I do not understand what Christianity and the religion of Jesus Christ is, nor what the ways of Jesus Christ were, if one of His own true, beloved people in this world, let them be ever so simple, let them be ever so feeble, refused to follow in His ways — assuredly they could by grace tell of what had satisfied their hunger and of what had met their thirst; assuredly they could say, “I know what met the cravings of my soul, and I can tell you it will meet yours. Who do you think knows the value of bread? The chemist? Not he; but the starving man that has eaten it. I have eaten that bread, he says. There is too much mere head-work, I fear, about us; hence our reasonings and our speculations and so forth, in reality a poverty-stricken state of soul. “Give ye them to eat” rings in our ears to-night. The Lord in His grace give us to hear it, and to heed it as well.

That is what introduces His departure in figure here; He sends His disciples, and He goes up into a mountain to pray; He goes on high, as it were — that is what is represented by His going up into the mountain—and the disciples cross the water in a boat, and you have their vicissitudes. O how blessed it is to think what it says here, “He saw them.” Now I want my brothers in the Lord here to-night to share with me the comfort that passage brings; “He saw them toiling in rowing.” Ah! brother, you are laboring, it may be in some sphere of service or work, and it is very uphill, very hard, and it takes a great deal out of you, and you are very often depressed. Now think of this, “He saw them toiling in rowing.” Not the shades of night, nor the earnest vigil, which He kept in prayer on the mountain-top, nor the storm-lashed lake that they were crossing, none of these things had hidden His poor servants from the Master’s eyes: “He saw them.” O what a comfort that is! What a comfort for us all, whatever may be the character of the “rowing,” whatever may be the character of the labor or danger as we sail over the sea of life, “He saw them.” O what words these are! Those blessed eyes looked down in a tenderness which was all His own! And now mark this, in the darkest part of the night Jesus came to them. That is always the time Jesus comes. The fourth watch is just upon day dawn, and the dawn of day is, as we know, preceded by the darkest part of the night. Have you never watched by the bedside of some beloved one, and have you not witnessed (I know some here have) the struggle between darkness and dawn? There is a sort of struggle between night and day at the very moment just preceding day dawn. That is the time Jesus comes. And observe how beautiful it is; He came walking on the water. Let us delight in contemplating the majesty of His love! It is not only that I see His divine power as He steps the waves, but I see the majesty of His mighty love. They could not be upon the stormy sea without His walking those waves too; they could not be, as it were, in difficulty and in danger without His drawing near to them; they could not be surrounded by the fury and hurricane of the tempest that came down from the mountain side and threatened to destroy their little bark, without His going near to them too. He came to them walking upon the water. There is a little touch here of great beauty; have you ever thought of it? “He made as though he would have passed by them.” What do you think the meaning of that was? Do you think it was a mere accident that this is recorded for us here? Do you think it is a mere little trifling circumstance in the history that the Spirit of God brings out? I believe it is exactly the same thing that you find in Luke 24, when He joined those two poor, heart-broken, weary ones upon the morning of His resurrection, as they walked and were sad, and had given up all hope in this world, and said, “This is the third day since these things were done”; it says, “He made as though he would have gone farther.” It is the same kind of action here; He “would have passed by them.” Why? To call out from them the faintest cry of want and need of Him; that is what it is. It was not that He was indifferent, that He did not feel; oh, assuredly, it was not that! It could not be as to Him of whom it is so sweetly said, “That tender heart that felt for all, For all its life-blood gave” -- oh no; He was never insensible to the distresses of His poor servants in their vicissitudes; but He delights to draw out confidence. Oh! if there is the feeblest confiding of trust in any of your poor hearts here to-night, if nearly everything has fled but this one hope in Him, small though it be, be assured
He wants that. That is the meaning of this action here; He would have passed them by; but only that He might awake up, and draw out, as it were, and minister to, the dying embers of that faith which was in the heart. Then they “cried out” How grateful to His heart that cry! Was not He attentive? Did He not delight in that confidence so expressed? Mark what He says; there are three words here, “Be of good cheer,” “Be not afraid”; but note especially the words between them. Our beautiful old translation has it, “It is I”; but that in reality means “I am,” ἐγώ εἰμι, the same as in John 8, “I am.”

Mark the connection, “Be of good cheer”; “I am”; be not afraid.” O beloved friends, what a trinity of blessedness there is in these three expressions! “Be of good cheer”; might not that well wipe away every tear from every eye? “I am”: the mighty God in the glory and dignity and majesty of His own person walking the waves and waters. “Be not afraid”: the very word He is saying to us to-night. Now, brother or sister (thank God we can all of us be engaged in work in different ways), you are “toiling in rowing”: God in His infinite grace give us that blessed confidence in Christ’s care and love, that amid every wind and storm and our toiling through them, we may ever hear Him say, “Be of good cheer” -- “I am” -- “Be not afraid.” Oh the luxury of being the means of blessing to some poor heart! The one who is so used knows its sweetness; but it must be tasted to be known and thus enjoyed. “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” But remember, in all the vicissitudes of service, and in all the ups and downs so-called of life, whether it be at home or in the service of God, in the world or in the church, whether it be in the counting house or at the counter, wherever you are, remember this, there will be “toiling in rowing” while Jesus is absent; but in the darkest part of your night He is near, so we can sing,

“In darkest shades, if He appear
My morning is begun.”

And “He talked with them.” How blessed the rest of that intercourse! the divine familiarity; oh how precious the intimacy expressed in those words, “He talked with them.” O to hear those beautiful words, those wonderful words! The Lord in His grace just use His own precious tidings to-night to encourage our hearts, beloved friends, that we may all go forth with a little more of the fire of Christ’s love in our souls, and that we may have the comfort, whatever position we are in, as we toil through this world where He is not, of knowing for ourselves the solace and cheer of Himself, for His name’s sake.

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“The Man Christ Jesus”:
Being Addresses on the Gospel of Luke

Preface

In these addresses I have sought earnestly and, I trust, in dependence on Him without whom nothing is strong, no thing is holy, to set before my hearers the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, as He is presented in the Gospel of Luke; and as I believe each gospel was intended of God to depict Him in various aspects and glories, so I have sought, in preaching on this portion of Scripture, to give prominence and distinctness to Himself as Son of man displaying the power of Jehovah in grace in the midst of men; that being, as I believe, the special aspect of His glory which characterizes Luke’s account of our Lord.

That there should be found in the New Testament four coincident testimonies to our Lord Jesus Christ, distinct in character and purpose, is not surprising to that faith which receives the scriptures as the very Word of God, testifying of Him of whom it is rightly said, that “our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.” That which, therefore, marks these blessed gospel histories for faith, is fulness and variety.

It has been to the preacher an unspeakable delight to dwell upon some of the perfections and glories of his precious Savior and Master and Lord, as here unfolded. A sentence or two from a pen that is now at rest will best convey what the heart has found in this ministry:

If I open the Old Testament anywhere, or the gospels, or the epistles, what different atmospheres I find myself in at once! In the Old, ways, dealings, government, man -- though man and the world governed by God; piety no doubt, but piety in that scene; and even in the gospels and epistles the difference is quite as great, in certain respects more important. In the epistles (so the Acts), one active to gather; souls devoted to Christ; valuing Him and His work above all; power shown more than in Christ on earth, as He promised -- it is gathering, then caring power. I get back -- though now in the power of the Holy Ghost, and grace in a saving, gathering way -- to man; but it soon fails. But in the gospels I find a Center where my mind reposes, which is Itself always Itself, and nothing like It; moves through a discordant scene, attracting to Itself through grace (what no apostle did or could do), and shining in Its own perfection, unaltered and unalterable in all circumstances. It is the thing about which all service is occupied as its point of departure, and to which all under divine influence is attracted, for it is God.

These are precious words, conveying what the heart has here so really found. May those who now read these addresses, as well as those who heard them delivered, be through them more filled with His own blessed company for the “little while” that yet remains.

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Chapter 1: Luke 2:1-14

You will find, beloved brethren, in the Old Testament Scriptures, that the holy anointing oil employed in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priest’s office was composed of several essential ingredients. These were myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, with oil olive. Ex. 30. Imitation or common use of it was prohibited. It was specially set apart for that sacred purpose, and was that oil which descended on Aarons beard, and came down to the skirts of his clothing, typifying the fulness and perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ as the power of all that was bestowed upon Aaron and his sons.

Now, has it ever struck you that one reason why we have in the New Testament Scriptures four different accounts of our Lord Jesus Christ is this -- that different excellences and perfections in the Christ of God might be set forth? I am not speaking of the subjects of the gospels, which, of course, are plainly to be seen. I speak of the striking manner in which, for faith, the glory of Christ stands out in this fact -- that each historian, as has been said, “produces different parts in this rare and sweet compound.” See Ex. 30. And therefore you have God in His good pleasure employing four men -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- who were specially raised up and qualified by Him to present, by the Holy Ghost, the person of Christ in the various aspects in which we find Him revealed; and the one we have before us this evening is Luke.

The beauty of the Gospel of Luke, and that which gives it its character, is not so much the setting of the Lord Jesus Christ before us in His official, His personal, or His relative glories, nor indeed, as elsewhere, in His eternal Sonship, which is the characteristic of John all through, but its presentation of Christ Himself as Man. But, mark, apart altogether from that which belonged to Him, and that which He did, as Man; it is His person as Man. And, as has been said, such a Man that might have been seen any day in those wonderful times in which He lived and walked in this poor world, perfect Man, though very God. And, beloved brethren, what a theme for us, if our hearts are free; if we are at liberty, through His grace, from things around and within that distract! How sweet to sit down and contemplate this blessed Son of man, to trace His footsteps, to dwell upon all His grace, and drink in of the mind of God concerning Him! If I may say so, I believe this is the one great need of the moment for the saints of God.

Through God’s grace we have, I trust, been instructed in the doctrines of Scripture. Through His infinite mercy -- I trust it is not too much to say -- we know something (small it may be) of the doctrines, the great essential truths, in the epistles of the New Testament. But, beloved friends, it is another thing to know the One who gave accomplishment to all; to keep the company of the One who is above all; to drink in the spirit of this blessed One, and then to reflect it. And that is what mere information in Scripture will never give you. No amount of knowledge, however correct; no amount of intelligence, however exact, will ever put upon your soul the impress of the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must be in His company, you must walk with Him, for that; and there is an abstraction, and a power, and a blessedness about it beyond all description. If you observe, you will ever find it so. The more accustomed your heart becomes adoringly to walk with Him, and know Him as a real living Person, a Companion, a Friend; One always at your side, so that you never can talk about being lonely or desolate, of being forsaken or disappointed or cast down, because He is ever with you, and He never changes, but is always Himself, and always equal to every occasion; the more, I say, Christ Himself is before you, the company you keep forms you, and you in turn reflect it. Think what a different kind of people we should be in our words, our character, our personal bearing, even towards one another! Do you suppose there would be the ungraciousness, the roughness, the uncouthness there is? Oh, beloved friends, it may be that we think little of these things, but they bespeak absence of the company and mind of Christ! You cannot be in His company, and gather up His mind, and act thus. Impossible! Indeed, that is the comfort of the gospel history. It brings us into direct contact, direct company with the blessed person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another striking feature about the Gospel of Luke. From the moment you come to it, you get the sense that heaven is open. His gospel, in a very peculiar way, places you under an opened heaven; and, beloved friends, it is open from the very beginning. If you read the first chapter, you will find the visit of the angel from heaven to Zacharias. That is heaven, so to speak, let down and opened upon earth. When you come to the second chapter, you find all the world in the hands of Caesar, and God’s own people Israel also in subjection to the Roman power. The world had got away from God, and was managing its own affairs without Him. Everything was running its accustomed course, and God was left out. God was outside the whole ordered system of things, and Israel were enslaved. If they had only had eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, the yoke that pressed them down ought to have told them of their low moral condition before Him -- but there was none of that. And while all the earth is in its full-blown departure from God, Caesar Augustus decreesthat the whole world shall be taxed; and God turns it to account to bring about the accomplishment of His own purposes. Then you find the blessed Savior ushered into the scene. But in the second chapter you have to go outside with God to the plains of Bethlehem. Not to the great ones of the earth, but to the poor, ignoble, unknown, disregarded men who were following their lowly occupation of watching over their flocks by night; and then we get the blessed intimation of the angel to them:

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior (Luke 2:10, 11).

Now, if you reflect, you will see very clearly that for God to reveal the thoughts of His own heart to us is a very different thing from His investigating the thoughts of our hearts. It is
most important to have the thoughts of our hearts investigated, and for God Himself to read those thoughts out to us in secret; to look us through and through, and tell us what He sees in us, and knows about us. And we all have to pass through that personally. It is not merely the great fact, as in Scripture; but we have to travel with God, and learn in His light all that He knows about us, and sees in us. That is a necessary and an important part; but for God to reveal His thoughts to us, for God to tell us the secrets of His bosom, the thoughts that were in His mind and heart long ere sin came in, long ere this world began; thoughts that ever centered in the Son of His love; oh, what a different thing that is! And here you have a little letting out of it. “Unto you,” says the angel to the poor, obscure men outside the city, outside the world, outside the ordered system, “is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (v. 11).

The earth was asleep, but all heaven awake. Such was the contrast. Earth in a deathlike slumber, and heaven all alive to the fulness of the grace of God that has just come down. “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior.”

This blessed fact is the very beginning of everything for us. But you may say, as many often say, “What is there in that? I know salvation.” Ah! but do you know the Savior? Have you considered that it is possible to know about the work of Christ, and yet have but a poor knowledge of the Savior? Oh, there is a very great difference! You might know safety, you might be clear from coming judgment and from coming wrath, and yet be to a very great extent with small knowledge of Christ personally. But you could not know the Savior, you could not come in to personal contact with Him, without your soul having the divine meltings which that knowledge brings. And, beloved friends, there is another thing. You may know security, and be free from wrath and judgment, and still go on hard and fast with the world. That, I grieve to say, is what a great many people do. They try to hold religion, as they call it, in one hand, and grasp the world in the other. That is what hundreds of God’s people are doing. They may be clear about their acceptance, and their immunity from coming judgment, fully assured of all this, yet they do not seem to have that personal knowledge of the Savior which would fortify their hearts against the world; and, be assured, nothing but this will do it. Oh, brethren, assuredly if we know and have to do with the Savior Himself (I do not now speak of what He has wrought, however blessed), then the end of everything that could attract us down here is before us.

I remember hearing, not very long ago, an interesting account of the visit of a servant of God (now gone to his rest) to a remarkable man, and dear child of God, who lived away amongst the hills in a distant part of England, and who had been so chafed and exercised and harassed by all the varied trials which have, alas! sprung up amongst the children of God, the decisions which have been permitted to test them, that he was rather timid about having anything to do with almost any other Christian. (I am not justifying that for a moment. I simply state what occurred.) Well, the visitor came to the door (the two were strangers to one another in the flesh), and sought admission, but was met somewhat coldly and roughly; so much so, that at last he simply stood and repeated these blessed words, “I was a stranger, and ye took me in.” Ah! beloved brethren, the door was at once flung wide open, taxing the utmost strength of the hinges, and the welcome words were heard, “Come ye in.”

I give you this merely as an illustration of what I seek to press. Now, here was one who had come into personal contact with Christ, who knew Christ, over whom the words of Christ had power; and from the moment those words were uttered he seemed not to be able to do enough for the one to whom he was cold and distant before; he could not now bestow upon him too much care or kindness, too great hospitality, or too much affection; and then listen to his testimony. He said, “Ever since I have seen your blessed Man in the glory of God, I have seen the end of everything down here.”

Beloved friends, nothing else will dim and fade things down here. Doctrines apart from Him, principles however true, have not the displacing power of Himself in the heart. I am not (God is my witness) speaking a word against doctrines, or principles of truth, for they have their place; but nothing will spoil the world for you, my brother, my sister; nothing will take the value out of present things but personal contact, in spirit and by faith, with Him who had not in this world where to lay His head. Do you want a sign, a proof? “Ye shall find the Babe,” you shall find this Blessed One, “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (v. 12). Think of all that is involved in this statement; the humiliation, the stoop, the emptying. Think of the circumstances in which He was found here. The mighty God, come down in grace, is seen a Babe, in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!

And is that the world you covet, and court, and are shaking hands with, my brother or sister here to-night? Is that the world, young man, you desire to get on in, which gave the One to whom you trace your every blessing a reception like this? Oh, beloved friends, I feel persuaded that every one whose heart ever came in contact with the Lord Jesus, and who remembers Him in these circumstances, will turn his back happily on a world that gave his Lord only a manger at His birth, and a cross between two thieves at His death. Oh, to be able gladly to bid a long and final farewell to such a scene! But for this, beloved, you must in your souls be acquainted personally with Himself; and, I further believe, with Him where He is.

A dear saint of God, and servant of Christ, W. H. Hewitson, is reported to have said that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ better than he knew any living man. And this is considered a wonderful thing to say; but is there anything so wonderful about it? I ask you affectionately to-night, Did any one ever place himself at the disposal of your knowledge as Christ did? Did any one ever say to you, “Come, touch me; handle me; know me; abide with me; see me; observe me”? 
Did any one ever do that? He has said, “Come and see”; “Abide in Me”; “Come and dine”; “Come . . . and rest.” Did any one ever do as He has done? He has laid Himself out in His blessed grace that we should know Him, the most accessible and gracious amongst men.

I am firmly convinced that the great danger of the child of God at the present moment is the world. The world has crept in and made sad inroads upon us. I am not thinking so much of the world as a snare; but what I see and deplore is the world on principle amongst the saints of God; that saints are positively citizens of this world on principle. I can understand one not cast on God entrapped and ensnared by it. Surely we all must know how exposed we are to any advance or any proposition in this way; and that we have to go through it with Christ before us, the only source of power and safety. But what I dread is that there should be the going into it on principle; adopting its ways, principles, habits, without a twitch of conscience as to it. That is the terrible part of it. Thus it is worldly positions are taken up and adopted as a matter of course. The necessity of the case is pleaded in extenuation; the impossibility of succeeding otherwise is urged; or the threadbare plea is made, “You see, I could not get on without it.” Better far, my brother, have done with it. Oh that it were engraved as with a pen of iron on our souls, of God at the present moment is the world. The world has accessible and gracious amongst men.

Did any one ever do that? He has said, “Come and see”; and differ, but God

saving power. It was not God testing, or proving, or detecting; but God manifest in flesh -- God, in the blessedness and fulness of His own grace, become Man. This is the divine spring and motive of piety -- God manifest in flesh. Piety is called forth by this. God manifest in flesh is the great productive and forming power of godliness. That is the meaning of the mystery of godliness. Is it, do you suppose, something in us? Ah! be assured it is not. All who know themselves in His presence know that the eye must be turned out upon an object for power, not on what is within. God manifest in the flesh is objective, and is the real power of Christianity. The subjective occupies you with yourself, and with what goes on within. Let us not appear to deny, in any sense, that there is the subjective side of the truth as the result of the objective presentation of Christ to the soul; and, assuredly, in proportion as we have before our souls what God presents to us in Scripture, and ministers by His Spirit, even the person of His Son, the subjective state is formed by that presentation. And herein is the real power of all true godliness: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

We are in the habit of making deductions and drawing conclusions, and all well in their place; but the facts of revealed truth are the things we draw conclusions from, and they are set forth by God in His own way. And that is the blessedness of His revelation. Everything else in this world is shifting and changing. Our deductions and conclusions vary and differ, but God’s revelation ever abides the same. Perhaps, too, it is white-heat, as it were, in our hearts to-day, and ice-cold to-morrow. That is just what we are, and what goes on within us; but when we come to God’s Word, there is no variation nor shadow of turning. It is always the same, and herein lies the blessedness of looking at the manifestation of the grace of God to us in the person of His blessed Son come down into this world.

There are three things that come out in the praise of the heavenly host, things which never could be true till then. We get first the ascription of “Glory to God in the highest.” It is always well to begin there. Generally we do not so begin: but nothing is lost by beginning at God’s side. “Glory to God in the highest.” That never could have been said with such deep meaning before. It is not that the whole state of blessing had not to be made good historically, but the announcement of the blessing is connected with Christ’s person and His coming. That is what is so blessed! Oh, the blessedness of connecting all with Him, with His person, when He is positively come into this world! Here was the One upon whose shoulders, as it were, the whole weight of this blessed work could be placed. In Jesus, God found One on whom He could rest for the upholding of all His glory. Well the Father knew that He, the Blessed One, would sustain everything for Him, as well as bring forth blessing for the poor creature that had departed from Him. How securely it all stood in and under Him who had come! “Glory to God in the highest” tells us this. Now God can announce the fact Himself, and the Lord Jesus spoke of it anticipatively when He said, “I have glorified Thee on
the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4).

This, then, is the announcement made, we may say, from heaven, yet upon earth, the very sphere where God had been outraged by sin. Man, as far as he could, as far as his responsibility was concerned, had tarnished the glory of God. Everything was in ruins; Israel, the chosen people, in bondage; the world a vast moral chaos, when He came who alone was the hope of man. But when Jesus is born the thoughts of God and heaven are made known upon earth. The sons of God had shouted when creation came forth from God’s hand. The Book of Job tells us how they were moved -- “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). Creation, come forth in perfection from the hand of the great Creator, thus moved them; but when they look at this great sight, they praise. There is great beauty in all this. Creation can evoke by its magnificence and grandeur the songs of the morning stars, and the shouts of the sons of God. We can, as it were, hear them say, as they beheld the mighty power of God put forth to bring this orb into existence, “The hand that made us is divine.” A very beautiful and blessed sight creation was, but it pertained to Jesus alone to be the key of that note, “Glory to God in the highest.”

I would now for a little remind you how all this was made good, and on what this glory rested as a basis; and this will at once bring our souls to that great and blessed work of the cross, which alone could be the foundation on which the whole fabric of blessing, as it were, could rest. Christ must give to God a full equivalent for all His holy, righteous demands, ere glory could really be established; yet here there is no allusion to this; the work is not named. I think this is one of the most beautiful features of the passage, that all mention of the work is left out. There is not, you will observe, a hint or an allusion of any kind to the great work which the Savior was to accomplish. Of course it is understood, but it is not here expressed. How is this? The whole blessing is summed up in His own Person. The great and blessed One is here come who was to do the work. Verily the Person who was God manifest in flesh had come. He, and He alone, was competent to undertake for God’s glory. He, and He alone, could give effect to all the counsels and purposes of God. Who else could lay the foundation for these? Who else could put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? Who else could lay one hand on the throne of God, and the other on a poor sinner? “He alone the Savior is.” In connection with His advent, heaven can celebrate victories yet to be won, and connect those victories with Himself.

Now look at the second thing: “On earth peace.” But there is little peace on earth now. That is too sadly evident. The spirit of strife and war rests on the whole earth. I am speaking of the whole Church of God. There is the brokenness of heart and the tenderness of spirit, and there is as well the feeling of shame. I say this affectionately. Bear with me! At this moment the divided, broken state of the Church is the scorn of the sceptic, the stock-in-trade of the infidel, and the delight of the devil. We are a positive disgrace at this moment in the eyes of the world. I am speaking of the whole Church of God. The great hindrance in the way of God’s purposes of grace in the world at the present moment is the state of the Church of God. Are we not to feel that? Have we so isolated ourselves from God’s Church, and have we shut ourselves up in what we have made a narrow section of it, that we have no heart, no feelings of compassion for, no tenderness in yearning over, the state of the whole Church of God? If we had Christ’s mind we should feel it, we should verily be broken-hearted about it. And when I look around from place to place, and go to prayer-meetings, and never hear a breathing to God as to this, never a cry of compassion for, no allusion to this, never an allusion to it, how can I help saying, “It is not in our thoughts; it does not seem to burden us; to all appearance we are not feeling it”? Let me ask you, How should you feel if your own family were blighted and blasted and scattered to the very four winds -- hand against hand, and heart against heart? And yet that is not an exaggerated description of the state of Christ’s people. Oh, that we felt, even ever so little, our own sadly solemn part in...
it! Do we not know that there is something lying at our door? May God bring it home to us as we dwell on those beautiful words, “On earth peace.”

Thank God, it will be so yet! And there again is part of His blessedness. As has been so touchingly and beautifully said, “The state of blessedness was born in the birth of the Child.” It was not yet historically made good, but the blessing was born in the birth of Jesus, and therefore heaven can celebrate it on earth.

Then there is the third thing: “Good pleasure in men.” Herein is set forth the kindness, the goodness, the tenderness, the compassion, the interest of God, the purpose of God; His counsels as to the poor race that had departed from Him. God’s Son had become a Man. How could there be a doubt of God’s interest in men? Jesus, God’s Son, had become a Man! Could He show poor creatures like you and me a greater proof of His interest in us, His pity for us, than by His blessed Son thus coming into this world? Oh, the comfort of that word, “Good pleasure in men”!

And, beloved friends, there is more than that, because it was not the power of God as Creator. That power had already been witnessed. He had displayed His eternal power and Godhead in bringing this world into existence.

“The spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.”

But the grace that could triumph over evil, the grace that could take occasion by the fall to show itself in its fulness, that is the wonderful thing. And that is exactly what we have here; it brings to mind that blessed word in Scripture, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). That is what God displayed. He was not overcome by the evil of man, His creature, but He overcame the evil by the good that was in Himself. He could now express the depths of the complacency of His wondrous love, His own Son having become a Man.

One word more, and I have done. I think there are two deeply practical things that are read out to us in this scripture. It is of great importance to see that the truth of God is practical, and speaks in a practical way. The first thing this tells me is what I am; what man is; what we all are; and this is a very important point. You may track a person’s footsteps, look at his ways, his character, the evil of his doings; and that may be a perfectly true exhibition of the evil of the heart. But here it is a deeper thing, although there is no mention of it. We learn what we are in the presence of this marvelous display of God’s grace. Look at the reception the Lord Jesus got in this world; look at the effect this had. If there had been the smallest response in man, the most latent seed of goodness in his nature; if there had been one redeeming feature in the creature, that could have been worked upon; the goodness of God in Jesus would have drawn that out, so that man would have answered to it. The person of the Lord Jesus would have attracted that to himself. You remember what He said: “They hated Me without a cause” (John 15:25). That is not a pleasant, but it is a very wholesome, truth for us to learn, because there is always a great danger of our becoming elated in our hearts because of the grace of God. It ought to be the other way. We ought to magnify the riches of His grace, as displayed to us in our worthlessness.

We find, then, these two things. First of all there was no power in man to profit by the grace when it came. Secondly, when it was brought to him, he refused it, rejected it, would not have it. These are two things that enhance the grace of God. First, I learn what I am as connected with the race that turned Jesus Christ out of this world, nailing Him to the cross. I learn that the same disposition, the same heart and nature those had who did that, are in you and me. It is not eradicated, changed, altered, improved, nor bettered. I learn in the presence of God the vileness of what I am, in the treatment the Lord Jesus received in this world. And then I learn the perfect goodness of God to me. I learn what God is in the marvelous display of His own goodness and kindness; and although I find it is all over with me as far as I am concerned in state and condition, yet there is fulness of blessing for me in that blessed One.

These are things very much on the surface, but just the things I am sure we need. Above all, think of the blessedness of His own person, when we become acquainted with Him, and with God in Him. Thus we get to know God in Him. We can say, blessed be His name, “I know God! I have met God in Him, I have seen God in Him, I have heard God in Him, am brought to God in Him, am set down in all the acceptance and fulness of blessing in Christ before God!” I believe it would be impossible for any one who had really made such acquaintance with Him to go on with the world. It would put you outside at once. The more you are brought into blessed acquaintance and communion with Him personally, the more you are cast outside the world that would not have Him.

May God, in His infinite mercy, suggest to us, for meditation when alone, somewhat more of the glories of the Lord Jesus, and affect our souls, and impart to us more of His spirit, more of His tender compassion and longsuffering, more of Himself, concerning whom, when He had come, the multitude of the heavenly host praised God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Chapter 2:
Luke 3:1-14, etc.

There is a very considerable interval between the events of this chapter and what was occupying us last Tuesday evening; and before passing on I would briefly notice the way in which the second chapter of Luke concludes.

