

THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth"—Eph. vi.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
GEORGE MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E. C.
1856.

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seem difficult on a first reading, will ordinarily be easy on the second: and be assured that what is presented to you in these pages was never intended to be read as a newspaper, and then thrown aside. It only remains for me to commend you and this little volume to the blessing of God, who has permitted it to be brought to that measure of completeness, in the first year of its publication, of which such a work is susceptible.

EDITOR.

A WORD TO THE READER.

Dear reader, let me ask you to read the scriptures referred to in the various passages that come before you in this little publication, whether referred to in the way of illustration or of proof. With this, (and prayer for God's wisdom,) what you read will be plain; without it there is but little hope of your understanding it. Whatever can be understood without *attention* will be read without profit; but what may

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2 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

this title ; and according to his exigency will the Christian, who studies that word with the simple intent to do God's will, be furnished from its various parts with this girdle. But since it is proposed, as God may give ability, to present, in the following pages, truth drawn directly from the divine word, and truth that may advance believers practically in the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is hoped that the title, thus modified, may be allowed, and not be misunderstood.

The necessity for such a publication has from various quarters been pressed upon those who have undertaken it, and, in attempting to supply the need, they may state, that whilst truth suited to help believers in “building up themselves on their most holy faith,” may form the chief part of that which is communicated, it is not intended to

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ADDRESS.

THE first requisition in connexion with the Christian's call to “put on the whole armour of God,” is to stand, having his loins girt about with truth ; and few Christians, who think at all, will deny that in the character of the present times there is a special reason to heed the exhortation. But it must not be supposed, from the title adopted, that those who have commenced this little work, think, for a moment, that they can, through its pages, supply this part of the armour. The whole of the revelations of God, in His word, come under the comprehensiveness of

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exclude the presentation of the “grace and truth” of the gospel of salvation, nor prophetic subjects, so far as they bear upon the Church's hopes, and Christ's glory, and the world's solemn prospects.

It is intended to publish a number monthly, if the Lord will, and sometimes, if need be, a double number ; and the desire of those concerned in its publication is that the poor and the simple, especially, may find such instruction to their souls as God may own, and may result, through His blessing, in a better knowledge of Christ's worth, and that thus His name may be more set by.

To say more at the present moment is unnecessary, as the character of the work must be gathered from a knowledge of its succeeding numbers.

HOW A BELIEVER IS "DEAD UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD."

Rom. vi.

Grace always sets us in liberty. Even in holiness, liberty is the character of its separation. It is liberty from the bondage of sin. It is willing, joyous, consecration to God.

This chapter is most practical, yet deep, very deep, as everything is that comes from God. For everything that comes from God returns to God. Man is his own end by nature, and all his thoughts and actions begin and end with *self*. But Christ could not come down here and walk in righteousness without doing everything *to God*. So the incense of "the meat-offering" went all up to God. No doubt the priests smelt the sweet savour, but as offered, it went all up to God. So this new life, of which the chapter treats, as it comes from God, so it goes to God. It brings forth fruit, of course, but

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that is not its end. Its end is presented in Ephesians v, 2, "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love." This is christian morality; but then it is God's nature, God's life, expressed in men: life that flows from God and must go to God. But it is added, "as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice *to God* for a sweet smelling savour." The life God gives goes to God. And when that is wanting, all is wanting. Beloved, that is everything—because a man is not what he does, but what his motive in doing it is. Two men may do the very same thing from the most opposite reasons: one, for example, may labour for his family, another, to spend what he earns on sinful pleasures. How different the act, though they do the same thing, and equally well, for their employer! Everything in the new nature goes back to God. Hence we have to judge ourselves. For even the Christian, when walking blamelessly before men, may suffer other things than simply

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pleasing God to come in and spoil the sweet odour. Oh, how dreadful, when *self* comes in and spoils the odour—it may be not to others, but to ourselves!

In the 3rd chapter of this epistle we get the way in which the blood of Christ met actual sins, whether of Jew or Gentile. In the 4th, we have the full character of christian faith,—reposing in God, who had come in power, and had raised one who was under death to His own right hand. Looking at Jesus as a man under death we see divine power coming in and raising Him up. In the 5th chapter, this principle is applied to justification; and we have the joy which is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Then the law, which is contrasted with grace, and was brought in by-the-bye, after man had become a sinner, itself righteous, and thus demonstrating the sin of man.

There are two ways in which man might stand before God; he could be righteous, or he can be saved. There is no other way. He could be, indeed, innocent, I mean, as Adam was; but

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by the entrance of sin that is lost for ever. So now he can only stand on the ground of sovereign grace. The law is a good law; and if lived in, it would make any man happy—it would make angels happy. For to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbour as one's self, is practised in heaven. But it could not, in the form in which it was given at Sinai, be given to an innocent Adam. For the law always supposes sin to be there, and it comes in to bring out its real character. Having shown us that as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous—thus showing us that God traces the family of sinners up to Adam, and the family of righteous up to Christ—he takes up, in this 6th chapter, the objection, that this seems to make it indifferent how we walk. Thus, if by one man's obedience men are made righteous, and we are looked at in the head to which we belong, our actions are no matter, not being the ground of our acceptance. The flesh

would say this. For the flesh will turn everything to evil. It will take the law itself, which was given to *convict of sin*, to make out *righteousness* by it; and grace, which is the power and way of holiness and communion with God, it will turn into an occasion for sin. Adam and Christ however are brought before us as the two heads of the two families of men. But Adam becomes a sinful man—sin has been accomplished in his condition ere he becomes a head. Christ, too accomplished righteousness ere He becomes the head of His family. And as we come into the state which was accomplished in Adam, so do we into that which was accomplished in Christ. And as there was a life in us which liked the state in which we found ourselves by Adam, even so, when we find ourselves justified in Christ Jesus, there is a life in us which likes this state.

The apostle's answer, then, to the use the flesh would make of the truth of our being made righteous by another's obedience, is drawn from the

very truth which gave rise to the objection. The Christ, in whom we are, as our Head, has died and risen again. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" In Christ we have died to sin. It is never said that we ought to die to sin, but that we *have died* to it. We are set in Christ. Where is my place as a believer? In Christ, dead and risen again. If I have this justification, it is in Him in whom I have possession of this life. If I have not the one, I have not the other. The apostle is not now talking of motives. He is laying down what *must be* from the nature of our union with Christ. If I believe that I am saved by the blood of Jesus, then, I find in the blood, put on my ear, my hand, and my foot,* a motive to walk in consistency with its claims. But here, he is not talking of motives, but of resurrection. How have you got this justification? By death and resurrection. I am treating you as dead, for Christ is dead, and you are in Him.

* See Leviticus viii, 23, 24.

If I am dead, I cannot live in that to which I am dead. That is the doctrine. We are to mortify our *members*, but *we* are not commanded to die.

The great question is, how can we get rid of sin in our nature? We must kill it. We must put ourselves to death. How can I do that in that nature itself? I must get another life before I can kill the one I have,—a new life, before I can begin to crucify the old. Otherwise, I put to death the only life I have. But I get this new life, and so I can mortify what is of the old. It is my *members*, too, that I mortify—not me. I, the old I, has died in Christ's death, as it is written, "I am crucified with Christ," but, it is added, "nevertheless I live;" the new life is *me* now. I live. I have a new life, though the old one was put to death, and I can now afford to exterminate all that belongs to the old.

Liberty is thus connected by the apostle with death and resurrection,—“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.” “If we be planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

What Christ have you a part of? A dead, or a risen, Christ? Is Christ divided? We do not get a half Christ. If we die with Him we also rise—"that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life." There is our walk. And see the standard of that walk—the measure that is set before us—"the glory of the Father."

I stop here to examine this wonderful expression; for whatever shows us the excellency of Christ gives us power. What I see is this, that there is not a single thing that makes the Father glorious that was not concerned in the raising of Christ from the dead. Take divine power,—it is God that raiseth the dead. Take death as the ruin of man,—out of it God raises Him. Take the love of the Father, it is in special exercise. Does ever the love

of the Father appear so drawn out as because of the death of Christ? Never. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." A new motive is added, as it were, for the Father to love His Son. But, besides, it was the Father's Son who thus lay under the power of death, and, therefore, He cannot be left there. For His glory's sake, the Father would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Take righteousness,—the Father's righteousness was magnified. "I have glorified thee on the earth, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self." The Father, having been indebted, so to speak, to the Son for having been glorified on the earth, had to see to it that He should now obtain His reward. Thus, everything that constitutes the Father's glory was at work in raising up Jesus to His own right hand. There would have been a gap in heaven, a fearful gap, if Christ had not been raised. But it was not possible that He should lie under the power of death.

Oh, when we know the person of Christ, then we know that He could not be holden of death. It was to the knowledge of this that the Lord led the woman of Samaria. He first deals with her conscience, "Go, call thy husband;" and then, after telling her "all that ever she did," He leads her on till He can say, "I that speak unto thee am he." So that the person of the Lord Jesus fills her heart and soul. It is when God has made the soul to apprehend, through the power of the Spirit, that it is a dead Christ who is raised that we get the power of life. I enter into union with Himself as risen, but as once dead for my sins, and come, by grace, into the condition I was in; raised up out of it by the glory of the Father. How near it brings the Lord to us. How could you or I rise up to heaven to see the Father's glory? But here I see the Father's glory enter into the place where Christ was dead for my sins. He has been concerned for me—exercised for me. And do not suppose, for

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He does not say *realize*, though that be all right in its place; but, *reckon* yourselves to be dead, since Christ is so,—in the power of this risen life. It is here I get this life—even in Christ risen. I get my soul elevated into the apprehension of the Father's glory, and character, and relationship to Christ, in seeing every divine perfection displayed in the raising of Christ, and being made partaker in Him of the life in the power of which He is raised.

How does this associate me with it? Why was He there in death? He was there for my sins, and this connects this risen life with my every day affections. It is not mental power or penetration that enters into it. It is the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost entering into the excellency of the person of Jesus—seeing that He was such a sort of person as could not be holden of death, and the glory of the Father engaged in His resurrection.

a moment, that it is mental wisdom that gets to this. It is knowing that you are such a sort of sinner as that Christ was in the grave for your sins. First, conscience is reached by the power of the Spirit of God, then, the whole issue of its conflicts is seen in what takes place in His person wholly under the burden of our sins.

We see that all the power and glory of the Father was concerned in raising Him up, and the heart follows Him up there.

Next as to the manner. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." I do not get a half Christ. If He has died, and our sins are put away, then also He is risen, and our place is in Him as so risen. (For justification is not in this part of the epistle. Justification is not presented as His having put away sin, but that He in His person is the accepted one; (raised again for our justification;) and we in Him.) "Our old man is crucified with Him,

that henceforth we should not serve sin." Serve sin! He is talking in the language of a country where they employ slaves; talking after the manner of men. You are servants now of righteousness—and yet not servants, for indeed it is liberty. The idea is that of one person who is at the will of another. He was the slave of sin. It is the same thing to be under the law and to be under sin. (See John viii.) "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." If you are under law you cannot abide for ever—you are only servants—you may be turned out, or (as told of slaves) killed if you do not serve well. But if you are a son you are a part of the household, you are free and you abide for ever.

Now you cannot charge a dead man with anything. His master cannot bring a dead man under guilt. You cannot mortify till you have somebody to mortify. The life to which guilt could be charged has gone out of existence. We are dead. How can I talk so? Christ is dead, and we are

dead in Him. "Now he that is dead is freed from sin." Ah! but you say, it is not done with. Are you wiser than God? He says that it is done with in Christ. It was all attached to Christ, laid on Christ, for us by grace, and He has died, and there is an utter end of it. For all that I see in myself, evil principles, and an evil nature, that is what He died for. It is done with in Christ. And now I am to mortify all that savours of it. Therefore "reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin"—reckon—that is the word—and there is liberty—liberty *from* sin, and not *to* sin.

I make two remarks. While fruits are surely produced in me, the grand doctrine of Christianity is, that I am saved by a mediator. If I am to be saved by myself—all is gone; all is lost. If you ever enter into judgment you are lost. Therefore, the whole doctrine of salvation is this—there is a days-man. As to myself, as Job says, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so

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clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." But there is a days-man. One who can lay His hand upon both. And this days-man is Christ. He is my life, and of course I bring forth fruit; but I am made the righteousness of God in Him.

Still you say I find sin alive, nevertheless. But let me ask you, Is Christ all this for the sins that you have, or for the sins that you have not? Of course for those you have—those you find out. Those are the sins for which Christ died. The jealousy is all good, but with the jealousy remember the grace which has put them all away.

If we are dead we also live. I am brought, through connexion with Christ, into a new state of existence, in which nothing can come against me—sin, Satan, or death. There is not a thing which could reach me as a sinner into which Christ has not gone for me, and He has got out of it all. We are set in quite a new place, like Israel the other side of the Red Sea. He died

unto sin once. If He had shrunk from going through all that weighed down upon me as a sinner, I should not have escaped—I should have no liberty. "But he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He was put under obedience to the uttermost. He was put through everything to see if unwillingness to obey could be found, (and that is sin,) and it could not. Therefore, in this death, there is not only expiation, but the moral perfection of the Redeemer. Christ never asked any other cup to be put away; but that cup He could not wish to drink. It was suffering for sin—the hiding of God's face. So in the garden, He chose rather to have God's face hidden than fail to obey. Now He lives beyond it all. Now mark, what is your position? You are dead—are you not? "Dead, indeed," but yet alive. There we get the proper christian position. It is not, "if you are not this you will not get the value of the blood," but you *must* be this because Christ is. I do not

exhort one who is not my child to live like my child. No, in truth I do not. "Likewise, reckon ye yourselves," &c. I get the position and the consequence. I am to reckon that I am dead. This is faith. It does not say "experience," but reckon, and the consequence will come. By grace I have the title to reckon myself in like manner to be risen, then I live to God. I now get the justified position of living for God before the world, as before I got the condemned position of the sinful life of Adam. He does not say, yield yourselves to morality, but yield yourselves unto God. Whatever comes from God goes to God. (I hate myself when I find myself doing a good thing, if it is not done to God. Alas! I find it. And in speaking of the best thing there may be the worst sin.) Now I yield myself to God. One of the first things I saw in the Gospels was, that Jesus never did anything for Himself. He had not time to sleep. Prayer occupied His night, or He rested in peace in the tossed ship. He is there

Men will say that if you give man perfect peace he will forget God. Alas! it is in our wretched nature to do so at all times, and to abuse the relief of our conscience to do so. But the power of resurrection in Christ in which we have this relief sets us free from sin. How can he that is free be a slave? "If we are led of the Spirit we are not under the law." The Holy Spirit will never lead us into sin. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." When I speak of your being servants, I speak after the manner of men; for after all it is real liberty to serve God. Now mark there is fruit in righteousness. What fruit had we in sin? Its end was death; but, righteousness, serving the will of God, bears blessed fruits. Not merely is there righteous fruit, but there is fruit in righteousness. "We have our fruit unto holiness."

What is holiness? Separation unto God. Adam was not holy—he was innocent. God is holy. He knows good and evil, loves the good and hates

in obedience, not merely in the things commanded, but because they were commanded. Oh what liberty! If you are a Christian you know what it is to be a slayer of sin and self—and that is the most blessed thing you can know. I have a right to have done with myself.