You can see how that chapter gives us the early life of our Lord Jesus Christ; His infancy and youth; some details of the circumstances connected with Him in that period; ending with the wonderful declaration, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

That is a very blessed reality for us to dwell upon, because it sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ as God’s unique sheaf, so to speak, in His own intrinsic, untainted purity,
under God’s eye, as Man. This is the gospel, as we saw last week, that specially and peculiarly sets forth Christ as Man. Thus then the second chapter ends: “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” There was no one like Him. He was alone in His perfection; growing up, as it were, for the time of the exercise of His ministry, which was yet to come. In infancy, youth, and manhood we see Him in all that beautiful subjection to His parents which marked Him as the perfect Man; having, at the same time, the fullest sense in His own person of who He was, as well as of His mission. “How is it,” said He, “that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?”

Think, beloved friends, of all that is involved in these words; the sense that the blessed Lord had of who He was, what He was, and what He was here for; and mark as well, too, His perfect subjection as Man which accompanied that knowledge: “He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them”; He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

This brings us to the third chapter, which presents what is introductory to the commencement of His ministry; and here let me show you an interesting point with regard to the manner in which Luke unfolds his instruction as to that. Before the blessed Lord Jesus Christ comes forward to exercise His ministry, the first thing presented is the world as it then existed.

Everything was in the most perfect order, as far as man could judge of it, and as far as man’s wisdom could accomplish it. You will find the emperor in his place, and the priests in their place; you will find, as has been said, government and religion all in their due place and order. That is how the chapter begins. It shows you the external condition of things in this world. There was everything that could be appreciated by men; all that could delight the heart of man; nothing to shock or outrage the feelings of mankind. Still all was a wilderness as far as God and light and truth were concerned. Now, is it not very striking to see how things that are excellent in the eyes of men, and appreciated by men, such a state of order and decorum, as we say, that which we have a sort of satisfaction and delight in, that all this is utterly desolation so far as God is concerned? And therefore it is that God thus puts His mark of disapproval upon it. Instead of Christ being ushered into that order of things to take a throne there, to take a kingdom there, to acknowledge and accept the people in that condition, you find that God has His servant, -- not at Jerusalem, He would not have His witness at Jerusalem, -- but He has His witness exactly in that position, exactly in that locality, which is characteristic of what the whole scene was under His own eye; viz., in the wilderness. And another gospel tells us more than that, too; not merely the fact of John being in the wilderness, but that he was a voice crying in the wilderness. Nothing could be more expressive than that. The servant of God outside the ordered state of things, not claiming a throne for Jesus, but ploughing up the consciences of men. You find the most solemn voice of God here to the conscience. How striking and instructive it is! “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth” (vv. 4, 5).

These times of John were very like the days of the Lord Jesus Himself. I have no doubt at all that John, in his day, was looked upon just as the Lord Jesus was looked upon in His day, as a trouble of men. And when things are in that state before God, at any period, the man who stands apart on God’s behalf will always be regarded as an intruder. He could not be an inclusive man; he must, from the very nature of things, be a man who stands apart, whatever the compassion of heart, whatever the longings and yearnings of his soul over the condition in which people are. His position must be one outside the whole existing order of things. How could he be a testimony for God if he were in any way associated with it, if he were part and parcel of it, partaking of its methods and principles? How could he thus stand for God, and His testimony in relation to it? “The axe is laid unto the root of the trees” (v. 9). God must have this moral blot removed; He cannot accept a throne amongst a people in such a state as that. There must be a moral condition suitable to Him. This demand was the very thing that drew forth the proud opposition of Israel to Christ and God. Had Christ come and accepted honors from the nation as it stood, and taken His throne in the midst of them, recognizing them as they were, they would all have received Him; He would have been gladly welcomed and accepted. But for God to put His lance, as it were, into that putrid sore, and by John’s testimony to say, “No, there must be a moral state of things suited to Me; I cannot reign over a nation or people in that condition; there must be purity and holiness, the sweeping out of those corruptible things; I will not take My throne there”; -- that was the very thing which stirred up the hatred of men. If you stay in corruption, and protest, you will be allowed to stay on for ever; but if you take your stand outside; if you walk, as it were, in the wilderness of this world, separate, apart, like John the Baptist, both morally and spiritually; if you withdraw from the manners, modes, and maxims of a corrupt scene like this, having a testimony to render, the voice of God through you, His own Word, then you are an intruder and unwelcome. But if you remain in the midst of it, if you accept it as it is, you may protest, and protest, and protest; it will be to no purpose; there is no power in it; your presence countenances the corruption, and negatives and annuls your protest.

This brings us to another point. You will perceive that John’s ministry was really prophetic. Now, prophecy may be looked at in two ways. Sometimes our view of it is too limited; we have too often an imperfect knowledge of what it is. There are many prophecies which are not the foretelling of future events, although, of course, that thought is included in the term. Prophecy is not merely the foretelling of future events, but the presentation of the stern reality of things as they are. If any man, any servant of God, is empowered by God to bring to bear upon people’s consciences the awful
reality of things as they are; if he, by the Spirit of God, is enabled to bring the Word of God to bear upon men’s consciences, so that there is the detection of hidden things by the power of that Word, that is prophecy.

John 4 furnishes an instance of this. It is exactly what the woman of Samaria found with the Lord Jesus Himself at Jacob’s well. As He spoke to that poor woman He brought the truth, which He Himself was, in all its own power to bear on her conscience. He told her her history, opened up the hidden depths of her heart. As God He was there looking down, and searching her through and through. He could tell that woman everything in her whole life. “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet,” she said. He revealed to her the solemn reality of her state before God.

That is prophecy in one aspect. No doubt it foretells future events, but you must not limit it to that. Indeed, in the New Testament, prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit of God acting in power in the assembly; and there it is exclusively bringing to bear on the conscience the Word of God by the Spirit of God. It is the Word of God conveyed to the conscience in such power through the ministry of the prophet as to produce the conviction that God Himself is there. John’s ministry was thus prophetic.

Another thing that is exceedingly interesting with regard to prophecy is, that when everything is in a state of ruin and corruption, this kind of ministry is God’s great way of reaching the consciences of His people. The ministry of the Word is made to apply to people’s souls. It is not so much deductions from the Word as the Word of the living God itself brought to bear on the consciences of men. It is not what the speaker says, but what that Word says, that bears fruit. That is the character of all true prophetic ministry.

Mark it here very distinctly, as we have it in the second verse — “The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”

In this locality was his suited place at this juncture, and not in the holy city, not in the ordered state of things according to the mind of man. He was one outside and apart; so that, like the prophet of old, he might have said, “Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men” (Jer. 9:2).

Here, then, is God’s messenger, His mouth-piece, His witness. The one He was about to use is the man outside in the desert. First of all we have the place; next, the Word of God came unto him. When everything is in rebellion and ruin and departure, God raises up a witness, who presents in his person and circumstances the salient characteristics of God’s message for the moment. The Word of God came unto John in the wilderness. The message was distinct. And when that Word reached him, it constituted his commission, his ordination, his consecration, or whatever else you may be pleased to call it. He received it from God Himself; he was sent forth, and he went out true to that Word.

And now we come to the terms of the testimony he rendered. Let us look at it again; it is a most withering word. You could not get a truer sense of the utter moral wreck of everything before God than that which you get by reading and pondering over John’s message. There is not a class that is not addressed; there is not a soul but must be pierced through and through by it. Your heart must faint if you look at the condition it describes, and that with regard to the coming kingdom, the coming of the Lord as the Messiah. If you think of the state of things depicted by John’s message, your heart must sink within you. You are bound to say within yourself, “What is man?” Yet there is one bright thing in it, one little sentence in Isa. 40, which Luke quotes from, that has the deepest comfort for the soul — “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass” (vv. 3-6).

“Well, the comfort is not there,” you say. Perfectly true; it is most convicting, most searching, most solemn:

All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.

The best part of it is the most fleeting:

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

Now, it is in this last sentence that the real comfort lies. How blessed, how consoling, how wonderful, too, coming in exactly where it does! God always works in this way; that is to say, first of all He exposes, reveals, manifests, lets His light in on the condition of things under His holy eye. How would you like those eyes of fire turned upon you? I speak to you earnestly, affectionately, this night, my brother, my sister. Are you prepared to be searched through and through, and discovered as to all the things that are hidden away there in your hearts, and which you think nobody else knows anything about? That is God’s way ever. Man’s way is to cover up. God’s way is to bring out into light. Man’s way is to conceal. God’s way is to manifest. He must have the thing in open daylight, as it were. He cannot allow you to cover up all that sin and iniquity. He cannot permit you to cling to corruption. He must have corruption known as corruption. He must let His light in upon things, and uncover them to us, and give them their true name. But when He does so there is immense comfort in this assurance, “The word of our God shall stand for ever.” In such days as we are passing through, that is an immense comfort. We must feel to-day, if indeed we have hearts to feel, if we are not enveloped in deep insensibility, we must feel the heaving, the rocking, the tottering, of everything down here. Let me tell you affectionately that there is not one solitary stone of stability in any one thing in this whole earthly scene, not a single solid resting-place can faith find here. The whole system is a
shifting quicksand.

Now, is it otherwise if we come to the Church? By “the Church” I mean the Church of God. We are bound to own no other church than that. There is the Church of God, the Body of Christ, and all Christians belong to it. Everything else is sectarian. It matters not by what name it is called. It may be the most noble name that could be given; but everything short of the whole Church of the living God, the Body of Christ, is something less than that which is in God’s thoughts. Now then, suppose our expectations are in the direction of the Church. Looking at it in that way what shall we find? You know very well there were supposed to be certain landmarks, certain great heights, as it were, of security with regard to the truth, with regard to the doctrines of the Word of God. You know very well that security and preservation was expected from these, and they were supposed to maintain the truth intact, and to be a sort of guard to keep the truth. Well, you must surely have observed how the tide has overflowed all these. The rising tide of infidelity has gone beyond the loftiest barriers that man could put up to defend the truth; and all the ancient landmarks of creeds, confessions, and articles of faith are being rapidly submerged. The infidel mind of man is more and more disposed to unbelief in what is supernatural and divine. Where, then, is stability? Faith confidently and quickly replies, In the Word of the living God. And that is divine. Where, then, is stability? Faith confidently and more disposed to unbelief in what is supernatural and divine.

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But it may be that I am speaking to one here to-night who has no interest in these things at all. Friend, and fellow-traveler to eternity, what have you got? Can you say you have got Christ, you have got the truth, you have got salvation? If not, what have you? Oh, friend, will you not face this question to-night? What are you resting on? Everything is fast breaking up. People in the world know that well. The feeling abroad in the world to-day is one of general insecurity, of universal distrust as to everything. How blessed then is this verity of God, The Word of the LORD shall stand fast for ever. I commend that Word to you to-night. That Word will reveal what your poor heart wants. It reveals Christ, salvation, everything that your soul needs.

That was John’s testimony. First of all the withering up of everything that was opposed to God, and at the same time bringing that blessed Word to bear on the conscience, as well as ministering comfort by it. If any poor heart was stricken, there was, as it were, a little balm dropped from heaven. Oh, how like our God in His grace all this is!

Now we come, after John’s testimony is given, to an instance of another very interesting characteristic of the Gospel of Luke. We read:

But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison (vv. 19, 20).

It is remarkable that this account should be given here, as the actual imprisonment of John did not take place at that time at all. Why, then, is it mentioned in this connection? Because Luke ever has a moral purpose in view, and presents things as they suit that purpose. Hence he commonly disregards the mere order of time; that is to say, he takes the events and circumstances, and groups them together with a moral object before his mind. Of course, all that he wrote, and all that the writers of the other gospels wrote, was inspired and revealed by the Spirit of God. Now, as to fact, John was not cast into prison until a considerable time after this. Yet I think you can have no difficulty in seeing that Luke introduces it here because he wants to put John aside, in order to bring in Jesus. That is the object of its being recorded in this place. He will now bring Jesus on the scene, and therefore he disposes, as it were, of John. It was perfectly true, remember, that John was cast into prison, but not exactly at this juncture.

Observe what follows:

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened (v. 21).

You could not conceive anything more blessed than the suddenness with which we are, so to speak, ushered into the presence of the Master. The message and ministry of the forerunner has terminated in the record here in the most abrupt way; and John being removed off the scene in a moment, Christ henceforth occupies it. Now we are face to face with Jesus, and, oh, what a presentation of Him! what a blessed and practical setting forth of Him it is! All the people were baptized. Jesus was baptized!

Oh, beloved friends, what a comfort for one’s soul it is that the Lord, a Man from heaven, is before our eyes here! And if your heart retires from all the misery and wretchedness and failure and breakdown and weariness presented in all around, what a comfort that your eye may now rest on Jesus. And there alone it is that true rest is found. You cannot reach it in the changing things down here, nor find it in altering the condition of things around you, either in the Church or in the world. You will never find a ray of sunshine or a moment of quiet until your eye rests on Jesus! Oh, what repose He gives! What comfort and satisfaction He brings! Well may we sing of Him, that blessed “Source of calm repose” --

“Thy mighty name salvation is,
And keeps our happy souls above;
And joy and everlasting love;
And keeps our happy souls above;
Thy mighty name salvation is,
And keeps our happy souls above;
Comfort it brings, and power and peace,
And joy and everlasting love;
To us, with Thy dear name, are given
Pardon and holiness and heaven.”

And here we have Him presented as a Man -- Man in absolute perfection set before us in these two things. Baptized! Why? His perfect subjection in taking His place with those who turned to God in the midst of His own people, His submitting to baptism, was the expression of His own appreciation of whatever turning to God was found in the midst of the nation. It reminds us of that beautiful verse in Psa. 40 --

Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God.” (vv. 7, 8).

Mark, “I delight to do” it. You and I do it under constraint,
often if not always; but with Christ it was the subjection of a perfect Man. It is wrought in us through many a sorrow, many a difficulty, many a pain, many a tempest. Thank God it is so. Thanks to a faithful God; when He begins He finishes. But, oh, the blessed contrast in Jesus, whose words were, “I delight to do Thy will!” Then, as regards a poor, trembling few in the nation, He thus speaks:

My goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight (Psa. 16:2, 3).

His goodness as Man did not extend to Jehovah, but to the excellent of the earth. He says, “My delight is in them.” Thus it is, the blessed One takes His place with those turning to God in the midst of His nation, saying, as it were, “I must be there.” So He is baptized. Oh, how blessed is that sight, beloved friends! How precious to dwell upon it! What a contrast to every other man! Here, in very truth, the eye can rest even on this blessed One, a Man in the perfection of His own nature.

But there is another word here; viz., “praying.” I do not know any other incident in His life more full of moral glories and beauties than this. He is presented in these characteristic ways very blessedly in the Gospel of Luke. This gospel, more often than any other, sets the Lord before us praying. In all the great events of His life you find Him praying. And there is another thing that I would dwell upon. You not only find Him set before us as praying, but you will find how blessedly, as a Man perfect in dependence, He takes the attitude of prayer.

Now, beloved friends, is it not true that there is a growing tendency amongst Christians amounting to a want of reverence in this respect? I know exactly what the mind of man is, and how readily it can rebound from one thing to the opposite. Thank God if we have been delivered from superstition; but, oh, let us seek grace from Him so as not to plunge into irreverence. Be assured we are in special danger in that direction, and all the more because we have been emancipated from the thraldom of superstition. When we come into the presence of God let it be with a due sense of His presence, and let us earnestly desire the manner of reverence due to Him. Surely, if the seraphim covered their faces and their feet while they cried, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory,” it becomes those who in spirit and in truth worship the Father not to be their inferiors in reverence.

Baptized and praying, the heavens are opened upon this perfect One. And how well you can understand that there is now an Object the heavens can open upon. Never before had there been one whom the heavens could salute according to God in the midst of His nation, saying, as it were, “I must be there.” So He is baptized. Oh, how blessed is that sight, beloved friends! How precious to dwell upon it! What a contrast to every other man! Here, in very truth, the eye can rest even on this blessed One, a Man in the perfection of His own nature.

But this is only in passing; yet I could not help bringing it in here. We see then the heavens open upon the Man who was everything to God and heaven. Now the heavens are open for us to see that same blessed Man in glory. Thank God, He is not changed! The circumstances are changed; He was in humiliation; He is in glory; yet He is the same blessed Man. I do like that old hymn of Hart’s: “There is a Man, a real Man.” And with the same heart and affection, the same love and kindness. He is in glory. There I can see Him. Standing upon the platform of His grace, I can behold Him where He is. There is nothing that dazzles, that repels, that turns me aside; for, standing upon the platform of His grace, I can rest there.

And that is the real security against everything down here. It is not finding out that things down here are worthless, but finding out that the One in heaven is above all. It is exactly like John the Baptist himself. It is, in its own way, precisely that which wrought in him. His soul had found an Object in Jesus that was above and beyond all to him. Let us just for a moment turn to it. They wanted to make rivals of John and Christ. That horrid, awful spirit of rivalry, which the devil is the prime mover in, is attempted to be set up between the forerunner and the Master. They come to John,
and say, “Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him” (John 3:26). What is John’s reply to this? “I am delighted,” says John. “You cannot bring me tidings that more delight my heart. All my heart is satisfied. All men come to Him. Well, then, I have got what my heart longs for.” “He that cometh from heaven is above all” (v. 31).

“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand” (v. 35). “This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (vv. 29, 30).

Oh, beloved brethren, believe me when I say it again affectionately, What we want in these days is not more clearness of perception, but more room in our hearts for Christ! Be assured there are a thousand difficulties, a thousand questions, which would be all solved in a moment if it were simply and only Christ before us.

Well, may God use His Word to set Him before us in all His blessedness and exquisite beauty. And if the heavens opened to Him, if He was the Object of the Father’s love, may God grant, in His infinite grace, that we also may learn to have no other object, no one else before us but Himself. May God command His blessing on His own Word, and in His grace speak to our souls through it, for Christ’s sake.

Chapter 3:
Luke 3:21, 22

The ministry of John the Baptist, which mainly occupied us last week, was of such an exceedingly searching nature to every class, that none were exempt from responsibility by the application of his word to their consciences. It was as like the ministry of Elijah of old as anything could be. Indeed, the angel Gabriel said of John that he should go before the Lord “in the spirit and power of Elias”; and that is what characterized the searching, sifting nature of his testimony. It was preparatory for the One that was coming. It said, in fact, that God was coming.

I suppose that, in some sense, God would send out, and does send out, morally, ministry of a like nature at the present moment, in connection with the near return of His blessed Son; only in this way, that it is a waking up of His own people. God would do this, beloved friends, and, I have no doubt, is doing it, in His grace, and in His own way. He is stirring up the hearts of His saints in these last times. When I say “His saints,” I mean every Christian; I mean all His own, wherever they are; not merely a few out of the whole, or any particular body; but ALL; the whole Church of the living God on earth. For wherever there is one of Christ’s members; wherever there is one that is purchased with His blood; surely God has a specially peculiar waking-up voice for such at this moment with respect to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this it is that makes it so solemn for ourselves. We must put the question to ourselves (if, indeed, we are accustomed to live in the application of the word of the Lord to our own consciences and souls), “Am I ready for His coming?” I do not now mean merely in title; I do not mean to confine the challenge to the question of fitness; but am I practically ready for all that is involved in this word, “The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”? It is very searching if, in truth and verity, we apply it to our own hearts.

John’s ministry was of a larger and wider nature, because it took in all classes; it extended to every one; not merely to Israel, but to all mankind. It was also preparatory; not to the establishment of the kingdom in the sense that the Lord would then set it up, but for the reason that God was coming. The Jews might speak of the Messiah to come according to their own thoughts; but what is pressed here is, that God is coming. John was to go before the face of God, who in His grace became a Man; but still it was God who was coming.

Now, if we think of it in that way, it searches our consciences and hearts; and that is what the word of God ever does. The Lord make us honest with our own consciences! It is a great thing to be searched down to the very depths of our moral being. It is not a question of what people may say or think of us, but how this word cuts us. And, when it is so, the inquiry arises at once, “What shall I do?” If you look at the ministry of John, you see every class brought in wanting; all the people are brought in deficient. They come and ask him, “What shall we do?” There is no preparedness anywhere; there is imperfection manifested wherever you turn; and if you think of all the grace of God shown to this world; the manifestation of God’s kindness, and mercy, and favor down here on every side; the pains He has taken with man; the pure grace He has displayed to sinners, as well as to His own; you might well ask the question which is asked in Scripture, “What is man?” And your heart would sink within you, for, no matter where you turn, you fail to find anything suited to God. Whatever there be that at all meets His mind is the product of His own grace. If there is anything which, in the smallest degree, is suited to Him, He is the One who formed it. Look at the creature in any condition as the fruit of God’s favor bestowed on him, and you must ask the question, “What is man?” You find faithlessness, inconsistency, and departure on all sides; and nowhere more than when you look at the Church. What is the Church of God upon earth to-day but the witness to the fact of the utter ruin of that which was set up on earth to be a lamp-stand for the truth? Inspect, if you will, the nearest circle of all, even those who are most responsible, because most favored in having light from God as to His mind, as well as truth recovered for them which had been lost sight of for centuries. If we think for a moment of such, what are they but witnesses to the more grievous failure of not holding fast, and maintaining for God, the truth and light which, in His sovereign grace, He had made known to them? Your heart might well sink as you behold revolt and wickedness in the world; breakdown, failure, and departure in the Church, individually and collectively, wherever your eye rests; for there is nothing that you can find comfort in anywhere.

Such is the character of things brought before us in this third chapter of Luke; and such is the effect upon the conscience and soul that are touched by the sight. Well, it is exactly at this moment that God ushers the Lord Jesus on the
scene. Yes, when there is not a single thing that your heart can turn to with anything like comfort, then it is that God says, I will bring in One now whose like has never been found. Then the eye rests on Jesus; and there is perfection. I do not know anything more blessed; for it is perfection in a Man; One who, as a Man on earth, met every thought, and satisfied every desire, of the heart of God. I do not, of course, mean to say that He was not God. God forgive the thought! We know that He was divine, and we adore Him who was God’s own beloved Son, the eternal Son before ever time was, or the worlds were made. But I am speaking of Him now as entering into time, coming down into this world as Man, having taken that place in perfection before God. Again I repeat it, He was, as Man, perfect under God’s eye. That also is what comes before us in the third of Luke; and here alone there is rest.

It is very blessed to think that our faithful God and Father would assuredly bring our hearts at this moment to where perfection alone is; not to the creature, either individually or collectively, but to Jesus. That is, I believe, what is set before us here. Not, observe, Jesus as Messiah purging His floor; not His coming with the besom of judgment to remove defiled things. No doubt He will do that; He will baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. John’s testimony was,

I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable (Luke 3:16, 17).

That is not what we find here.

Ah, no! it is not judgment, not Messiah purging His floor, but a Man in lowliness and subjection, a Man according to the purposes and counsels of God, in whom all the dearest thoughts of God’s heart were folded up, the only perfect, spotless Man, even Jesus! I know nothing more blessed; and, beloved friends, if one poor thing may be permitted to put a practical question to other poor things like himself, I would affectionately ask you if you can sit down and meditate on Him who is thus set before us? Alas! how little we appear to be free to meditate. Oh that we were at liberty to meditate more! In this busy, restless age we seem to be so little at leisure, to have so little time to sit down and meditate upon what Jesus is, on the records about Him, on the testimony that God has given concerning Him. Oh, how different is this to meditating on our own thoughts or our own hearts! Verily, they are not worthy of it; they are at best but worthless. The very best thing that passes through these wretched hearts of ours is not worthy to be even mentioned. But on Him! Well may we say, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet!” Dwell upon Him; think of Him. The Holy Ghost has come to bear witness of Him. The Scriptures testify of Him. Wherever you turn your gaze the object of the heart of God is presented to you in Him. And, oh, beloved friends, that is what you ever find when you come to the knowledge of yourself, not merely of the things you have done, but when you come to know yourself; the depth of the abomination and the iniquity and the vileness of your own heart; the man of self there, the depths of that treacherous, yea, villainous nature within us all tonight! If you look, in company with God, at the wretchedness, the wickedness, the worthlessness of the creature, in a word, at what man is, you cannot but admit that just as he gave up God for an apple at the first, so he would do it now. Is that the material you have found out yourself to be made of? Man just come from God’s hand, in innocence, gave up God for an apple! That, without a gloss, is what man is; and we are all by nature of that man, and after his order. May God give us to look at it, to measure it, to acknowledge it in its awful depths. What for? Only that we may witness the perfection of man in Jesus! There alone is where solace for our hearts is found, in Him in whom all the thoughts of God’s heart are met, and where we find positive perfection in a Man under God’s eye. Over such a One it was that the heavens opened!

There is, I may say emphatically of this scripture, a great reality here (and we suffer loss if we do not give it its full measurement and place in our souls), that which we find also in Rev. 5 -- viz., He is worthy. It is as true a description as could be given of who He is and what He is, who is set before us here in all the perfection of the position He was pleased to take in this poor world. In that position He was Himself worthy. How could we see the heavens opened unless there was an object worthy? Now, that is exactly what you find in Rev. 5. There it is a question of opening a book. Here it is a question of opening the heavens. But whether it be the opening of a book of judgment, or the heavens opening to express the appreciation and delight of the heart of God in this blessed object upon earth, it is the same One, and He is worthy! “Worthy by all to be adored,” well may we sing.

Oh, beloved friends, what a theme for us! what a comfort if in any little measure our hearts are at leisure from ourselves to enter into God’s thoughts about the One thus presented to us in His own blessedness, One perfectly worthy, intrinsically worthy! And that is just what you find in Rev. 5. The prophet saw a seven-sealed book, and “wept much,” he says, because no one was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon (v. 3)

It was the book of the judgments of God with respect to the earth, and no one was found worthy to open it. But there were those at hand who had intelligence, and to the weeping seer it was said, “Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.” Then he says, “I beheld.” And what did he behold? A Lion? A mighty Conqueror? Neither of these, but a Lamb! A suffering Victim that had exhausted all the judgment of God! And when all the created intelligences of heaven see that form before them, they raise the note of praise -- WORTHY: “worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain” (v. 9).

Now, here in our scripture this evening it is only the first step, as it were, toward that. Jesus had only just entered on His ministry. It is perfectly true that we have not as yet come to the end of the work, the finish of it; but it was He, and He alone, who was to do it. And that is what is so blessed. You can predicate of the Lord Jesus Christ from the very
commencement of His ministry, “He shall work, and who can let it?” Everything that comes out with respect to His blessed person extended to the fulness of the work in its perfection. The whole state of blessing, all the good that was to be secured, all that answered to the heart and mind of God, was summed up there in His holy person. In due course He will accomplish the work given Him to do; but here the Person who should do the work is He who commands the whole attention of heaven -- the heavens were opened!

Two things come out here, and I earnestly ask you to bear them in mind: heaven opened on a Man perfect according to the counsels and purposes of God. It is what we find set forth in Psa. 8. Three times in Scripture the question is asked, “What is man?” It is asked by Job (ch. 7), by the remnant in Psa. 144, and by the Spirit of Christ in Psa. 8. Job asks it in view of God’s care over such an insignificant thing as he was: he exclaims, “What is man?” He says, as it were, “Why shouldst Thou think of me, consider me, a poor worm?” That is what man is. Then the remnant, smarting at the hands of their enemies, ask, “What is man?” Why dost Thou not take vengeance on, and rid us of, impotent oppressors such as men are? But in Psa. 8. it is the Spirit of Christ who asks, “What is man?” And the answer is JESUS, the Man according to the whole counsel of God. He is the One who meets the heart of God -- the personally worthy, intrinsically perfect, Man, upon whom the heavens can open. How blessed to think of Him!

Thank God, we can now look up into the opened heavens, and see Him there who is the Object of the heart of God. They were opened upon Him down here on earth long before the work of redemption was finished; because His person, in all the glories that marked it morally, was there under God’s eyes and before men. This moment, as we have seen, was that which ushered in His ministry. The heavens open upon Him; the Holy Ghost descends on Him. Oh, what a sight -- the opened heavens and the descending Holy Ghost! The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove, and rested on Him. How blessed to meditate on such a scene! There was One who was not only worthy for the heavens to open unto Him, but that the Spirit of God should descend in a bodily shape, and rest upon Him. The Lord Jesus, according to Acts 10, was anointed “with the Holy Ghost and with power.” And this carries back the thoughts at once to the type, even the anointing of Aaron for the ministry, the details of which are given in Ex. 29.

I need not say to you that the Holy Ghost’s coming down on the Lord Jesus did not in any sense add to His perfection. He was as perfect before as afterwards; but it was in connection with His service on earth. It was God, as it were, setting His mark upon Him, and sealing Him for His work. Acts 10, already referred to, explains that as simply as anything could do. “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (v. 38). This chapter furnishes a divine commentary on what took place in Luke 3.

Now, what is so significant about the anointing of Aaron in Ex. 29 is, that no mention of blood is made there. Aaron is simply anointed with oil (that precious compound which we were speaking of two weeks since), but not with blood. He himself, and by himself, is anointed with oil; and it descends from the crown of his head to the skirts of his clothing, prefiguring the Lord Jesus Christ in His own personal perfection being set apart for His ministry. Afterwards you do find blood, when Aaron and his sons are together brought in, but not with Aaron alone, because Aaron alone stands before us as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His intrinsic perfection.

Thank God, the Holy Ghost comes now and dwells in our bodies, if we are Christians. But upon what ground? Assuredly because the blood of redemption has been sprinkled upon us, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has washed us whiter than snow. If we are washed from our sins in His blood, then the Holy Ghost comes and dwells in us. The oil can be poured upon the blood. The Holy Ghost seals the value of the blood. It is not the apprehension, it is not the appreciation, that our hearts have of the value of it that is sealed, nor is it our intelligence that is sealed, but God puts His seal on the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verily, that is something worthy of his seal. The oil rests upon the blood; God, as it were, thereby expressing His own satisfaction in the worth of that blood, as well as marking for ever as His own the one sprinkled by it.

How blessed thus to think of it! The Lord Jesus Christ has secured that for us through His finished work. Thank God, the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, has come down, and has never left the earth, but abides with the saints for ever. He had not previously come in person to dwell upon earth, but when Jesus is here in His own intrinsic worth, in the perfection of His own nature, and under that opened heaven, the Spirit descends in a bodily shape like a dove, and rests on Him, a perfect Man.

Another thing is, that the form He was pleased to take was intended to mark off, as it were, Him upon whom He so rested, as in the truth and blessedness of His own person. The form, observe, was that of a dove. Does not this set before us as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His intrinsic worth, in the connection with His service on earth. It was God, as it were, fitting resting-place for the blessed Spirit in the moral deluge
of this world.

Now, all this receives both emphasis and confirmation when we remember that the Spirit came down personally to dwell in the Christian and in the Church; because the Holy Ghost does dwell in the saints corporately, as well as in their bodies individually.

When He thus came He took, as we read in Acts 2, a form suitable to the occasion and purport of His coming, a form significant of what He was then about to carry on in this world; just as here He took a form suitable to the expression of the person of the perfect, blessed Man Christ Jesus. In Acts 2:2, 3 we are told,

There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind [or hard breathing], 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. Now, that is perfectly expressive of what He was about to do. You understand clearly, I trust, that the Holy Ghost could come down here because the work of Christ had been accomplished; Christ had finished all He came to do; the foundation, so to speak, had been laid in blood, and Jesus had been exalted; so that the descending Spirit could come and take possession of the bodies of those who had been washed from their sins in Christ’s precious blood. The form which the Holy Ghost takes is beautifully significant, because the moment had arrived when God was about to send out a far-reaching testimony into this world; a testimony not to be confined to one people or nation, but addressed to all the world. It was to go out on all sides, and this is set forth by the “cloven tongues.”

When God dealt with but one nation, He was pleased to use one language, the Hebrew tongue; but now His voice is to reach out to Gentiles as well as to Jews; hence the appearance of cloven tongues. We find also that they were “like as of fire.” What does this imply? Simply that grace reigned through righteousness. There was that in man which called for judgment; and the cross had fully met it; there sin had been judged. This testimony was to be founded upon the cross, and therefore the cloven tongues “like as of fire.”

Here is a mark of the most exquisite grace. The diverse tongues which previously had been given to men were the expression of divine displeasure and judgment; but now God’s infinite grace and goodness were to be made known to them; and hence we read of it in these words: “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (v. 11). But in the scene before us in Luke, how suitable in every way to the Lord’s blessed person was the dove-like form! And thus we see in suited character the blessed One whom God was setting apart and specially anointing and sealing for His ministry.

There is another point here, of great interest and beauty, to which I would call your attention for a little. It is this: the Holy Ghost’s descending in bodily shape like a dove, and abiding on Jesus, was also the expression of the place of man acceptable before God. It is very blessed to see this unfolded here, and it is everything to our souls when we discern that we have it thus in Christ. It is a great thing to trace all up to Christ. All that He has won He shares in grace with us now on the ground of redemption. Redemption in this manner opens the way for us to come into all the blessing which we find set forth in Himself.

Thus what we have here set before us in figure is, our place before God in Christ, the Father’s delight in us as in Him, and the seal of the Holy Ghost as the expression of it.

Let us now for a little dwell upon the voice from heaven, and first observe how different it is from the voice in the first part of this chapter. Have you noticed the two voices in this third of Luke, and how they are in contrast? The first voice is in the wilderness; and it was in every sense suitable that God’s servant should be there. It is suitable that God’s servants today should be morally in the desert. No other place befits them, because of the evil state of things in this Christ-rejecting age. A witness for God to-day must stand apart; he must be morally outside; in one sense a Jeremiah, a man of tears and sorrow, who sits alone (Jer. 15:17); in another sense a Habakkuk, standing upon his watch, and setting him upon the tower; but in either case a man apart.

I was thinking the other day that the question at the present moment for every conscience and heart is this: Shall we remain within the departure and protest? or shall we go apart and testify? Now, I do believe God has raised that question, and it will not be possible honestly to shirk it. Shall I stay as part and parcel of the order of things, and protest? Let me ask you, What is the good of your protest if you do? What value, then, has your protest in it? If you stay in the thing you protest against, you take away from the value of your protest, you negative it; nay, you paralyze it, you destroy it. This is an immensely solemn question for the people of God at this moment. Of what value, I most earnestly and anxiously ask, is that protest against the world and its ways, and all that belongs to it, if the man himself who protests adheres to that against which he witnesses? Example is far more powerful than precept. Men care but little for the precept if they discover inconsistency in principle and example. There can be no doubt our lot is cast in difficult days. The words of the prophecy of Isaiah, “Truth is fallen in the street,” are at this moment receiving a painful exemplification in the professing Church. “Truth is fallen in the street,” and there are but few who seem to think it worth their while to pick it up. If a man stands for it, if a man seeks to be controlled by it, if he is a lover and a witness of it, he must be morally outside the existing order of things. Hence we see John in the wilderness; from thence sounds the first voice in Luke 3; and oh, what an awakening voice it is! How it exposes, and makes bare, and cuts up everything of man! No class of the community escapes its withering exposure; the “generation of vipers” are warned against the boasting self-complacency that would shelter itself in pride beneath the ancestry of the father of the faithful. Verily we may say, What a voice!

But we find another voice in this chapter. There is no thunder in its tones, no denunciation in its sound. It came not from the wilderness, but from heaven. It was the Father’s
voice. Who but the Son could elicit its testimony? Just as on Him the heavens could open (for He was worthy), so this voice could testify, not of Him, but to Him directly, “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased” (v. 22).

Oh, the blessedness of being made acquainted with the testimony of this voice from heaven! Wonderful grace on God’s part to allow us to know how He feels toward His beloved Son. Wonderful grace to allow us to hear what He thinks of Jesus, what He has found in Jesus. The Father’s voice from the opened heavens tells out His heart’s appreciation of Jesus; and He has revealed it for you and me, that we may share it with Him. “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.” Not only I am, but I have been. It is retrospective, and not present only.

It is very striking, beloved friends, to put those two voices together -- the voice in the wilderness and the voice from the open heavens; the voice of John the Baptist thundering forth upon the moral death around, breaking up the highway for Him that was coming, and the Father’s voice in the preciousness of its testimony to the Son, “Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased.”

There is another thing that comes in, and that is, just in proportion as your conscience is affected by the first voice, your heart will find its comfort in the second voice. It tells of Him who has met God’s heart, God’s affection, God’s nature. And about Him, the Son, the Father lets us know His thoughts, and gives us to share those thoughts with himself.

Further, it is very comforting to the heart to think that poor, wretched things though we are -- poor, worthless, silly sheep -- yet He does not present a different object to that which His own heart has found. Christ is the Father’s Object and pleasure, and He would have Him to be yours. Christ fills all His thoughts, and He would have Him fill all yours. That is blessedness indeed, and glory as well.

We have here also, in a very marked way, an owning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you do not find anything at all like this in previous ministry. The subject of ministry in itself is very interesting. I do not believe you will find preaching (such as we understand it) until you come to Christianity. I do not say there were not proclamations made. We do read in the Book of Ezra that he made a pulpit, and proclaimed the law from it; but that was not preaching, as we commonly understand the word. Further, I believe I can give you a very good reason why it is so. Preaching would have been out of keeping and order with the previous ways of God, because the law demanded doing, and man elected to be on that ground. It was the characteristic of the time or dispensation. Law meant a claim upon the creature to do. You can easily comprehend how out of place preaching would be then. Man was called upon to yield obedience, to do and live; but when man is brought in utterly ruined and lost, and the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven to do all the will of God, and to seek and save the lost, then you get preaching, because there is something to preach. There is now good news to proclaim, and it takes the character of evangelizing. Philip went across the desert and evangelized one man. He preached Jesus to him. He found there one to whom he could go and tell, ignorant and desolate as he was, the new good news. That is how preaching comes in. The Lord Jesus went about preaching, and His apostles afterwards did the same. John’s preaching was more of the character of law -- demanding and exacting; but man never could meet the requirements of God. John’s ministry brought conviction, but never relief; and therefore there is no heaven open, no unfolding or expression of the Father’s thoughts then. But when Jesus was here, in whose blessed person grace and truth met, the eye of God rested upon One, above and beyond all others, whose ministry would be the setting forth of the mind of heaven; One whose ministry should perfectly express God’s thoughts and the desires of His heart for poor, wretched creatures in this world. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:17. Accordingly when He was here who was to sustain that blessed ministry, who was as well the expression of it in His own spotless person, then heaven opens, and the complacency of the Father’s heart in Him personally is sweetly expressed in those wondrous words, “Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased.”

Beloved friends, is there not immense comfort in that for you and me, knowing what poor, wretched creatures we are, what poor, wretched hearts are ours? It was this which moved the heart and conscience of the poor thief. No doubt the grace of God had wrought in his soul, and the Spirit of God had wrought in his conscience, but do you think it was nothing to that poor thief to look upon a spotless Man? Do you think it was nothing to him to see a Man who was absolutely perfect hanging upon the cross? Hearken to his dying utterance -- “We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:41). I can well understand how that poor thief would say, O Lord, let me wrap myself in Thy eternal perfections. It was the tremendous contrast between himself and Christ that forced the confession -- “We indeed justly.” There was no palliation, no excuse, no explanation. He does not attempt to lessen the enormity of the guilt, he does not complain of the severity of the sentence or dispute the justness of the position. No, here is the “no guile” condition of Psa. 32. The actual confession of sins is here. Grace has brought him to this point.

While on this subject, though a little outside what is before us in Luke 3, it may be well to call your attention to that which finds an apt illustration in the history of this saved robber; viz., the ways of God in bringing the soul to self-judgment and confession, and His ways after it. The work of the Spirit is in the first, the work of Christ is in the other. The first is the creating of a sense of need, the second is the meeting of that need. What a rest for his heart to see beside him on the cross his contrast in that spotless Man! Hence his cry, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”

Now, to return to our immediate subject, we see heaven open upon a perfect Man, the Holy Ghost comes down and abides on Him, and the Father’s voice from this opened heaven salutes Him, as it were, in words which demonstrate His own exclusive blessedness -- “Thou art My beloved Son.”
Oh, the blessedness of this voice and of those who were permitted to hear it, and witness this scene! Now in faith and by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven we can dwell upon it, meditate upon it, and thus taste somewhat of the joys peculiar to it.

May God by His grace lead us to hear it in the record this night. It is, be assured, in such scenes that all true and lasting comfort can alone be found. Here the eye can rest, here the heart can repose. It is of scenes and subjects like this that the Spirit of God in Luke’s Gospel traces the Lord. It casts a bright light on what follows. It is very clear that the following words are descriptive. They were found, after his death, in the pocket-book of the late Venerable Henry Irwin, a beloved and faithful servant of Christ in Ireland --

“Hark! the thrilling symphonies
Seem within to seize us;
Add we to their holy lays,
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.
Sweetest name on mortal’s tongue,
Sweetest note in angel’s song,
Sweetest anthem ever known --
Jesus, Jesus reigns alone.”

May God by His Spirit set that Blessed One before us. He is the balm, the sovereign balm, for every wound, the cordial for our fears. The Lord in His mercy grant that none else save Himself may be our theme and our song, so that our hearts’ affections may be called back to Him, and occupied with Him until we ourselves have reached Him on high, for His blessed name’s sake.

Chapter 4:
Luke 4:1-14

There is an intimate connection, beloved brethren, between that which we have in the concluding verse of the chapter partially before us last week and the great subject of this chapter -- a connection which, I believe, is given by God in order to bring before us who it really was that was thus tempted of the devil. That verse completes the genealogy as presented in the Gospel of Luke. I will just read it for you “Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God” --

Now, have you ever thought what this scripture implies? There is attached to it a distinct and definite meaning, which casts a bright light on what follows. It is very clear that the Spirit of God in Luke’s Gospel traces the Lord’s genealogy up to Adam; that is to say, He shows the Lord to be a true, real Man. It is, then, Christ’s connection with the human family which is set forth here. A single sentence in one of the epistles (Gal. 4:4) gives both this and His Jewish connection -- “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.”

This presents His connection with the human family. It is saying that He was truly and really a Man. “Made under the law”; that is to say, He was truly and really a Jew. He was pleased not only to become a Man, but also, as is said elsewhere, to take “on Him the seed of Abraham”; i.e., the Blessed One took the position and circumstances, but not the state. How blessed to meditate on the grace of such words as “The Word became flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14).

Now, the passage before us to-night does not set forth His connection with the nation of Israel, but His connection with the whole human family. And mark, that last verse -- “Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God” -- means this, that He who was truly Man, He who was pleased to become such here -- “the Word became flesh” -- demonstrated and proved plainly and distinctly that though Man He was the Son of God.

He is the One whom we are privileged to look at adoringly in Luke 4. He is the One who returns from Jordan full of the Spirit; and it is very blessed that it is set before us in this way. He had gone down into John’s baptism in association with every true heart that turned to God in Israel. He had exhibited the perfection of His human nature in dependence and obedience there -- “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” -- and when there, as we were seeing last week, the heavens were opened upon Him, the Object upon whom the heavens could open, and the Father’s voice greeted Him in the perfection of the position that He was pleased to take, saluting Him with these words: “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased” (v. 22).

Thus, full of the Spirit, and anointed -- not to add anything to His person, but in connection with His ministry and service -- He returns from Jordan, and is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan. If you will turn to the Gospel of Mark (ch. 1:12, 13) you will find a very striking and touching addition to what we have either here or in Matthew’s Gospel. It is a statement that is peculiar to Mark. We read,

And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts.

How interesting and touching a fact! This blessed, spotless, perfect, holy Man, true and very Man, yet very God, is found in the dreary desert, the solitary, howling wilderness -- a more desolate scene than which you cannot conceive -- where there was nothing to minister to Him, nothing in consonance with Him; there, surrounded by the wild beasts, He is for forty days tempted of Satan.

Here we are at once brought to the point when Satan steps on the scene. He had tried his power on the first man, and had succeeded. He had contested every inch of the way with Adam in a very different scene from this. In Paradise, surrounded by all the fresh proofs of the Creator’s tender care and interest in His creature; surrounded by all the marks and favors of His hand; Satan there fought with man, and won. And now he cannot endure that there should be a Man on earth, a real, true Man, who had never, like Adam, forfeited Eden; a blessed Man, who did always those things that pleased His Father and His God. I say again, the devil could not endure that the Son of God should be there as Man in connection with the human family; yet owned and greeted from heaven by the Father’s voice as the Father’s beloved One, in whom God had found His good pleasure. Satan could
not permit that. And therefore he comes forward to contest the path with Him who is thus led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

You will observe, beloved friends, the contrast between Christ and every other man in that respect. Every other man is driven into the scene of temptation by his own lusts, the folly and wretchedness of his own heart. Man goes there by the very nature of that which is in him, and there is defeated and falls. But Christ is led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness, where there is the perfect contrast to everything that was found in the earthly Paradise. Thus it is we see the Blessed One here; and Satan comes and says, “I will dispute your whole title, your whole position.”

Now, there is not merely the contrast of the circumstances in which the first Adam stood with the circumstances in which the last Adam stood, but there is the contrast after the defeat of the one, and the victory of the other, -- after the defeat of Adam, and after the victory of Christ. Have you ever thought of it? After the defeat of Adam, God “dove 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. 3:24).

Innocence is everlastingly lost. There is no possibility of lost and ruined man ever returning to that condition of innocence in which he stood originally, as created by God. But when Christ, the Second Man and last Adam, is victorious; when Satan himself is bound by the perfect obedience and dependence of the Blessed One, who is the contrast to every other man in this world -- He who as Man not only lived by the Word, but kept the Word, and also kept that position which He was pleased to take in grace -- then observe the contrast: angels come and minister to Him. Angels, I believe, were found connected with the cherubim in the first garden, to bar for ever the way of return -- the witness to the utter ruin of responsible man. But angels are also found in the wilderness, where Jesus was victorious over Satan, as those who minister to His body; for I do not believe it went beyond that. They ministered to the bodily necessities of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Man, the perfect, victorious Man.

How marked the contrast! They are the executors of judgment in the first garden, guarding the tree of life from fallen man, the solemn witness to the impossibility of any return to innocence but in the wilderness they are the blessed witnesses of Satan’s defeat, and of the triumph of the only obedient and dependent Man.

Now, it is very important that we should clearly understand the meaning of the word “tempted,” as applied to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. There is no difficulty in understanding its meaning as applied to all other men. If you will turn to the Epistle of James 1:14, 15, it will help to show the contrast:

Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

From this it is very evident what the meaning of the word “tempted” is, as applied to you and me. Clearly it is the drawing forth of a principle that is within us. There is in fallen man a principle which responds to and is acted upon by the allurements or terrors which Satan brings to bear upon him. So when we speak of temptation as applied to ourselves, it is the calling out of the evil which is in us. How well we know it, if, indeed, we know ourselves in the light of God’s holy presence! But, alas! how many have never as yet measured themselves with that light! and hence it is, I have no doubt, that the man of self is but little and imperfectly known. We talk of Satan’s tripping up and turning the feet aside, and doubtless this is painfully true; but is it not too often pleaded and urged with solemn forgetfulness, that there is that in man upon which the enemy can act, and that the great power of the temptation of the enemy is in the principle that he finds within man? In this, be assured, lies the secret of the energy of Satan acting upon us, finding a response and an echo there -- a something which at once responds to his touch.

But when Scripture applies the word “tempted” to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the exact opposite to all this. You will remember that precious word, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). Oh, the blessedness of it! How it sets forth and brings out before our souls the perfection of the matchless Savior! There was nothing in Him that answered to Satan’s allurements. The presentation was entirely external. That which was typified by the fine flour mingled with oil, with the frankincense poured thereon, supplied no response to the enticements of the wily foe; and hence it is written of Him that “He Himself hath suffered being tempted” (Heb. 2:18). Let us note this well. The external presentation of delectable things for life, brought with it to the Lord Jesus, as perfect Man, a suffering peculiar to Himself. It is well said that the flesh in man, when acted upon by its desires, does not suffer. Being tempted, it enjoys. Hence we are exhorted to arm ourselves with the mind of a Christ who died rather than not obey. See 1 Pet. 4:1.

It is an immense thing to get a due sense in our souls of the difference in this respect between Christ and every other man. Here is One who never had a motive in His heart save the will of God -- One whose meat and drink were to do that will. And the presentation of anything else to Him brought the most intense suffering, the deepest pain and anguish. Why? Because He was, as Man, absolutely perfect. Temptation to other men is pleasure. There is in us a kindredness to it; there is that in us which responds readily and gladly, which accepts, entertains -- yea, even welcomes, the allurements of the enemy. Have you not found this out, my beloved brethren?

Is it possible that you have not as yet discovered that there is an open door, the flesh in us, for all comers? Are there no pleasures in sin? And that too even though they be but for a season? Mark what the Spirit of God says as to lust. What is lust? It is a principle of flesh that the desires to have for itself; it matters not what it is. It is the desire to possess, independent of God, and that independent will in the creature is the root and essence of sin.

There exist on all hands very mistaken notions of what
sin is; and just as there are loose thoughts of sin, so there are
loose thoughts of holiness. If you have wrong thoughts of
holiness, it is because you have wrong thoughts of sin. You
cannot have one without the other. You cannot have divinely
exalted thoughts of holiness if you have not divinely true
thoughts of sin. If you mistake what sin is, you will be sure
to mistake what holiness is.

It is important to get down to the bottom of things. There
is a way of speaking about sin which is disastrous and
dangerous to an appalling extent. Sin is now limited to mere
acts; certain acts are taken to define sin. Sin does produce
acts, as a tree produces fruit; but it is very possible to restrain
these in an outward way. Many motives would combine to
render this expedient and advisable, but it were indeed
blindness itself therefore to deny the existence in man of a
will independent of God. That, as I have already stated, is the
very essence and principle of sin, and it is found in every
fallen man, but is just the very thing that was not in Jesus.
The will of God was the secret spring of every movement of
His blessed life. He never moved but to obey God’s will. “I
delight to do Thy will,” are His own words; and how blessed
and comforting are they in the light of our wilfulness and
waywardness! Alas! how we delight to do our own will! True
it is that, in God’s infinite grace and goodness, He breaks and
subjugates our will, and (blessed be His name!) forms and
shapes us to His will; but there is no delight in us naturally to
do God’s will. Lawlessness and independence are the natural
tenants of the soil of our hearts. We delight to do our own
will, and take our own way; but the spotless Man Christ Jesus
was the blessed exception to it all.

I trust you can understand plainly now that when Satan
did come and present these external objects to Jesus, it was
intense suffering to that perfect One. As each assault of the
enemy reached Him, though only from without, He suffered.

“In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted.”

I know too well that when we are tempted of Satan there
is an echo within, an answer there; and instead of being
suffering to us, it is pleasure.

But every one is tempted, drawn away, and enticed by his
own lust; then lust, having conceived, gives birth to sin;
but sin, fully completed brings forth death (James 1:14,
15).

What solemn, searching words are these!

I would now, beloved brethren, invite your attention to
the Lord’s temptations as they are presented by Luke; and at
the outset would make this remark, that in this gospel you will
find the order of their presentation to be a moral one, whereas
in Matthew’s Gospel the order is historical and
dispensational. Hence it is, I believe, that in this third gospel
we find the last temptation is placed second. It falls in with,
is suited to, the object of the Spirit here; and very instructive
it is to observe the design which makes itself so apparent in
each of the divine records.

There can be little doubt that the clause “Get thee behind
Me,” though inserted here, really forms no part of Luke’s
narrative. It was evidently taken from the Gospel of Matthew,
where it rightly appears, because it is connected with the last
temptation, which, as I have just intimated, Matthew places
in its historical order. But there is a distinct and definite
reason why those words should not appear in the translation
of the Gospel of Luke; even this, that it would present Satan
as returning to the attack after he was driven away by the
blessed Lord; whereas if left out, then we find the Lord’s
reply presented exactly as I believe it was.

Let us now, in dependence on the Lord, who alone can
give us a right understanding by His Spirit, look at these
various assaults of Satan.

The first is common to both Matthew and Luke. It comes
first because it is the temptation of bodily, personal
necessities. The Lord had become Man. As such He takes His
place in this world, and the devil said unto Him, “If Thou be
the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread”
(v. 3).

How affecting, beloved friends, to think of it! There He
was suffering hunger, with sinless want, sinless need, as a
Man down here, in conflict with the one who had vanquished
every other man. Oh, what a picture for our eyes to gaze
upon, even Himself thus assailed by the enemy! “If Thou be
the Son of God.” It was as if the crafty, hateful foe had said,
“Use your power as God, and deliver yourself out of your
human necessities”; but in reality the enemy seeks to make
the Blessed One give up His place of dependence as Man, the
object of the devil being to tarnish His glory by setting one
part of it against another. It was part of His glory, that though
God over all, blessed evermore, He had been pleased to
become Man, and in that position had exhibited human
perfection in His absolute dependence upon and subjection
to God. He perfectly maintained the position of Man which He
had been pleased to enter into, thus displaying not only Man
in perfection before God and men, but also the contrast with
every creature, whether angels or men. It was beyond all ex-
pression intolerable to Satan that there should be such a
display of Man before God and men. Up to this the enemy of
God and man, victorious over man, had held the ground as
having vanquished man and that too in circumstances most
favorable to the creature of God’s hand and care; but now
another Man is on the field of battle to meet the foe flushed
with victory, and to vanquish and bind him, not by the display
of His power as God, but by maintaining in perfect
dependence and subjection the place He had taken as Man.

It is well to bear in mind that the Blessed One had
voluntarily taken this place. In His blessed grace He who had
said, “Mine ears hast Thou opened”; also said, “Lo, I come:
in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do
Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” It
were thus impossible for Him to retire from that place which
He was pleased to take, simply because He was Himself Man
in perfection before God. Having taken this place, His very
perfection is shown in His abiding in it. He lived by the Word
as well as kept the Word and this is exactly the perfection you
find in Jesus here. He had no word, and therefore He does not
move. He says, “It is written.” He appeals to the Scriptures;
He kept the Scriptures; He lived by the Scriptures. How
blessed to consider Him thus! There is something even more important than finding bread to satisfy hunger, more important than finding sustenance for the body. What is that? To keep the Word of God. Oh, the moral magnificence of it, to stand fast by the Word of God, to hold fast to the Word of God, not moved by any proffered good from that Word! That, beloved friends, is more important than life itself. That, then, is what we find in perfection in Christ when tempted -- “It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (v. 4).

Again, let us dwell upon the blessed position which the Lord Jesus Christ takes in all this. He takes the lowliest place; He meets man as the lowliest of men. You cannot conceive any one more lowly than He is here. There is nothing really more lowly than to be obedient. True lowliness is to obey. Ah, there is a desperate amount of pride in all that form of humility now abounding; but real lowliness, genuine lowliness, heaven-born lowliness, is the most subject, dependent principle that can be conceived. The Lord here is the lowly, dependent One. He says, as it were, “I have not come to command, but to obey.” He was pleased to take that lowly place.

Oh, the blessedness of such an Object -- One who, as Man, was perfection before God and men; and hence, in the position He had been pleased to take in grace, the mind and will of God found their fullest, most perfect response. Oh, the contrast between this Blessed One and all else presented to us in the narrative! Verily we may say, His perfection sheds a contrast between this Blessed One and all else presented to us. It is untrue! If you turn to 1 Cor. 2 you will find that the words were given from God as truly as the vessels were raised up by God. You will find both. Mark the expression -- “Spirit-taught words”; not words “which man’s wisdom teacheth.” “But,” says learned people in these days, “this kind of thing is out of date, and we must keep pace with modern progress and the advance of science. The Bible is all very well in its place, but there are other voices and other authorities which must be heard and bowed to. We cannot refuse to advance with the times by being held fast in the bondage of old superstitions.”

Thus the blessed Lord simply appeals to Scripture; He simply stands by what God had written. How blessed to think of that -- “It is written!” Here is the record communicated indelibly in Spirit-taught words through channels God was pleased to use. It was not merely that God raised up the vessels of inspiration, but He supplied them with the words. I know it is said, that though He raised up the vessels, they could use the words suited to the time. It is untrue! If you turn to 1 Cor. 2 you will find that the words were given from God as truly as the vessels were raised up by God. You will find both. Mark the expression -- “Spirit-taught words”; not words “which man’s wisdom teacheth.” “But,” say learned people in these days, “this kind of thing is out of date, and we must keep pace with modern progress and the advance of science. The Bible is all very well in its place, but there are other voices and other authorities which must be heard and bowed to. We cannot refuse to advance with the times by being held fast in the bondage of old superstitions.”

The simple yet sublime reply of God to all this kind of mind desire (see Eph. 2:3) is, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 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. 2:11, 12).