In the 5th chapter we have one, ungodly in himself, under the judgment of unrighteousness; here, one under the dominion of sin—like Israel of old, making bricks without straw. They did not like it, but they could not help it. Well, but you say, it has dominion; I am afraid I am not right. Where are you? You are putting yourself not under grace. You must be under grace, and then go to God and get power against sin. Therefore chapter v is before chapter vi. You must get under grace. Grace is not to a holy being—that is love. Grace is to one unworthy of it. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace,"—you have God on your side against it.

the evil. So it is with Jesus, and so with us. We love good and hate evil. I, as a creature, cannot estimate the difference between good and evil. So I must have God as an object to make out the full measure of good, and thus judge and be separate from the evil. The affections drawn to Christ are the channel and power of it. In this latter sense Christ could not have an object, though ever regarding the Father; and as man looking to the joy that was set before Him. But He had no need to have His affections drawn to an object to sanctify Him. He had them in perfect communion and truth. And indeed, as taking this resurrection place, He sanctified Himself, set Himself apart as the resurrection man through the revelation of whom we should be sanctified through the truth. He Himself was the object of God's delight on earth. (Matt. iii, 16, 17.) Elsewhere He is ours in heaven. (Acts vii, 56.)*

* When I say on earth, I speak as when actually revealed. He was ever God's delight. See Prov. viii.

There is no fruit from sin. It is the perishing down into death of that which is degraded by having lost the image of God. Now I must walk in righteousness. What is the consequence? I get withdrawn from the spirit and ways of the world; I get away from the influence of the things which govern it, my heart is more abundantly occupied in the practical liberty of the new nature, with that which is of God; confidence in Him is increased, prayer has a larger sphere, the heart is drawn nearer to Him, and living in intercourse with Him, He Himself is more fully known. It is not merely that there are fruits, for besides this practical walk in righteousness, there is connected with it the consecration of the heart to God, and the having knowledge of Him. If we live to God there will be the knowledge of what good and evil is in the eye of God—not simply that you live to Christ as to outward devotedness, but you will get your heart withdrawn from the influence of the things which drew it formerly away.

eternal life as the gift of God than earn ten lives; for having it so, it is the proof of His love, and that is bliss.

The Lord give us, in every day common life, to live in the secret life of the heart, and hence in the outward life of our daily service *to Him*, founded, as it is, on reckoning ourselves to be dead and alive again, yielding ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.

THE PASSOVER.

“CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US.”

Exodus xii.

Redemption, as presented in the type of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, has two aspects. The one is seen in the feast of the passover, the other in the passage of the Red Sea.

The history and circumstances of the two disclose, in a wonderful manner, the redemption which God has wrought for His people in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in plain common life, oh *let God be everything!* Be not like one slipping and getting on, and slipping and getting on, as Christians often are, but be advancing quietly and steadily, increasing in separation to God; then you will have fruit unto holiness, you yourselves being servants, (it is not said unto holiness, but) *unto God*. There is the spring and glorious excellency and liberty of service. You may be a servant unto righteousness to satisfy your conscience and worry yourself to death. But what I get here, through grace, is, liberty through righteousness, and then Christ's will the motive of all I am to do. O blessed thing! It is liberty indeed. There must indeed be the practical every-day fruit; but besides this, there is the joy of serving God, positive joy of serving God. And it is sweet after all—after showing us this practical way of getting righteousness and true holiness, even the image of God—to learn, that eternal life is altogether of grace, the free gift of God. I had rather have

In the deliverance at the Red Sea, by Israel's being brought through a path, by the power of God, which was *death* to all who attempted to go through without it, we have presented to us the power of God in associating believers with Christ in His resurrection, and so delivering them from the reach of all their enemies—sin, Satan, death—as well as separating them from the whole portion and judgment of the world.

Accordingly, at the Red Sea (Exodus xv) there is the song of victory, and the celebration of the triumph which God's power has given to His people over all the power of their enemies. And the knowledge which a poor sinner finds now, through God's grace, of his being “risen with Christ,” makes his heart indeed rejoice, and say, “we are more than conquerors through him who hath loved us.”

But in the passover the deeper question is met, of *how God's power can be thus displayed on behalf of those whom His holiness has condemned as sinners.*

"God is light"—"There is none holy as the Lord." He cannot, therefore, link Himself with sin, nor can He bring a people into association with Himself until He has put away their sins.

Hence the passover comes *before* deliverance at the Red Sea; even as Jesus must be known as *dying* for our sins, before we can say, through His resurrection, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The passover, which answers to Christ's death, brings redemption before us in connexion with God's righteous holiness, and the judge and hater of all sin. The deliverance at the Red Sea, which answers to Christ's resurrection, shows how God's power in Christ is on His people's side, because His death has met the claims of all the holiness of God.

Israel were delivered, it is true, on the night of the passover: but from what were they delivered? Not from the pursuit of Pharaoh, but from God's judgment for sin. The blood was sprinkled on the lintel and on the door-

found its full answer:—"He was delivered for our offences." "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Can I then, though trembling with a sense of guilt, say, "O God, my trust is only in the blood of the Lamb;" "I seek a refuge only in the blood shed on Calvary?" Then the answer of God to my heart is, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*" What security is this, when God says, "I will pass over!"

The passover, then, as a type, presents the redemption of believers from the just judgment of sin; while it, at the same time, shadows forth the execution of that judgment upon the world. And, alas! there will be no escape for high or low, if the blood, which alone shields from judgment, be despised. It is said, (ver. 29, 30,) "And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and

posts to bar the way of God's entrance as a judge. It is not *power* that delivers in the passover; but weakness, *death*, the blood of the Lamb!

The question to the Israelite, on that night, was how God should be staid from entering his dwelling as a judge. And God showed him that nothing but his trusting to the sprinkled blood of the Lamb, would cause the angel of death to pass over his dwelling. He entered every dwelling, of high and low, of the Egyptians, where the blood was not sprinkled. For "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." "For," says the Scripture, (verse 23,) "the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and *when he seeth the blood* upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." Blessed picture of the ground of security, which a simple trust in Christ's blood gives to the chief of sinners! For in the blood of *this precious Lamb*, God's justice has

all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead."

No height of position, no worldly power and glory, can shield from the judgment of sin; nor can any meanness of condition escape. The firstborn of Pharaoh on the throne, and the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon, are smitten alike. "There is no difference, for all have sinned."

I may add here, as to the world's judgment, that the Red Sea is a type of death to all who are not brought through it by the power of God. Israel was brought through the sea, and safely landed on the other side of it, as believers are brought through death, by the resurrection of Christ; but Pharaoh was lost in it. He entered in pride and unconsciousness of the power which was leading the hosts of God through the deep waters, and, when too late, he found that he

could neither retreat nor make good his passage on the other side. Not one escaped: "The depths covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone."

To meet death without a part in Christ's victory over death, is to be lost in it. It is ruin and perdition. But God's people are brought, by the resurrection of Christ, even in this world, to the other side of death: as it is said, "If ye then be risen with Christ." And as Israel, when brought through the Red Sea, and safely landed on the other side of it, could sing both of the power that had delivered them, and that would finally plant them in Canaan, so the believer, now, who is associated by faith with the power of God in the resurrection of Christ, can sing of present victory over death, and rejoice in the certain hope of coming glory. "He hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and hath raised us up together;" and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory."

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

in sin—not with *motive*, from the love of Christ constraining—but with death and resurrection.

In this 7th chapter he applies the same doctrine of death and resurrection to the law. This is the great point under discussion, and not whether we have a renewed man's experience or not. Let me have never so new a nature, yet if I am still under law, the law will condemn me. The only effect will be to give me such a sense of the holiness of God as to make me miserable. Put any person under law, and you put him under the curse: not that the law is bad, but that no one can keep it.

But one will say, I use the law, not for justification, but for sanctification. I answer, you cannot use the law as you please; the law will use you as it pleases. If you do not obey it, it will curse you. It is holy itself, but it has no power to sanctify. The effect of using it is to put a man under the curse; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all

HOW A BELIEVER IS "DELIVERED FROM THE LAW" BY UNION WITH CHRIST.

Rom. vii.

From the 4th chapter of this epistle the apostle develops the great doctrine of the power of the resurrection in deliverance and righteousness: not only God's taking the blood of Jesus for our sins, but God acting in power on man even when dead; first, in raising Christ, and then in the quickening of a saint by the Spirit of God, by the same divine power by which Christ was raised from the dead. In taking up this great principle, he applies it in the 5th chapter, not only to the putting away of sin, but to the acceptance of the person of the believer. In the 6th chapter he applies it to the practical walk—"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" No: a dead man will not go on in sin, or else he is not dead. He connects our not continuing

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things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law is good, if a man use it lawfully. You will never say it is good, if you are under it; for who has not broken it?—who has not lusted? It is a good weapon, but it has no handle? If I take it to condemn others, I must first condemn myself. It is as sharp for the person using it as for him against whom it is used. Thus, in the case of the woman taken in adultery, they thought that in whatever way Christ should act, He would be in a dilemma. But they find that the law, which they were to use against the woman, condemns themselves as well as her. Christ lets them use it; and when it condemns all, He then takes up grace. The law is adapted to the unrighteous. Of what use is it to say to a righteous man, "lust not?" If he has no lust, he does not need it; and if lust is there, what can the law do but condemn him and deny his righteousness? It was never meant to do anything else. Well, we should

thoroughly understand what deliverance from it is.

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Verses 1—4.) What the apostle does here is to take the principle of resurrection and apply it to the law. The law, says he to the Jew, or to any one thus under it, was your first

husband; but you have now another, being freed by death from the first, and you are risen in Christ. We are not physically risen, but we have a part in the death and resurrection of Christ. The law is the one husband—Christ risen the other. Now we cannot have both at once. We are bound by law to have only one. Well, the law was my first husband, but I am freed from it by death. The law kills me. I die, and the law's title is gone—the tie is gone. How? for it is blessed to trace the manner. It is not that we have died personally. It is not that the law was ever abrogated. It could not be. But we are dead to the law by the body of Christ, because the full curse of the law was attached to Christ. He died under the curse. The law spent its weapons on Christ. It did everything it could in the way of curse against Christ—it spent itself entirely on Christ, and Christ has risen out of it. He was perfect, yet, having been made sin for us, the law brought a curse on Him; and what can it do more

than spend its curse on Christ. And now that He has risen out of it, what can it do to Him? Nothing. Is Christ under it now? Oh no. He is in an entirely new position—"Set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." There is the position of Christ now. Now this position of Christ is applied to the Christian by faith. For whilst Jews were actually under the law, almost all who are called Christians are under it virtually:—alas! that is in their thoughts and apprehensions. But here I see how God has set us free. Here I see Christ coming and taking up my cause. I see Him, as mediator, taking my place, and faith applies to me everything that He has done, and into which He has come for me. I find my place in Christ as the Second Adam risen. He comes and gives me a portion in His place. What is the law to me? It condemned me, it is true; but then God has settled every claim the law had against me in the body of Christ; and now I have a life in Him beyond the reach of law. Now I have

life in Him; for the tie with my first husband is broken by death, and is gone. Hence the believer is dead to the law.

Does this take away its power and authority? By no means. People say to me, do you know the killing power of the law? Yes—but I know it as freed from it, for it has killed me. It cannot kill me again. You cannot make a dead man feel. The law found sin in me, and it has not merely pronounced the curse, but executed it in Christ. And now I can talk about it in peace. It is not to the law that I am now joined, but to my new husband, to whom I am tied by faith; not to exact fruit from a bad tree by commanding it, but to graft a new graft—Christ as our life—"that we may bring forth fruit unto God."

Thus you see that if you are under the law in any sense, you are under the curse. You have sin in your flesh. Will the law allow it? Do you think it will let you off? Can it deliver you from it? Do not talk of the sanctifying

power of the law. Your *putting* yourself under law is not wanting to be good, but your unwillingness to own how bad you are. You hope to get good out of your heart, if you have not yet succeeded. Now, if God require anything from me, I cannot give it. God does in fact leave us often under law. What is the consequence? The sin which works against the law becomes positive transgression, and sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful. Not only so, but the motives of sin are stirred up in us by the prohibition of the law, and the will works against the barrier to work to death and condemnation.

Persons say, take away a man from under law, and you leave him without restraint. Of course, if there be no reality in the life of Christ—but He liveth unto God, and unto God we too live with Him. I dare you to be under the law with a sense of God's holiness. You could no more stand one moment in the presence of His holiness than compete with His power. The law will

have righteousness and true holiness. It will not ask you if you take it as justification or a rule of life. It will take you on its own ground. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." This was not the law's fault. God's law is holy. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." While there is a will in us, the law must condemn us, for it resists the law and authority of God. Law does not talk of a new nature. It asks, do you produce the thing that God demands. It will allow of no excuse. It would be a bad law if it did. Do you love God with all your heart? No, you do not. Well that is sin, and you are cursed. The effect of a will in us, restrained by the law, is to urge the will against the law which checks it.

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness

of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter." It is a deliverance. You do not know that you are slaves to the law if you do not know that it is a deliverance. How do we obtain it? By dying to the law. "Being dead to that wherein we were held." (*margin.*) I died under it, and that is the way I got deliverance. The law is not dead. It is in full force against all who are under it. But we have died under it. It has killed us by its righteousness. It is the ministry of death. It was written on stones in its requirements, and I have a nature which does not meet them. It will not neglect—not modify them. It condemned me because not obedient, and now it has had its full effect—of course in Christ. By faith I find my place there. I get by faith into Christ—I get part with Him. One man takes another into partnership, and gives him all the benefit of the connexion, and the advantages the firm already had acquired, though he had no part in acquiring them. So we all come into partnership

with Christ. All debts are discharged, and I have a part in all that is His. It was all kindness on His part, for I had brought nothing.

"We are delivered from the law, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." It is not a letter demanding, but a spirit making me walk in that which is agreeable to God, as partaking of His nature—its desires and delights—in the power of the Spirit of God. It is not a law delivering up to a curse for breaking its requirements; but that which makes me partaker of righteousness as it is in Jesus before God.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." But it did not cure me of sin, but provoked it; and then it came and brought death to my soul. It is thus good in the way of showing the need of Christ.

But will bringing death to the soul convert a man? Never. When he says, I had not known sin but by the law, he means in conscience: of course he

knew sin; and was sinning every day. "For I was alive without the law once;" that is, going on quietly, without any thought of its bringing death and condemnation on his soul. "But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." He found it was of no use to be combating sin in this way; that is, by thinking on the prohibition of the object, and of course of the object prohibited, with the lust in the soul. Victory over it is obtained by looking away from it altogether, and this we are enabled to do in the power of a new object, Christ possessing the heart by the Holy Ghost.

"And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." This was not the fault of the commandment. It was given for life if men had kept it; but man being a sinner, it was a commandment unto death.

The source of all this we find in the 5th verse, in which we get a most important truth. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which

were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." In chap. viii, 9 we see the contrast. But here "being in the flesh" gives the whole position and standing of the man. He stands as before God in the flesh—in the helpless sinful nature of fallen man. That is the case, the condition the man is in. He is not a dead and risen man. Does the law quicken him? No; the law could not give life. (Gal. iii.) It proposes life when man is at a certain point; that is, when he has already kept and obeyed it. But how can a man get to this without life? How obey in sinful flesh? Can we while in the flesh and under law? Hear the judgment of the word. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The law does not give life or the Spirit; but to obey I must have both. Now we are all "in the flesh" until we are "dead and risen with Christ." Compare vii, 5, and viii, 9, and see the difference. In the one we have, "For

when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death:" in the other, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Now the law and the flesh go together; they are correlatives. The law deals with man as man—with man in the flesh—man ere he gets the Spirit, which he receives in virtue of redemption. And what is the effect of its operation? "The motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought all manner of concupiscence." "Sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful." Is that the way to get holiness?

Verse 14. "For we know that the law is spiritual, But I am carnal, sold under sin." He could not say, *we* are carnal. For of whom is he speaking when he says "*we*"? of Christians.