May God by His Spirit give all His own the grace to apprehend the value of the word, “It is written.” Here faith rests in a peace which nothing can disturb. How true it is, as has been well observed by another, that under God’s protection His people need not fear! The old difficulties and objections are revived, but they will meet in one way or another the old defeat. While the world lasts, skeptical books will be written and answered, and the books and perhaps the answers alike forgotten. But the Rock of Ages shall stand unchangeable; and men worn with a sense of sin shall still find rest, under “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Let us now for a little look at the second temptation. It is the third really, but the second morally, as we have before noticed, being what is called the worldly temptation; i.e. the glory of the world. Satan knew that worldly glory belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who will indeed possess that glory ere long. As Son of man He will by-and-by have the glory of the world, according to God’s thoughts and counsels and purposes. Therefore it is that Satan comes here, and says,
That is all given to me, and I give it to whomsoever I will.

That was false, and yet true. It was false as to title, but true as to fact; for Satan had acquired this by man’s sin. As to title, he had none at all. Satan had no title to give glory to any one; but having, through his craft, induced man to depart from God; having assailed the first Adam, and having vanquished him, he profits by this victory over man (which was, in result, the creature’s departure from the place of confidence and trust), and here sets himself forth as the usurper. “I have all this,” he says, “and I give it to whomsoever I will. If you will own me as the giver” -- that is here the meaning of worship -- “if you will take it from me, all shall be yours.”

Oh! is not that exactly what the powers of this world have done? They have just taken the devil’s bribe. How solemn, how awful, to think of it!

But now look at Jesus for a moment; look at the obedience we find here. He says, “It is written.” Mark how He appeals again and again to the Scriptures; how the word of God, beloved friends, is still His great weapon in meeting the adversary. “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (v.8).

Fallen man would like the gift, and would long after the gift, and the more glory it had the more it would attract him; but the Lord Jesus -- the perfect Man -- thought of the giver; He thought of who it was that offered it. His heart was so perfectly in unison with the heart of God that He says, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.” He would not take an empire or a kingdom from any one else beside. He would not take glory, pleasure, or honor from Satan. Why, that is what the poor world is doing just now. Satan comes with his glittering bait, and it is readily swallowed by poor, lost, misguided man -- blinded and deluded by the arch-fiend of hell, the god of this world, and prince of the power of the air. But oh, the blessedness of contemplating the first man’s contrast in the Lord Jesus Christ -- the Second Man, the perfect Man! How blessed to be able to say, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only!” *Him only!* Are you exclusive in that way, beloved friends?

I would add a word or so more on this. I have said that responsible Adam, when tempted and tried, broke down in this very thing. Adam ought to have held and maintained for God, but that is exactly what he did not do. Further, we find that historically Israel were tempted in a similar way, and broke down in the wilderness. His own people Israel entirely failed in representing this testimony. They constantly, continually, and utterly departed from God for forty years. With regard to the first temptation you will remember how He kept them in dependence in connection with the manna, and how they failed. They needed to learn the lesson of dependence -- to be cast upon God day by day, and moment by moment. With regard to the third temptation they say, “Is the Lord among us or not?” So that you have the Lord Jesus Christ set before us here as the perfect contrast to man in every way and in every position and set of circumstances in which you can conceive man to be placed.

The last temptation is what is called the “religious temptation,” and it is of great spiritual profit to our souls to contemplate it, because we shall find that this is the hardest of all; this is the most difficult of all to resist. I believe, as I have stated, that Luke presents these temptations in a moral order, which gradually rises until you get to that which is morally the highest. Though not the last historically, yet it was such morally, and in it the height of temptation is reached. Hence it is that he puts it last. Let us just read the words: “And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt Jehovah thy God” (vv. 9-12).

Now, you see, the object of the tempter here was to separate two things that God always puts together; that is to say, the end, and the way to get to it. I believe you will find these two things constantly and continually put together in God’s own mind. Satan separates them here. He separates the end from the way by omitting from the psalm which he quotes (Psa. 91) the very words which constitute the way to the end. What were those words? “To keep thee *in all thy ways.*” Mark that: “In all thy ways.” He daringly suppresses part of the scripture; he omits the words which would have left the temptation patent and unmasked. That is exactly what you find him doing at the present.

The devil, as you see here, can quote Scripture, and he can suppress Scripture; he can also pervert Scripture. How solemn to think of the subtlety of the great enemy of God and man! What force there is in the touching words of the apostle to his beloved Corinthians when he says,

*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety [i.e., craft], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).*

It is thus the wily foe deals with Scripture. He takes it, as it were, in his own hand, and craftily seeks to extinguish all in the scripture that would shed its own light upon the subject he desires to assail. The greatest comfort of my heart is, that he does not know my heart; and it would be intolerable to me if the only One who does know it did not know it. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? *I the Lord*” (Jer. 17:9, 10).

But then Satan is a very jealous observer of your ways. He knows your tastes from *observation.* He knows what will act upon you; he knows, as it were, the fly you will rise at. This is what is solemn. I believe he is the most intelligent of creatures, but the most miserable. No creature could be more miserable than the devil, and he wants everyone to be as miserable as himself. He studies everything; he looks at everything, and reads your character through your ways. Thank God, he does not know our hearts; only God knows them. Satan knows what is outside. He sees you, watches you; he knows, I repeat, what will take you. He studies you
when you are little aware of it. Lord, grant that Thy saints may not be ignorant of his devices!

The enemy says, “I know what will catch that young man, I know what will catch that young woman; I know how to assail that old man, I know what will trip up that old woman.” Oh, it is solemn! May we take heed to our ways; may we ever be on the watch. Remember, the chart for the mariner does not only tell of the fair way, where all is clear, but it marks the shoals and rocks, the places of danger and peril and shipwreck.

But let us observe what the tempter left out here: “In all thy ways.” That is the way to the end. Mark how the Lord meets it: “It is said.” Beautiful words! “It is written” on one occasion, “It is said” on another occasion. “It is said, Thou shalt not tempt Jehovah thy God.”

Has that no voice to us? Do we never tempt Him? What is tempting the Lord our God? Let me try and tell you. Have you never known your heart to be assailed in this way: “Now let me see whether God is as good as His word”? Is that trusting Him? Is that resting in Him? Is that believing Him? Is that confiding in Him? This is the very thing that was not in Adam -- confidence of the heart in God, no resting in Him who has pledged His word. It is the very opposite to it. It is to say, “I will see whether God will sustain and uphold me; I will see whether God will carry me through this thing.” Ah, that is not leaning on Him, resting in Him, but the very opposite! You are not sure then, are you? You are trying whether God will be as good as His word. That is tempting Him. But faith, confidence in God, says, “It shall be done.”

How sweet those old lines

“Faith, bold faith, the promise sees,  
And leans on that alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And says, ‘It shall be done.’”

That is resting upon God. The heart, as it were, says, “I know Him; I do not test Him, I do not tempt Him; I believe Him, and I believe what He says is true. I believe, moreover, it is true, because He says it.” You will tell me that this is reasoning in a circle. Be it so! It is a magnificent circle to reason in -- it is a divine circle. I believe what He says is true, and I believe it is true, because He says it.

I will finish with just one word more -- Satan departs. He could get no hold anywhere. He has met the Perfect Man, who has vanquished him by dependence and obedience, and Satan is bound. The Lord Jesus Christ bound him. And now, mark you, as He went forth full of the Holy Ghost to meet Satan, so it is beautiful to see that He “returned in the power of the Spirit.” He went in the power of the Spirit to vanquish the devil, and returns likewise. He goes to meet the strong man in the power of the Spirit, and comes back in the power of the same Spirit to scatter blessing wherever He goes. On Calvary’s cross He bruised his head in death, and in resurrection He dispenses blessing.

The Lord give us to adore the matchless grace of Jesus. Oh, the moral blessedness of dwelling on Him as Man perfect under all suffering, testing, and trial from the enemy! May God in His infinite grace read out to us the lessons that He would have us learn, and above all things I would look to Him that He would make known to us the blessedness of those words, “It is written”; for His name’s sake.

Chapter 5:

The way, beloved friends, in which the Spirit of God introduces to us the wonderful scene in this portion of Scripture is very worthy to be observed. The surroundings of it, the connections in which it is placed, are all strikingly in keeping with the magnificence of the scene itself. There is one little word especially which gives character to this introduction, which, indeed, is characteristic of the whole narrative. That word is praying: “As He was alone praying” (v. 18).

Now, that is not merely remarkable because it sets before us the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in one part of His blessed nature, the perfection of His nature as Man, which I need not, I trust, remind you is dependence, entire dependence being the perfection of man, and that belonged only to Christ; but further, that which would mark a perfect man: a man perfect before God in this world would be one absolutely and always dependent. And that, I need not say, was what marked most blessedly our Lord Jesus Christ as Man. He was the essentially, distinctively, dependent Man.

What adds importance to that which we have here is, that in the earlier verses of this chapter (which you can study for yourselves at leisure) you will find another part of His glory set before us in a very distinct way; that is, His glory as Jehovah-Messiah. He fulfils everything that belonged to Him as Jehovah-Messiah. He fed the poor with bread. He ministered to the need of the poor of the flock as only Jehovah could do. He could, in the largeness of who He was, open His hand, and satisfy the need of all that were in that condition before Him. Christ is not only Man, but Jehovah; He is not only Jehovah, but Man.

As Man, then, He is dependent; and that is what the Spirit of God distinctly marks in connection with His glory here. The highest part of His glory as Man is reached in this chapter. It was an upward journey that He took until He arrived at Mount Tabor. What is generally said -- “He went from the manger to the cross” -- is true in one sense, but not in another. More correctly expressed, He went from the manger to the very highest position of glory as Man here in this world. He went from Bethlehem to the bank of Jordan; He went from the Jordan’s bank to the mount of transfiguration; and then He descended from the mount of transfiguration, from the highest point of glory as Man, into the dust of death, into Calvary’s depth of woe.

It is exceedingly blessed, and very instructive too, to get these facts distinctly before our souls; and surely if there is anything to which God would call the hearts of His people in these times, it is this: What is our resource? “Praying!” Assuredly it is in prayer. Prayer is the expression that the
hope of the one who is praying is outside all visible things. The meaning of prayer is, that you can do nothing. The ground of all prayer is, that you have lost every resource but God. I do not believe we truly pray until we realize this. As long as we can arrange for ourselves we do not pray. We address ourselves to the difficulties before us, and we try to deal with them; but when we have come to our wit’s end, then we turn to God.

I have often been struck with that psalm which speaks of those who go down to the sea, and do business in great waters. When they are brought to their wits’ end, and can do nothing for themselves, then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distresses. He never heard a cry of need from any one without answering it; not perhaps in our way, but in His own. There was only One that cried, and was not heard, and that was Christ. There was but one perfectly righteous and dependent Man on this earth that cried and was not heard; and that was Jesus on the cross. “O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not.” That was the solitary exception to all God’s known ways down here.

Oh, what a blessed thing it is to have this put before our souls in Scripture! to have God calling us back to this simple position before Him with regard to everything we find in the Church and in the world at this moment; to be cast upon God; to solve the difficulties on our knees, as it were; to wait, and watch, and trust, and pray. That is our resource, and that, moreover, is the way out of the strait place we are in. Be assured of it, beloved friends, the exercise of heart in it all is that which brings glory to God, and deepest blessing to ourselves. And here is the great example in the Lord’s own perfection set before us. He was alone praying, and that is what introduces this scene of glory, when the Lord Jesus Christ gives a picture of the coming kingdom. Oh, the blessedness of that which brings glory to God, and deepest blessing to ourselves. And here is the great example in the Lord’s own perfection set before us. He was alone praying, and that is what introduces this scene of glory, when the Lord Jesus Christ gives a picture of the coming kingdom. Oh, the blessedness of this picture! Could anything surpass it? The essentially dependent One Himself glorified as a Man on the holy mount!

It has been rightly said, that at verse 18 of this chapter we have a complete break in the gospel. Another subject entirely is entered upon, and it is introduced in this way: He says to His disciples, “Whom say the people that I am?” And now you find that two very important things come out here. One is that all around is speculation. That is what is in the world to-day about God’s Christ and God’s truth -- speculation. God in His infinite mercy keep us from that! But that is what you find here. “Whom say the people that I am?” They answer, One says you are Elias, another, that you are one of the prophets. That is to say, it was all a kind of speculative reasoning (curiosity, if you please), but nothing certain or divinely reached at all.

This is exactly what you have now. The air of this world is rife with questions about the truth of God and Christ. That is the kind of atmosphere that surrounds professing Christendom at this moment. There is nothing positive. There is, until you arrive at the divine area, no divine certainty either about Christ or the truth. The very things that mark the period we are passing through are uncertainty, speculation, reasoning of every kind. It is so much so, that if a person stands upon the ground of certainty, people say, “Oh, you must take care; you must not be too dogmatic!”

But, beloved friends, you cannot be too dogmatic if you have the truth. The grand point is, whether we have the truth. And who, I ask, is to bear witness to that? It must be God’s record, beloved friends. If it is not this Book in our hands, if it is not the Scriptures, the Word of God, you may get the cleverest conclusions, the clearest deductions, the wisest thoughts conceivable brought together; but if you have not the Scriptures, you have not certainty. If you have Scripture, you have certainty.

And observe another thing in connection with all this: there is simplicity in the Scriptures. You will find the great truths of God’s revelation remarkably simple. There is a magnificent simplicity in the things of God. In the things of man there always exists a certain amount of haziness; but beautiful simplicity characterizes the things of God. I admit this, that, be it ever so simple, there is no power to take it in except by the Spirit of God. And I am perfectly convinced of this, that in proportion as our minds are at work in the things of God, we are outside the direct teaching of the Spirit of God. There is nothing more hostile to the simple instruction of the Holy Ghost than the human mind. The teaching of man may be all very good and very right, but it is not the Spirit of God taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us.

But the Lord says, “Whom say ye that I am?” He leaves, as it were, the outside circle, and brings it down to a very much closer circle, very much nearer to ourselves: “Whom say ye that I am?” How beautiful this is! The man that is taught of God answers at once. There is no hesitation, no uncertainty, no fear, but a distinct utterance, “The Christ of God.”

There is an instance, of what I was speaking to you about just now -- having divine certainty. This one knew Jesus; he was taught of God. It was not flesh and blood, as we know from another gospel, that revealed this to that man. Man never reached that truth; never scaled its heights, nor fathomed its depths. Flesh and blood, in this connection, means that which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17).

There you have one of the most remarkable instances of the absolute certainty that the soul taught from on high has. Peter says, “The Christ of God.” Do you think he was afraid to say that? Was there any uncertainty? He knew it. How? Not because of the effect in his own heart; not because there was happiness in his own breast. It was a revelation to him. And that is what all truth must be -- a revelation out of Scripture by the Holy Ghost to faith. That is to say, what is revealed from God in Scripture is understood by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And so Peter had certainty. He knew God, and could say without any question, “The Christ of God.”
Now note, in connection with the break at this point, that the Lord Jesus takes a new title, which ever afterwards adheres to Him. Tell no man, He says, that I am the Christ of God, the Messiah; the time for that testimony is past. “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day” (v. 22). That is the new title which He takes now, “the Son of man”; because they refused Him, rejected Him. He was going to be crucified where He ought to have been crowned; and He sets before us here, not His atoning sufferings, but His martyr-sufferings.

I think I can make that very simple to you from Scripture, because, after it, He speaks of our following Him. We could not follow the Lord Jesus Christ in His atoning sufferings. Thank God, we are privileged to follow Him in the path in which He walked as a martyr, and it is so He speaks here: “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected . . . and be slain.” In that connection He at once brings out the path. He says, There is a path suited to the position I take. And instead of taking His place as the Christ of God, and receiving the glory that belonged to Him as Messiah; instead of being exalted as the second psalm presents Him, He takes another title, and sets His face towards martyrdom.

In the second psalm you find God’s Anointed; in the eighth psalm you find the Son of man. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only entitled to the inheritance, but He has Himself an additional glory, because, besides being the appointed Heir, He is the Redeemer-heir. He takes the inheritance with all the load of defilement, and redeems it, thus becoming entitled to it. This, of course, brings in resurrection, the great evidence of the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

His sufferings referred to here, then, are all martyr-sufferings; how He would be treated by men -- hated, scorned, cast out.

There is another word in this place which is very solemn for us all: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (v. 23). Let us ponder well and deeply the words, “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily.” “DAILY”! In this lies the test. How truly it has been said that it is terribly difficult to go on every day denying oneself, and no one knowing anything about it. Ah! it is not for me to say a word against the martyrs that in other days went to the stake, and sealed their testimony with all the load of defilement, and redeems it, thus becoming entitled to it. This, of course, brings in resurrection, the great evidence of the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

His sufferings referred to here, then, are all martyr-sufferings; how He would be treated by men -- hated, scorned, cast out.

Are we content, beloved friends, to take up our cross? Are we content to daily deny ourselves? Alas! how this finds us out, exposes us to ourselves. I have often trembled as I thought of the readiness of the heart to pursue an entirely opposite path, and, instead of daily taking up the cross, exhibiting a daily readiness to embark in whatever will contribute to our gratification. Have you, beloved brethren, discovered the deceitfulness of your hearts in this? Not only do things attract in the world, but the heart within us is capable even of this: a willingness to transform the Church into a world for itself, a world where you can gratify your thoughts and desires just as much as the poor worldling gratifies his in the world outside. The principle is the same.

But how different the daily cross and denying yourself; and, as some one has said, denying yourself is a far harder, a far more cutting principle than self-denial. It is a knife that penetrates deeper down into the quick, as it were, of the soul; a daily, yea, hourly and momentarily martyrdom, without applause or praise from men; not a single ray of glory attaching to it; not an atom of commendation, not a word of encouragement; all, as it were, a secret death under the eye of God. How different to the path of nature and flesh! It is truly a hidden path; but what moral beauty it has for faith! Of it we may well say, that it is indeed “a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lions whelpes have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it” (Job 28:7, 8).

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” (vv. 23-25).

You see it becomes a question of one of these two things: either giving up everything for Christ, or going in for everything apart from Him. It is thus that the Lord brings this out here; and then, in order to stimulate faith, He takes Peter, James, and John up into the mount, and gives them a sight of everything apart from Him. It is thus that the Lord brings this out here; and then, in order to stimulate faith, He takes Peter, James, and John up into the mount, and gives them a sight of the glory of His future kingdom.

There are three things connected with this wonderful scene. The first is, He is transfigured. I think it is beautiful that, in connection with the transfiguration, the Lord Jesus is presented in the act of praying. “As He prayed,” we read. It was not that He wrought miracles or displayed the magnificence of His Jehovah-Messiahship. It does not point to His wonderful works of power, though doubtless these were also wrought by Him; but it was not at such a moment that He was transfigured. Why is it said, “As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered”? Was it not that this very glory reflected the perfection of the perfect Man before God? This, I believe, is the reason of its being set forth here. When Christ was in that attitude which, above all others, presented Him in the absoluteness of His own perfection as Man, He was transfigured. How blessed to dwell upon such words written of Him: “As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening” (v. 29).

It is blessed to observe how, in the Gospel of Luke, in all the great events of the Lord’s life -- at His baptism at Jordan, here at the transfiguration, then again in His agony in Gethsemane, also when choosing His apostles -- all through those great scenes and events of the Lord’s life, the Spirit of
God lays express emphasis upon this fact, that prayer was what marked Him in them all. He was the perfect Man cast upon God in absolute dependence.

So, then, in those words in which the transfiguration is introduced, “As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening,” the first great object set before us is Himself.

Next we have the companions of Jesus on the mount, Moses and Elias; and they appear in glory. Now, beloved friends, that is very blessed. They were in the same glory with Jesus; but a glory which was, in figure, in type, kingdom-glory -- the glory of Christ’s coming kingdom.

Moses and Elias, I believe, speak to us in a double way; they speak to us dispensationally and morally. Moses was the giver of the law. “The law was given by Moses.” Elias was the representative of the prophets; so much so that, when Israel had departed from God, and given up the law, Elias remained as sole representative of it in his witness to the people. These two great witnesses, then, the law and the prophets, are brought in here for this reason: everything was about to disappear, and Jesus would be left alone. At the end everything goes. Moses is gone, Elias is gone, and Christ alone is left, and remains for evermore. This will bring to your recollection that scripture, “The law and the prophets were until John” (Luke 16:16). That is to say, those administrations by which God was testing and dealing with man -- the law, which came with its claims upon man; and the prophets, which always called the people back to the observance of the broken law -- these subsisted and had their place until John. When he came he ushered in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was Christ’s forerunner; there was something more bright and blessed and lasting coming. John says, One is coming. Are you ready for Him? Him that cometh after me; are you ready for Him? God is coming. Are you ready for Him? That was the character of John’s witness. But the law and the prophets, in figure, in type, are brought in here in connection with the kingdom in order to show that they pass off the scene; but that Jesus, thank God, remains for evermore.

There is, I believe, a moral reason as well as a dispensational reason why they are here introduced. Because they represent not merely the law and the prophets, but they also illustrate what will be found at that blessed moment when the saints are changed and raised. Yes, beloved friends, when the Lord Jesus Christ is in His glory, the saints, raised and changed, shall be with Him. Moses must have been raised, for he had died. True, the place of his burial was not known to any man, for God buried His servant; and Israel were preserved, perhaps, by that very fact, from turning Moses into an idol. God buried him, and no man knew the place of his sepulcher. Elias was taken to heaven without dying; so that you have the figure exactly of the two classes: those who shall die, and those who shall not pass through death. “We shall not all sleep” means that we shall not all die; “but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Moses and Elias represent the heavenly company, raised and changed saints, who shall be in the glory with Jesus. Oh, the blessedness of it -- in the very same glory!
what was the basis of it? The blood of atonement. And so it is here. The glory of God rests upon the cross. “Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters.” The beams of the chambers of glory, as it were, rest upon the deeply laid foundations of death, into which the Lamb of God went, so that everything should be established and made sure. What could be more blessed or comforting than that? They “spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Well now, let me be very brief on the second point. You will always find, if God tells us His thoughts, if He is pleased to show us what is in His mind in relation to His Son, that there is accompanying it that which brings out what we are. Here we find Peter, James, and John asleep. Oh, how little up to the thoughts of God we are! Asleep in the presence of His glory, as they afterwards were in the presence of His sorrow. They could no more keep company with Him in sorrow than they could keep company with Him in glory: “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep” (v. 32). If we know our own hearts, we know what that is. Well may we sing --

“You soughtest for compassion, Some heart Thy grief to know: To watch Thine hour of passion; For comforters in woe.

“No eye was found to pity, No heart to bear Thy woe; But shame and scorn and spitting -- None cared Thy name to know.

“Man’s boasting love disowns Thee; Thine own the danger flee, A Judas only owns Thee, That Thou mayst captive be.”

How striking are the words, “But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.” I have no doubt that dispensationally they represent the spirit of slumber that now rests upon Israel. The nation is in a moral slumber. This is their state now, but there is a moment coming when they shall be awakened, and shall see the Lord’s glory. He will wake them up. He can call them together. No one knows where they are now, dispersed to the four winds of heaven, “a nation scattered and peeled.” Does not that vividly express the present condition of Israel? But they will awake, and see His glory. They will ere long gaze upon the smitten One. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

We have here also the natural feeling of man’s heart coming out, as if it had been said, How blessed to perpetuate this state of things. Peter says unto Jesus, “Let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said” (v. 33). He would put them all on an equality with Christ. He desired to put them all together on the same level. Beloved friends, how wonderful [i.e., amazing]? Whether asleep or awake, man, as such, is always out of keeping with God’s thoughts. Their being asleep showed them to be not up to the scene. When awake they were still not up to it. Nature cannot enter into God’s thoughts, but is always out of tune with them.

That brings us to the third point here, and this is the Father’s voice. “Let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them” (vv. 33, 34).

That cloud no doubt was the Shekinah, the token of the divine presence. Now, their entering into the cloud was entirely new. No such thing had been known before. The cloud had journeyed with Israel, tarried upon the tabernacle, had been their constant companion; but they had never entered into it. The cloud that went before them removed and stood between them and the chariots of the Egyptians, and was a cloud of protection for them in past days; but they had never as yet entered into it.

“And they feared as they entered into the cloud” (v. 34). I believe that refers to Peter, James, and John, who represent the earthly saints. They fear when they see the heavenly saints entering into the cloud. But there came a voice out of the cloud, the Father’s voice. Ah! there was only one voice that could come in to vindicate the Son’s glories. How blessed is all this! It was at such a moment as this that there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him” (v. 5). Oh, beloved friends, do not your hearts rejoice to hear the Father thus express the infinite delight of His heart in that Son? “This is My beloved Son!”

Now, to me it is most blessed to think that He does not say, This is the Son: adore Him, worship Him. That would be perfectly right; for it is written, “When He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb. 1:6). Perfectly true it is that the Son is worthy of equal homage with the Father, “worthy by all to be adored”; but He does not say that here. He does not say, This is the Son: fall at His feet, and praise His name. All this, of which He is worthy beyond all human thought or power of utterance, would not express what is so blessedly and tenderly set forth in the words, “This is My beloved Son.” Ah! how God delights to reveal the depths of His heart in relation to Christ. “My Beloved Son” gives us to see the Father’s heart about that Son. “My beloved Son” lets us into the secret of Who fills that heart. “This is My beloved Son: hear Him.” How these words not only, as we have said, express the Father’s affections, but how entirely do they demonstrate Christ as supreme! And what a response is accorded to that by all who know His love! How good it is for our poor hearts to know what the blessed God feels about Jesus! Ah, beloved friends, be assured there is no subject with such power to sanctify and enrich the soul as this. Let us try and think of the unspeakable grace of our God in permitting us not only to know His thoughts about the Son of His love, but to share them with Him. Oh, what grace! Is there nothing in that for our hearts and affections? Nothing in that to carry us above this poor, wretched world?

“This is My beloved Son: hear Him.” Thus He sets the alone Object forth; and be assured, beloved friends, the Father would have that blessed Object to be everything to us. Of Him we may well sing --

“He fills the throne -- the throne above,
He fills it without wrong;
The Object of His Father’s love,
The theme of the ransomed’s song.”

“This is My beloved Son” introduces us, as it were, to the opening of the Father’s heart. “Hear Him” shows the Father’s purpose that this Blessed One should be the Object of our hearts. What real comfort and delight are bound up in these expressive words, “This is My beloved Son!”

One thing more. When the Father’s voice was past, when the utterance that thus set forth the beloved One had thus died away, what do we find? When that voice that called attention to Him, that gave expression to the endearment of the Father’s heart towards Christ, and that set Him before our poor hearts, was gone, then “Jesus was found alone.” Jesus only! Oh, how blessed! Moses gone, Elias gone, everything gone; but Christ remains. And, beloved friends, I would say in connection with this that there is another word which will feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you. Let me give it you; and may God make it feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you. Let me give it you; and may God make it feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you.

Oh, beloved friends, may God in His infinite grace give us to apprehend in some measure the unspeakable comfort and blessedness of such a word as that! Do you think the disciples were losers when “Jesus was found alone”? Jesus only! Oh, how blessed! Moses gone, Elias gone, everything gone; but Christ remains. And, beloved friends, I would say in connection with this that there is another word which will feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you. Let me give it you; and may God make it feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you. Let me give it you; and may God make it feed your souls, if you will only allow the Holy Ghost to minister it to you.

But before we look at this great sight, it is important to observe that there are certain steps which lead up to it, and which bring out the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the character in which the Gospel of Luke sets Him before us.

Our subject on previous occasions has been all the blessed perfectness of the Man Christ Jesus; and we have here, in this chapter, an additional instance furnished in certain circumstances which bring it out in a very blessed way. Look, for a moment, at this celebration of the Passover. In connection with it is mentioned a cup that was partaken of prior to the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Two cups are spoken of in Luke; and when the Lord says, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come” (vv. 17, 18), He refers, not to the cup of the Lord’s Supper, but to the cup which went with the Passover, having its place in connection with that institution. That first cup was indicative of joys connected with the kingdom. Wine is a symbol of earthly joy; and that Passover cup is the token of the earthly joy of the kingdom, founded, of course, as it must always be, upon the blood of God’s true Passover Lamb; for, whether earthly or heavenly joy, it must rest upon the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. It is well just to notice that in passing.