Hence they are viewed in what they have as such in common; that is *in their spiritual standing, so viewed in Christ*. "We" know that the law leaves nothing untouched respecting a man's standing in the sight of God. It judges everything in the motives and intents of the heart, according to the searching judgment of the Spirit, and to the light of God's nature. But when he says, "I am carnal," he is talking of individual conscience. Christians, *as such*, are in the Spirit. They are not carnal. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." (Rom. viii, 9.) The flesh is in us, it is true, but if walking in the Spirit we are not in the flesh: for in the Spirit is power and liberty according to God. Here, however, man is not set free, but is viewed in his own capacity to deal with evil when his will is set right, and seeking to attain righteousness according to the desires of a new nature. It is personal individual conscience making the discovery of what is in his heart, but in the presence of the law which judges

the whole result. You will find, at the end of the chapter, that he speaks constantly of I, I, I; and never once of Christ or of the Spirit. It is the experience of what the human heart is, and not the knowledge of what the heart of God is. It is the experience of what I am, as acquainted with good and evil, and not the knowledge of my position by faith. This we get in the 8th chapter, and there we are not under law.

What is our subject all through the chapter? The question is not whether it is a renewed man or not. I believe it is a renewed man, for he delights in the law of God after the inner man. But it is the case of a man under law. It is the effect of the law, as a measure of righteousness, on the conscience, where there is no power. You will never understand the end of this 7th chapter of Romans until you see that it is the discussion of law dealing with a man under it. He always wills what is right and never does it. There is a total want of power. Do you not

that. Is holiness then not necessary? Most surely it is. But I thus speak to show you that you cannot have peace in this way, because the result of holiness in you does not reach the holiness of God, and God forbid that that measure should be lowered. We are made partakers of His holiness. I say it to make you know that you cannot have holiness in this way. That is given us in nature, in the communication of the divine nature. It is practically maintained through the knowledge that God is "for us," in the peace with Him which Christ has perfectly wrought and gives to the believer.

In verses 15 to 23 it is I, I, I; and God says, 'I will give you enough of it; you will get tired of it, and then you will be glad to be beholden to me in grace, and to be done with law and self.' Now what is the end of all his labouring? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Divine power is needed. If you have got a good will through grace, you must get power too.

want power for holiness? The law will never give you that. It is as feeble to do that, as it is strong to curse. What the apostle is here saying is all about self. Till Christ is known as a deliverer, and the power of the Spirit comes in, giving liberty, and occupying the soul with all that God is, has done, and sets before us, in the love which secures us for the enjoyment of it, all that the soul can say is, I am this, and I am that. And while it is what you are to do and to be, you are occupied with yourself. There you are floundering, like a man in a morass, because of the kind of ground you are on. If you think to pull one foot out, you have only the other deeper in. Now you want a deliverer.

Take the question of peace with God. If you were more holy, do you not think you would have more peace with God? Oh yes, you reply. Then your holiness increases the value of the blood of Christ, or you are not resting on that blood as that which makes peace fully and absolutely. Your answer shows

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Is he brought by progress to peace? No; but he is brought to give up the effort to bring flesh up to it, and to the knowledge that no good thing is in him—that he has no power to do good. So now he says, "Who will deliver?" He learns that he has got a bad self, and that he must get a deliverer. All is now changed. He looks on another to do that which he cannot do, and he finds it all done. Man is brought to his real level, and then God is brought in, and he thanks God through Jesus Christ. Thus he gets power by learning that he has none, and by receiving peace with God through the blood of Jesus, *while knowing that he has none*. He is brought low—finds that he is a sinner incapable of getting better and reaching God thus; and then Christ dies. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." But this is not merely giving strength for the struggle, so as to make a man content with his success, and so get peace, but it is the knowledge of a complete salvation, wrought by God

in view of what we were, and to the sense of which we were reduced—salvation and peace. I come to know what I am as man and I am wretched: I come to know what God is for me, and I am happy. Moreover, the resurrection, which has obliterated every trace of condemnation, brings into a new sphere where the Spirit gives liberty, and the hope of glory to which it leads on.

Thus we have, first, that you cannot have two husbands at once. Then the doctrine that the law provokes sin. Then we have man put under the law, that he may have what is called experience. It is all about I and self; and not till the end do you get Christ and a deliverer, and thus, "thank God," though the two natures remain the same; the new, however, walking in grace, the old being held for dead. Thus, as a doctrine, we get entire deliverance from the law; not weakening it, but giving it its whole power—but that power kills. The person who weakens the authority of the law is he

HOW CHRIST IS GRAVEN ON THE HEART BY THE HOLY GHOST.

2 Cor. iii.

The apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, tells us what a true Christian is. He calls him an epistle of Christ. He is a person upon whose heart God has written Christ, as Moses wrote the law on tables of stone. This the apostle opens out; but first he states what Christians are in contrast with the law. A Christian is a person on whom Christ is engraved—not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart. If the heart is serious, one must see that many have not this. We see many persons very amiable, and others with a trying nature. But here it is not difference of mere natural character. That is not the point. Natural amiability of character is not Christ graven on the heart. It has nothing to do with being a Christian. That is a positive real work of

who puts man or any one under it, and leaves him any hope. For sin is in the flesh, and the law will allow of no sin, but curses all who take up its works to do them. To mingle grace with it is to destroy its obligation, and undo its authority, which is righteously exercised in condemning. We die to the law; and then we get Christ's position, being delivered by death and resurrection. Then we get the law applied as a matter of experience in this holy way, to bring home to the soul the want of its power to keep it. It is a great deal more difficult to know our want of power here than to know our sin. Conscience will tell you of sin, but it requires long experience, though we know it is true, to learn that we have no strength, and to have flesh so broken that we have no confidence in it; to learn that there is no power, just as there is no forgiveness, but in grace; and to find that it is the discovery of what we are that settles the question of peace and power, for then it is God Himself.

CHRIST GRAVEN ON THE HEART. 55

God. It is the Holy Ghost engraving Christ on a man's heart, putting Christ into his thoughts, his words, and his ways, just as the law was put upon stones. Now a person may get angry at this; but, nevertheless, Christ is the object of a Christian's life, and your own conscience must judge if it is so with you. It is not that there is not failure. A man who is seeking to make money does not always succeed; but every body knows what his object is. Just so, *Christ is the object of a believer's life.*"

God gave the law, not to make men righteous, but to prove that there were none righteous. The law condemns every one. It was the ministration of death. But after men had broken God's law He sent His Son. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." God's Son has been in the world. How comes it that He is out of it? The world would not have Him. Men spit in His face.

That is what the world has done. Now I do not ask you about duties; but I ask, is Christ engraven on your heart? We cannot kill Him now; but our hearts can reject Him as much as ever the Jews did. An honest man—I do not speak of a Christian—will own that from morning to night Christ is not in his heart.

Now what was the apostle doing? When a Christian went from one place to another, it was customary to give him a letter of commendation. But, says the apostle, Do I want a letter? If one came to him to ask what he went about doing, he would say, Look at these Corinthians: (for they were going on well then:) they were his letter. How so? *Because they were Christ's.* Now I leave it with you as to whether Christ is on your heart. I do not ask if you love Him as you ought; for if you love Him at all you will not say that; He is too precious for that. But if you are a Christian you are sure there is not anything that you would not give for Christ. You

may not be able to govern yourself, still, Christ is the object of your heart.

Notice now another thing: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." It is not liberty to be fearing and trembling before God. "Liberty" is to be happy with Him. When the Holy Ghost begins to show me my sins, I have anything but liberty. I begin to be afraid of my sins; I do not know whatever to do with them. False liberty is taken away, and true liberty is not given. And that will always be the case until the perfect love of God is seen. Now, law will never teach me that. Suppose I command my child to love me, and threaten him if he does not; will that make him love me? Why, it will make him tremble. That is what the law does. It cannot produce the love, it can but command. What is the effect? I cannot stand in its presence. When Moses had been up on the mount, his face shone. He had been with God. And when he came down with the two tables of the law, the children of Israel

were afraid to come near him. He had to put a veil on his face, for the glory of his countenance. When in the presence of God's glory, they cannot bear to look on it. The only effect of the revelation of the glory of God is to drive me away as far as ever I can get from Him against whom I have sinned. There is not a pleasure in the world that the presence of God would not blast in a moment. There is not a happiness of man, as man, that is not spoiled by the very mention of the name of God. Now think what a terrible state that is to be in.

The apostle calls this claim of God by the law the "ministration of death and condemnation;" because it claims righteousness, and does not produce the thing it claims. Whenever a person is looking to his conduct for what he ought to be, he is under the ministry of death and condemnation. That is not the way to get Christ written on the heart.

Before we turn to look at Christ as He is now, let us look at what He

was, God manifest in the flesh. In what state did He find men when He came? He found them "all under sin." And what does Job say of himself, as being in this condition? "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his fear away, then would I speak; but it is not so with me." Now what do I find in Christ when He came? I find "a daysman"—the very thing that Job wanted. Was there fear in Christ? Was any one afraid of Christ? If a sinner was ever so burdened he could go to Christ, and thus to God. Now here I find that though my sins hindered me from going to God, they could not hinder God from coming to me. You will never find a single case in which Christ did not receive the sinner with open arms. Never. Now, that is what you want. Christ did not

say, get righteousness and come up here, and I will have you. No; but He came down here to meet us here. That is an entirely new thing. Christ came in this way to win our hearts thus. And therefore they reproached Him with receiving sinners, and eating with them. It is quite true, He replied, but is not a father glad to receive his lost son? Even so is it with my Father in heaven; and therefore am I come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now that is grace. But there is righteousness too. When the father fell on the neck of the prodigal, he was in his rags. He could not bring him into the house in his rags, it would dishonour the house. So His blessed love goes on—and Jesus gives Himself for the sins, which unfit me for the Father's house. I see that the very Lord, against whom I sinned, has taken my sins and put them all away.

Now where do I see the glory of God? Not now on the face of Moses—I could not look on it there. But

image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is the ministration of righteousness, because the Holy Ghost comes and tells us that there is a righteousness accomplished "by one man's obedience." It is the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit is given on the foundation of the righteousness. And now the man is at liberty, because his conscience is perfectly purged. Here he will have trial and conflict, it is true; but as between himself and God he will never have anything but perfect peace.

This is God's way of graving Christ on the heart. First He gives a man the consciousness of being entirely condemned; showing him that his nature is enmity against God; that the law he has broken; and that when Christ came in grace, Him he did not love. And when He has brought him to this in his conscience, then He shows him that the God against whom he sinned has come and wrought out a righteousness for him, and that this blessed man is now in glory.

now I see it in the face of Jesus Christ. Dear! I say, that is the one who died for my sins. He could not bring my sins into the glory, and therefore He put them away. I have got His word and His work for it; and the glory for it too; and therefore God is now ministering righteousness. Now it is "the ministration of righteousness." The sins are not passed over. He sweat great drops of blood for the sins. He has really gone through everything that holiness required on account of them, and now He is in the glory; so that every ray of the glory I look at is the proof that my sins are put away. When I see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is the very thing I like to look at; because the one whom I see in the glory is the one who bore all my sins. Oh! I delight to look at Him. And that is the way I get Christ graven on my heart by the Holy Ghost. "We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same

Now mark how the heart thus learns to trust God. Dear! I say, when I was in my sins, God came and put them away. My sins are the very thing that give the greatest proof of His love. He has given Christ for them. Well may I trust Him for everything else.

Let me now ask you, dear reader, if your confidence is in this God? Has your heart been brought to submit to this righteousness—for you have none of your own? Oh, it is the hardest thing for the heart to be broken down so as to be willing to have righteousness by the obedience of another! "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. v, 19.) But if you have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ you will desire to "*be found in him*, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God, by faith."

HUMILITY.

1. There is a difference between being humble before God, and being humbled before God. I am humbled before God, because I have not been humble. I am humbled, because of my sin. If I had been humble, I should have had grace given me to prevent it. For "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

2. The only humble place is the presence of God. It is when I get out of His presence that I am in danger of being lifted up. People say it is dangerous to be too often on the mount. Now I do not think that it is when we are on the mount that we are in danger, but when we come off it. It is when we come off the mount that we begin to think that we have been there. Then pride comes in. I do not think that Paul needed a thorn when he was in the third heavens. It was after he had come down that he was in danger of being exalted above measure—from thinking that he had been where no one else had been.

3. I do not believe that to think badly of ourselves is true humility. True humility is never to think of ourselves at all—and that is so hard to come to. It is constantly, I, I, I. If you only begin a sentence with I, there is nothing that a person will not put after it.

4. What hearts have we! "I the Lord search the heart." Who but God can know them. Persons who think they search their hearts and are quick in their evil, do not really know their hearts, nor are they truly humble. The fact is, they *must* be talking of *themselves*, and their pride is nourished even by talking of how evil they are.

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN IS.

Rev. i, 5, 6.

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

There are certain expressions in the word of God which unfold, in the most familiar manner, what the Christian is; and which, if there was but the most ordinary attention on the part of the reader, would lead him to say, "well, if that is what a Christian is, I know nothing of the matter."

These expressions are not the violent stretching forth after some hope, but they are characterized by the quiet certainty with which they appropriate the blessing. As John here says of all the Christians to whom he was writing, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," &c. Now, if I were to ask you—you, perhaps, who would be affronted if I should say

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you were not a Christian—if I were to ask you, are you sure that Christ loves you? that He has washed you from your sins in His own blood? No, you would say, if honest, I know nothing of it. Yet these are the expressions of the common recognized state of Christians.

Or can you say—"yes, blessed be God, though a poor thing in myself, I do know that God loves me." To be able to say this is the common portion of the believer. And so it is written, "*we know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." All Christians are recognized as knowing salvation. And in ii Peter we read of one who had forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. But he could not forget what he had never known. Forgetting "that he was purged," was *backsliding*; the *Christian state* was knowing that he was purged.

You will find every kind of exhortation addressed to the believer; but they are all based on the ground of his having been brought to God. I ask

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any one, would there not be a quieter, happier, state of soul if you were certain that God loved you? There cannot be happy affections if the soul is not in confidence with God. That is the kind of knowledge of God which is life eternal. God is love, and if you do not know *that* you know nothing. And where are you if you know not God?

If you believe fully that God is love, love toward you, what kind of thoughts would you have of Him? Would you think that you must obey, or else He will punish you with His vengeance? Would you think of Him as a *Judge*? No. Such thoughts are not the thoughts of one acquainted with His saving love.

Of course there is a judgment, but there is no mercy then. When Christ comes to judge, can you stand if He marks iniquity? can you answer Him for your transgressions? No. But if you really believed in His righteous judgment now, you would say, "enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall *no man living*

be justified." But Christ is not now a Judge; He is a Saviour. It is all mercy now. He is not imputing to any their trespasses. *Every eye must see Him.* We Christians see Him *now* as a Saviour. You who do not believe put it off till the judgment, hoping to be able to meet Him then; but then "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." He is a Judge when He is not a Saviour. It is judgment then, not trial as to whether you will pass. Now there is a trial going on, not indeed as to whether you are a sinner or not; but as to whether you will receive Christ or not. Now your heart is put to the test: alas! your wilful heart would still reject Him, if grace does not bow you in the sense of sin. God will justify *Himself* in that day, and no one else. In that day He will demonstrate the sin which is the ground of the judgment. Every secret thing will then be made manifest. It is not then that the question is raised, but that the judgment is manifested. Now, the question is

that sin and Christ, as the Holy Lord, should not be together. So is it ever when the soul is brought to be jealous about God. The idea of compromise is a horror to one whose conscience is active about sin. Well, when brought to this, what *can* the soul have confidence in? Oh! in this,—that *when we were in such a condition* we have full assurance of the love of God toward us.

Now if I turn to nature, I see signs of goodness, but wide-spread misery and wretchedness too, so that I know not how to say God is love; and these very signs of goodness show me that I have lost it all, for this God I have offended. If I turn to providence, I find it all confusion. How often have the wicked the upper hand. If I look to the law, it condemns me, and leaves me without hope.

In all these I see things *about God*; but nothing that reveals *Him*. In Christ I get what reveals God. I, for myself, just where I am, find that He is the "faithful witness" of God. For it is in this world, where all the sin

raised. All this is brought into the soul now. In spite of all the fair appearances of the world we justify God now, we accept the judgment God gives of man now, we justify Him in condemning us. *The eye of God brings the judgment into my conscience now*, and I bow to it. I feel and say that God should not let such a wretch live before Him. That is what *will be* when every eye sees Him; but it is also what *is* now in the soul, when the Lord reveals to us our state by faith. I now justify God. I say I have been all darkness and sin, and I abhor myself in His presence. Conscience is dumb in the light of God. If you have been brought to this, you know yourself. If you seek to hide it you are not the better, but the worse.

Suppose that I am brought to this, I shall not now be trusting to a vague feeling that God is merciful. It was not so with Peter when he found himself a sinner in the presence of the Lord. He said, "depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." He felt

was, that Christ was the faithful witness.

There will be no need of a witness in heaven. Now *I can* go to Jesus and see God in Him. Do you ever find a single act or word of this faithful witness that was not love? Never. Of course He would unmask the hypocrite. But the moment a person is true,—were he the greatest sinner in the world—the moment he is contented to be what he is in Christ's presence—you will never find that He was anything but love. Of course God must convince of sin. He will write on the sepulchres and tell what is within. God will unmask what we are; our self-deception He will discover to us; but then He is perfect love, and nothing else. What brought Christ here? To know that there was sin? Oh no! He knew it well; but He came here *because there was sin*. The very sin I am confounded at, is the very thing that brought Him here in love.

In the case of the woman who was a sinner, in the seventh of Luke, Christ

puts down Simon, and He does not care for the guests. Why? Because a poor woman was to be comforted in love. Christ came into the very place where sin was. If it is a question of truth, He knows my sins. When I speak of Christ loving me, it is that He loves me *knowing all that I am*; it is not loving, surely, the sinful condition I am in, but loving me when in it. He will write on the ground to let my conscience act; He will bring my sin into my conscience. He will not let me get satisfied with myself, but He will have me to rest in His thoughts of me. What the heart struggles to do is to be satisfied with itself; but God will break that down; and the moment you are brought to that, He will make you to be satisfied *with Him*, just *as you are*. He will not leave you there, of course; but He will have you to rest in the knowledge of His perfect love: "Unto him that loved us;" then I find rest.

But that is not all: it is added, "and washed us from our sins in his own

blood." It is not said, *will* wash us, but *has* washed us. We want it now, for peace, and for holy affections. "In his own blood." Who has done this? Christ. He has done it. He has made us "clean every whit." And if *He* has washed us He has done it in righteousness, knowing all our sin, and maintaining all this perfect righteousness which made us tremble because of our sins; but *in accordance with it all* He has washed us from our sins in His own blood. He knew what our sins were in the sight of God, and so He gave Himself up; Himself entirely He gave for me. An angel could not, nor should not, do it; he is called to keep his first estate,—but Christ only. In this act of Christ in washing my sins I find Him giving His blood, His life, Himself, for me. Not one single spring do I find that was not love to me. Such is the knowledge I get of Christ.

He has washed me from my sins in His own blood. Do I believe this? Oh yes! I do. I believe that every

one of them is washed away, and that He has done it, as it is said in Hebrews, "by himself he purged our sins." Ah! you say, if I only *felt* this! But let me ask you, will your feelings add to the value of Christ's blood? Oh no! Then why not rest on it, as that which has perfectly satisfied God on account of the sins? The question of sin Christ settled between God and Himself. "By himself he purged our sins;" He did it according to the holiness of God, and according to my need. And what cleanness do I get? The cleanness which God's eye requires; all that which shut us out from God being perfectly put away, so that we are brought into the light as God is in the light; and in doing it His perfect love has been revealed.

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." If I take a person and bring him into the enjoyment of everything that I have myself, I give the fullest proof of the perfect outgoing of my heart towards him. Kindness may give something for a

person; but that is perfect love. I cannot do more. Well, that is what Christ has done. He is the King and Priest; and He makes us kings and priests too: and it is worth so much the more because it is the very thing He has Himself.

Another thing we get,—the perfect love of the Father. Not the love of Jesus alone, but the love of the Father, the knowledge of which Jesus gives us. He makes us priests unto His Father. Was ever love like this? Never. Was Christ ever anything else? Never. He is nothing but this perfectness of love for us. And the sum of it all is, "he has loved us." Has He anything else to say to us? No. What love had to do, it has done. Oh, in the simplicity of thankful hearts, to say, "he has made peace by the blood of his cross." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

THE WILL OF GOD, THE WORK OF CHRIST, AND THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Heb. x.

The basis of the argument of the apostle in this chapter lies more in the contrast, than in the comparison, between the law and the good things to come. The law, he says, had only a shadow, not the very image of the things. For example, under the law the priests ministered in infirmity; now Christ ministers in glory. They offered oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins; He one sacrifice—once for all. Then, there was a veil; now, there is none. Then, the priests could not enter into the Holiest; now, we have boldness to enter in by the blood of Jesus. The law had a shadow of good things to come, not the very image. It was a mere figurative witness of the things that were to be spoken after. Just as the shadow of a man gives some

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general indistinct idea of him, but does not present a single feature clearly; so was it with the law. It could never make the comers thereunto perfect, as the repetition of its sacrifices showed. Now the unity of the sacrifice proves its perfection; and the present position of the worshippers gives the most complete contrast possible to that under the law, though there is a certain measure of analogy.

There are three things brought out in this scripture: first, the source from which all blessing springs: secondly, the means by which it is accomplished: and thirdly, the testimony by which it is known.

This last is a most necessary part of the matter, in order to our communion; because, unless we know sin to be all put away, it would be absolute madness to attempt to enter into the presence of God: a Jew even would not have thought of such a thing—much less a Christian. If I am not as clean as an angel, the presence of God is no place for me; and the attempt to appear in

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it would be to follow the example of Cain, who thought to stand before God as a worshipper *without blood*. We may cry to Him from the depths, of course, and He will ever hear; but if the conscience be not perfect, we cannot go into His presence *to worship*.

With the Jews, this perfection was, of course, only ceremonial; with us it is real: with them, the veil hid God; now that it is gone, and that we enter into the Holiest of all, there is the greater need of perfection of conscience. This is why the apostle insists so strongly on the word "*once*." Indeed, all the reasoning of the chapter depends on it. "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." "*Once*, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, *once* for all." If those sacrifices could have wrought perfection of conscience, would they not have ceased to be offered? Christ was *once* offered, thereby proving the

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perfect result of His work; it needed no repetition. That is why he says, elsewhere in this epistle, that, if this be rejected, "there remaineth no more offering for sin." If that has not made perfect, there is no hope. If that be rejected, there is only "a fearful looking for of judgment." In the repetition of sacrifice there was a remembrance made of sin. It was not God's saying, Their sins and iniquities I will remember *no more*. Christians now have often a mind to be in the same place still, and call their unbelief humility. With the Jews, of course, it must have been so, because it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin. *Therefore, God changes the whole thing.* "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

This brings out the *first* principle to which I alluded, namely, *the source of all blessing*. It originates in the *divine will*. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." It originates in the will of God, and not in the will of man;

that is only sin. As a creature, man should have no will of his own, just as Christ had none. The principle of His obedience was not a controlling power, hindering the operation of His own will; but, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" This was perfect obedience as a man. God's will was His; and that will alone brought salvation and life, where man's will had only brought sin and death. This gives stability and perfection to everything, to find its source and origin in the will of God. If it had been the result of my will, all would have been vacillating and changing as man's will is; and, moreover, if we had earned heaven by our own will, there would have been no love of God in the matter, and we should lose the sweetness of holding everything as the fruit of divine love.

This will of God is not presented to man *to do*; it is the Son of God who says, "Lo, *I come to do thy will, O God!*" Men could never have done the will of God. The second Adam does it. As belonging to the first

Adam, *our* place is to confess that we have not done, and that we never could do, the will of God. When brought back to Him, of course, we have nothing else to do, for we are sanctified unto obedience; but, as regards acceptance, it is the result of the work of another. "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." God does all for us in grace, and leaves man out, both in the *will* and *work*. Salvation is the result of *God's will* and *Christ's work*. And it gives quietness and confidence in this work, to see that it was not a work done to turn God towards us, as it were, but that, from all eternity, it was counselled by Himself. We have the source of all in the unchangeable purpose of God.

Secondly, we have the work itself. It is a wonderful thing for us to be thus let into what passed between the Father and the Son before the world was; and most blessed to see the free-will offering of Christ. If it were God's will to be the author of our salvation, it was equally Christ's to be the in-

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strument of it; and whilst He, in order to be so, makes Himself a servant, His divine power is still evinced in the very expression, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" *that* could be said by none but by one competent to execute any command of God's. Supposing that command had been to make a world, instead of to save one, Christ was the only one who could do such a will; and in fact, both divine power and divine love were evinced in a higher degree in redemption and resurrection, than in creation.

In verse 5, where the quotation is from Psalm xl, the verbal difference is considerable, but the sense identical. "A body hast thou prepared me," and "Mine ears hast thou opened," or "digged," are both expressions of assuming the form of a servant. The ear receives commands, and the boring of the ear was making one a servant for ever. So when a body was prepared for Christ, He took on Him the form of a servant.

Thus far we have the will of God

working in grace, and Christ undertaking to accomplish it.

Then, in verse 11, we have the contrast between the priest standing, and Christ sitting. His work is finished,—there is nothing further to do; and He sits down till His foes be made His footstool. "For ever," in verse 12, means "continually," "constantly," not that Christ will never rise up again; but, as regards His sacrifice for sins, He will never have to rise again to do anything more. Having offered one sacrifice for sins, He sits down till His foes be made His footstool. As regards His friends, all is done—not as to intercession, of course—but as to acceptance and perfecting the conscience. But He has still to deal with His enemies; therefore is He waiting, still retaining His servant character, until God makes His foes His footstool. We, too, are expecting, till Christ rises up from the throne and judges His enemies. This is not done yet, else wickedness would be purged from the earth; and it explains the call for ven-

geance in the Psalms, which sometimes puzzles people,—“Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered,” &c.; and, “Of thy mercy cut off mine enemies.” These surely are not the cries of the Church. She does not want to see her enemies judged, but saved. She goes to meet the Lord in the air. Not so the Jewish remnant. It passes through great tribulation; and, “except those days were shortened, no flesh should be saved.” So they call earnestly enough for deliverance. But such is not our part at all; we are associated with Christ while expecting; in grace now, and in glory by and bye, but not in judgment.

In verse 12 we have seen that Christ’s one sacrifice was such, that He has for ever sat down; so in verse 14 we read, that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever,”—or “continually,”—“them that are sanctified.” Thus we are continually perfect; not *practically* here—though the Spirit sanctifies the heart and affections as far as this goes—but *here* the work of Christ

makes the conscience constantly perfect. “The worshippers, once purged, should have no more conscience of sins.” Thus we are brought into the presence of God, never to have any more conscience of sins. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” We are called *so to know Christ’s work*, as to see that it is quite impossible for us to have sin on us before God. Sin cannot be in God’s presence. There is nothing but perfection there; and we are there because perfected for ever by the one offering of Jesus. We are in God’s presence *because we are clean*, as clean as He could wish us to be. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is quite true we have to keep a conscience void of offence; and not to grieve the Spirit; but we are sealed of God unto the day of redemption, and there can be no mistake. The Holy Ghost could not dwell in us unless cleansed by the blood of Christ; and then He is the witness, not to the fruits, but to *the virtue of*

that blood. The fruits could not be produced unless He were there, of course, because they are “the fruits of the Spirit;” and when produced, the order is, first, the internal ones, then all the rest. “*Love, joy, peace,*” precede the outward manifestations of the Spirit’s presence.

The Christian ought to keep himself in the present communion of his known place before God, because then, besides the joy, the Holy Ghost has its full flow in using him as a vessel to others, to God’s service; whereas, otherwise, He must occupy us with ourselves. I have not only communion, but power, *only as thus in immediate intercourse with God in His presence.*

We come now to the *third* point. Having seen the source of all in the divine will, and the accomplishment of all in the divine work, we get the testimony to it all in the divine witness. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, This is the covenant,” &c., then He said, “And their sins and

iniquities will I remember no more.” And here is the secret of settled peace. If I think that God will ever remember sin, I am denying the will, the work, and the testimony of God. In short, if a believer in Jesus, it comes to being a sin to have the least thought of God’s ever imputing a sin to me. It is just as much a work of the flesh as to commit the sin. He does not now impute sin, and He never will. “Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,” sweeps away every refuge of lies, and lays the blessed foundation for full confidence. “Having, therefore, brethren, *boldness* to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus,” shows that the very way we enter into God’s presence, proves that the thing which shut us out is gone for ever.

“Our bodies washed with pure water,” refers to the priests, who were washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil. The latter is not mentioned here. After they were once washed, the priests needed only to wash their hands and

feet. The anointing with blood of the ear, the thumb, and the toe, was the application of the work of Christ to the whole moral man. The work of Christ is always set first, then follows the work of the Spirit. In Ephesians it is said, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word." Therefore, in the tabernacle, the first thing you meet is not the laver, but the altar. *As a sinner*, I must first meet the blood; then I am fitted for *service*, by the removal of all that is contrary to God: but I cannot skip the altar to reach the laver; I must there own myself a sinner first; then I can delight in the holiness of God, and understand it too.

The apostle then goes on, "Consider one another to provoke unto love," &c., that is, having got to God in grace, we must be diligent in acting towards others in grace. He introduces—"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together," to meet the tendency there

sacrifice, then there remains nothing further; there is no year of atonement to come round again with a new offering; but just as those who believe are eternally perfect, so, he who refuses, is left remediless. It was he who despised Moses's law who died without mercy, and not he who broke it; so it is he "who counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace, that shall be counted worthy of a sorer punishment;" not he who fails. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;" such is the gracious provision for failure through infirmity—advocacy, righteousness, and propitiation. But if a man, after having seen all the grace and fulness that are in Christ, deliberately chooses sin as his portion; and, rejecting the blood of the new covenant as insufficient, turns back again, then he must take the consequence. God's grace is His last resource, so to speak, for winning man.

was to avoid public testimony, and to think that private faith would do, in times of persecution such as these were. This was their natural tendency; and, whether it be persecution or reproach, it is the same thing. The latter is perhaps our snare. "And so much the more as ye see the day approaching;" for judgment is surely coming. If the power of evil increases there is the more need to cling closely to Christ. And we must not suppose that the world is improving because the Spirit is working; on the contrary, this is just the proof that judgment is nearing. The more rapidly souls are gathered in, the more reason have we for believing the coming of the Lord to be at hand. Whilst the long-suffering of God is salvation, the hope should ever be a present one to the Church. It was the wicked servant who said, "My lord delayeth his coming;" yet he did delay it.

Then, in verse 26, it is as though he said, If you do not hold fast,—if you will give up, and *abandon this perfect*

If that does not suffice, judgment must take its course; and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." On this ground the position is at once that of "adversaries," and we know Him that hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense." "Let us, therefore, hold fast our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward;" and let us remember that we shall "have need of patience;" but "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

GENTILE MERCY, NOT JEWISH PROMISES.

Matthew xv, 21—28.

There is a practical lesson in Christ's way of mercy toward this woman, as well as a secret in her lowly, uncomplaining, assumption of the place that belonged to her, that many a heart,

that is seeking for help in Jesus, needs to know.

The soul that knows and owns its wretchedness, and makes no pretension to any claim, yet brings its misery before a God of goodness, is a soul that Jesus can never refuse to comfort. He may be repelled by the claims of a false and pretended righteousness; but He cannot hide Himself from the misery that seeks His aid, and has no plea nor appeal except for mercy's ear. For mercy dwells, as in its proper fountain, in the heart of God; and Jesus is both the expression of that mercy, and the channel through which it flows.