Now, the Lord here manifestly takes the place that morally was always His. He was always the true Nazarite among men; He was always the true Nazarite among men, though dwelling among them in all the grace of His heart; but now He openly takes that character which was ever His morally in Himself. Hence He says, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come” (v. 18).

Afterwards the Lord institutes His own Supper, of which, I need not say, He did not Himself partake. He previously...
partook of the Passover, as a true, obedient Jew; but now He
gives to His disciples the symbols of His own holy body and
precious blood, the touching expression of His ineffable love
in laying down His life for them; the memorial too of the
accomplishment of redemption, and of the remission of sins.

Most remarkable and affecting details connect themselves
with this last Passover that He celebrated with His beloved
disciples. “Go,” said the Lord to Peter and John, “and
prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto
Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said unto
them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a
man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the
house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the
goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is
the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My
disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room
furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as He
had said unto them; and they made ready the Passover. And
when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve
apostles with Him” (vv. 9-14).

Oh, the perfect, divine dignity of Him who, whilst He
was Man, was also God! How the perfection of His Godhead
glory shines out here in all the majestic quietness, conscious
power, and fulness of knowledge that characterized Him! And
at the same time you see how distinctly everything is marked
out—nothing left to what we might call a “peradventure,” or
“peradventure,” or “chance.” The whole proceeding is
definitely arranged by One who is Master of every
circumstance, and who has all under His own hand.

But observe another thing which is exceedingly blessed.
He says, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with
you before I suffer” (v. 15). Here you have the perfection of
His feelings as Man, His human feelings. That is one thing
that is so exceedingly blessed when we think of the Lord Jesus
Christ: the combination of the human and the divine; the
combination of all those wonderful, blessed feelings that
marked Him as Man, with all the glory that belonged to Him
as God. As a sweet hymn says --

“The union of both joined in one
Form the fountain of love in His heart.”

His love is human and also divine. You get not merely one
side, but both. See the two here put together by the Holy
Ghost. At the very time when His divine glory comes out,
when He shows that He has everything at His disposal, then
it is that His precious human affection is displayed. As has
been blessedly said, He is like the father of a family about
to take a long journey, and seeks to have a parting interview
with His loved ones. That is the beauty of it. “With desire I
have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”

Oh, the blessed perfection of the heart of our Lord Jesus
Christ -- the blessed, perfect Man! What tenderness, what
consideration, what affection, breathes in every word! Put
these two things together, and could there be found a more
blessed study for our souls? I am lost in wonder and
amazement! Perfect God and perfect Man; very God and very
Man. Our souls bow to the blessed truth. It is this which
promotes worship. When we have reached that blessed Person
in the attraction and fulness of His own nature, then our
whole moral being is commanded. The moment we reach His
blessed Person we adore; we cannot help so doing. Worship
cannot be got up; you cannot manufacture worship; but reach
that presence, and you are on your face! And that is ever the
effect, beloved friends, of the presence of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Do we realize that in our souls? Do not for a moment
think that I wish to turn your eyes inwards. I hold that all
realization is by faith; and I do not believe in any feelings,
however religious, that are separated from faith. It must be all
of faith. Take, for instance, that scene which comes before the
mind as we are speaking. Think of the Lord’s Supper as He
here instituted it, even on this eventful night in which He was
betrayed. Thank God for the Lord’s Supper! And, blessed be
Him, it is recovered to us in its simplicity! Oh, what a
mercy in such days as these! He Himself has recovered it in
all the primitive simplicity in which He gave it to His own.
What scene on earth is like that of the Lord’s Supper? When
we are really there, when we sit down in His blessed company,
and know we are in the presence of Himself, who
gathers His own around Himself, how blessed! If Christ is in
the midst, it is that which constitutes the meeting as according
to His mind. If He is not there, it is no true meeting according
to the Word of God. That narrows the question in a very
simple way.

I do not for one moment mean to say that there are not
numbers of God’s beloved, believing people who do
remember the Lord, according to their measure of light, in
breaking bread and drinking wine, in other circumstances. I
believe, because I know it, there are true saints of God, and
ture servants of God, who, according to their light, and the
affection of their souls toward our Lord Jesus Christ, do
remember Him. And I believe He takes account of it. That is
one thing that stands by itself. I would not for worlds destroy
the comfort of that to any one’s soul. But remember this, it is
only individual in their case. To have a collective
rememberance, to have what His word implies -- a communion
together, it must be a remembrance together, and a
remembrance together with Himself, in His own company;
and for this there must be His own presence. Moreover, to
have that presence there must be all the conditions of that
presence, all the blessed accompaniments of that presence. All
these things go together, and while it is well, and right also,
to be clear and distinct about that, it is another thing entirely
to take away from, and interfere with, the comfort that many
a dear, though unintelligent child of God derives from the fact
that he has remembered the Lord Jesus Christ. I ought to be
very glad when any one has such a desire in his heart,
because he has already the first element there. The great thing
is to build upon that. Bring in Christ, but do not destroy the
little bit that is of God. Cultivate it, add to it. Remember, we
are not called upon to be breakers down of walls and hedges.
The axe and the hatchet are cruel instruments. What we are
called upon to do is, to “strengthen the things which remain,
that are ready to die” (Rev. 3:2). If we find ever so little of
Christ, let us never fail to own it. Never let us fear
acknowledging ever so little of the truth. Why should we be afraid to walk in the steps of the Master? Let us be well assured of this, that our ability to discover and own the little there may be of Him, flows from His being much before ourselves.

I have said all this simply in connection with Christians remembering the Lord Jesus individually, even though taking the Lord’s Supper apart from the intelligent knowledge of it as set forth in Scripture; but how good it is to be according to His mind no one can easily exaggerate.

Now, when we come together where the Lord Jesus Christ gathers His saints to His name, it is His own presence that fills our hearts and thoughts. Christ is the Center, and He is as well the Object. It is to Him the Holy Ghost gathers, and it is on Him the Spirit fixes the mind of the gathered company. Christ is there, and fills the soul. Suffer me very affectionately to press upon you that which is intended to characterize the first day of the week, and the Lord’s Table. Is it so, beloved? Or do you go there merely to derive a certain kind of satisfaction to your heart that you have broken bread and drunk wine? Which is it? Do you not see how possible it is to proclaim loudly, on the one hand, that we have escaped from system, and yet, on the other, to turn the very Supper of the Lord into little better than an empty form, a cold ceremony? That is the danger to which we are exposed: and if we practically divest it of the presence of Christ, of the fact that He is there; that we go there to remember Him, and be in His company, and under His leading; to sit before Him, and hear His voice; what a dreary void it all must be! Then indeed it might well be said, “They have taken away my Lord.”

It has been remarked, and I believe rightly, that what characterizes the presence of Christ is this: that in His presence we forget our heaviest griefs and our greatest joys. Both alike are outside. Why? Because we have then reached His presence who is greater than all. Thus it is that there is no remembrance of them for the moment. I do not say we may not return to them; but while we are there we are both abstracted and absorbed by His company; as it is said, “Lost in wonder, love, and praise.” In such a moment, strange as it may seem, silence is the most eloquent expression of the soul’s adoration. And when that silence gives way to an outpouring of the heart, “O Lord, we adore Thee!” is its utterance. If the presence of Christ commanded all the company; if every heart were riveted and enraptured; if every soul were entranced by the greatness of the One who takes His place in the midst; what a moment it would be!

It is well then to see how that the great central worship-meeting of Christianity is the Lord’s Supper. There is a peculiarity, a speciality, about it that attaches to no other meeting.

Further, the interest is not only in all these circumstances connected with the Passover, the institution of the Supper, the combination of the human and divine, so blessedly seen in our Lord Jesus Christ; but there is another point to which I desire now to direct your attention, a word used in the instructions given to the disciples; namely, “Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?” (v. 11). Observe how He particularly points to that one spot as that in which, according to His own mind, it was suitable for Him to eat the Passover with His disciples; and it was there He instituted the Supper. I cannot but feel - that there is something deeply characteristic about this word “guestchamber.” What does it mean? When He thus designated it, what did He intend to convey to their hearts, and (shall I not say?) to your heart and mine? Is He not speaking to us through this scripture, just as He spoke to them? He means simply this: that He was a Stranger here, and that we must be strangers too. He is showing us, beloved, how His earthly circumstances must form and determine ours. How touching! The Creator of all, He who formed everything, by Whom as well as Joseph is upheld, had not a spot in His own creation!

“Who are these?—a Pilgrim through this lonely world
The blessed Savior passed;
A mourner all His life was He,
A dying Lamb at last.

“O Pilgrim through this lonely world
The blessed Savior passed;
Here have we found a place of rest;
Save only in the grave.”

Verily, the truth that lies around this “guest-chamber” ought to speak to us as to our present place in this world, and be a distinct voice to us that we should manifest it more. Let Christendom have its costly buildings, its gorgeous temples; but the “guest-chamber” is the place that becomes the followers of Him who had not where to lay His head.

In the next place the Lord breaks every link with the old order of things. He says, “I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (v. 16). In this verse, as has been truly said, it is not now a question of setting up the kingdom, of establishing it as things were. He is about to establish things on a wholly new basis through redemption, through the work He was going to accomplish before God. These are deeply important and interesting circumstances connected with the celebration of the Passover and the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

There is another point here, which, though very sorrowful, it is still good and edifying for us to ponder. It is this: that where you find God most fully manifested, there you will always find man most fully exposed. This is a principle running through every part of Scripture; and what follows here is no exception to the rule: hence the Holy Spirit shows us the treachery of Judas, the wickedness of the priests, and also that which has a special voice to us; namely, the weakness of the disciples.
All would shrink from the treachery of Judas, and shudder at the evil hatred of the priests, the solemn witness to the intensity of religious animosity and malignancy, which know no bounds, and which exceed all else in the lengths to which they will go. This would be universally condemned by Christians, but many might pass over the sad witness here to how little reality there is even in the love of the Lord’s own. And, beloved friends, how solemn it is to reflect on that which we are here told obtained fast hold of them. What was it? A strife! (v. 24). Can it be possible at such a moment? Ah! yes; such is man at best; a strife, for pre-eminence too, in the presence of the most perfect manifestation of all its contrast in Jesus.

Oh, friends, what a thought, what a word for us! How the Word of God exposes us! How the presence of Christ and the grace of Christ find us out! “There was also a strife,” is the record. There were other things, but there was this. What a principle to intrude at such a moment! Does it not make one blush for very shame? Alas! what a picture of ourselves, what a witness of the material we are made of, friends. “There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” Oh, the littleness of humanity, the littleness of even the best! How unblushing the impudence and insolence of the flesh! Oh, beloved friends, it is enough to break the heart, if we at all take in what we are capable of at a moment like this! For what have we here? The mighty God, who had emptied Himself, and become a Man, as a Man humbling Himself yet more. Thus, last week we had the mount of transfiguration before us, and looked at Him descending from Tabor to Calvary, from the heights of glory into the valley of the shadow of death. It is in the presence of such grace that there is strife, the selfish assertion of the miserable, contemptible littleness of man. That is what we have here.

Let us now see how the Blessed One meets them. What does He say? Ah! beloved, Jesus was not like us. We are too apt to correct the faults of others by severity, by the lash, by cutting scorn. You never find that in Christ, and yet there never was one more sensible of the faults of others, because He knew them in His own divine mind. But, oh, the tenderness of His heart! In the presence of such grace that were flung upon His blessed path here, it was in His perfect, tender, loving heart! The possession of littleness like this! For what have we here? The mighty God, who had emptied Himself, and become a Man; and yet He did not come, as it were, with an axe, and fell us to the ground. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ in the grace and tenderness of His heart!

Here again we have the great evidence of the Lord’s entire dependence as the perfect Man; for the perfection of a man is in the absolute dependence that marks him as such. That is one side of the perfection of Jesus. No doubt you have both here; but what specially and peculiarly marks Gethsemane, the scene of His agony, was this: that whilst He went through all in spirit with His Father; carried, as it were, in His heart, passed through in His soul, all the shadows of the cross that were flung upon His blessed path here, it was in His perfect, absolute dependence. And I do not believe it is without reason that it is recorded how He “kneeled down, and prayed.” I do feel, beloved friends, that there is great need to call attention to the attitude of prayer, the manner of prayer. They cannot be disconnected from one another. We do not, I believe, sufficiently take in its importance. Assuredly, as I have intimated, there is a distinct purpose of the Spirit of God in giving this record about our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Man; namely, that He kneeled down. I do not suppose that you will think I am overstraining the passage to say that the Holy Ghost calls special attention to the manner in which the Lord Jesus, in the perfection of His dependence as Man, approached His Father. For who, and what, is here set before us? A Man cast upon God, watching, weeping, praying; perfectly so. We see, too, that an angel strengthens Him. You know that did not go beyond His body. His body is
strengthened to endure the excess of agony, to go through intense and inconceivable suffering. Thus He “kneeled down.”

Now, I suppose, when we draw nigh to God in our closets, we do not, at least when in health, recline on couches, or sit cross-legged upon chairs. I cannot imagine for a moment any person privately in his or her own room drawing near to God in that manner. Why, then, should we do it in public? Why should there be such a sharp contrast between our mode of private prayer and our manner of public prayer. Do not, beloved friends, in your minds and hearts, resent my calling attention, to this. It has been asserted that, having escaped from the meshes of superstition, we have fallen into irreverence. We ought to take to heart, and learn from, such a statement. There are many things said that are not true, but we ought to take into account, and draw instruction from, everything. Thank God, we have escaped from superstition; but it does not necessarily follow that we should therefore be irreverent. I am sure there is some ground from superstition; but it does not necessarily follow that we ought to take from the heart of man can understand; an unbroken calmness in a darkness that no human eye could penetrate. There is no agonizing, no weeping there; all is fullest submission, perfect subjection, bowing beneath the awful load, bearing it in His own body on the tree. Put the two occasions together, and see how perfectly consistent and beautiful they are; the perfection of agony in Gethsemane, the perfection of sin-bearing at Calvary.

Well, beloved friends, what a scene it is to dwell upon! One feels a kind of diffidence in speaking of it. The subject is more suited for adoration than discourse; but a solemn voice reaches the soul from the scene presented in this chapter, and one could not put it aside without seeking from God that we might dwell on it with reverence, conscious that the place is holy ground; that we might have ears to hear the voice that comes from this Blessed One in the perfection of His dependence, in all that agony as He takes the cup from His Father’s hand: “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

May God by His Spirit, in His own infinite grace, apply it in all its deep significance to the heart of each of us here this evening. He can read to us the lessons that it teaches. I commend it to you affectionately and earnestly; and I would count upon your love in receiving any little word of exhortation or of warning that has passed from one’s poor lips to-night; assured that He would have us learn from, and be exercised about, every little thing connected with Christ’s glory and His truth.

May God bless His Word; may He bring home to us this wonderful scene, and fill our thoughts with it, that we may get a deeper impress in our souls of the Blessed One who is perfect Man as well as perfect God, for His precious name’s sake.

**Chapter 7:**

**Luke 23:1-49**

The closing scenes in the life of our precious Lord Jesus Christ are here set before us, beloved friends, in the aspect in which the Gospel of Luke was intended by God to present them, and I invite you to dwell upon them for a little with me this evening.

We were looking last week at Gethsemane, and even though it has the appearance of repetition, permit me just to recall your attention to the difference between the agony in the garden, and the scenes recorded in this chapter in connection with the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is deep blessing for our souls in dwelling upon, and getting an understanding of, the nature of both.

Now, what marks Gethsemane (as we have, I trust, already seen) is this: that Satan -- who, you will remember, had departed from Christ for a season after the temptation in the wilderness, after the Blessed One, in the perfection of His own position in dependence upon God, had gained the victory over the tempter, had bound the strong man -- Satan here returns with all the horrors of the impending death and judgment that were before Christ; he comes back again, wielding a power which he had acquired through the sin of man -- “the power of death.” The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us this: “That through death He might destroy {annul} him that had the power of death.” As a usurper Satan had gained that power. Man sinned, turned away from God; death came...
in; and Satan, profiting by man’s disobedience, acquired that power, and he wielded that power until the Lord Jesus Christ in death annulled him who had it:

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).

Here, then, in Gethsemane, we see Satan presenting death in all its horrors, seeking to bring that in between Christ and all His perfection as Man before God, upon whom He leaned in perfect dependence as a Man. That is what constitutes the agony in the garden. It is hardly, beloved brethren, a subject to discourse about, but more one to think of upon your knees before God. But when you gaze on it; when you dwell on it here; when you see Him praying, watching, agonizing; always uninterruptedly dependent; never anything but Man perfectly cast upon God, wholly leaning upon God; taking the cup from His Father’s hand — “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” — shrinking from it, as it were, in the perfection of His holy nature; accepting it equally in the perfection of the same dependent Man; how it strikes you as being most mysterious and wonderful!

When we come to the cross, when the cross is actually reached, He goes through that terrible hour in all the calmness and quietness of One who had in spirit traversed the road before. There are these two things; what comes out in Gethsemane is the perfection of dependence; what comes out upon the cross is the perfection of subjection. Dependence marked Gethsemane, its anguish, and its agonies, in Luke; subjection, and superiority as Man, marked the cross. Hence we shall, when we come to look at it, see that the Lord speaks peace to the poor thief, and that He calmly commends His spirit to His Father. Death is to Him but the occasion of perfect communion, perfect fellowship, perfect rest of heart to His Father. Death is to Him but the occasion of perfect dependence as a Man. That is what constitutes the perfect dependence and communion as Man, gone through all the suffering in spirit with His Father, He comes out as perfect master of the situation, and death becomes the occasion to Him to commit His spirit into His Father’s hands: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (v. 46).

You notice that the chapter begins with the charge which they bring to the Roman governor, Pilate, against the blessed Lord. They accuse Him of saying that He was a King. What was their object in bringing that accusation before Pilate? When the Lord was before the chief priests and scribes it was another thing. Nothing would so arouse the prejudice, the hatred, and the animosity of the Jews as for Him to assert that He was God’s Son; because that was to claim the Messiahship, the very thing they would not allow. But to accuse Him of saying He was a King, to bring that charge against Him, was to excite the jealousy and prejudice of the Romans.

Thus did the Jews seize on the very thing that suited their mind. It was they who railed on Christ, saying that He made Himself the Son of God; and now it is they who cry before the Romans that He says He is a King. This, they know, is the point to which Pilate will attach the most importance. Oh, the subtlety of the heart of man! How cunningly it adapts all occasions to its own wicked ends! How it presses everything into its service! It is a solemn fact that there is no hatred in this world equal to religious hatred; no hatred so bitter, blind, and relentless as religious hatred. It is grievous to think that such a principle should assert itself even amongst the saints of God; and I ask sorrowfully, Is not the history of the Church, in this respect, a solemn, sad witness of the fact to which I thus call attention? See how it is manifested in Israel, in the Jewish nation. What impelled them on? Deep-seated religious hatred. Their terrible, deadly animosity against Christ consumed them, and therefore we see everything pressed, as it were, into this service. They seek to arouse the sensibilities of the Roman governor, in order, if possible, to depreciate the Blessed One. They will, so to speak, act upon every feeling in every breast to depreciate Him. Oh, the depths of the wickedness of the human heart! The awful, hidden, secret depths of the heart of man! What is it not capable of? “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? “I the Lord search the heart.” None but God Himself can get to the bottom of what moves in that deep well.

Now, all these things drop into their places here. That is how the chapter opens, with this accusation before Pilate. There was a measure of truth in what they said and yet it was false in the way it was presented. There is many a word spoken in this world that is true, which is pressed into the service of falsehood. How often a person tells the truth to hide the truth! There is no greater falsehood in this world than that. It was perfectly true that Christ was a King. He is the King of kings; He will wield the scepter of universal empire. “There shall be one Lord, and His name one.” “The Lord shall be King over all the earth.” “He shall reign for ever and ever.” “He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” See Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15; Luke 1:33. All this is true: it was false as they
presented it. Their object was to bring forward His kingly titles and glories as if He were asserting them in order to subvert the Roman power. There is the point in which the untruth was. It was perfectly true He was a King; it was perfectly false that He was asserting His kingly claims at that time in order to set aside the Roman government. There could have been no foreign yoke on the Jewish nation except for Israel’s sin. They were an enslaved people because of their sins. There is nothing more solemn than to see how continually that was brought before them. On another occasion the Lord said, “Show me a penny.” What did He mean by that? If there had been the smallest lingering exercise of conscience in them, looking upon a Roman penny ought to have wrought conviction of their state. As a proof of their subjection to a foreign yoke, it ought to have brought their national sin before them, and would have done so had there been any real sensibility left in their souls.

I would remark, in passing, that it is very helpful for us as Christians to see that there is no power in this world but what God has ordained. That would settle a thousand difficulties for you if you bowed to the Word of God. It is not a question of whether the power is good or bad. The Christian’s place is to be in subjection to the civil magistrate. Why? Because there is no power except of God, the Source of all power. Scripture is very distinct and plain about that. “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Rom. 13:2). If you remember who it is that has allowed the power, your duty in respect of it is to accord it what God has ordained. That would settle a thousand difficulties for you if you bowed to the Word of God. It is not a question of whether the power is good or bad. The Christian’s place is to be in subjection to the civil magistrate.

The Roman yoke was brought upon the Jewish people directly in connection with the government of God. Therefore, for Christ to assert His own authority to set aside the Roman power would have been for Him to deny the very thing upon which He was insisting. Still, He was a King; but His kingdom was not of this world, and the time for Him to wear the crown had not then arrived.

I am now about to call your attention briefly to three things. The first is this: Whatever part we trace of His blessed life, whatever portion of the history, the sacred record, of our Lord Jesus Christ we study, we shall always find in the presence of each fresh incident that man is fully exposed. You cannot look at any part, whether His glory, or the sufferings and sorrows of His path down here in this world, and not find this solemn reality. So it is here. There are in this chapter three great instances of the condition in which men are found today. There is Pilate, there is Herod, and there are the Jews. Now, I find mankind classed under these three heads, and it all comes out here in each of them. Look at Pilate for a moment. He was said to be a cruel man; but, as far as we know, he had no enmity against Christ. On the contrary, he would have released Him if he could. Certain things moved that man. His natural conscience was uneasy; he was not at rest. His wife’s dream troubled him. He had the conviction as a judge, “That is an innocent Man. He is not guilty of the crimes laid to His charge.” All these things acted upon his conscience. His own sense of things asserted strongly an innocent Christ. How markedly without excuse did the evidence leave him, that at his bar was One without guilt. He knew, too, that for envy the Jewish people had delivered Him. And then his clear-sightedness as a judge must have told him that things were laid to the charge of the Blessed One which He knew not. Yet see what a history is set before us in this. Look at the struggle that went on in that man’s soul. Look at the various bidders, so to speak, all collected there in connection with this moment. What is the real secret of it? Why could he not gratify his natural conscience? Why not cast the die in favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and free Him as One in whom there was no blame? Why not? Because Pilate could not afford to give up his friendship with the world. That was the secret of it. You remember the words recorded in another gospel, “If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar” (John 19:12). If you set Him free, if you allow your natural conscience to rule you, if you listen to the voice from heaven which your wife had in that dream, if you go according to your own sense of right as a judge, you will lose the friendship of Caesar.

Oh, what a voice there is in that for our souls to-night! Is there not many a person in this company morally situated as Pilate was? Your conscience touches you; you would like to be on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ; you have had numbers of intimations of various kinds which have reached you; you would like to stand up for Him, would like to be His friend, would like to be on His side: but then there is the world; you cannot give up the world; you cannot break with it, cannot part company with its friendship. How many here may be in that position this evening! How many there are in this great city who would be on the side of Christ except that they cannot break with this world’s friendship? They cannot give up their Caesar. “If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.” The moment Pilate heard that word, the die was cast; that was what decided it; and he determined to hold to Caesar; so he gives up the spotless Jesus “to their will.” Awful words! How God shows us what is at the bottom of our hearts! How He opens to us the secrets that are down there! How He, as it were, unlocks the chambers of the soul! How He comes to us and lets the light in, and shows us all the motives that work there! That is what I read in Pilate and the conflict of his feelings.

In Herod, the apostate king of apostate Israel, we see an unmixedly wicked man; a vile, wicked wretch, without a single redeeming feature in his character. Therefore the Lord does not answer him a word. I do not know anything more
solemn than the interview between Christ and Herod. The Lord answers Pilate: there is no enmity in him. He also answers Caiaphas, because of the oath of God; but not a word does He utter to Herod. It is an awful thing for God to be silent to us. Better far that He speak to us in a voice of thunder, than not at all. Oh, what a thing it is when God is silent; when, so to speak, the sky over our heads is leaden, and there is no voice, no sound! Well did the psalmist pray, “Be not silent to me; lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit” (Psa. 28:1).

Ah! that is the meaning of all this. If God is silent to thee; if God speaks no word in thine ear, ah! it is as if thou art given up for the pit. This is what the case of Herod brings before us. What a voice of the Lord has this dealing with Herod for our souls!

Then, what we have in the Jews is not only that terrible religious hatred and enmity against God and Christ, but, in another aspect of it, the world’s choice as well. Pilate says to them, as it were, Well, now, choose between these two. Here is the spotless One; the One in whom I find no fault; against whom I can record no indictment; the One who went about doing good, who spake as never man spake, whose miracles and words of kindness, whose goodness and compassion, are well known on every side: and here is Barabbas, a convicted thief, a robber, a sedition-monger. It is of necessity that one should be released at the Passover.

It is well to understand there was that custom of commemorating the intervention of God on behalf of the nation. A prisoner was annually released in remembrance that Israel had been released by God in former days. Moreover, there were two back doors, as it were, open before Pilate. One was Galilee. He heard that Christ was a Galilean. He says, as it were, I will keep my friendship with Caesar, and pass Him over to Herod; He belongs to Herod’s jurisdiction. Here is the Passover coming too. I must release one then. Shall I liberate Barabbas or Jesus?

That is the course multitudes of people are pursuing today. God only knows whether there is one of that character in this company to-night. If so, permit me to ask, Is not that exactly what you are doing? Your mind runs in this way: “I do not want Jesus Christ; I do want religion; I could not do without religion; I must have my religion; I would die for my religion; I must have my form of Christianity; but I cannot afford to have Jesus Christ! I will keep my religion, but I do not want Christ nor His cross.

That is exactly where the world is to-day. The world cannot do without its religion. There is what is called the religious world. Strange combination of terms! And there is the world of religion; but they do not want Christ; they will not have Christ. They want to have happiness without Him. Forms and ceremonies are an advantage to them; they can profit by such; they will go in for them to any extent -- the more of them the better; but Christ is not wanted, and He is not welcome. “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” God may be thus speaking through His servant to some souls in this company to-night; some perhaps preferring their sins and follies, vanities, lusts and passions, to God’s own Christ. That is exactly what is set forth in the choice of the world. “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” Is this, dear friends, your choice? You have your Barabbas in some shape or form, but it is the very contrast to Jesus Christ, the very opposite to Him. The Barabbas of to-day is no doubt of a different character from the Barabbas of former days; but then or now, the world’s choice is not Christ. “Not this Man, but Barabbas,” is its voice still.

I trust that now you see how humanity, in every shape and form, stands out here before us. But there is a class of persons different from all these; namely, the daughters of Jerusalem, who indeed display much feeling at the sight of Christ’s sufferings, but entirely apart from faith. The distressing circumstances of that Blessed One simply aroused their human sensibilities. As McCheyne sweetly sings --

“Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
‘Jehovah Tsidkenu’: ‘t was nothing to me.’

I know that at this present moment there is a power by which it is very possible to work upon human feelings; but it is of no profit. You may work upon human feelings to such an extent that people will weep and wail; but when the excitement is past there remains no real impression on the soul. What we want are the tears of conscience, tears at the back of the eyes, so to speak, deep down in the inner man, which no eye sees but the eye of God. That is what is wanted; not the mere stirring of the natural feelings, which are ever evanescent, have no continuity in them, but quickly pass away.

Observe the grace of the blessed Lord here, the self-forgetful love of His heart -- “Daughters of Jerusalem,” He says, “weep not for Me.” They did not understand the cross; they knew not what was coming upon themselves; but He adds,

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (vv. 28-30).