Blessed Lord! He can dismiss from His presence a company of proud Pharisees, who find fault with His ways of grace, with the stern rebuke, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and can say to a poor outcast Gentile, that pretends to receive nothing from Him but what goodness can give to a dog, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Jewish promises, to which she had no claim. The disciples would have got rid of her at any rate—for her misery could not be repulsed—but man's thoughts are not to set aside the order and the covenants of God. Therefore Jesus answered them, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This *but* brings the woman nearer to Christ, with the more touching expression of her sorrow, "Lord, help me!" But no! she must go lower yet. She was an outcast Gentile; Israel's covenanted mercies did not reach her case; and she must hear the word from Christ, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs."

This was a terrible word to fall on her ear. But it was true. And until our hearts have learned to submit to this, we have not reached the place to which sin has brought us in the presence of God; nor are we on that ground of rest, (even if believers,) that nothing can shake or disturb. It is indeed a terrible thing to feel one's

Misery thus owned and felt, and making its appeal to sovereign mercy, reaches at once the eternal spring of goodness.

This woman was of the outcast nations of Canaan, (dwelling in the regions of Tyre and Sidon, proverbial for their wickedness,)—a mere sinner of the Gentiles—an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenants of promise." Her misery had drawn her to Christ for help, and her heart had entire confidence in His power. Still, at her first, and even second, appeal, she meets only with a repulse. She said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David."—"But he answered her not a word."

The "Son of David" was a title that indeed belonged to Christ, but it was as the Messiah of the Jews; and this woman was not a Jew. A Canaanite had nothing to do with "the Son of David." She was a Gentile, and she must take the outcast Gentile's place, relinquishing the ground of

ruin in the presence of God, and to know that His mercy is our only resource, and, at the same moment, to be obliged to own that we have not the least claim to the exercise of that mercy. But this is the truth of our case; and the Lord's dealing with this woman illustrates it in the plainest way.

She had no claim to the promises, and therefore could not plead them. She was not a child, and therefore could not claim the children's portion. She was, in truth, a Gentile dog—and she could only have a dog's portion. In the presence of God, even when suing for mercy, we must indeed take the place that belongs to us. This poor woman does so. She does not refuse the place that belongs to her, however low and degraded it may be. But, oh, there is a reality in her dealing with the Lord that nothing can set aside. She meets the reply of Christ, by taking the dog's place; and answers, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

She owns God's sovereign right to choose a people, if He pleases. She acknowledges that she is not one of them, and that she has no right to the children's portion. But, at the same time, she casts herself on that sovereign goodness, to which she can make no claim, and is content with what, in its sovereign exercise, it can bestow on a dog.

The apparent harshness of Christ in refusing to meet her appeal on ground that did not belong to her, only drew her soul to where mercy could flow without a bar. When she lets go the title of "Son of David," which a Gentile could not use; when she owns that she has no title to the children's bread; when she asks only for the mercy that the God of goodness can show to a dog, she finds that her apprehensions of His goodness are more than confirmed by Christ, and that she has reached a fountain that rises above every thought and desire of her heart.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT; THE HOLY GHOST IN US; AND GOD FOR US.

Rom. viii.

There are three parts in this well known and remarkable chapter: first, Deliverance in the power of life from God,—the power of God in resurrection giving life in the spirit as our portion through the work of Christ; secondly, The presence of the Holy Ghost Himself,—not merely the fruit of His operation, but His own personal presence; and thirdly, The outward security—what God is for us—not anything in us, but that for which we can count upon Him. Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God. For only the creature can pretend to separate us; and no creature can separate from God, as being mightier than He. "If God be for us, who can be against us!" Therefore in the end we have nothing

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of the inward work; *that* the apostle had fully spoken of before. So entirely does he pass it over, that when he says, "Whom he justified," he does not add, *them* He also sanctified, though that is true, but "*them* he also glorified."

I repeat, we have, first, the inward effect and work—*life*—to its full result, even to the resurrection of the body. (Ver. 1—14.) Then, secondly, the presence of the Holy Ghost in us. (Ver. 15—29.) And, thirdly, all the securing power of what God is for us outwardly, in His counsels, &c; not looking at His work within the soul, maintaining it, and so on.

But before I enter on this chapter, I would say a few words on the conclusion of the last. A godly person, who had come to the deliverance there is in Christ Jesus, in the end of the 7th chapter,—that is, to the beginning of the last verse,—might suppose that there was an end of conflict; but it is not so; for such is the instruction of the latter part of the

same verse. It is after the soul has known deliverance by Jesus Christ, that this great principle comes out, "with the mind I serve the law of God;" therefore, until the deliverance is known, this cannot be realized; but the flesh remaining in us, after we have known deliverance, occasions conflicts after deliverance, because there are conflicting principles, contradictory one of another. In the 7th of Romans *the law* and the flesh are opposed to each other; but in the 5th of Galatians—where we get the real form of both conflict and deliverance—it is the opposition of *the flesh* and the Spirit. In Galatians, they have the Spirit, and therefore you get real power after the deliverance, which you do not get in Romans, because they have not the Spirit. Thus, in this 7th of Romans, it is not flesh and the Spirit, but man under law; and, therefore, he does not say, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" but, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He delights

in the law, it is true. Of course he does; for, if the new man is begotten it will delight in the law, whether under it or not. But the law has no power to give the Spirit; therefore, if under it, I cannot be led of the Spirit, I must be led of the flesh. "But we"—who believe—"are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "And, if we be led of the Spirit, we are not under the law." Therefore, in Galatians, where they have the Spirit, they are exhorted to "walk in the Spirit." But, if they have the Holy Ghost, why this exhortation to walk in the Spirit? Because the flesh is still there, and "lusteth against the Spirit," and there is ever a danger of acting according to it. "The Spirit," however, on the other hand, "lusteth against the flesh;" and is given for the very end that we may overcome, "that we *may not do* the things that we would," which is the force of the passage. If I walk

position before God. And by association with Him we are taken from under our sins into this new position—into resurrection-life with Christ. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation." Christ has undergone the judgment due to sin, and then arisen from the dead; and in Him we too have died to all that came upon Him as dying, and in Him risen; and because we are alive, through the life of Christ, *after the judgment for sin has been executed on Him* who died for it, there can be no condemnation to those who are *in Him*. Moreover, "it is God that justifieth." God came in in power, and put them through a work of death and resurrection in Christ, and there is an end of their whole standing as in flesh before God, and of all that attached itself to it.

Therefore, now it is no question of *hope* where faith is simple. I do not hope anything in speaking of the effect of the cross. I do not hope that the work of Christ puts away my sins; it *has* put them away,—it is a

in the Spirit I do not fulfil the flesh's lusts.

I now turn to the doctrine of our chapter.

In the first three verses of this 8th chapter, we have the results of the argument shown in chapters v, vi, and vii. In the first verse we have the result of chapter v, in the second Adam—"justification of life." In the second, we are "dead unto sin," as in chapter vi. In the third, we are "dead to the law," as in chapter vii. Under the first Adam, who brought in sin and death, there was nothing but what pressed down; while in the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, it is all lifting up—perfect liberty. God has come in, in delivering power. But you say, "How is that?" God's own Son went down under the power of death for our sins, and rose in the power of a new life without them. He left them behind Him, with the life in which He had borne them, and to which the claims and curse of the law attached, and entered into a new

past thing, executed and done. He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Moreover, we do not now trust in promises for our peace, but in a fact, in an accomplished promise. Of course we do trust in promises for our every day's need and deliverance, but that is quite another thing. As to *salvation* we rest in that which is already done. "By the righteousness of one the free gift is of many offences *unto justification of life*." We are brought in living power into God's presence in resurrection. We are in Christ Jesus, who not only died, but having passed through death is beyond it all, in an entirely new position. There is our position, in Christ Jesus, in God's presence. There is no condemnation *there*. There is an end of the whole condition to which it applied: for it has exercised all its force on Jesus.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Here, too, is the secret of the walk of the Christian—"who walk not after the

flesh, but after the Spirit." Now we get that of which we had nothing in the end of the last chapter, that is, Christ and the Spirit. Indeed, we get more of the Spirit than of Christ and His work, for He is talking of that which results from what Christ has done. I find here the living power of the Spirit in Christ Jesus, setting us, as associated with Him, in a position where we are sitting out of the region of condemnation, made free from the law of sin and death.

Notice now the connexion of the three first verses of this chapter, with the argument of the three preceding chapters. The first verse looks back to the 5th chapter, and asserts that we are justified because Christ is dead and risen; and that there is no condemnation if we are in Christ Jesus. The second looks back to the 6th chapter, and answers the question, "Is this free justification a principle of sin?" No, for how have we got into Christ? By death and resurrection. Then you have the life of Christ, and that is

the nearer to God the more miserable, if there is anything at all as a question between the soul and Him. There is, then, no condemnation to them that are in Christ. Is there any condemnation for Christ? Why! He is the Blessed One of God, the very substance and principle of being and accomplishment of what God delights in. How then can there be any condemnation for the one who is in Him? He makes our standing. In Him is our peace. All the old sins are gone, and there is perfect peace and security in God's presence, for we are there "as he is."

Verse 2. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In the 7th chapter, we saw the power of the flesh, which was constantly subjugating the man, whose will was set right. There was a law in his members. But the Spirit has a law—a constant uniform principle of action—just as much as the flesh had. There is power too—living power—

the very principle of holiness. The law of the Spirit of life has made us free. The third verse looks back to the 7th chapter, and shows that what the law could not do, God "has done;" viz., condemned that sin in the flesh which so troubles and besets us; and that through Christ's coming in the likeness of it, and as a sacrifice for it, so taking us from under its dominion. The righteousness of the law is now fulfilled in us; the principle of it is planted in us, "for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law." Thus we get the practical result, besides "no condemnation" and standing in Christ. The law could never give that.

I desire to call your attention again to the first verse, as there is extreme force and power in it. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation." It does not merely say that they are not condemned, but it goes a great deal further—"there is *no* condemnation." And the soul needs this full assurance. For conscience is more lively the nearer we are to God. And

in Christ. It is not taking a man and saying to him; here is the law, and keep it. Man would put this first, and get out of condemnation by it. Now we are quickened by the life-giving second Adam, and have part, as we have seen, in His resurrection, in order to getting out of condemnation; Christ having first wrought the atonement, we enter into life discharged from sin. But man would get his conscience free by the movings and actings of this life, that it might be as to his consciousness—*himself*; but this cannot be. There must be submission to condemnation, and the sense of helplessness, so that Christ may be our hope; in other words, there must be submission to God's righteousness. Until the conscience is clear, we cannot be dealing with God as a God of power. God will not let us have the power until we submit to the condemnation, and get it settled by Christ. But having submitted to God's righteousness, there is living power in Christ, which sets

the man free from the law of sin and death. In Rom. vii, there are the desires of the new life, but working in relation to the law, and therefore no power; but here it is life bowing to Christ.

Verse 3. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." The law was not in fault; it only failed through the weakness of the flesh. You cannot make anything perfect out of bad materials. A man may be a very skilful workman, but if you set him to work upon bad materials, all his skill will be of no avail. For instance, a man might carve on wood, and display the most exquisite taste and workmanship, and produce that which every one would admire; but if he were to attempt to do the same in clay instead of wood, it would only crumble to pieces beneath his hand, and all his skill would go for nothing. So the law attempting to work on the flesh only crumbles it to pieces. The material breaks down under it. The law never effected the giving of righteousness.

not only for sins, but for sin. It is a real, thorough redemption. If God sets about delivering, He does it perfectly. He would not deliver you from your *sins* and leave you under your *sin*, to worry your conscience about it. For the grand point here is not merely pardon, but deliverance, so as to stand in liberty before God. Therefore, what the true heart wants is power over the sin with which it is in conflict every day, and a conscience really freed in God's sight, that if past sins are put away they be not working in power in him as a law in his members, by which he is captive to sin. Yet he knows and feels that its root is still there. But root and branch have been condemned by God's sending His own Son. It was He who thought of this. *His own Son*. There we learn the extent of His grace and His firm purpose to accomplish that work of deliverance for us.

Verse 4. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the

It promises life to those who keep it, but it never gives life. Christ alone gives life.

What man could not do, that God does; and that is the secret of the whole chapter. "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." The question is, How can sin in the flesh be condemned?—not our sins merely, but this terrible thing, sin in the flesh. Well, God is going to deal with it. God condemns it. I see He ought to condemn it, and that frightens me. Well, how has He done it? "By sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin." Thus He condemned sin in the flesh, and put it away in Christ's sacrifice. He executed it in Christ's dying for us. The whole condemnation has run out on Christ. This terrible thing, which I do not know what to do with, God has done away with—outside of us altogether—in Christ. Christ died,

Spirit." Here He takes up the walk. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. It is not a law which is given outside us, and has to act by a flesh whose lusts refuse its requirements, and whose will rebels against its authority. It is a new life in power which discerns, indeed, and brings to light, the lusts of the flesh, but which makes me walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The flesh is not changed, therefore I am not to walk after it. The flesh is there, but that is no excuse for walking after it, for the Spirit of Christ is in us. And, moreover, "God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear." The flesh is still present, and must be judged and kept down. We all, as believers, have the flesh in us, though we are not in the flesh; but that does not necessarily make the conscience bad,—it does not hinder my communion if it is not allowed to act in any way. I go and talk to God about it. I am in communion with Him about it. I go and say, "Father,

help, or I shall fail." If I allow it to act in any way, conscience gets bad, and I lose communion, and I have to go and confess my sin before communion can be restored. Thus, the mere fact of indwelling sin is—if we walk with God—an occasion of communion; (I do not say the cause of it;) whereas, in so far as I allow it to act, it is a barrier, though grace comes in and restores.

Verse 5. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." "After the Spirit" gives the condition and position of the man looked at as a spiritual man. Every nature is suited to certain objects. The vile nature has its objects; and they who have the Spirit will delight in the things which are according to the Spirit's nature. They who are after the Spirit have a mind which has objects on which it rests, and towards which it tends in its desires.

"For to be carnally minded is death." The carnal mind, fruitless in its nature,

men; gardening, and knowledge, and all that the heart can desire; and "what can be done after the king?" But the things of the flesh cannot fill the heart: "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." For let him exhaust all that the world can afford, the energy that exhausts it is never satisfied; the greater the energy to find out all the world can afford, the more is it found out that it cannot satisfy. But when we get *Christ*, as in the Canticles, we want, on the contrary, the capacity to seize it all. What peace and joy is found in communion with Him! But if self comes in the rest is broken.

Verse 7. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Here we get a deeper thing still. Here we find that the flesh has a *will* that will not be subject to God. It would not be *will* if it were. The flesh has not only desires that are contrary to God, but a will that is not subject to His law. The law declares not only right things, but also the authority of the lawgiver; and when the authority of God comes

lies under the death of the old Adam—death comes in to seal the condition. "But to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Here we get the inward thing in the power of the Holy Ghost—life and peace.