Those days did come, though I admit that the Lord’s prophecy was only partially fulfilled, and that it will have a fuller accomplishment by-and-by; but if you would read a dark and bloody page of history, sit down and read the account of the sack of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus, and you will gaze on horrors that will strike to the very bottom of your soul, horrors only to be exceeded during that time of terrible tribulation which is yet to come.

“If they do these things in a green tree” -- He was the green tree Himself -- “what shall be done in the dry?” -- that dry, apostate Israel without God, that sere and sapless tree fit only for the fire. That is the meaning of these two expressions. The dry tree was the withering, ripening-for-judgment, spiritually dead state of Israel. When they are fully manifested as dry and apostate, ready for the burning flame, what will be done then?

Now let me draw your attention to the last subject in our
scripture, a part of it so deeply affecting to our souls -- the immediate circumstances accompanying the crucifixion itself. First, you will notice that there was no infamy, no shame, no amount of opprobrium, too great to heap upon the spotless One. They first hang Him upon a gibbet; and I say “gibbet” for a special reason. We must look at things as they really are. We speak of the cross, and God speaks of the cross; but I sometimes think there is very little realization of what the cross means. The cross has become a fashionable ornament in Christendom; people decorate their persons with the cross. Yet what was the cross but a gibbet, the Roman mode of capital punishment -- a cruel, shameful, scornful, hateful kind of death?

They hanged Him, then, upon a tree -- “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” It was not, as we know, the Jewish way of punishing criminals. We learn from the Old Testament Scriptures that when an offender was put to death by the Jews he was stoned. But to be hanged, to be placed upon a gibbet, was a Gentile, a heathen mode of execution; and thus it was they handed Christ over to the Romans, saying, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.” The heathen Roman soldiery were little better than savage executioners, and were unrivaled for brutality and cruelty. They placed the Blessed One between two malefactors, proving what I have said before, that there was no amount of ignominy, scorn, and shame, too great to invest Him with in that moment. And therefore the Holy Ghost records here: “There were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him” (vv. 32, 33).

Now, Calvary means “the place of a skull” -- token of the end of humanity on its own side. This is what man is reduced to, an empty skull. If you look at him in his natural state he is morally but a sightless skull. Alas! what nothingness, what vanity, marks man in his own condition at best. It seemed suitable that they should come to this place, Calvary; and there it was they crucified Him, and the two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

And here, beloved friends, you find a thing that never was known till now -- a crucified robber jeers at Him! It had never before come to this, that a man in death would laugh and scorn and ridicule another in death by his side. No such thing had ever been known until you come to the crucifixion of our precious Lord Jesus Christ. A robber, suffering the extreme penalty of the law, by His side, despises Him, contemns Him, sneers at Him, rails upon Him. Oh, what a scene! Oh, what is man not capable of! What will he not do in the presence even of God’s own precious, spotless Christ! It seemed to be reserved for that moment for man to exhibit all his worst where love endured its last. That is what comes out here. And you will find another thing, too, which I would particularly lay upon your hearts; namely, the marked way religious nature is seen. There is such a thing as religious nature as well as irreligious nature. Wherever you find mere natural religion, or the religious yet natural heart, you will find what is expressed in that word, “If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us” (v. 39). It was but the expression of the natural heart at such a moment. How solemn to witness it!

There has been for a considerable time a doctrine abroad, which perhaps has received a little more impetus of late, that, by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, fallen and depraved humanity is connected with God. Though largely held by a certain class of professing Christians, it is a doctrine by which man is left in his lost estate and guilt, and Christ and God are dishonored. Its keystone is this: that the blessed Lord, by taking manhood into God, made that manhood the medium of communicating life to the souls of sinners; that He now does this by the sacraments, that which He Himself performed in the days of His flesh; that the eucharist communicates life to him who receives it, inasmuch as the body of Christ is really present in the sacrament. I may just say that these sacraments by which the blessings of incarnation are thus continued are administered by men who call themselves priests, these persons professing to be in an unbroken line of succession from the apostles.

What a solemn denial of the truth is this! There is no way by which man can have to do with God save through death and resurrection. No, beloved friends, the Lord Jesus Christ’s own words are full and distinct as to this: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (John 12:24). Mark this, I beseech you. Short of His death and resurrection there is no connecting of man with God, no being brought to God, no righteous ground upon which God can come out in all the deep, unutterable love of His heart, and take man up in a new order of things altogether. Hence it is we find His death and resurrection so brought out in Scripture. Christ as Man has taken, in glory, an entirely new place through death and resurrection. Thank God, He can now bring us there, He can give us title to be in that place, He can have us with Himself in that place; but that is the very opposite of the anti-scriptural fable of Christ’s union with sinful humanity.

What follows here is exceedingly touching. Thank God, we have often dwelt upon the history of the poor thief who was convicted and saved, and who went with Christ into Paradise; and I would not for a moment lessen the blessedness of that in our hearts; but there is a side to it that is increasingly precious to me when I think of his case. I desire to reiterate what, through grace, we have known and held; namely, that it is the great instance of surpassing, sovereign grace. This man was crucified on a gibbet; but no matter, as has been said, gibbet, or no gibbet, when God and the soul meet we have the simple and immense fact that the soul is brought at once into His presence. Mark well the words that come from his lips at this moment: “Dost not thou fear God?” not, “Art thou not ashamed of being a thief?” Here was grace that wrought in him as well as -- what we also see here -- grace that wrought for him. Christ was bearing that man’s sins before God, and the Spirit of God wrought conviction in that man, and repentance and faith corresponding to the work that Christ wrought for him. The work was done by Christ for him, and there was also a work done in that man by the
mighty power of the Holy Spirit of God. We find here sovereign grace working in the man, and we find as well the sovereign grace that gave Jesus to do the work for him. What could be more blessed, if the Lord Jesus Christ had taken the sinner’s place, than that the sinner should be entitled to take the Savior’s place. That is exactly what we find. Christ had taken the sinner’s place, and, in virtue of that, the sinner is entitled to have the Savior’s place. Christ says, “To-day.” Oh, the blessedness of it! There is no theme out of heaven so grand as this. “To-day.” An immediate reality! This is what God meant by the sufferings and death of His own precious Son: “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise” (v. 43). It is as if the Blessed One had said, Not the kingdom yet. True, I am a King; true, I have a kingdom; true, I shall wear a crown; but before the kingdom comes, and before the crown is worn, you will “be with Me in Paradise.”

That is what God meant by the cross, and that is what God can do for poor, vile, wretched sinners that trust in Christ. Is there a poor, lost, unforgiven one here tonight? In a moment, in a twinkle of the eye, in virtue of that wonderful victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, He can take you into heaven; Observe, too, one leading character of the Gospel of Luke here, even the bringing into present blessing: so perfect is the work of Christ that this thief taken up for his crimes was that day made absolutely fit for heaven. “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

And there is more even than that. I have looked at the conversion of this thief, not only as an instance of sovereign grace, as a proof of what God meant by the cross, but in this way also: that at that moment God had a balm prepared for the heart of His precious Christ. Oh, the blessedness of it! God had this balm there in this poor thief; a poor, vile malefactor; so bad that the world was getting rid of him. And that is all the world can do: it can put men on gibbets, or shut them up in prison. A man thus shut up comes out from prison the same as he went in, save by the grace of God. The world cannot change a man’s nature. I quite grant the power of the civil law to be all right with respect to human government and authority. I fully believe that evil-doers should be dealt with by the strong arm of the law; that murderers should atone before men upon the gallows. I have not a question of it. That is all in place according to the sword of government entrusted to the hands of the Gentiles. But that accomplishes nothing for a man’s soul. A man goes to prison, and, except the grace of God work in that man’s soul, he comes out the same as he went in. Neither the gallows nor penal servitude will ever reach a man’s soul. Nothing but the mighty power of God will do that.

But how blessed to meditate on the case of that man hanging beside the precious Christ of God on the cross -- a murderer, notorious for sedition and robbery, and no doubt for villainy of every kind! In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, that man passes from death to life; and in all the misery and wretchedness of his soul he turns to Christ, and says, as it were, I will reverse all the verdict against you, all the judgment against you. You are a King; you have a kingdom; you will wear a crown; you are coming to reign. I am only a poor thief; let me wrap my soul in your eternal perfections. “Lord, remember me.” Oh, what a balm for the heart of Christ that was! What a blessed, wondrous cheer from God for the heart of His own Son in the very first moment of His victory in death, that one should be hanging upon that cross who was the comfort and solace of His heart amidst the contempt, the jeers, the scoffs, the scorn and ridicule, all around!

That is what I read in this story. I do not want to lessen the sovereign grace, the work of the Spirit of God in the conscience of that man, and the work of Christ for him upon the cross; but beyond that think how it delighted God at that moment to minister comfort to the heart of His own beloved, suffering Son.

At the last stage of this great transaction there is darkness over all the earth. How suitable it should be so! God and Christ were alone there. This scene had been pictured long before in these words: “There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place” (Lev. 16:17). Though that darkness was emblematic, in a certain sense, of the darkness that rested on the mind and heart of the nation at that moment, the terrible state and condition of darkness that rested morally upon Israel, yet doubtless God intended to abstract His Son in that hour, that no eye should see what passed between Him and Christ when the Blessed One bore the judgment of God against sin.

Another thing went along with this. The veil of the temple was rent. That marked the passing away of a different kind of darkness. God had said that He would dwell in thick darkness; but now He dwells in it no longer. Previously God was hidden, though He acted. He was concealed behind the veil; but now He reveals Himself in the death of Jesus, and by means of that death. How blessed! The veil of the temple, which separated God in His holiness from man, and shut man in his sins out from God, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; that is, from God to man. Could anything be more blessed? Yet man is to-day endeavoring to put that veil up again. That is what a large portion of Christendom now desire to do, to set up that veil again between God and man. The veil was rent in twain as soon as ever Jesus died; but people in our day want to put it up again, to put God in the darkness, and man in the distance from Him. That is the great object of the largest portion of professing Christendom. I hope I shall offend nobody if I say it openly and plainly here to-night. The genius of both popery and ritualism is to put God in the darkness and man at a distance. You have it in these two systems, the essential genius of each being distance from God. But here the veil of the temple was rent in twain; not removed to be put up at another time; not rent, observe, from man’s side, as if man were the abolisher of it, but rent from God’s side. The only One who might rend it was the One who erected it. God had erected that veil, but now He rends it. It is rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

One thing more, which is also characteristic of the Gospel
of Luke. Jesus cried with a “loud voice.” Why is that recorded? Why does the Spirit of God dwell upon that here? In order to show that our Lord Jesus Christ retained the full, undiminished, unchanged strength of His manhood; that, in the full possession of all His powers as a Man; not wasted, not worn out with suffering; His strength in no sense deteriorated by what He had gone through; but in the full vigor of perfect humanity He cried with a “loud voice,” and said, “Father.” What a beautiful word! Perfect communion, perfect repose, perfect subjection of spirit in all the rest of the heart, even though death was there; but a death that truly was only the occasion of His commending His spirit into His Father’s hands. How beautiful and blessed to dwell upon this!

The Lord give our hearts to abide here in the sense of His infinite grace. In this lies the power that wins our poor, cold hearts. It is a suffering Christ that wins the affections. He wins us, attracts us, in suffering. It is when the heart rests on Him as thus suffering that we can exclaim --

“We were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all”

God, in His infinite grace, set before us His suffering, precious Son in all the blessed perfections that mark Him as a Man, and keep Him before us, that we may see the folly and vanity of all else in the light of that cross, the nothingness of all the great schemes of this world. All its plans and glories are here measured and estimated at their true value.

Lord Jesus Christ, set Thou Thyself as the bleeding, suffering One before all our hearts, for Thy precious Name’s sake.

Chapter 8:

My desire at this time, beloved friends, to connect the wonderful scenes pictured for us in these chapters by the Holy Ghost; but before doing so I wish to direct your thoughts back for a few moments to what follows the subject upon which we were dwelling last week. There is one thing in particular that I am anxious we should linger over, and contemplate all the blessedness of to-night, because it so peculiarly characterizes the Gospel of Luke. I refer to the closing utterance of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”

Oh, the infinite character of all the blessedness that it here sets forth -- Sonship in perfect communion, unabated confidence and trust in God His Father as Man in death!

You will not fail to observe how different this account is from all that is recorded in the other gospels. For instance, in Matthew the divine record in every detail very markedly sets Christ before us as the Victim undergoing the abandonment of God. It is of course, the very same scene as that depicted here; there was only one scene, as there was only one Person; but the Spirit of God (may I say so, with holy reverence?) delights to set before us the many sides of the moral glory of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, then, His complete abandonment that Matthew records, that wonderful judgment which the Blessed One underwent upon the cross, as the Lamb of God bearing the wrath that was due to sin. Therefore the utterance that characterizes the account given in Matthew’s Gospel is, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Now, that is not noticed here; it is not what was required in Luke’s presentation of the Lord. Of course, again I repeat, it was the same scene; but it is another side of it which is presented here, even the perfection of the confidence and trust that ever marked Him as a Man, and now in the presence of death. Death was but the occasion of the manifestation of such confidence in His Father and God; and thus it is He commends His spirit into His hands.

Another thing important to bear in mind, as we linger over this word, is the note of victory that is sounded forth. We are here permitted to listen to the Victor’s voice, the Conqueror of death, through death! death submitted to in victory, and the foundation laid for that which will yet be as thus expressed: “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).

I may at this point say that there is a scripture which is too often quoted in an incorrect connection. You remember it is recorded of Hezekiah, that when he had recovered from his sickness and the exercises of it in his soul, he said, “The living, the living, he shall praise Thee” (Isa. 38:19). Now, it is well to remember that that is Jewish blessing. Christian blessing is of another order.

There is no subject more important to understand than the character of blessing set forth in Scripture. It is this which makes the scene in Isa. 38 so peculiar. Hezekiah, no doubt, was a true servant of God; still, all his links were down here on this earth. Therefore, to him death was intolerable. It was the severance of every tie that bound him here. It was perfectly in keeping with his position and order of blessing to say, “Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption”; again, “The Lord was ready to save me”; and
again, “Death cannot celebrate Thee” (vv. 17, 18, 20). It was the character of blessing suited to that time. But in what is now before us we have the winning and inauguration of another order of blessing entirely, the ground laid for heavenly blessing.

Here we gaze on Himself, the Lord of glory, victorious over death; not an Hezekiah snatched back from the gates of the grave, rescued from the very grip of the enemy, but Himself the Lord, who underwent death, and was victorious through it. “Father,” then, expressed His perfect confidence in, and dependence on His Father in the presence of death; so that death became simply the opportunity to display that dependence which ever characterized Him as Man down here on this earth, in most perfect and blessed contrast to all that ever went before.

There is a remark in the Gospel of John to which I will refer; and I would invite you at your leisure to compare all the gospels. Do not seek to harmonize them. Verily they never disagreed! In their record and witness there never was any divergence. Nothing but perfect unity of account and revelation could mark them. You will miss the real mind of the Spirit of God, and the blessing and comfort of it for your souls, if you adopt that process. What is said in the Gospel of John is, “He dismissed His spirit.” That is, as a divine Person, He separated His spirit from His body. He could do that, because He was God. In Luke, as Man, He commends His spirit in perfect confidence to His Father. In Matthew, as the Victim, He bows His blessed head, accepting the judgment, and completing all His atoning work by His death. It is peculiarly the divine side in John. He Himself is the One who in John’s Gospel separates His spirit. Therefore the word employed there is, “He dismissed His spirit,” after having fulfilled everything that was written of Him.

It is only thus, then, that you get the knowledge of the mind of God in Scripture; you get out of Scripture what God put into Scripture, and you get all the blessedness of Scripture. It is not putting into Scripture something out of our own minds. You will find as you look at the gospels in that way, and indeed all the records that God has been pleased to give, whether in the Old Testament or the New, every blessing God unfolds in them.

Not unfrequently one little word is characteristic of the truth that is given. The word “Father” here is quite characteristic of Luke. It shows Christ’s Sonship with the Father; dependence, confidence, trust, as Man with God. Oh, what an atmosphere it takes us into! May our souls love reverently to contemplate it, to dwell upon it, remembering the place the blessed Lord took. He who was God, was pleased to become Man; and He kept that position, maintained it all through His blessed life on earth.

The next thing we have in this twenty-third of Luke is the effect of the cross on conscience, and that in a twofold way. The Roman centurion stationed there to watch the crucifixion completed, is the great witness of the power of the cross on conscience. The effect and power of what his conscience took cognizance of in connection with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ forced the almost involuntary testimony from his lips as he gazed upon Him. “Certainly this was a righteous Man” (v. 47). Oh, the power of the cross! both internally and also externally. I am bold to say there is no power on earth or in heaven equal to the power of the cross. The effect of it on conscience, heart, and affection is beyond man’s power to describe. There is, in very truth, nothing like the cross, whether we look at it here in its effects on the conscience of the centurion, or upon the crowd; for there was this testimony as well: “And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned” (v. 48). They were wholly unable to understand it, yet they were struck with the fact that something had taken place beyond the usual order of things. God was pleased thus to give proof of the power of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, at His burial, all the circumstances were providentially arranged and brought together in the most blessed way. First, a naturally timid man is at that moment emboldened to come and link himself with the Lord Jesus Christ in death. Joseph of Arimathea was apparently a timid man, and does not seem to have been before associated with the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. But God in His wonderful grace was now pleased to give the man the courage suited for the occasion, and he comes boldly forward and begs the body of Jesus. Secondly, Pilate, who would have been only too glad if he could have kept his character in the world, and have released Christ, gives up the body, because there was no enmity in his heart.

Thus we have these three things beautifully put together by the Spirit of God: the affection of the women, the courage of Joseph, and the willingness of Pilate, the man in whose breast there was no enmity.

There is also another thing here; and that is, the honor of the grave. There is no such thing now as the honor of the grave. It was a Jewish thing entirely. Burial was very important with the Jews, because I have no doubt it was, in their earlier history, a testimony to the fact that they were to possess the land. They were charged not to leave Joseph’s bones in Egypt. You remember how they brought his bones up, no doubt in testimony to the expectancy of resurrection in the land. But the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was to be the end of all that. An altogether new order of things was to come in now. That is what brings us to ch. 24.

I will now just call your attention to three other things in the verses we have read together to-night. The first is the occasion itself. What a day it was! In all the previous history of the world there had never been such a day as this first resurrection morn. It was the brightest day that ever dawned on this poor sinful earth. Think of it for a moment. These are the three great realities brought before us in the commencement of Luke 24: the risen Lord, the empty tomb, and the rolled-away stone. I am speaking of it now exactly as this chapter presents it to us. First we see the risen Lord, in his victory and triumph. He arises, as it were, with the fruits
and spoils of His conquest. He had been through the night of judgment, entered the gates of death, passed through the confines of the tomb, finished everything He came to accomplish. You remember how the former creation was celebrated with the Sabbath in its beginning; but now the grave of God’s Son was at its close. We here come to a totally new thing. We behold a risen Man, yet who was, and is, God over all, blessed evermore (Rom. 9:5). If we contrast with this the record of the Old Testament Scriptures respecting the worthies of former times, whoever they may have been, what do we find? Why, just this, that with regard to every one of them, however long he lived, it is written, “And he died” (Gen. 5). Even as to Methuselah, the longest-lived of all in the days when human life was prolonged far beyond the length of human life to-day, the statement is that “he died.” That is the undeviating record.

Now, thank God, we come to what is altogether new, an entirely fresh and blessed reality: “He . . . is risen” (v. 6). This is indeed the new beginning. As has been truly said; “This is the second volume of our history.” God grant that every one of us may understand it! Christ’s death closed the first volume of our history, all that we were. The second volume, which opened with His resurrection, is filled up with all that He is. Volume one is the record of all that we were as children of Adam: our sins and wretchedness, our guilt and vileness, fill, as it were, its pages, a sad and solemn record of man lost and guilty before God. It is the record as of a night of darkness without the relief of a solitary star. They are blotted pages from the commencement to the end. The second volume is filled with the glory of His own person -- His finished work, and all that He is in the perfection of His victories. Oh! to be well versed in the magnificence of this wonderful record of His glories, Himself the second man and last Adam.

Another thing that marks this resurrection-day in contrast with all former periods, is the blessed way in which the triumphant One has everything in His own hands, so to speak. You cannot read the account of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ without being peculiarly struck with this. We see Him now lifting every load out of the way, a blessed proof that He held things in His own hands. He had left death and judgment eternally behind Him, and is now the risen One for evermore. “Death hath no more dominion over Him” (Rom. 6:9). He is the Conqueror of death and the grave, and in this sense it was emphatically “His hour.” Contrast that for a moment, beloved friends, with what went before. You remember how He said to them: “This is your hour.” And man went on, until God took the whole proceeding into His own hand, until the three hours, when Christ met God about sin, and God dealt with Christ about sin. God and Christ were alone during those three hours. As we draw near to gaze by faith on “that sight” we seem to hear the solemn words, “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.” What a moment that was, when God as God forsook Christ as Man! That is what marked those memorable hours. And note how God put His own seal on the perfection of that work which was there wrought out. God expressed in a very remarkable way His perfect satisfaction with all that His blessed Son had consummated. Do you know what that was? We were dwelling on the subject a little last week. He rent the veil of the temple. That was God’s striking answer to the cry of the suffering Savior. How blessed in adoring love to dwell on the complacency of His own heart in what Christ had done on the cross!

God was pleased to express His satisfaction in a twofold way. No one can say there was an interval between Christ’s precious death and that significant rending of the veil. He dies; the veil is rent. The two facts synchronize; they take place at one and the same time. Now, observe it well, whilst this was the end of the Jewish system as such, it constitutes also a clear and full witness to the falseness of popery and ritualism. The veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Christendom desires to put it up again. Thank God, they cannot accomplish this end. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever” (Eccl. 3:14). As I have already said, this was God’s blessed testimony to the value, as He measured it, of the work of His own Son, whilst it was the death-knell of all that connects itself with human, earthly religion. I am bound in faithfulness to bear my witness -- though I do it without the smallest desire to wound the feelings of any -- that the practice of a large part of professing Christianity at this moment is but a virtual re-erecting of the veil. How solemn to return to that which was done away in the death of Jesus! Mark it well: God rent the veil. He did not remove it, nor withdraw it, nor roll it up from the bottom, nor lower it down from the top: it was rent in twain. The Blessed One died, and the veil of the temple was rent; and in connection with it is disclosed that of which previously there could not have been, and had not been, any type. Until the veil was rent, there could not be a type illustrative of the way into the holiest having been opened by His death. This is blessedly set forth in the rending of that veil, an action which, like the wonderful work it bore witness to, is never to be repeated.

Let me here direct your thoughts to what may be called a very distinct public testimony to the fact that redemption was accomplished; namely, Christ’s glorious resurrection from among the dead. “The Lord is risen indeed” announced this great event amongst His own on that blessed morning. That this might be said, had been the fear of His enemies: “Sirs, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead” (Matt. 27:63, 64). “But God raised Him from the dead” (Acts 13:30). How simple that is. This, then, was God’s great public manifestation of
His absolute satisfaction with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it is so truly and blessedly said, that the resurrection is the fundamental truth of the gospel. It is the great public demonstration of the completeness and efficacy of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that His own remember their Lord in His death, but in fact the risen Lord is the glorified One. He who was on the cross and in the grave is now in glory. A crucifix, then, is the denial of the truth of the gospel: it is an attempt to fix the eye on a visible and superstitious representation of Christ in death, and that as well the death of shame awarded Him by man. There is at this moment, thank God, a living and glorified Christ. He is alive out of death, and seated upon the Father’s throne, at the right hand of the Majesty on high; above all, “Head over all.” The Lord in His grace give us to see the immense importance of this truth. May He keep our souls from slipping away from it. There is in us a tendency to return to earth and earthly things; and there is always opportunity in that direction.

Thus, then, the Lord is here seen in His perfect triumph and victory as the risen One; but there is something which is in saddest contrast with that which I have said was the brightest day that ever dawned on this earth, and which was beyond all appreciation in its blessedness. Look at the twenty-fourth verse: the hearts of His disciples, His followers, are broken, afflicted, despondent; nothing but gloom seemingly settling down upon them. Think of this, too; the apostles, the chosen and sent ones of Christ, not being in the very least degree in unison with the occasion! They are really in perfect contrast with that glorious day. They are all in the darkness of uncertainty; the gloom of death and the grave en-shrouded their spirits, even though resurrection was come, and Jesus was alive again for evermore. They could not sing --

“Jesus lives! no longer now
Can thy terrors, death, appall us;
Jesus lives! by this we know
Thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us.

“Jesus lives! henceforth is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm our trembling breath
When we pass its gloomy portal.”

There was a combination of circumstances that operated to bring about their discordant state of soul. First of all, it is most solemn to think that the words of the Lord Jesus had been forgotten by them. The apostles’ state seems to have been, as to this, the darkest of all. The perplexity of unbelief covered their hearts and minds. The tidings of the women, as they returned from the sepulcher, had no place with them; all seemed as “idle tales.” Those shining ones that met these women at the grave said, “Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of the living God, “The Son of the living God,” implies resurrection; and yet here is poor Peter all in the dark as to it. Ah! beloved friends, this is what we all are. Even the apostle, blessed man as he was, is amazed to see that the Lord Jesus was not there. He “departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (v. 12).

Another circumstance contributed largely to bring about this state of soul, and the consequent darkness that rested upon their hearts; that is, they were really looking for something down here in this world. Beloved friends, nothing will more certainly, more surely produce a state of wretchedness in your hearts than looking for something on earth. Nothing else will so effectually keep the soul out of its true blessing, and for the simplest of all reasons: our blessings are all in another place.

“Oh, what a voice all this has for us; for how often do we forget His words and sayings! Is there one here to-night who has forgotten His words? That is why you are sad -- full of gloom and despondency. You have forgotten the Savior’s words; they have ebbed away out of your hearts. Is it, then, strange that you should be in wretchedness of heart and perplexity of soul?

“And they remembered His words”; and thus it was all was changed for them: they can now put on the garments of praise. It is very blessed to see how they left the sepulcher at once when they remembered His words.

“We cannot linger o’er the tomb:
The resurrection-day
To faith shines bright beyond its gloom,
Christ’s glory to display.”

They “returned from the sepulcher” (v. 9). That is one great change now effected. How it shows us the power of the words of Jesus! Now we have them written, praise the Lord! We have them in what is called the “Word of God.” We have the very words of Jesus.

It is truly saddening to dwell upon the state of the apostles here, and I only return to it because of the importance of the lesson it teaches us. It is instructive to see the plight into which servants of Christ may get. Alas! what poor things we are. What is possible for us either on the side of blessedness or failure is indeed wonderful. In this scene the servants appear in greater darkness and distance than all the rest. It seems as if there had been greater difficulties in the way of connecting them again with Christ than all others. The one chief in this seems to have been Peter, who, coming and looking down into the tomb, simply wonders and departs. Do you remember his confession? Taught from heaven, too; divinely illuminated by the Father, Peter, in answer to the Lord’s question, “Whom say ye that I am?” replies, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15, 16).

Well may we say, “Ah! Peter, you have forgotten your confession, you have forgotten the revelation from heaven of the Father’s mind that reached you.” How can He be still in the grave, if He were the Son of the living God? That word, “The Son of the living God,” implies resurrection; and yet here is poor Peter all in the dark as to it. Ah! beloved friends, this is what we all are. Even the apostle, blessed man as he was, is amazed to see that the Lord Jesus was not there. He “departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (v. 12).

Another circumstance contributed largely to bring about this state of soul, and the consequent darkness that rested upon their hearts; that is, they were really looking for something down here in this world. Beloved friends, nothing will more certainly, more surely produce a state of wretchedness in your hearts than looking for something on earth. Nothing else will so effectually keep the soul out of its true blessing, and for the simplest of all reasons: our blessings are all in another place.

“There above is our life and glory,
There will shine an endless day.”

Let us now turn our thoughts for a moment to a brighter side
of this subject; namely, how the Lord meets the low condition of His chosen ones. It is wonderful and blessed to dwell upon His matchless grace and goodness, and to see how He deals with the folly and blindness of His poor people. What a comfort it is to be enabled to say to one another to-night, “He never will give us up.” For ever blessed be His name! Alas! how quickly we can give one another up. But He never does so.

Now, observe, they were going away from Jerusalem. They were leaving the then center of God’s interests upon the earth, the place of His name and grace; they were going away from it, and He follows them, saying, as it were, by this very act, “I will never give you up.” May God by His Spirit enable us to appreciate such blessed grace as this. Forgetful, unbelieving, unintelligent as they were, yet He never will abandon them. Oh, beloved friends, that is the blessed grace that here shone forth! The very opposite to this only too often marks ourselves: we are selfish and self-seeking, even in God’s things.

Further observe the skilfulness of the love of Christ. There is nothing so skillful as love. It is to our shame we have so little divine love in our intercourse one with another. The reason of our clumsiness in dealing with each other is because we have so little love. “Love is of God,” and again, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:7, 16). Love is the power that moves the heart and guides the hand: it is this that wings the words from the lips of one into the soul of another. A remark of the late Dr. Guthrie will illustrate this point. “A man,” said he, “may point like a lifeless finger-board along a road which he neither leads nor follows; but it is what comes from the heart of the speaker that打动s the heart of the hearer; like a ball red hot from the cannon’s mouth, he must himself burn that would set others on fire.” Some amongst us, alas! seem to glory in putting the waning spark out; the destructive principle appears to rule their ways.

Oh, the skill of the Lord’s hand! How He draws them out in all His tenderness, in all the grace and compassion of His love, and leads them step by step along the way. Well indeed may we sing:

“His is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.”

Think for a moment, too, of the way in which He ministers to them, after He Himself has kindled those desires in their hearts. He does not let them go alone. He comes near to them, but their eyes are holden that they should not know Him. He draws out their hearts, deals with their affections, brings them on step by step. He lets them tell their own tale. Listen to it: “Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done” (vv. 18-21).

Having allowed them thus to tell out their thoughts, He then in His grace begins to deal with them. Mark His first words, and their solemnity: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (v. 25). What a voice is in these words! He further says, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (v. 26).

You will not, I trust, fail to mark how the Blessed One in these words combines His sufferings and His glory: in these words a rejected and heavenly Christ is set before us, and all that Moses and the prophets had spoken are connected with Himself. It has been well said, that this should bind round our hearts every jot and syllable of God’s Word. How blessed to have pressed on us the mind of God in Scripture relative to Christ. No doubt there was to be redemption by power; but redemption by blood comes first. Even as to the blessed Christ Himself, death must come in, if God were to be vindicated, and man fully blessed. And there is not only redemption by power, but a new and heavenly life, of which they had no thought. What filled their minds was the redemption of Israel by power: they were looking for a kingdom on earth. They were influenced by selfish consideration for themselves alone, and by the essentially earthly character of Judaism. But the Lord connects the Scriptures with all that happened to Himself: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (v. 27). It has been blessedly said that “He awakens that ardent attention which the heart feels whenever it is touched.” Think of that Blessed One thus conducting these poor hearts through “all the Scriptures.” We may well say of this:

“It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths rolled between.”

The theme here is “Himself,” and verily His name runs like a golden thread through every part of God’s Word. Oh! beloved friends, have your hearts found that out? Christ is the center of Scripture; He is the center of all the thoughts and purposes and counsels of God. If you have not Christ simply before your soul you can never understand the Scriptures. I find Him everywhere set forth in type, and sounded from the harp of prophecy, through the roll and sweep of centuries. The heart that knows Him, and loves Him, delights thus to find Him. As He is the center of all Scripture, so He is of such a heart. It is challenged as to Him: “What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?” and without delay it is replied, “My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand . . . His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend” (S. of S. 5:9, 10, 16).

Now, I observe and mourn over a growing tendency in an opposite direction to that set forth in these words so important for us, “All the Scriptures.” This is baneful in a double way; first as to Christ, for all the Scriptures testify of Him; next as to our knowledge of and interest in Scripture. Our being partial in knowledge creates the tendency to exaggerate on one side or the other. You may rest assured of this, that all exaggeration (if
I may so say) of truth, springs from a *partial knowledge* of the Word. That which alone can preserve us from this is, giving *all* the truth its due place. That which hinders us giving all the truth its place is, the not having all the truth ourselves. When I say “*not having,*” I mean not consciously through the ministry of the Holy Ghost. If you have only a part, the mind is biased, and its tendency is to exaggerate that part to the exclusion of much else. We should seek, beloved friends, by God’s grace, to be kept from this. The limitation of partial knowledge assuredly hinders our seeing all Christ’s glory, and deprives our own souls of precious blessing.

Bear with me in pressing on you this danger of exaggerating any part of truth from simply having only a part; and do let that little word, beloved friends, sink into your souls, “All the Scriptures”: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself.” How foolish are we to desire or accept less than “all the Scriptures,” when God has given us all! Be assured of it, when you have Christ before your soul as the center of the Scriptures, the center of the counsels and purposes and mind of God, it is indeed well. All the Scriptures testify of Christ, and point to Him; all the counsels of God revolve around Him; and it makes a wonderful difference if, instead of looking at the Scriptures in reference to yourself, you look at them in relation to Him. I remember so well how that very thing delivered me from a false notion. It is now some years ago. I remember seeing how Christ was the center of the thoughts and purposes and counsels of God, the center of all Scripture. I remember how it set me free from the thought that the elect were the center of the mind, purposes, and counsels of God. No; it is not so. It is in this our souls get balance. If you have Christ before you, you have God’s balance. This is what we need; and it is truly blessed to have the truth communicated by the ministry of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and to see Christ everywhere, in “*all the Scriptures.*”

The Lord in His grace affect our souls with the record He has been pleased to give to us of this precious and wonderful scene of resurrection glory. May He fasten it on our hearts more really than ever, according to the skill of His hand and the grace of His heart; and thus bless us just as He did the feeble souls in those days.

**Chapter 9:**

**Luke 24:28-53**

When last together, beloved brethren, we got as far into this closing chapter of the Gospel of Luke as that part where the Blessed One is seen expounding to those sorrowful travelers, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself. That was the point to which our thoughts were led last Tuesday evening: the risen Lord, in precious grace, showing how Himself is set forth everywhere in Scripture. And I was trying to impress upon you these two things: first, that we need “*all the Scriptures*” -- not merely part of Scripture, not merely certain portions of it, but all -- and, secondly, that the second Person of the blessed Trinity is in every part of it; the united testimony of the Word as God has been pleased to give it to us, and Christ the center of it: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (v. 27). Only permit me again to emphasize, it was *Himself* in His own person in Scripture.

Now, we are told that their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him; and there was a distinct purpose of God in their eyes being holden, as we shall see presently; but the Blessed One is seen here connecting the Scriptures with Himself, and all that happened to Himself. That is what was before us last week.

I would invite you this evening to consider with me three distinct points presented in the rest of the chapter. The first is, the *kindlings* of His grace in their souls; the lighting up, as it were, of the fire of divine grace within them, so as to make their hearts burn. May I ask if your hearts have ever been thus on fire? What a wonderful thing it is when under His kindling the heart burns! I grant you it is not everything; I quite grant it is not the fulness of the blessing, but it is the *highroad* to it; it is the grand commencement and spring of the divine work in the soul.

Then comes the answer to it in the manifestation of *Himself as risen.* That is our second subject to-night. He had not, as far as we are aware, yet made Himself known to them as the very One who was risen. Their eyes were holden. He traced throughout the Scriptures the testimony to Himself, but He did not as yet stand truly and really as risen before them.

The third and last subject of the chapter is His *departure.*

These are the three subjects; and I think the three places spoken of here would answer to the subjects -- Emmaus, Jerusalem, and Bethany. These three places will help us, by God’s grace, to fix our thoughts on the subjects: the words of His grace to their souls; the manifestation of Himself to them as really risen, and the consequences of it; and then the platform from which He left this world, the place to which He brought them out, and from which, having blessed them, He went up on high.

Well, now, seeking the blessed Spirit’s help, let us look at these for a little, and we shall see how they bring Himself in His person before us. Look at these kindlings: what a fire His love sets burning in their souls! Oh, beloved friends, it is a wonderful thing to think of it! He does not leave them. They were slow and foolish, slow of heart indeed, to believe all that Moses and the prophets had spoken; but He never gives them up. What a comfort to your souls and mine: He never will give up His own. It is a blessed thing to hold fast to all this grace of the heart of Christ. He will never give up even the feeblest of His own. He does not leave them. He does not say, as it were, *There, I leave you now!* You have turned away; you have become hard in your hearts. On the contrary, as we have seen, He went after them, He journeyed with them. And what is He doing all the time? Why, what He does still. He is making Himself necessary to them, indispensable to them. How often one hears that word -- and has used it one’s self -- “That is indispensable to me.” Now, there is but One that is indispensable to us, and that is Jesus. There is but One worthy of that place in our souls, and that is Christ. Christ is
indispensable to us. There is not a thing in this world we could not do without; but you cannot do without Him. He is verily the indispensable One. We often think we can manage without Him, and then in all His blessed love He allows us to find out our insufficiency, and deals with us in His love, and leads us to discover that we cannot do without Him; and thus we sing --

“As weaker than a bruised reed,
We cannot do without Thee;
We want Thee here each hour of need,
Shall want Thee too in glory.”

This unfailing love of His is what kindled the fire in their souls; and there was besides all the wonderful skill of His love in doing it. Love, if I may so say, is the most skillful operator in the world. He draws their hearts out, and He goes with them and lights up this fire. Observe how easy it would have been to extinguish it. I grant it was but a little spark; still He, so to speak, fans it, ministers to it, adds the fuel of His grace to that little flame which He Himself had kindled. And then mark what happens. As they journeyed they drew near to the village whither they went, and the evening was upon them; but He (oh, the blessedness of it!) had become necessary, oh, so necessary, to them; this mysterious Stranger, who had walked that road with them, had so imprinted Himself upon the fleshy tables of their hearts; He who had walked as the unknown Stranger, as far as they were concerned, had so got possession of their affections and souls, that when the moment comes that He would withdraw, when “He made as though He would have gone further,” then it was that they “constrained Him” (vv. 28, 29).

Oh, beloved friends, how blessed all this is! The deepest love was manifested in that action of the Blessed One. If you look at it merely from the outside, you would fail to see the blessedness of it. But He drew off that He might draw out. Though He essayed to leave them, His heart was toward them, and He had so got into the affections and souls of those poor disciples that they cannot go in without Him, and “they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent” (v. 29). How gladly He goes! That is why He drew off. For ever blessed be His name, He loves to be constrained. He kindled the fire in their souls, and when thus He had opened the door, so to speak, He went in to abide: He was constrained.

It is the same in respect of ourselves. We can have Christ by faith with us now. And it is an immense thing to have His own blessed person spiritually with us; to have His company, His presence, and to know He is with us according to His word, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you” (John 14:8). And we need the sustainment and comfort and joy of that blessed presence. He conducts us, and leads us on step by step. What a blessed reality it all is! It is not that it belongs to a chosen few. Far from it; it is the portion of all His people; it is for you, beloved friends. You may have Him in your home as your Companion, your Friend, to walk beside you, to solace you, to cheer up the lonely moments of your life. How blessed it is! “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” Do you think it was difficult to constrain Him? Do you suppose He wanted much pressing? He wanted just as much constraining from them as kindled into a holy flame that ebbed fire in their hearts. Then, we are told, “He went in to tarry with them” (v. 29). He became their guest; for I have no doubt they entertained Him. Oh, did they not in a deeper way entertain Him? Beloved friends, there is nothing entertains our Lord Jesus Christ more than a weary, desolate heart that turns to Himself. You can bring nothing to Him so attractive as a weary, heavy-laden heart. So He was entertained in a double way. He was entertained, no doubt, because of the circumstances. They were broken-hearted, sad, cast down. He accepts the external entertainment set before Him. He went in, and while He sat at meat with them He took the initiative. He can never go into any scene where He is not first and last. But He took, as the head of the house would, the bread into His hands, and He broke it, and gave to them.

Now, that was not the Lord’s Supper. It is most important to have correct thoughts as to the Lord’s Supper, but this was not the Lord’s Supper. It was the ordinary meal they were partaking of here; but nevertheless it was the breaking of the bread which the Blessed One was pleased to make to their souls as the sign of His death. As He broke that bread before them, the reality of His death on Calvary’s cross passed from the symbol in His hands, by His own power in its reality, into their souls. He brought Himself before them, as the One who had been dead.

Now you see the object of their eyes being holden until this moment. Had they recognized Him, and known Him, and accepted Him previously, it would have been a kind of substantiating of all the Jewish thoughts and aspirations which were so alive in their souls. They are to know Him as the One that died, the One who passed through death. And hence it was that until now their eyes were holden. Now would come the overthrow of everything that was merely egotistical in Judaism, and it was this very thing that ruled in their breasts at that time. They must now know Him as the One that died and rose again, as the One alive out of death. He broke the bread before their eyes as the risen One, and immediately their eyes were opened. But the moment He, by this symbol, conveyed Himself as the risen One really before their eyes, He vanished out of their sight. How blessed and how wonderful to think of it! What they had been looking for, what had moved in their souls before, was as expressed in their words, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel” (v. 21). What had slain all their living hopes was His death, the fact of His death. It was the death of the heir to them; and their hopes, which centered in earth, were all broken up and scattered to the winds, as we say, by His death. But now God has led them on in His wondrous grace; Christ, in His wonderful love, has led them step by step to this point. There He was Himself before them in His death, in symbol, yet as the risen One; their opened eyes rested on Him thus for an instant, and then the Savior vanishes out of their sight.

Let us now look at the consequences of this for a moment. There are two things that are perfectly beautiful here. “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?” (v. 32). Now, I do not think we ought to depreciate that. I am always afraid of such depreciation. We ought not to make little of it, and yet we ought not to make...
everything of it. What was it made their heart burn while He talked with them and while He opened the Scriptures to them? Was it not Himself? Do not tell me that anything He does is small or trifling. It was He that did it. It was He that lighted that fire, He that kindled that flame. It was His love that struck, as it were, the match in their souls.

All these exercises, under the Lord’s blessed hand, conduct to that which next comes before us — communion. But you must have burning to lead to communion; you must have burning of heart to lead to communion of heart. That is the road to communion. The heart is set on fire by the kindlings of the love of Christ; the heart is delighted as the word comes from His own blessed lips, and He conducts on to this moment. He Himself is before us, really and literally back from the dead, a living Person. That is just what it was with them. What made all the difference now is, that Himself is there before them. Not merely Himself in Scripture; because that is what you do find: He had been before them in Scripture, in His own interpretation of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms. And what a wonderful interpretation of Scripture that must have been! Not a flaw in it! Oh, what divine harmony and perfectness as He conducted them through the Scriptures, and said, as it were, I am there; and I am there; and I am there! Not a scene that He did not fill; not an event of which He was not the crowning figure, so to speak; not a circumstance that did not revolve around Him. But He, in His own blessed person, is now really before their eyes. It was more than report, it was reality now. He is there present to the gaze as alive from the dead, alive out of that death which He had undergone in the deep, eternal love of His heart for them; Himself having changed everything, altered everything, and brought in an entirely new order of things. Then it is they rise up the same hour of the night. Farewell now to weariness! It brought in an entirely new order of things.

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Thus, then, it is we have got to Jerusalem. Observe how you are called back from Emmaus, where the kindlings began. And that which marks Jerusalem is, the manifestation and full revelation of Himself as the risen One, the manifestation of Himself as the One alive out of death. It is this which characterizes our second subject tonight. And so He comes into the midst of the apostles and disciples as they were assembled together. And note this, for it is exquisite: He connects Himself in their souls with all His risen glories, all the magnificence of the victories which He has won, and of which His resurrection is the great witness, as seen in the One whom they had known down here. That is what forms the first great part of this subject. It is the same Jesus. There is no change in Him. True, He had gone into death and come out of death; true, He was risen from the dead; true, He had passed through the portals of the tomb, and, being raised from the dead, dies no more; true, He has a glorified body; but for all that He was the same Jesus; and that is the great point in the second subject tonight. He connects Himself in resurrection glory with Himself as they knew Him as He was down here in this world. “But they, being confounded and being frightened, supposed they beheld a spirit. And He said to them, Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?” (vv. 37-38).

Did He ever say that to you, beloved friends? Did He ever stand beside you in the troubles and sorrows of your heart, in the trials and exercises of your souls? Did you ever hear His voice saying, “Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?” Do you know what can put that all away? Two little words will banish for ever everything of that kind from conscience and soul. Those words are, “I myself.” Oh, what words they are, “I myself!” “Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts?” What we find here disposes of all that kind of thing. “Handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see Me having” (v. 39). He establishes the fact of the identity of the Person standing before them, risen from the dead, with the very One they had known and walked in company with down here in this world; but mark it well, He is leading their souls to know Him in other parts of His glory. That is a beautiful word in the Epistle to the Colossians, where the Holy Ghost says of Him, “Who is the Beginning” (Col. 1:18). Oh, beloved brethren, what glories are involved in that word, what glories circle around that word, “Who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead!” How blessed to think of it! In Adam fallen we see the responsible man, we see the moral ruin, misery, and wretchedness, the decrepitude (may I say?) of humanity; but in the risen Christ we behold the beginning of all the new order of things that is according to God. The cross and the grave closed the history of the old; the open tomb and the resurrection morn began the history of the new, and He who began it must ever after give this character as such to all that is according to God in man. Hence He is the last Adam. That is to say, there never will be any other order of man than He: now risen, He is the last Adam. And He is the second Man, because He has closed the history of the first. He is the last Adam, because He in His own new heavenly order continues the history evermore; there will never be another. And that is what He is bringing their souls into the knowledge of here. He is setting Himself before them in those glories that pertain to Him as risen. He is, as it were, educating their souls into that, and therefore He points to these evidences, and eats before them.

Not only have we the establishment of the fact of Himself risen, but a very blessed thing connected with it too. You find peace and the foundation of it; peace and its foundation. Now, it is a grand thing that peace rests, and that peace is established, for its eternal immovability, upon such foundations as are here. Hence He announces it: “Peace unto you” (v. 36). This is His first word when He comes into their midst. Do they question it? “He showed them His hands and His feet” (v. 40). There was the price of it, the purchase of it, the foundation of it. There was the grand, eternal stability of it, the immovability of it. Is there any power on earth or in hell that can remove these marks in the Savior’s hands and side? No more can you take away that peace in evidence of which those marks were
here displayed. He announces peace, and points to its evidences, those marks in His hands and side. How blessed! Is there any one here tonight who has not peace? Some one says, “That is only the gospel.” What do you mean by “only the gospel”? I would like to measure the value of all such expressions. Do you know that you can never get beyond the gospel? Never, beloved friends, whoever you may be. In it you are introduced to the heart and nature of God. I admit there are the counsels of God, fruit of the purposes of God, and that there is precious instruction in Scripture about them. But the gospel is the revelation, in this blessed Person and His work, of the heart of God Himself, and all that was connected with the manifestation and display of His nature. Is there any one here who has not known this? Is there a single soul in this company who has not peace? If such is the case, I will tell you why you have it not. You are looking into your own heart and feelings. Introspection as to the feelings of your own heart is the secret of it, the cause of your want of peace. And I will tell you more than that: in this lies the reason why the saints of God are not happy. I never knew any one to be made happy by looking within. Never! There is nothing but misery for saint or sinner by looking within. What gives peace is Christ’s finished work upon the cross. Look away, then, to Jesus, and to that great transaction accomplished for us more than eighteen hundred years ago. That, and that alone, imparts peace.

“That which can shake the cross,
May shake the peace it gave;
Which tells me Christ has never died,
And never left the grave.

“Till then my peace is sure:
It will not, cannot yield;
Jesus, I know, has died and lives:
On this firm rock I build.”

Observe how two sensations take possession of them here — amazement and joy: “While they yet believed not for joy, and wondered” (v. 41). And then He establishes the fact of His resurrection as a real Man before their eyes, by taking and eating a portion of broiled fish and of a honeycomb.

Another thing you find in connection with this incident is the true basis of faith: and I am very anxious to impress that upon every heart — the true basis of faith, which the fact of resurrection, the announcement of peace, and of the foundations of it, involve. You find two great elements in it here. One is the words of Jesus; the other is the Scriptures. I need not say that now His words are in the Scriptures. It will be well to read together v. 44 again, so that it may be impressed upon every heart. “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you.” There you have His own words. They had listened to them, they had received them: “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. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” There also are the Scriptures. Now do you see the object of this? There are three things here. First, the words of Jesus for the true basis of faith; secondly, the Scriptures; and thirdly, their understanding opened by the risen Lord. So that they could say not merely, We have heard these words, we have heard Him say it, we have listened to the voice of His own mouth, but it must be so because God has said it. There is the real and true basis of faith. And they have received opened understandings as well — understandings illuminated and opened by the risen Lord Himself. The words of the Lord Jesus, now in the Scriptures as God has given them, constitute the ground upon which faith can always rest. Upon this precious, magnificent foundation which He puts under our feet we can indeed repose. How wonderful to think of it! It is not mere hearsay, nor the imagination of any person’s mind; but faith has for its immovable basis the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the certainty of Holy Scripture, as God has been pleased to give it to us, as well as the understanding opened by the risen Lord. This was before the Holy Ghost came down. The Spirit of God had not yet been given, as you know; but their understandings were opened by Christ Himself, so that they could understand the Scriptures. And so He says, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (vv. 46, 47).

Now observe the wonderful grace displayed here. If there was a place on earth more wicked than another, more tarnished by man’s sin, more steeped in all the iniquity perpetrated in it, it was Jerusalem, yet there it was that God’s grace was first to be set forth! How blessed to think that there, where the Son of God had been cast out and despised, divine grace was to be first proclaimed! But this grace was to take in all nations, not merely one nation. The cross would be, as it were, the grave of Judaism as such, and would open the way for repentance and remission of sins to be preached among all nations, beginning at the spot which was, so to speak, the worst upon earth: “And ye are witnesses of these things” (v. 48).

This, then, brings us to our third point and that is, the Blessed One’s departure; and my object in speaking of it in this connection is to show how that marvelous mission of the disciples was to be carried out. Repentance and remission of sins was to be proclaimed world-wide, but in order to carry this out power was necessary; and therefore He says to them: “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high” (v. 49). As if He had said, I have laid the ground of your peace, but now you want power. You have the peace, I pronounced peace and showed you the foundation of it; but you must have power in order to deliver this wonderful testimony, to preach it in My name amongst all nations.

Do you see why I connect this with the departure? Because I greatly desire that all our hearts should get a truer sense of the significance of those wondrous words, “power from on high.” Not power from earth; not power from learning; not power from education; not power from skill of any kind here; not power from or by men; but “power from on high.” And, as some one has said, and I believe it is perfectly true, “It is the power that is irresistible, and yet the easiest quenched, if He, who is Himself the power, the blessed Spirit of God, the third Person of the adorable Trinity, be grieved.” May we ever keep this in mind, even how the smallest unsuitable thing will check that power, will retard its exercise. The remembrance of
that would bring us to where our solemn responsibility lies. Have we not frequently grieved Him? Have we not even in that to which it relates quenched Him often? Oh, how have we not, by our own ways, interfered with the manifestation of this power! Mark this a moment more, for that is all that concerns us at this time: this power is “from on high,” but not merely from the place to which He was going, but from that to which He was to be exalted. Power was to come down from the scene of His exaltation, and was connected with His exaltation. “Being,” says the Holy Ghost by the apostle Peter, in the Acts, after the blessed Spirit had come down,

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).

Thus we find that which is identified exactly with this utterance of the Lord Jesus here. And this “power from on high,” He distinctly tells them, was “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). Now put those two things together. “The promise of the Father” -- to whom, beloved friends? To Christ Himself. Not to us, but to Him, the exalted, glorified Man. “Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He” (that is, Christ) “hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” That is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ, having accomplished everything as Man on earth according to God’s purpose, having fulfilled everything according to God’s pleasure as the perfect Man, and having gone on high, He, exalted, received from God, the Holy Ghost to give to others; as Man too, for He received this promise, He received the Holy Spirit, as the exalted, glorified Man; and the apostle identifies the very fact of His departure with that great reality.

There is here a kind of two-fold glory. The Holy Ghost shed forth is a proof of Christ’s exaltation, but the fact of His exaltation laid the ground for this coming down of the Holy Ghost. It is an important thing to bear in mind, for had we before us the Church, or Church truth, we should see that the Church is founded on ascension, not on resurrection. I do not mean that resurrection is excluded, but I do say, it does not go far enough, for that by which the Church is formed on earth is the Holy Ghost, who came down from the ascended, glorified Christ. There must be ascension, and exaltation as well, Christ as Man seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, before there can be the presence of earth of the Holy Ghost, by whom all the members are baptized into one body.

Further observe -- and it is very interesting to notice it -- how the Holy Ghost is designated according to the object which God had in view in the gospel. I do not know whether you have ever compared the gospels. If not I would invite you to do so; not to harmonize them; for, as I intimated on a previous occasion, harmonizing is based on the profane and irreverent assumption that the records disagree -- the Lord pardon the thought! They have never disagreed, never differed. Why attempt to harmonize such records? But you can compare them, and if you do this you will find that in Matthew there is no mention at all of the ascension. We have Christ’s resurrection in that gospel, and then He goes into a mountain in Galilee, and meets the disciples there. In Mark it does tell us He ascended; and He presides, as it were, over the operations and service of His servants: Mark being the gospel of service. But the Gospel of Matthew being the dispensational record, it leaves off [concludes] with the remnant and Christ in Galilee. The Gospel of Mark shows us the Man gone on high, and presiding over the service of His people performed on earth. The Gospel of Luke shows you the Priest gone up on high. Hence I believe His lifting up of His hands is a priestly action.

“He lifted up His hands, and blessed them” (v. 50). The Gospel of John speaks of the Comforter, the Lord Jesus Christ going to the Father, and sending down the Comforter to conduct the affections and hearts of His people into the Father’s house and the Father’s joys. But here in the Gospel of Luke it is connected distinctly with the Acts. This is Luke’s first letter to Theophilus; the Acts is his second. The first letter contemplates here what was coming: “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” That power was distinctly in connection with the remission of sins; and the commission was to go out to all nations.

The Gospel of Luke records the commission under which every evangelist and preacher to-day through grace goes forth and stands in the mountains and valleys and highways of this world, proclaiming repentance and remission of sins. And mark, this commission comes, not from this man, nor from that, nor from so-called churches, nor from any assembly of people whatever. No, brethren, the servants of Christ hold their commission direct from heaven, from the ascended, glorified Man at God’s right hand. He is the One who calls them, and sends them when and where He will. To Him they are responsible; while, of course, those who hear, are likewise responsible to judge as to whether such speak according to God’s mind, as revealed in this Book. But it is an immense thing to keep these in their true order. I care not whether it be the greatest, the highest ecclesiastical person in the land, or the meanest connected with any body of people meeting together and calling themselves a church: all true commission in ministry under which the ministers of Christ act is neither of man as to source, nor by man as to channel. Here, then, is the commission, and the One who sends the servants -- the glorified Man, Head over all things to the Church. Hence ministry is ever individual; whereas worship and praise and thanksgiving are in their nature corporate; and as surely as you mix these two things together you get into confusion.

And now we come to the positive act of departure, and we know it was from the place called Bethany. Now, it is not my purpose to say much about Bethany, and the Lord knows I have no desire to exaggerate it. I fear it has been exaggerated. As I have before observed, the exaggeration of any truth is very dangerous. It arises, I believe from not having the whole of the Scriptures before our souls. But yet Bethany comes in here in a very distinct way. “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (vv. 50, 51).

Bethany is, I believe, remarkable as the spot where He connects the affections of the remnant that were attached to Himself with the place whither He was going. He connects, as it were, the divine link which He had formed between the affections of the remnant and Himself, with that blessed place.
in heaven into which He was going. Therefore Bethany connected heaven with the person of Jesus. “He led them out as far as to Bethany.” I fully accept, for I believe it is perfectly true, that the character of all real blessing is as expressed in the words, “He led them out.” They describe exactly what must take place with every person who receives blessing of this order. And you will find that the more heavenly, the more distinct, the blessing is, the more you will have to be led out for it. “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” Could anything be more precious than to see the blessing coming from those pierced hands, the very same hands? Do you not cherish the thought that the Blessed One, after fulfilling the purposes of God, after accomplishing that which is the ground of the eternal blessing of His people, has carried His manhood up to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and there bears the nail-prints in His hands, and the spear-mark in His side, those marks which He will bear for ever as a Man; for it is the same Jesus? And, beloved friends, here is the great proof of it: He had His glorified body in the twenty-fourth of Luke, and He showed to His disciples in His glorified body the wounds in those hands; then He lifted up those wounded hands, and blessed them.