There is a two-fold peace; peace in the *conscience*, and peace in the *heart*. The former the blood of Jesus has obtained and gives; the latter, of which this verse speaks, is a far higher thing; it is peace in the heart and affections. There is peace in the heart when the affections in quiet are at rest in the steady delight in and pursuit of a perfectly satisfying object, for the pursuit of which the conscience will never reproach us. If we are delighting in the Lord, there will be peace. If we are ever disquieted, it is with ourselves we are occupied; but if the Spirit is at work, He takes us away from self to God. And herein lies the contrast between Ecclesiastes and Canticles. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is taken up with himself: it is "*I*, Solomon, the king;" singing men and singing wo-

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in it brings out the rebellion of the flesh; for the flesh immediately says, 'I will, and I will not.' So if you break one commandment you are guilty of all; because unwillingness to submit is as much shown in the breaking of one as in the breaking of all. If I bid my child do three things, and he does only two of them, which he likes, and in the third takes his own way, insubjection of will is as much brought out by his disobeying in one point as if he had disobeyed in all. "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Its lusts are contrary to His nature—it goes against His will and authority. This will, by its existence, is hostile to God,—for our place with Him is to obey. To have a will of my own is not to obey.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Our standing before God is not in the flesh—not in the first Adam and in his nature and will. We are looked at of God as alive in the Spirit. The flesh is there and lusts, but he is in the Spirit; the living

power of God having come and wrought the new man and working in it. Hence by His power there is liberty—holy liberty. All that the Spirit delights in and desires characterizes the man before God; for a man is what the object, thought, and feeling of his mind is. You are not in the flesh—He does not say the flesh is not in you. There is another life, even that of the risen Jesus, which is in you, and is that in which you live before God, though the flesh may seek to guide you; if it does lead we are not walking in the power of the Spirit.

“If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” It is not merely God working for us, but God in us;—not merely producing a new nature, but dwelling in it and working in it. For besides the new nature we want power.

If we have the new nature only, we have good desires, but we do not accomplish them, as is the case in the 7th chapter; but if the Spirit of God dwell in us, not merely have we new thoughts and desires, but there

resurrection power. Meanwhile, this is realized in the power of the Spirit and new life. I hold the body for dead; for, if its will works as alive, its movements and fruits are nothing but sin; and I hold the Spirit as my alone life, for its fruits are righteousness. And how entirely this testimony of the resurrection of the saint being by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in him, separates him from the whole condition of the world. The world will not be raised because the Spirit of Christ is in them. They have it not. We however shall be raised by His Spirit who dwells in us.

Here is the link. Saints are raised, because livingly united to Christ. “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.” This shows in what a place we are set. Thus we have three characters of the Spirit: He is called the Spirit of God, as contrasted with the flesh; the Spirit of Christ, as characteristic of our walk in the world; and the Spirit of life, as connected with our resurrection.

is living power to accomplish them. It is most precious to see how he brings in God as the real practical deliverance of the man who was before in the flesh. For it does not say, “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,” *if born of the Spirit*—though that is true; but, “if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you;” showing that it is God Himself working in power—as the Spirit of God. Such is His form and character as working in man in power, in contrast with flesh and man.

As to practical character He is called the Spirit of Christ in man, for there the life of the Spirit was perfectly displayed.

Verses, 10, 11. Finally, for the full and complete accomplishment of deliverance from the body of sin and death, we are assured that if the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ dwell in us, He that quickened Jesus shall quicken our mortal bodies by reason of His Spirit that dwells in us. The body is not left until it, too, is brought to participate in the full result of

Thus we get, up to the end of this 11th verse, the answer to the 24th verse of the 7th chapter, O wretched man that I am! For here, there is full deliverance, not for the Spirit only, but even for the body. The Holy Ghost, in the working of His power in the saint, does not leave the body until it is fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. The desires are there according to the new nature—liberty and power,—all in and through the working of the Spirit by real life communicated, and, finally, glory. It is the forming of the new man—power; while the flesh is there resisting the working of the Spirit; and finally, a body fully conformed to the life which we have by the Spirit. This communication of life, so that it may be our nature, and the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself, causes the effect of that presence to be spoken of in two ways; for Scripture speaks of Him as our life, and as separate from it and acting in it. Hence He is both nature and power. The new

nature given to us, but the Holy Ghost dwells in us. And, as the fruit of His operation, we read, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." A groan comes forth. I may not understand my groan, but the Spirit in me does. I may not have the intelligence to know what is the just answer to it; but God finds the working of the Holy Ghost sensible of what is around me according to God. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." It is my heart, but also the Holy Ghost who has produced it as a real feeling in my heart. It is me, for it is done in me; and yet it is not me, looking to its power. We thus get the working of the Holy Ghost in us, and the comfort of knowing that it is *us*, and the Holy Ghost too. For, from the 14th verse, we have the second form of this truth, that is, the Holy Ghost acting personally in us, as Himself there in power and sympathy. It is not merely that He is

there was an interval between these two things, to make us sensible of the distinction between them. We read, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," that is, the new nature. But then the new nature wants power; it has neither strength nor power. The very characteristics of the new nature are dependence and obedience. But there must be *power*; and that is the Holy Ghost,—ours in virtue of redemption and uniting us to Christ; and then *the leading of the Spirit*. Then it is said, we are "led of the Spirit." Now the Spirit does not lead the flesh, but the new man. It teaches me to reckon the flesh to be dead; and if I reckon it dead, it is not *me*. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, then ye are temples of the Holy Ghost, who is *in you*, which we have *of God*. A temple is that in which God dwells; and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. What a solemn reason for holiness of conversation! And again it is said, in

a source of life in us, but He acts in and on this life—He leads and guides us as Christians. He Himself acts in us, though here as in connexion with this life.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, &c. When He wants to show the source of power in our spiritual life, He points to the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit is life," and so He is. Without the Spirit we cannot believe; "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" yet it is very important to remember that after having believed the Holy Ghost Himself is given to dwell in us. "*Because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a different thing from the quickening power of the Spirit. Old Testament saints had the quickening power of the Spirit, but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost could not be until Jesus was glorified. (John vii.) Instances are given in the Acts, where

John xiv, He shall be in you, as the other Comforter. He was not in them before. Jesus went away; but there is this new Comforter, not merely with us as Christ was, but in us; and He abides, He does not go away as Christ did. There is no power in us to apprehend the truth, or to walk in the power of it. But the Holy Ghost not only presents the things of Christ, but gives us the capacity of apprehending them; and moreover it is by Him we are enabled to enjoy them, and "to walk in the power of them."

In 1 Cor. ii, 12—15, we find these three things stated regarding the Spirit: 1st, Divine instruction received by the Spirit. Ver. 12. "We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. 2nd, Communicated to others by the Spirit. Ver. 13. "Which things we speak in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." And 3rd, Spiritual capacity to discern, through living power in the

souls of those taught. Ver. 14, 15. "He that is spiritual, judgeth [discerneth] all things."

The solemn truth is this, that the Holy Ghost has been really given as indwelling power. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh;" for, besides life, there is this indwelling power of the Holy Ghost. The Comforter could not be given in this way, until Christ was gone, and redemption fully accomplished; for by the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the seal was put on the value of the work which Christ came to finish. The seal was put, not on what *we* had done, but on what *Christ did*. The Lord's own anointing, when baptized, was a seal to His *personal* perfection. Him hath God the Father sealed; but could God put the seal *on me* in whom sin is found? No. "*In him* after that ye believed ye were sealed." Even if I *am* born of the Holy Ghost, righteousness is not accomplished in me according to God. Therefore He

Holy Ghost. "They perceived the boldness of Peter and John." I am not here speaking of miracles, the mighty signs and wonders which were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost; but of the boldness with which the apostles spake after they received the Spirit, as we see all through the Acts. It was not the boldness of the flesh, but the fruit of the presence of the Holy Ghost working in them spiritual energy and power, so as that the conscience should be in perfect liberty before God, and the fear of man disappear through the acting of a power which made God present to the soul in love. We have a beautiful type in Aaron. After he was washed, he was anointed *without blood*, but his sons were not anointed until sprinkled with blood. So Jesus was anointed down here with the Holy Ghost, and with power, as the seal of His personal perfection, *before* the blood had been shed; but we are *anointed* and sealed after we are perfected through the blood of Christ.

could not seal the whole result. The Holy Ghost was also given to testify of Christ's glory as the risen man. It is not merely that Jesus personally was accepted, when He went up on high—He was present for us, and as the Head of the body; and He received from the Father the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost's coming is declared to be dependent on Christ's perfecting His work, and taking His place on high as man—the Head of the body; and He bears witness also to the personal glory of Christ. The effect of this was manifest in the difference in the apostles before and after Pentecost, and before the giving of the Spirit. Peter was born again; yet we find ignorance, stupidity, and fear. What do we find after? We find the same Peter, who had denied Christ worse than the Jews, (for he was in fellowship with Him,) charging home this very sin on the Jews. Was he afraid? No; his conscience was purged, for Christ had died meantime; and besides we find he was filled with the

(2 Cor. i.) Christ sends the Holy Ghost, and He is in us as the Spirit of adoption; the effect is to put us into direct communion with the glory and place of Christ in the presence of the Father. This gives the character of our walk. We are to mind the things of the Spirit. Do they who are after the Spirit mind the law? No; they keep it, because they do not mind it, nor are under it. They mind the things of the Spirit. And what are they? Anything in the world? No! nothing. "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." He gives us the knowledge of *past* redemption, *present* peace and liberty, and *future* glory. He occupies the soul with Christ; thus bringing joy, and thankfulness, and power, into the soul. The Spirit turns the eye back, and teaches *the glory* of the cross, after we have known its saving power, and this we can then peacefully contemplate, for we are on God's side of the cross. Whatever is morally glorious we see it in the cross. There we see

love, obedience, holiness, righteousness, and law; there, too, we see whatever was morally bad; condemnation, sin, and death. God and sin met together in the person of Christ on the cross. When I have found peace, I can say, "now is the Son of man glorified;" not now I am saved, though that is true; but, "now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." And surely there is no joy like the joy of knowing that, in that act of deepest suffering for our salvation, both God and Christ were most deeply glorified. If Christ suffered all that agony for my sin in obedience to the Father's will, surely there never was a moment when God could look on Him with deeper delight: and I have now all the effect of it. The heart gets impressed and penetrated with the sense of His love, if I now look at what I am in Christ, such as that Christ is satisfied in me and the Father too. I am the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul. The light of God's love rests on Christ.

thought of what was before her, then all was joy, and there was certainty as to the future. The cross is the commencement of this journey, as separating us from the world; and if we know the Spirit's power in our souls we must keep in this narrow path (in heart I mean) all the journey through. Beloved, you have to go through the world, but do not make the wilderness the object of your hearts. Israel did this. You may desire earthly good, and you may get it; but it will bring leanness into your souls. Rather let us be, like Paul, doing one thing—so pressing on to the glory, as that we can forget the world and all that is in it, as things which are behind us—on which we have turned our backs.

I add a few words on the rest of the chapter.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The Spirit giving us the assurance that we are sons, we have no longer in any wise the spirit of bondage to fear. Fear has torment. Our relationship

Himself, and we are *in Him*. "In that day," when ye obtain the Comforter "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." We have the blessing of union with Him now, and there is but one thing more—to be *with Him* for ever. The Comforter is the perpetual remembrancer of that word, "so shall we be ever with the Lord."

The Church is to be brought to Christ, as Eliezer brought Rebecca to Isaac. All along the road he was telling her of the one to whom she was going. Just so the Holy Ghost is leading us up to Christ—the cross being the starting point of the journey, and the whole character of the road all along the way answering to it; and meanwhile He is telling us of all the glory of Christ and of the Father's house. There may be trial in the way, but what is that to the heart whose affections are set on Christ. Poor Rebecca! if she thought of her father's house when she was in the wilderness with an uncertain future; but if she

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with God is of quite another character. He has loved me, blotted out my sins, made me His child, and I am now in that relationship with Him. I do not know Him otherwise than as a loving Father, and I a saved son.

But then I am an heir, an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. Such is my joy and hope by the Spirit. But in this world of sorrow and evil Christ was a sufferer; if led by His Spirit I must be so too, like Him and with Him; but then it is the path to glory. But then this very apprehension of the glory by the Spirit makes us sensible according to God of the sorrow and suffering of the whole creation, which is waiting for the manifestation of us the sons of God—and not only do we see the creation groaning around us; but, as to our bodies, we are of it, and we groan ourselves being burdened; not because the heart is uncertain of God's love, but because, having known our share in the glory, we are therefore sensible of the contrast of the state in which we are as in

the body, and thereby connected with the first creation. But then the Spirit enters into all this sorrow, not in the selfishness which dreads it for itself, but in the sympathy which is according to God, as it was shown in Christ Himself. We may not know the remedy, but the groan of the heart is the movement of the Spirit sensible of the sorrow and misery that is around. Besides, if we do not know what to ask for as we ought, we know that God makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. This leads to another very important point—what God is; not as working in us by the Spirit, but what He is for us. Hence, sanctification is omitted. He foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. Nothing shall separate us from His love.

Thus, after the first three verses we have, first, the Spirit as life. Then, secondly, the Holy Ghost acting personally as present with us. In this we have the double character. He gives us the knowledge of sonship and joy

134 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

O let me ever share Thy grace;
Still taste Thy love and view Thy face;
Wher'er I am, wher'er I move,
Be Thou the object of my love.

Blest Jesus! what delicious fare,
How sweet thy entertainments are!
Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love.

To Thee I'll be for ever joined,
Joy of my heart, joy of my mind,
And in Thy Father's house above,
Unhindered taste Thy perfect love.

THE POWER OF ETERNAL LIFE.

Note on 2 Cor. iv, v.

We have, *first*, the object fully revealed by the power of God shining in upon the soul, but giving it as an object in its own perfection—"The light of the knowledge of the glory of

of inheritance, and He takes part in our sorrow and infirmities as in this world. And thirdly, we have God *for* us, so that none can lay ought to the charge of God's elect, nor anything separate them from His love. Blessed thought it is. We have life in the Spirit, the Holy Ghost in us, and God ever for us.

HYMN.

O Jesus, when I think on Thee,
My heart for joy doth leap in me;
Thy blest remembrance yields delight;
But far more sweet will be Thy sight.

Of thee, who didst salvation bring,
I shall for ever think and sing:
Thy love, O Jesus, ne'er can cloy,
Fountain of bliss, and source of joy.

For me Thy precious blood was spilt,
To seal the pardon of my guilt;
And justice poured upon Thy head
Its heavy vengeance in my stead.

THE POWER OF ETERNAL LIFE. 135

God in the face [person] of Jesus Christ." Here was the divine object, life in glory. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (iv, 6.)

But, *secondly*, it was really possessed as life within: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," which of course did not answer to the object.

Thirdly, this was the occasion of the display of divine power, and the exercise of dependence. "That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (iv, 7.) Hence cast down, and divine power sustaining. "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." (iv, 8, 9.) The manifestation of the life, in proportion of the sentence of death in ourselves, God securing by the path that nature be kept in check—the new man developed and exercised. "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. For 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." (iv, 10, 11.)

Fourthly, then comes the possession of the glory to which the power is competent to work us, and of which we are assured. This power is in "knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you," (iv, 14, and on to chap. v;) only he sees there is power enough in this life, seen in Christ, to swallow up what is mortal, so that death disappears.

Not yet having possession of the objective glory, we have the earnest of the Spirit, and the certainty already that God has wrought us for the very glory we have seen in Christ. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." To this we have a most wonderful and

therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all were dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (v, 11, 14, 15.) Yet we are still in the body, still in conflict; but we have this immense advantage from the revelation of this glory in judgment, not that we think of being manifested, though we shall be; but that *that* being laid hold of by faith we are manifested to God. This is a glorious position, and full of preciousness to our souls, if in truth we seek to be with God.

This is all founded on the work stated in v, 20, 21: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be

glorious result as regards the time of seeing Christ in the glory.

All (saints and sinners) will be manifested before His tribunal. Thus, while seeking to be agreeable to Him ourselves, we have the terror of the Lord before us. But what is the effect? We are righteousness perfected for Him, purified by God according to the purity of God. Hence the manifestation of the light which judges raises no question then at all. Indeed we shall be glorified to appear before the judgment seat, for Christ will come and receive us to Himself.

But there are two aspects of God, perfect holiness and purity, and love. The purity in judgment having to do with His own purification of us, whom He will then have conformed to the image of His Son who sits on the judgment seat. There is, as to this conformity, no question; but this other part of God's nature, *love*, free to act in virtue of this conformity, constrains when the judgment is thought of, and he seeks to persuade men. "Knowing

sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Oh! dearest Saviour take my heart:
Where can such sweetness be,
As I have tasted in Thy love,
As I have found in Thee?

Let every fervour of my soul,
Be Thy sweet sacrifice,
For ever be at thy control,
And but to serve Thee rise.

'Tis heaven on earth to know Thy love,
To feel Thy quickening grace;
And all the heaven I hope above
Is but to see Thy face.

Then keep me in Thy love, O Lord,
And teach me of Thy ways,
Till Thou shalt come to take me home,
And see Thee face to face.

THE DIVINE CALMNESS OF CHRIST, EVEN ON THE CROSS.

Note on Luke xxiii, 27—45.

It is lovely to see how the Lord does not merely show a resignation under trial, produced by an effort which makes Him bow,—and yet be absorbed by it, as we often are,—but a perfect obedience and acceptance of His Father's will, such that He rises altogether above it, so as to be quite free, to be in the fulness of, and to express just what grace would do; or, if needed, truth also, in that which was presented to Him.

Thus, when led to the cross, to the women He says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children; for the days come," &c. Then, when speaking on the cross for Israel He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was the one and only ground which could

be good for Israel. The Holy Ghost answered to it in Peter's sermon; and Paul refers to the principle. Then to the thief on the cross He says, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." There was the full present effect of His work and salvation.

Now how perfectly calm—as if He had only to teach in grace from heaven—is all this; and in the perfect appropriateness in each case which divine clearness could give. And how wide the scope of instruction! The judgment of Jerusalem,—the ground on which the Jews might be forgiven in virtue of the cross,—and the full present blessing in virtue of the cross, short of resurrection, not yet accomplished. The whole scope of truth was here.

Thus, *if we quietly do that which is given*, and trust God in the peaceful answer to what is brought before us, what wide-spread power of truth comes in.

CHASTENING.

If I am proud in my spirit, and lose the place of humility before God, and some lust breaks out; God may use this particular failure, and even continuance in it, to get at and chasten me for this root of pride, or of self-will, which seemed to have no connexion with it. So it was with Peter; only in his case there was not continuance in the sin. Peter had confidence in himself, and this led to his fall. The Lord, in His grace, had provided for it beforehand; so He looks upon Peter, and breaks his heart. After this, He does not say one word about the particular failure; but He does deal with Peter in the closest way to bring out, and to root out, this confidence in himself. "Simon, son of Jonas," He says, "*lovest thou Me more than these?*" A second and a third time He says, "*lovest thou Me?*" So that at last Peter had to take refuge in the Lord's omniscience. He who

knew all things could see the love which was in Peter's heart, though it might be no one else could.

MAN'S PARADISE AND GOD'S HOUSE.

The 84th Psalm opens out a new and special source of delight, but one which unfolds itself in many other passages. When God put man in paradise it was not God's dwelling, but man's. God visited man there, though man was already unfit for His presence; but at least it was man's dwelling, though prepared of God for him. But now God calls *us* to dwell in His house—His tabernacle. This is altogether a new thing, and of sovereign grace,—our dwelling with Him and in His house. (Compare John xiv.) We have this by His dwelling in us, and so our dwelling in Him; for thus we know the joy of what belongs to the place where God has

made His home, and thus become the home of that soul where He dwells. The passages above; Eph. ii, at the end; Rev. xxi; and 1 John iii and iv, all open this out.

MY HOME IS NOT HERE.

MY home 'tis not here, in a region of death,
Which sin has defiled with its poisonous breath;
Where Christ was rejected, where man is oppressed,
In a world full of groaning, I seek not my rest.

You may show me its palaces, stately and fair.
But the brows of their inmates are furrow'd with care;

Its wisdom is folly, and madness its mirth:
For the shadows of death all envelope the earth.

I may gaze on the mountain, and forest, and flood,

They speak of their Maker, my Father and God;
His sun it enlivens the day with its light.

His moon and His stars give a voice in the night.

His hand paints each flower with its beautiful dye,

His providence watches the sparrows that fly;

the Church, as the object of God's thought and counsel before the foundation of the world. There is such a union between Christ and His members that His standing is their standing; His acceptance is their acceptance; and His life and glory are theirs. So, also, there should be a correspondence in the walk with the position in which we are placed. My walk, indeed, is here, but the springs of it are all above. It is just as I apprehend my acceptance in Jesus, and my consequent place in the world, as He was in it, that I shall practically realize this.

The apprehension of this conflict depends upon the realization of the Church's position in Christ. It is not merely the mortifying of the flesh, though it is impossible to meet Satan if I do not keep under my body: for if I am yielding to the flesh, Satan has me down, and, so far, under his power. Nor is it the contending with the temptations of the world, though these, of course, we have to overcome. So far as a Christian is a worldly man, he

I hear *Him*, I see *Him*, wherever I roam,
For this earth is His work, though it is not my home.

My home is in heaven, for Jesus is there,
He's gone His own home for His friends to prepare;

In the land which no evil has ever defiled,
Where each tear shall be wiped from the eye of His child.

My home is in heaven! yes, there we shall meet;
What joy it will be our companions to greet,
With whom thro' this desert we journeyed along;
When the sigh shall be changed for the harp and the song.

ON TAKING THE ARMOUR.

Eph. vi, 10—18.

If I do not know practically in my soul my acceptance, and my position as a member of Christ's body, I cannot take in the instruction of this portion of the word of God. It presents, in its connexion, emphatically, the full result of Christ's work in relation to

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is a miserable man; and the more so the better. This conflict takes a higher character than either the mortification of the flesh, or the victory, in spirit, over the world; but it will never go on, if those be wanting. It is in a region where Satan and his hosts put forth their might. It is not conflict *in our souls* about God as to our standing in His sight or as to His thoughts about us; or what the final result of His grace may be. It is of an entirely different character. It is "against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." (See *margin*.)

Now it is not by underrating these enemies that we are to meet them. It is not by making light of them that we are to overcome them. Satan may soon put down our vaunting. Yet there is no reason to fear him. David did not fear Goliath; but it was because he went against him in the strength of the Lord, and only in His name. There is a phalanx, then, of spiritual enemies—not want of spiritual

affections, which, indeed, may be, and will surely unfit us for the conflict—but an army of real spiritual enemies, which every Christian, and the Church of God, has to meet in the heavenly places, if our true and blessed position, as *risen in Christ*, is to be enjoyed.

Now, says the apostle, in effect, if there is no room for boasting, there is no room for fear. For we are not avenging our own wrongs; we are fighting for God, and seeking, in His might to destroy the works of the devil. Therefore he says, “be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” And, if we are found practically walking above with Christ, we shall find our need of the exhortation, “Put on the whole armour of God.”

To illustrate what is meant by “heavenly places,” take the case of Israel. First, there is redemption out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb; not merely from guilt, but from destruction by the sprinkling of the doorposts. Then there is the power which made the path of death to others (the

Red Sea) the path of life to the believer. And after all this, there is the wilderness. We are in the wilderness—Oh that we realized it more and more! Well, Israel had there to meet Amalek: (see Exodus xvii :) and their whole strength was residing in Moses’ uplifted hands. So it is by the power of God alone that we overcome. Everything depends on the power of God. It is out of ourselves; yet it is ours to lay hold on it. But the conflict of Israel with Amalek presents rather the conflict of the believer with the enemy, as seeking to hinder God’s pilgrims in their onward progress through the world as a wilderness. It is the hindering power of the world, used by Satan to stop the march of a Christian through the world to God’s rest in heaven. Hence his power must be met and overcome too, or we cease to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.” But the world *must* be overcome; or the pilgrim character

must be dropped. But afterwards, even when Jordan was crossed, there was conflict; that is after death and resurrection in Christ are realized this conflict begins. After Israel had got beyond Jordan and were in Canaan, the Canaanites had to be overcome.

Now, here is the point. How am I to live a heavenly life? How am I to present a heavenly character. Why, by *living* in heaven. It is not by rule, but by living in heaven. Christ said, “I am from above;” so, as to every spring of my action, it ought to be drawn from heaven, from Christ. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 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.” If the wars of the Lord are to be maintained, and if the character of a Christian is to be maintained, it is by our living in heaven, by having our hearts in heaven. We belong to

heaven. O beloved! it is not words that can communicate the knowledge of this to you. I might talk for ever of heaven to you, and you would never comprehend it unless you were *there*. But if you are *there* you know what I mean. Now if you are in heaven, it will cost you no trouble, no anxiety, how to live down here. The power of that life which has brought you there, and the array of everything which faith finds there will mould your character down here. If, however, you are not in heaven, it will cost you much anxiety how to shape your conduct; and how to act so as to have the good opinion of others; and also how to keep on good terms with conscience and yourself. This is the thing, walking in the light as God is in the light.

Now, just as we realize our position in Christ shall we be able to meet the wiles of the enemy. It was just as Josua got beyond Jordan that he had to conquer Jericho; that Israel fled from the men of Ai; and that

he had to meet the wiles of the Gibeonites. The point is to keep our position in the heavenlies. Thus you see how the conflict is taken wholly out of the world. Worldly things have to do with it, yet it is carried on in heavenly places. How little do we realize these powers of evil! Not mere flesh and blood, but spiritual enemies, who strive to hinder our enjoyment in the heavenlies.

We begin at the wrong end when we begin with ourselves. Oh! it is sad for a Christian to be ever questioning and doubting, not certain of his salvation. It is not merely that he is unhappy—of course he is that; but he is not realizing what Christ is. It is a positive slur on the work of Christ. You may say, it is only a question of privilege; but no question of privilege stands alone. Oh, no! It is no light thing to be ignorant of Christ: I do not mean ignorant of His salvation; but ignorant of the fulness of His person, and the divine, eternal, perfectness of His work.

Christ." (1 Pet. i, 13.) We are called to serve Christ. "And if any man serve me," says He, "him will my Father honour." Every one is called to serve Christ. It is poor work if we are not asking every day, "what wouldst thou have me to do?" By and by, He will need no service, and we shall need no girdle; then we shall rest. But here we are in a world where Christ needs service. We are called to fight for Christ, and the apostle says, "no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier."

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness." It is the breastplate of *righteousness* which gives us a perfect standing before God, so that Satan can never raise a question as to this vital point. "We are made the righteousness of God in him." What is the good of Satan's coming to me, and telling me what I have been? I know it all; but I also know what I now am in Christ. By a careless walk

Now as to the Armour.

"Take unto you the whole armour of God." Make a practical use of the truth that is in the scriptures, and especially of that which is presented in this epistle, and let it have its due power in your souls. Thus you will be able to stand against the enemy.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." Do not hold truth loosely. There is much taking up of truth in a loose way. Why do men use a girdle? To enable them to gather up their energies, — to strengthen them for combat, or the race. *Truth* is what I want to strengthen me for my conflict with Satan's falsehood. And it is just so much of the truth as I am practically enjoying with God, that I can use as a girdle. O beloved, what are you doing here? Are you drones? Are you taking your ease? Are your garments loose? It must not be. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus

the sense of this may be lost: I may lose, *practically*, the breastplate of righteousness; I may forget that I was purged from my old sins. But there is a righteousness, a perfect divine righteousness, in which the believer stands accepted in the Beloved. I may trip, but nothing can undo the work of God in Christ.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." A walk in peace; fitted by these shoes to walk in the rough places in the world in peace, fitted to go on in peace in the path set before me. If I am abiding in the peace of the gospel, I shall be in rest and quiet, whatever the circumstances of the world may be. Yes, in that peace I can go anywhere. Jesus is our peace; that divine blessed peace, which does not hang upon circumstances.

"Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." All the fiery darts. There is not a single shaft that can pierce or

wound me, if I am holding up this shield of faith. Satan wounds by weakening our faith; and nothing does this sooner than neglect of God's word, or the allowance of any practical unrighteousness. It is not a question of what darts; it may be about acceptance, or temptation to a careless walk. But I by faith get up into the heavens, and see my position there: what then can harm me? There I know that all things work together for good.

There is no ground for faith but the word of God.

"And take the helmet of salvation." I must be sure of my salvation if I go up into the battle. There is no maintaining this conflict with Satan, if the soul is not established in grace. What a blessed thing it is to know that I am already saved! Then I can hold up my head, *having on* the helmet of salvation. As David says, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." A soldier might almost as well be without his shield as without his helmet: in either case he is unable to look his enemy in

we are grieving the Spirit. We cannot enjoy fellowship with God, if we are grieving the Spirit. There cannot be too much enjoyment of the corporate presence of the Spirit; yet we must have the apprehension and enjoyment of His indwelling power. Alas! alas! the inward life has fallen far short of the position in which we are placed. There is a great want of individual practical walking with God, not only so as to get enjoyment—that is low ground—but so as to glorify God, so as to give the consciousness to every one who comes in contact with us that our walk is with God, and that our strength is in God. The sword is not wielded in the power of the Spirit. We take the blessing, but the power to keep it, and to glorify God by it, is wanting.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," &c. It is blessed to find that after being fully equipped for the warfare, absolute dependence on Christ crowns the whole. There is our place of strength.

the face;—almost as well be without faith, as without the knowledge of salvation, in the practical question of meeting Satan in conflict.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is an offensive weapon. All are not defensive; though we are secured against injury by the breastplate, &c., before we are called upon to take the sword of the Spirit. We are to use the sword to make head against the enemy. We are to use it so as to deliver others held in his bonds. And this is not simply by a great knowledge of the word. I cannot use the sword of the Spirit with an arm of flesh. I must use it in the power of the Spirit. Oh! there is need to honour the Holy Ghost—near to me as Christ is, and dear to me as Christ is! For we read not only that Christ died for us, but that He sent that other Comforter. Oh! that word, "quench not the Spirit!" "Grieve not the Spirit!" Beloved, we should be anxious about this. We cannot use the sword of the Spirit, if

And it is for all saints; because it is alone as I see the Church's union with Christ as risen, and the Holy Ghost revealing the common position of all believers in Christ as His body, that I can understand the place and grounds, and reason, and power of this conflict. God has provided the armour; it is for the believer to take it to himself and to put it on.

THE CHRISTIAN MARINER.

"And so he bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

Yes, billow after billow—see they come
Faster and rougher, as his little boat
Nears evermore the haven. Oftentimes
It seems to sink and fall adown the wave,
As if borne backward by the struggling tide;
Yet mounting billow after billow, wave
On wave o'er riding, tempest-tossed, and shattered,
Still, still it nears the haven evermore.
"Poor mariner! art not thou sadly weary?"
Dear brother, rest is sweeter after toil.

"Grows not thine eye confused and dim with sight.

Of nothing but the wintry waters?" True;
But then my pole-star, constant and serene,
Above the changing waters, changes not.
"But what if clouds as often veil the sky?"
Oh, then an unseen hand hath ever ta'en
The rudder from my feeble hands the while;
And I cling to it. "Answer me once more,
Mariner; what thinkest thou when the waters
beat

Thy frail boat backward from the longed-for
harbour?"

Oh, brother, though innumerable waves
Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home,
I know that they are numbered; not one less
Should bear me homeward, if I had my will;
For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time
The *last* rough wave shall bear me on its bosom,
Into the haven of eternal peace.
No billows after! They *are* numbered, brother.
"Oh, gentle mariner, steer on, steer on;
My tears still flow for thee; but they are tears
In which faith strives with grief, and overcomes."

** Some of the hymns may have been in print before.—ED.

standing;—that is settled in chapters ix. and x. Now there are two things that hinder in running this race—a weight and an entanglement. How simply the apostle treats either! Just throw it aside.