It has been beautifully said that the Gospel of Luke terminates in perfect keeping with the way it began. It opened by showing you the priest of the order of Levi ministering on earth in the temple, and closes with the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek going up to heaven. The Gospel of Luke began with Zecharias but ends with Jesus about to enter upon the exercises of His priestly office on high.

One word further. Are there broken hearts any more? Weeping eyes any more? He has gone from them; He has left them. Ah! but He has gone to heaven, and see how they worship Him. Those closing words of Luke 24 remind me of what you find typically set forth in Lev. 23. You will see that there was a feast, and all that belonged to it preceded the Feast of Weeks. It was the wave-sheaf and all that belonged to the wave-sheaf, and following it was the Feast of Weeks. The disciples were waiting for the Feast of Weeks. He said to them, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” How magnificent the grace exhibited here! It was to begin at Jerusalem, and the power from on high was to come down at Jerusalem, the place of vileness and wickedness. Where the power of evil was most displayed, there the remission of sins was to be first proclaimed!

And now see the action: the disciples worship Him. Their hearts are linked with the heavenly Savior. They had been looking for an earthly kingdom; now they have a heavenly Friend. Their eyes follow Him into heaven, and they return to Jerusalem, the seat of God’s interests on earth, “with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (vv. 52, 53).

The Lord in His grace give to our souls a corresponding sense of His preciousness, and set our hearts on fire, that we may show out upon earth what we have found in Him; and that, instead of mourning, groaning, and being dissatisfied, we may be bright and happy in His love.

And may He grant that our hearts and affections may follow Him to the place where He has gone, and that we may walk down here a little more in all the blessedness of His company there, and presence with us, until we see His face, and are with Him for ever, for His blessed name’s sake.

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Index of Main Subjects

a “father,” ........................................... 274
a man in Christ ............................................. 241
Aaron ............................................................... 280
Aaron’s rod ....................................................... 136
Abba, Father .................................................... 270, 423
Abraham ......................................................... 166, 372, 439
Abraham, call of Abram ........................................ 234
Abraham, Philistines stopped up the wells of ............... 361
Achan ............................................................... 235, 357
activity ............................................................ 215
Adam ............................................................ 304
Adversus .......................................................... 385
affection and heart loyalty ...................................... 369
affections, satisfied .......................................... 310
all things of God ............................................. 169
Amalek ............................................................. 242, 243
Anania ............................................................. 246, 288
angels in Heb. 1 ............................................... 418
Antichrist ....................................................... 277, 373, 415
apostasy from the faith ...................................... 383
Artificial And The Spiritual, The .............................. 149
Atonement, blood of ...................................... 491
babe ............................................................... 270
babes .............................................................. 272
Badley, Mr. ....................................................... 311
Balaam .......................................................... 200, 354, 357
baptism of the Holy Ghost .................................. 424
Barabbas .......................................................... 499
Baronius .......................................................... 316
before he received the spirit .................................. 424
beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ ....................... 421
beholding ........................................................ 252
Bethany .......................................................... 247, 287, 292, 512
Bethsaida .......................................................... 395
Bochim ............................................................. 244
body of Christ, whole body on earth ......................... 375
bondage .......................................................... 278
bondage, in ...................................................... 146
bride .............................................................. 252, 307
Butler’s Catechism .............................................. 315
cage ............................................................... 347
Caiphas ............................................................ 499
Cain’s world ....................................................... 154
Caleb ............................................................... 227
calling, peculiarity of our ..................................... 106
Calvary ............................................................. 500
camp ............................................................... 217
Canaan ............................................................. 101, 243, 310, 345
Capernaum ....................................................... 256, 349, 430, 440
captain, let us make a ........................................ 225
Cardinal Manning ............................................... 315
Charity – Love ................................................. 328
child of Adam ................................................... 259
Christ, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and” .................................................. 425
Christ, a man in ................................................. 241
Christ, a Man in heaven ........................................ 187
Christ, ascension of ............................................ 55
Christ, Attractive Power of Christ Crucified ................. 281
Christ, behold the beauty of the Lord ......................... 161
Christ, bosom of the Father.” He never left it ................. 213
Christ, character and power of His resurrection ............ 50
Christ, death is to Him but the occasion of perfect communion .................................................. 497
Christ, exaltation of ............................................ 55
Christ, fact of the resurrection of ................................ 39
Christ, Feast Prepared for .................................... 286
Christ, forsaking of God ....................................... 319
Christ, forty days tempted of Satan ........................... 426
Christ, from the beginning ..................................... 176
Christ, fruits of His resurrection ................................ 44
Christ, fruits of His victory ..................................... 34
Christ, grace and sympathy of ................................ 5
Christ, He emptied Himself .................................. 425
Christ, He is the ideal Levi .................................. 419
Christ, He is the girded servant ................................ 418
Christ, He that is holy ......................................... 193
Christ, He was always the true Nazarite ...................... 492
Christ, He was anointed and sealed by the Holy Ghost for service ................................................. 425
Christ, He was pleased to become (δεινετο) ................. 425
Christ, Him hath God the Father sealed ....................... 424
Christ, His (Three-fold) Glory ................................ 382
Christ, His compassions ...................................... 439
Christ, His glory as “the life” .................................. 283
Christ, His Heart And His Hand ............................... 225
Christ, His Messiahship ......................................... 188
Christ, His Ministry ............................................. 429
Christ, His releasing mercy .................................... 426
Christ, humanity, as a divine Person, He separated His spirit from His body ......................................... 503
Christ, humanity, union of both joined in one ............ 493
Christ, humanity, union of His two natures in the same Person ................................................. 414
Christ, humanity, union of humanity and divinity in the Person of the Lord ........................................ 368
Christ, I work ................................................... 444
Christ, I was in Heaven ......................................... 310
Christ, in Luke, as Man, He commends His spirit in perfect confidence ................................................. 503
Christ, in Matthew, as the Victim, He bows
His blessed head ................................................. 503
Christ in the exercise of His priestly grace ................. 136
Christ, increased in wisdom and stature ..................... 473
Christ, living Man in heaven .................................. 184
Christ, love, unfailing ......................................... 508
Christ, made sin ................................................. 319
Christ, near to ................................................... 367
Christ, perfect servant ......................................... 419
Christ, rejected as king in Matthew ......................... 460
Christ, rejected as Servant-prophet in Mark ................. 460
Christ, rejected as the Man amongst men in Luke ........ 460
Christ, servant as Man ........................................ 431
Christ, servant-prophet ........................................ 419, 438
Christ, solitariness of Jesus here ................................ 283
Christ, the mighty God, who had emptied Himself ........ 495
Christ, the Object of Affection And Sympathy ............ 151
Christ, the sanctuary ........................................... 1
Christ, the support of His people ................................ 1
Christ, the victim character in Matthew ...................... 497
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ, The Man Christ Jesus</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, The Rejected Man</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, they watched him</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, we know Him in heaven</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, Whom say ye that I am?</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, With Christ in Death and Resurrection</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, word “tempted” to the Lord Jesus Christ</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, works and acts of mercy in which His</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goodness was displayed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ, Worthiness of</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ’s Desire</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christendom</td>
<td>339, 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, heavenly</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, no person can be “heavenly” unless</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he lives in heaven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, Our Portion, and Its Consequences</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, path on earth</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian, place in heaven</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian position, With Christ in Death and Resurrection</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian’s Dwelling Place</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian’s Pathway and Hope, The</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>294, 307, 365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity, displacing power of</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity, the real power of</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church, nature and character of the</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of God upon earth-to-day</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Rome</td>
<td>311, 313, 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closings and Communion</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comforter</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming of the Lord In Relation to the Saved</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Unsaved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communion</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion, Victory but not</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compassions</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compassions</td>
<td>267, 437, 442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>460, 464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compromisers</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience</td>
<td>179, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience, divinely-exercised</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience, exercise of, and self judgment</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience in the light</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience is the avenue to the affections</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience, no more, of sins</td>
<td>264, 295, 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscience, unjudged sin on</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness of our union</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conviction and confidence</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corban</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corn of wheat</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Trent</td>
<td>313, 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Trent in 1546</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creed, our</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crooked paths</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross, finished work</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross is the perfection of subjection</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross, the Grave and the Glory</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cup which in subjection He drank</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalmathana</td>
<td>391, 393, 395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark ages</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darkness</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daughter of Jairus</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>342, 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David at Ziklag</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>days of declension and unfaithfulness</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead with Christ</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and foresight</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death, Where Is Thy Sting</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>declension</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defilement</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deliverance</td>
<td>297, 377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deliverance from Egypt</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverance and Service</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverance, died in and to the place, to the whole</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition of being, in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliverance, proper Christian conflict comes in</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after deliverance is known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demas</td>
<td>244, 305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demas spirit rules with an iron sway</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dens</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependence</td>
<td>163, 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil, many demoniacs, but there is only one devil</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devil’s children</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devotedness</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disciples, professing themselves to be His disciples</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipleship</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipline</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipline, Christ’s servants are amenable to the</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipline and the order of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Affections and Their Object</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Center</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Object</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Path</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine, my</td>
<td>300, 343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing, nothing ever enters into their minds but doing</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door into the sheepfold</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douay</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douay and Rheimish translations</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dying of Jesus</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed, that is, “witness”</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>242, 243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt to Canaan</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>240, 402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>438, 446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha’s newly acquired mantle of power</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmaus</td>
<td>401, 507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoch</td>
<td>154, 158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians saints</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epheus</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephraim</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esau</td>
<td>239, 381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal life</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal security</td>
<td>256, 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal son, declares His sonship in the bosom of the Father</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal Son</td>
<td>212, 221, 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>282, 468, 478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal Son, ever in the Father’s bosom</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal Son of God</td>
<td>255, 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal Son of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>152, 211, 227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>233, 264, 288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>306, 311, 335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evanglizing</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve, woman saw that the tree was good for food</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectation, earnest</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith, resources in the present confusion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of God</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>257, 278, 279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>298, 317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, issuing from His lips at such a moment</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, My Father’s hand</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father of Mercies</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s love</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s love in my heart</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s pleasure, your</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s voice from those heavens saluted Him</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear not</td>
<td>285, 299, 302, 305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feast of weeks</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiery serpent</td>
<td>282, 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first Adam</td>
<td>267, 283, 388, 483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flesh, bettering of the flesh in order to give it rest</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flesh, unmortified and unjudged</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow me</td>
<td>197, 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Thou Me</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgiveness is relief</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgiveness of his sins</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galileo spirit</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden of Herbs And The Cared-for Land</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gehazi</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gethsemane</td>
<td>400, 407, 434, 492, 495-497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gethsemane is the perfection of dependence</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gifts are in the whole church</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilgal</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glory, surpassing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God, His claims, His pleasure, His interests, His</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is light</td>
<td>177, 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is light and God is love</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is love</td>
<td>178, 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God of all grace</td>
<td>170-172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God of All Comfort</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God Revealed in Grace</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God with Us</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s family</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gospel of our salvation</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel of the Glory of Christ</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel, power of</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government of God</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grace and government</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace of God, True</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graves Opened</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatness, Principle and Pattern of All True Greatness</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guestchamber</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hearken</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart broken down</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart’s affections</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavenly light</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavenly places in Christ Jesus</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Home</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Places</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herod</td>
<td>290, 446, 463, 498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herodians</td>
<td>393, 446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hewitson’s Life</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy of Holies</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honey of nature</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Dates</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human and Divine Circumstances</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idol, What is an?</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ije-Abaram</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Christ</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Christ and Christ in Us</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infante condition</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infante state</td>
<td>269, 274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner man</td>
<td>270, 271, 273, 274, 277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligent sympathy</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issachar, man of</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s folly and selfishness</td>
<td>320, 339, 381, 382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s history</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s testimony</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jairus</td>
<td>457, 459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s servant</td>
<td>419, 429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah-Ropheka</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus as Messiah purging His floor</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus was baptized</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John the Baptist</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John the Baptist, ministry of</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John, what was it formed</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John’s dying note</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John’s testimony</td>
<td>422, 475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>139, 279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaiized</td>
<td>320, 353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaiizers of that day</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judas</td>
<td>492, 495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judas and Hor</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kingdom of God</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kingdom of God is at hand</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kingdom of God, means</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korah, gaining of Core</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor and Rest</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb of God</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land, the</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodicea</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last Adam</td>
<td>483, 499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law, ministration of death</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law, ministry of bondage, death, and condemnation</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law was a rule of death for the sinner</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazarus</td>
<td>287, 292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalism, sincere legalist</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legion</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leper</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leper being cleansed</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leper Cleansed</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leprosy</td>
<td>435, 438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesson of dependence</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levi the son of Alpheus</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberty</td>
<td>145, 255, 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberty and a formative efficiency</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light detects and exposes</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, Beholding, Following</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord’s supper, Supper of the Lord</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord’s Supper</td>
<td>492-494, 508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord’s Table</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot’s wife</td>
<td>303, 304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love is its own motive</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relief, is not in itself power.</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remnant</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remnant Times: As Illustrated in the History of Enoch, David, an</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>removing the onus</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repentance</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repentance, godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserves of Faith</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource and Strength</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rest of home, and quiet of heart</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resurrection, character and power of Christ's</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resurrection, fact of Christ's</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resurrection, fruit of Christ's</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation from God and of God</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheims translators</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock, The</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rod</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rod, the</td>
<td>135, 136, 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruin</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sabbaths</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadducees</td>
<td>393, 463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salvation</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation is of the Lord</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation, Liberty, Food and Safety</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritan</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan</td>
<td>427, 432, 450, 483-486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan’s power</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saul of Tarsus</td>
<td>148, 320, 361, 364, 394, 429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saul’s armor</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scribes</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scripture in its use of terms is far more defined</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sealing, Spirit seals the value of the blood</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second blessing</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second man</td>
<td>461, 509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second Man and last Adam</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self, occupation of the heart with self</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self will</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-abandonment</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-importance</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-judgment</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-love, trickeries of</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-occupation</td>
<td>143, 307, 337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentiment</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separating Power of Christ at His Coming</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>separation</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation, Position and Ways of the Separated Ones</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seraphim</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant of Christ</td>
<td>428, 430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant of the Lord</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant of the Lord in perilous times</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant-prophet</td>
<td>419, 438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant-prophet</td>
<td>419, 438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service to Him</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service, the Master who selects the servants</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seven</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sheaf of the first-fruits</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shekinah</td>
<td>347, 403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sifting</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siftings</td>
<td>276, 279, 303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simeon and Anna</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin, define</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaic ministry</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixtus V</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skill of the Lord's hand</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snare, reason why people are taken in</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snare, Ensnaring Effects of the Visible</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon</td>
<td>239, 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son in Mark is the servant-Son</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of God, was both God and Man</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of man, the title</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of Man, Who is in heaven</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sons of Gad</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sorrows</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soul, state of</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit, effect of the filling</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit, Heavenly Comforter</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit, Holy Ghost and Faith</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit like a dove descending upon him</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit, Person and Office of the</td>
<td>385, 390, 395, 399, 404, 410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spiritual power and energy</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spirituality</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starting-post from whence the Christian runs</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starting-post of the soul</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state of Christ’s people</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state, of soul</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stranger here</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strangership</td>
<td>143, 238, 341, 494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subjection</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sufferer</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffering</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surpassingness of the power</td>
<td>320, 321, 325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surpassingness [excellency] of the power</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surrender</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sympathize with our weaknesses</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sympathy, knows Christ’s</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrophenician woman</td>
<td>388, 389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tempted</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testimony, the</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testings</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord knows</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thessalonica</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threefold Cord</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transfiguration</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treasure in earthen vessels, this</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasure, Vessel, and Power, The</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trials</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trouble</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>true motives and a divine object</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truth, half-and-half bowing to the truth</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth, Doing</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding, Have You?</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>union, conscious</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>union, consciousness of</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>united to Christ in glory</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unjudged sin upon my conscience</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzziah</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veil, not either on us, or on that blessed One</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veil was rent</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veil Rent</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulgate</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waiting</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldensian valleys</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk with God</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking with God</td>
<td>156, 158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watching</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weakness</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weakness is the platform</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness, The Power of</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>widow of Nain’s son</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wilderness</td>
<td>135, 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wilderness, the</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wile of the enemy at the present time</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will and pleasure of His Father</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of God</td>
<td>311, 314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word was made flesh</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work of Christ, finished</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world passeth away</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldliness, an avowed principle of</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worldling</td>
<td>340, 344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worldly Christianity on this side of death and resurrection</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yieldingness</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young man</td>
<td>272, 273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacharias</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Index of Main Scriptures

## Old Testament

### GENESIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 3:24</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 483</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 5:18-24</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 5:24</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 11:18</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 470</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 12</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 12:51, 52</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 13:10</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 13:10, 11</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 18</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 19:1</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 19:15-17</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 23:2</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 28</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 32</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 32:24-31</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 32:30</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 381</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 32, Gen. 45:1</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 48</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 49:18</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 390</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EXODUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 3</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 3:7, 8</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 3:7-10</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 3:9-22</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 3 and 15</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 4:2-7</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 12</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 12:2</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 14</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 15</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 15:6</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 15:17, 18</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 16 and 17</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 163</td>
<td></td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 136</td>
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<td>Ex. 17:11, 12</td>
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<td>Ex. 17:15</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 136</td>
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<td>Ex. 19</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 479</td>
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<td>Ex. 21:26</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 326</td>
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<td>Ex. 21:6</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 327</td>
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<td>Ex. 30</td>
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<td>Ex. 34</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 372</td>
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<td>Ex. 40:33-35</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 395</td>
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<td>Ex. 5:1, 22, 23</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 70</td>
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</table>

### LEVITICUS

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<th>References</th>
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<td>Lev. 10:9-10</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 359</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lev. 13:45, 46</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 434</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 501</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 373</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 395</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 236</td>
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### NUMBERS

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<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
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<td>Num. 13</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 345</td>
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<td>Num. 14</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 243</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 282</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 243</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 343</td>
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<td>Num. 32:5</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 258</td>
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</table>

### DEUTERONOMY

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<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>........................ ........................ 240</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 373</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 212</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 211, 345</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 101</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 215</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 550</td>
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### JOSHUA

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<th>References</th>
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<td>........................ ........................ 311</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 263</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 91</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 235</td>
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<td>Josh. 14</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 225, 227</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 227</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 234, 235</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 243</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 244</td>
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<td>........................ ........................ 244</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josh. 24</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 256</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Josh. 24:2</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### JUDGES

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<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
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</thead>
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<td>........................ ........................ 240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judg. 7:1-8</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 102</td>
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</table>

### 1 & 2 SAMUEL

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<th>Chapter</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<td>1 Sam. 17:48</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 120</td>
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<td>1 Sam. 18:4</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 120</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sam. 31:1-6</td>
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<td>2 Sam. 1:11, 27</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 120</td>
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<td>2 Sam. 2:4</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 227</td>
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<tr>
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<td>........................ ........................ 227</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam. 19:24</td>
<td>........................ ........................ 144</td>
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## New Testament

### MATTHEW

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<th>Pages</th>
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<td>291, 412</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt. 2</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 2:15</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 5</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 9</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 11:25</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 12:18, 19</td>
<td>228, 357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 15</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 15:15, 16</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 16</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 16:13-16</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
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<td>Matt. 16:17</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
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<td>Matt. 17:1-27</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 17:2</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 18:19, 20</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 18:20</td>
<td>187, 192, 193, 290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 27:21-28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 27:45-54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 27:63, 64</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 28:1-17</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt. 28:6</td>
<td>342</td>
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### MARK

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<td>418</td>
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<td>Mark 1:12, 13</td>
<td>482</td>
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<td>Mark 1:12-20</td>
<td>423</td>
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<td>Mark 1:21-38</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mark 1:40-45</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mark 2</td>
<td>440, 441</td>
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<td>Mark 2:1-17</td>
<td>439</td>
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<td>Mark 3</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 4</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 4:1-23; 35-41</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mark 5</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 6:1-4, 7-9, 12-16, 30-37, first clause, 45-51</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 6:31, 32</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 7</td>
<td>368, 386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 8</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 8:22-38</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 9</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 9:1</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>Mark 9:14-34</td>
<td>405</td>
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<td>Mark 10</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 10:17-27</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
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<td>498</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark 13:32</td>
<td>420</td>
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<td>151</td>
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</table>

### LUKE

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<th>Pages</th>
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<td>498</td>
</tr>
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<td>468</td>
</tr>
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<td>Luke 1:10, 11</td>
<td>468</td>
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<td>Luke 3</td>
<td>479, 480</td>
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<td>Luke 3:1-14, etc.</td>
<td>472</td>
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<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 3:16, 17</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
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<td>Luke 3:21, 22</td>
<td>477</td>
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<td>Luke 3:22</td>
<td>395</td>
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<td>210</td>
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<td>400</td>
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<td>Luke 4:38</td>
<td>432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luke 5</td>
<td>260, 267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 5:1-11</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 7</td>
<td>391, 367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 7:11-16, 36-50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 7:36-50</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
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<td>Luke 10</td>
<td>104, 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 12</td>
<td>213, 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 12:13, 14</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 12:35</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 14</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 16</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
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<td>490</td>
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<td>303</td>
</tr>
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<td>Luke 22:12</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 22:53</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 23:1-149</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 23:41</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 23:42</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
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<td>326</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

### JOHN

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<th>Pages</th>
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<tr>
<td>John 1</td>
<td>180, 373</td>
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<tr>
<td>John 1:1-12, 14, 18, 29-32</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 1:14</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 1:14-17, 28-43</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 1:29</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 1:33, 34</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 1:35-51</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
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<td>John 1:38-43</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>193</td>
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<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 3</td>
<td>282, 349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 3:25-36</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td>John 3, 4, and 7</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 3:9-18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 4</td>
<td>368, 473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 5</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 6:57</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 6:58-68</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 7:17</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 8</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 10</td>
<td>308, 362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 10:9</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
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<td>John 11</td>
<td>104, 292</td>
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<td>John 12</td>
<td>105, 287, 292</td>
</tr>
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<td>John 12:20-24</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
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<td>John 12:20-38</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 12:23-26</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 12:24</td>
<td>142, 284, 319, 333, 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 12:24, 25</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
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<td>John 13</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 13:21</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 13:31, 32</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 14</td>
<td>220, 221, 250, 341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 14, 15</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 14:16-31</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 14:20</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 14:8</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 16:7</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 16:7-15</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 17:23</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 17:24</td>
<td>317, 341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 17:4</td>
<td>29, 470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 19:30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20</td>
<td>151, 363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20:11-18</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20:19</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20:19-23</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20:21, 22</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 21</td>
<td>171, 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 21:15-19</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 21:18, 19</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTS**

| Acts 1:1-14; 26:16-19 | 246 |
| Acts 1:2 | 342 |
| Acts 1:4 | 511 |
| Acts 1:8 | 341 |
| Acts 2 | 395, 405, 480 |
| Acts 2:2, 3 | 485 |
| Acts 2:33 | 385 |
| Acts 2:41, 42 | 374 |
| Acts 3:13-16 | 50 |
| Acts 4:1, 2 | 50 |
| Acts 4:27 | 400 |
| Acts 5:30-32 | 377 |
| Acts 7 | 107, 144, 372, 413 |
| Acts 7:2-4 | 234 |
| Acts 9:17 | 246, 288 |
| Acts 10 | 479 |
| Acts 10:38 | 400 |
| Acts 13:30 | 504 |
| Acts 13:33 | 413 |
| Acts 17 | 452 |
| Acts 20 | 304, 317 |
| Acts 20:22-24 | 365 |
| Acts 20:25 | 390 |
| Acts 20:25 and 28:31 | 390 |
| Acts 20 | 390 |
| Acts 26 | 248 |
| Acts 26:13-18 | 245 |
| Acts 26:16 | 140, 325 |
| Acts 26:17 | 288, 300 |
| Acts 28:31 | 390 |

**1 CORINTHIANS**

| 1 Cor. 1:9 | 374 |
| 1 Cor. 2 | 194, 195, 378, 402, 485 |
| 1 Cor. 2:11, 12 | 485 |
| 1 Cor. 2:11-16 | 190 |
| 1 Cor. 9:9 | 432 |
| 1 Cor. 10 | 235 |
| 1 Cor. 10:20 | 372 |
| 1 Cor. 10 and 12 | 375 |
| 1 Cor. 13 | 328 |
| 1 Cor. 15:50 | 488 |
| 1 Cor. 15:51-57 | 199 |
| 1 Cor. 15:54 | 502 |
| 1 Cor. 15:58 | 416 |

**2 CORINTHIANS**

<p>| 2 Cor. 1 | 138 |
| 2 Cor. 1:11-22 | 400 |
| 2 Cor. 1:3 | 138 |
| 2 Cor. 1 and 12 | 278 |
| 2 Cor. 3:18 | 144 |
| 2 Cor. 3:17-4:9 | 414 |
| 2 Cor. 3 and 4 | 140 |
| 2 Cor. 4 | 141, 158, 160, 320, 324 |
| 2 Cor. 4:10 | 252, 307, 336, 360 |
| 2 Cor. 4:4 | 322 |
| 2 Cor. 4:8 | 240 |
| 2 Cor. 5:16 | 341 |
| 2 Cor. 6 | 138 |
| 2 Cor. 7:5, 6 | 413 |
| 2 Cor. 11 | 279 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. 11:3</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. 12</td>
<td>207, 239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. 12:7-10</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. 12:9</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cor. 13:11</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 1</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 2:20</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 4:4</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 4:25</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 5</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 5:16, 17</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 5:22</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 6:14</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal. 6:15, 16</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 1</td>
<td>194, 226, 50, 375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 1:13</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 1:23</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 1 and 2</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 2</td>
<td>455, 456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 2:2</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 2:3</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 2:6</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 2:21, 22</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 3</td>
<td>249, 375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 3:14-21</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 3:20</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 4</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 4:7-18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 4:8</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 6:10</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 1:20</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 1:20-23</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 1:23-25</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 2</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 2:7</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3</td>
<td>198, 233, 372, 311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:1</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:4-10; 1:20-23</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:12-14</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:21</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:28</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 3:7-11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 4</td>
<td>211, 331, 372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 4:7, 9, 12, 13</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil. 4:8</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1:11</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1:13</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1:2</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1:23</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 1:24, 25</td>
<td>298, 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 2</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 2 and 3</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 3</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 3:5</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 1:5</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 4</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 4:13-17</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 4:13-18</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 4:14, 15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 4:16, 17</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 5:1-10</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 2:15, 16</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thess. 3:1</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 2:5</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 3:16</td>
<td>332, 470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 3:18</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 6</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tim. 6:3-9</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 1:8</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 2</td>
<td>11, 200, 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 2:8</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 2:19</td>
<td>228, 299, 357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 2:19; 4:17</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 2:21</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3:1-5</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3:5</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3:5, 6</td>
<td>319, 353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3:15</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 3:16</td>
<td>228, 313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 4</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tim. 4:2, 3</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 1:1-3</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 1, 2</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 1:6</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 2</td>
<td>330, 376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 2:1, 12</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 2:14, 15</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 2:18</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 2:6-15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 3</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 4:12</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 4:12-13</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 5:7</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 9:11-15; 7:23-25</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 9:24-28</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 10:2</td>
<td>251, 306, 336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 10:2, 17, 18</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 10:15, 17</td>
<td>251, 306, 336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 10:19-25</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 11</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 11:1-6</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 11:4</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 11:8-10</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 12:4</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 13</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 13:11-16</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James 1:14, 15</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James 4:4</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Pet. 2:5</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Pet. 4:1</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Pet. 5:6-10</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 1</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:1</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:12</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:13</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:14</td>
<td>271, 274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:17</td>
<td>327, 339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:18</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:23</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:24</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 2:27</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 4:1-3</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 4:6</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 5:9, 10</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 11</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 2</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 3:17</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 3:2</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 5</td>
<td>378, 478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 11:15</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 17:7</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 19</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 19:11-16</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 20:12-14</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>