When a soul has got into weakness it has simply got away from Christ. That is what the Hebrews were doing. They were looking to something visible, to ordinances and the like, and had forgotten an invisible Christ. They had known Him once as the portion of their souls: for we read in chap. x., ver. 34, "Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Now that is the point he is pressing here. It is to this principle of faith that the cloud of witnesses were bearing testimony. The reason why any difficulty gets power is because we have got away from Christ. If I have got Christ for my portion, what is difficulty? Nothing. Paul speaks in Phil. iii. of having suffered the loss of all things, and of counting them as dross for the excellency of the

Heb. xii.

There is one thing remarkable in this epistle, that whilst it is full of warnings, still in none is encouragement and full confidence in God so remarkably set forth. And nothing brings a soul into entire confidence in God but encouragement in grace. So here, the apostle says, You are not come to the Law, but to Zion—to grace. He does not pass by the difficulties—he takes them all up; but he shows that the true way of overcoming difficulties is to treat them as none at all.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight," &c. As if he said, As for all that hinders you, why, throw it off. How strange to a soul that is toiling under the burden! But remember it is with *difficulties* he is dealing—not with

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knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. If Christ is my joy, it is no hard thing to throw away dross.

The Hebrews had all those other witnesses to living by the power of unseen things—Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, &c. But in Christ we have the beginner and perfecter of faith, one who has run the whole course, so that there is not a single step in the life of faith that has not been trod in the person of Jesus. He had everything against Him. Yet for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, &c. The joy was not His motive. His own love was His motive. Reward is never presented as motive for our conduct, but as an encouragement when we are in the course. Christ, God's love, is motive. Now herein is the power of running this race, of throwing off every hindrance—it is in having Christ as both our motive and our power.

But this supposes that we are clearly on the ground of grace—on the ground of this, that "God is for us." It is not at all a question of conscience. The

ground here is the ground of a Christian's course. There is no proper *christian* course till we are brought to God in grace. There may be exercises of conscience, but these are in order to acceptance. If I am connecting acceptance with glorifying God, I do not know what grace is—I do not know what a righteousness, not my own, and yet mine, is. It is so hard to give up everything that *we* are, and to believe that by one man's obedience many are made righteous. And if it is by the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is as perfect as God can make it. That is why, so long as a soul is hankering after something in itself, it can never be happy. It is not submitting to the righteousness of God. But when I do submit, and Christ is made of God to me righteousness, then I have to walk as a Christian. That is what we have in this chapter. Now we get the race. Jesus did not run in order to be accepted. Why? He was the blessed Son of God every step of the way.

is grace making us partakers of it,—positive grace communicating the essence of the divine holiness. His people He is to make like Himself—to enjoy Himself. For He has given us the nature that can do so, and His own love. Well, in bringing us to this He says, I must break down this, and that, and that.

But, he goes on to add, Do not be discouraged by it. Why? God is for you through every step of the way. "Therefore, lift up the hands that hang down," &c. If you were at Sinai you might fear and quake. I could not tell you to lift up, if you were at Sinai. I should say, Do not go too near. For no man can stand before God's glory when it is requiring that He should answer to it. But ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, &c., but ye are come to Mount Zion. What is the character of this Zion? Israel had entirely failed—the ark of God was among the Philistines. The ark was where the mercy-seat was, and on the mercy-seat the blood was sprinkled.

Well, in running this race the very difficulties with which faith is exercised become chastening. Faithfulness may bring us into trials; but the Lord uses the very trials of faith as a moral discipline for the killing of the flesh. The chastening is discipline—correction; not necessarily on account of sin; but even the troubles which come from our faithfulness serve to detect and correct the flesh. And everything *in us* hinders from the full enjoyment of what God is *for us*. See the grace of God in marking out and noticing every step of the walk—the constant care of love and wisdom to discipline us, to the breaking down of everything that hinders from the full enjoyment of Himself. We have admonition and warning here. Why? That we may be partakers of His holiness—that His own nature may be practically realized. What could be higher? His own holiness! Every step is toward this—and yet, alas, we often do not like the means! It is not requiring holiness; (of course it is required;) but here it

So Israel could not offer a sacrifice—for the very place where the blood was presented was in the enemy's hand. Now what is Zion? It is sovereign, royal grace. It is God coming in, and bringing back the ark and setting it on Zion. It is victorious grace in power accomplishing all the promises when Israel had failed.

In this passage (22–24) we get every part of the millennial glory—the whole fruit of God's counsels concerning Christ.

First, we have Mount Zion—full, royal grace. Then the heavenly city—Jerusalem—the heavenly capital of the kingdom. Then the innumerable company of angels—the general assembly—the whole host of heaven. Then He singles out what is most blessed among this company—the Church of the First-born—those with us united to Christ. Next, God the judge of all; and he gives Him this character because in connexion with His displayed glory. The spirits of just men made perfect—Old Testament saints,

who had run their course, but were not yet glorified—who had not yet got their bodies. Now He comes away down to earth again, when He speaks of the new covenant in blood crying from the earth. “To Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant,” because it is through that that Israel is brought in then. The blood of sprinkling, &c. Earth had received Christ’s blood as it had Abel’s. But now he has got on the ground of grace, and so it speaks better things than that of Abel.

Thus we have here all the counsels of God for the glorifying of Christ:—the mount of royal grace, the heavenly city, the heavenly host, the Church of God, God Himself, the Jews resting in the new covenant, Jesus its mediator, and His peace-speaking blood. There is where I have been brought, therefore I am to have courage. “*You are come.*” It is not hope. If I am thrown back on hope I am thrown on effort. But I am not thrown on hope, for I have got it;—got it, it is true, in

the midst of trial, but look at all those witnesses, or rather at Jesus, “who for the joy,” &c. We are in connexion with all this—not merely conversant with it by faith, but *livingly associated* with it. Herein is strength. For we are come to what cannot be shaken. Grace has brought us to everything connected with the display of God’s counsels for the glorifying of Jesus.

The Lord sees it needful for us to learn what we are; but the moment we get Jesus, we get the strength of Jesus and an object. Lay aside every weight. How can I? the soul may say. It is very easy for you to speak so who are not burdened so. But why have these things this power? *Because your heart is on them and not on Jesus.* When the heart is on Jesus they lose their power. Do not despise the chastening; there is a needs-be for it—something to be done in you; but do not faint, for it is love that is doing it.

The thing that rests on the heart is the wondrous grace that is incessantly occupied with us—with all our folly

and failing. The great thing is to be *with Jesus*; not merely to run to Him when we have got into a fault. We may then not find Him all at once. If I have been long away, I shall get exercise before restoration. But be with Him. Therein is the power of throwing off these difficulties. Be with Jesus *for His own sake*, and then you have Him for everything.

GRACE AND TRUTH IN JESUS CHRIST.

John viii, 1—11.

It is a different thing to have a rule of what is right, and to have the heart searched out. God can give a rule, and yet dwell in the thick darkness. But this is a different thing from having the soul unveiled in His presence. Now, it is not the sending of a law or a prophet merely that we have in Jesus, but far more; *the Lord Himself was there.* And this is what puts every one to the test, and what brings every-

thing out into the light. Yet there is vast comfort in it; for having come to Jesus we have come to the last and ultimate tribunal, and found it to be all grace. So the soul that has got peace knows that nothing remains behind, nothing remains undetected; but all has been brought out and disposed of according to the holiness of God.

Take the case of this poor sinner, who finds herself in the presence of God. It is not the day of judgment, but it is the presence of the Judge Himself. She finds herself in the presence of Him who will judge in that day by the same principles; the presence of Him who is not now judging, indeed, but a light to bring out every one’s character. So everything is brought out, as it was with the poor Samaritan woman. And that is what we want if we are honest to ourselves. If we are honest we shall not desire to have sin slurred over. If we like sin, and wish to get to heaven, too, then we shall want to get sin slurred over;

but if we have any sense of God's claim over us, we shall not want to have sin slurred over. And this is the test of the renewed heart. Well, if thus honest about our sin, we want mercy. We want what will meet our need in grace, and what will meet God's holiness. If you do not wish your sin to be meddled with,—if you do not like God to probe your heart, you like sin. You want to get off,—of course you do! but that is not being honest in the sight of God. You want to get happiness and still to keep your sin. So it ever is with mere natural conscience. But when awakened by the Spirit of God there is no desire then to slur sin over.

In these scribes and Pharisees there is the most dreadful wickedness,—a readiness to show sin up and yet an unwillingness to have it detected in themselves. Now, nothing marks a soul to be wrong like wishing grace to be wrong. Whenever we think of grace, and blame grace, we have no sense of ourselves, and no sense of

way they mean, not in the way of slurring over sin. They think they are good in the main, and that God will be bad for the rest. Now God is perfectly good and perfectly righteous in Christ.

Mark another aspect of the righteousness of these Pharisees; it has no pity; and it is the spirit of every self-righteous man. As soon as one comes to a pitch of wickedness to which he had not reached, he will condemn this person, who is more evidently a sinner than himself. So with these Scribes and Pharisees. They do not care for the woman if only Christ be condemned. It is the heartlessness that could condemn an outwardly greater sinner than themselves, and the attempt to condemn Christ too, if He will pardon.

The question which this narrative answers so blessedly is this—What is Christ to the sinner, who stands before Him just as he is? What is Christ to one to whom God has told his sin, and who stands in conscience before Him, confessing it? This scrip-

God. It may seem strange to speak of not liking grace, but really that is the case; and the principle of this is in every natural heart. Therefore, you will hear persons talk of judgment, because they have a notion that they can stand in the day of judgment, and therefore they do not like grace. Take the case here and you will find extreme hatred of grace. The Lord did not come to judge, He came as the friend of publicans and sinners. These Jews liked righteousness; and as the Lord liked grace, they brought this woman before Him, in the hope of confounding Him. It was the attempt to put His grace in opposition to the righteousness of God. They saw that He was all grace, and thought that if He condemned her, He would not be a Saviour, the law could do that; if He let her go, He would despise and break the law. The thought of the natural heart ever is that if grace is fully come in, it is no matter what we be. People say, God is merciful—and indeed He is blessedly merciful—but not in the

ture, and all scripture, shows that Christ is to that person *all grace*. It is not a question of what I am that is settled, but of what Christ is. When I am in the truth of my sin, what is Christ to me? I repeat it, all scripture witnesses that Christ is to such *nothing but grace*. But the world is not in the truth about sin. The world wants to keep a character without a conscience. The whole history of the world is this, that men's characters and their consciences do not go together. Now God cannot go on in that way. These Jews cared about their character, and therefore had to get out of God's sight. That is what the world is at.

Does Jesus leave them here with their character? No! But first He allows, in the fullest way, the righteousness of the law of Moses. What He does is this. In effect He says, I cannot let you apply the law until I put you under it, for law has to do with those who are under it. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." If you have no

sin, so that the law cannot touch you, then you may use it. What men want is a little righteousness, and the rest of sin slurred over. But this will not do with Christ. He will put every particle of sin under law. Therefore do not take justice in your hand, if you have sin. God will not put the weapon into your hand to slay your fellow without its first laying bare what you are. He brings home to the conscience all that is in the heart of unrighteousness—in effect saying, if you will have righteousness, you will have it. If you are in the presence of God, are you not all condemned? And if you are not condemned in your own conscience, it is because you have never been in the light. If you cannot bring out all that is in your heart, you have never been in the light—you are living without God in the world. The publicans justified God, the Pharisees justified themselves. All will justify God in the day when He judges; and that is what a sinner does now. “Being convicted by their own conscience,

ness; but when that is done, then He can deal in His own way—then He can deal in grace. And thus He does deal with this poor sinner, condemned in her own conscience. He does not judge her, He did not come to judge. He came, indeed, as a light, to bring out the sin; but He came to reveal the love of God after all the sin and judgment is owned. Now this woman had to find out what Christ was to her. She knew she was a sinner but she had to learn what Christ was to her as a sinner. What would the Judge say to her, a convicted and confessed sinner? He was the Judge, but He did not come to judge. So, in effect, He says, There you are, deserving to be condemned, but I do not condemn you. No man can condemn you, and I will not. They thought they could condemn her undetected themselves, but they soon found they could not. Man could not condemn her, and Jesus would not.

Now suppose this woman had said, Ah! but if you knew everything I

they went out one by one.” And if our souls are not true, if we shrink from the light, we shall do as they did.

Why “one by one?” Because conscience always convicts individually. “Beginning at the eldest.” The one who had the oldest reputation goes out first, and lets the others care for themselves. “One by one,” they get away from the light as fast as they can, and leave Jesus alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When they were all gone, the Lord turns to the poor woman. She was, indeed, a wretched sinner, but in a better condition than her accusers. She is honest about her sin. And being in the truth about her sin, she had nothing to go out for. As to man, when dealing with God about our sin, we do not care what he thinks. But it is a very solemn thing to be in the presence of God when all my sin is fully told out before Him.

Now mark how Christ acts. When it comes to be a question of righteousness, or Himself, He will give righteous-

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have done. If you knew what a sinner I have been. This is not the first sin, &c., &c. Ah! He well knew all her sin. With one word He brought into the consciences of her accusers all their sin. And this woman was in the light, and He knew it all. We, alas! forget many sins. God never forgets. And *in the knowledge of all she was*, Jesus says, I do not condemn you. Now it is not a prophet who says this, but the very one who is to judge; and think you that then He will reverse His judgment? Will He then say, Now I am to condemn you! Oh, no. He anticipates the judgment in her conscience, and then gives her the assurance of full forgiveness.

But how can Jesus act in such perfect grace? Because He went under the condemnation of all the sin. He put it all away. So with the thief on the cross. He acknowledges his condemnation before men, and Christ bore it before God. Herein is the unspeakable comfort, that if Christ speaks peace, He does it, not merely with divine title,

but in the perfect knowledge that it is the sin which He bore and put away. Why am I sent away fully acquitted? Only because He has had love enough to bear it all for me. We find in Christ, God not imputing to us our sins. If it is a question of our righteousness, law must condemn us, but the God of the law has forgiven me according to the holiness of the law. And more than that in the love which has forgiven us, we have come to know God. "We love him because he first loved us,"—and he that loveth knoweth God. Thus we get, as the blessed fruits of being alone with Christ confessing sin, peace for the conscience, and a happy heart.

AS THE TRUTH IS IN JESUS.

Eph. iv, 21.

The truth in Jesus is not a mere theory before our mind, but that we put off the old man, and put on the new. I cannot, however, do this in detail, except as I reckon that in Him *I have put off the old man, and put on the new.*

delivers the soul from the world's condemnation and from the world's bondage.

The passover unfolds the grounds of this. It is the presentation, in type, of the means by which a sinner is brought into association with God. Hence the first thing presented is the victim, whose blood preserves from judgment, set apart for death—according to the force of the scripture, "Without shedding of blood is no remission;" and "ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Most precious truth that it is *God* that marks, and estimates, and *condemns* the sin, which His infinite grace puts away!

The lamb was especially marked for the households of Israel. Every man was to take a lamb for his house. And if his own household was too small, his neighbour's was to be joined with it; for the relationship of a redeemed family must not be lost. It is the household of faith which is shielded from judgment, by the sprinkled blood;

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Exodus xii.

(Continued from page 32.)

The general idea of the passover, as a type of redemption, has already been given; but the details of its institution are of the deepest interest, as bearing upon the application of the wondrous death of Christ, as the ground of a sinner's deliverance from sin, and the basis of his peace and security before God.

The chapter begins with the statement, "This month shall be the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year unto you." The commencement of Israel's existence, as the people of God, dates from the time of their redemption from the judgment of the firstborn, and from their bondage in Egypt. God cannot acknowledge a people to be His, and yet leave them under the judgment of the world, nor under bondage to Satan, as its prince. The death of Christ alike

as it is also said, the whole household were to partake of the lamb. There may be in the family of God "little children, young men, and fathers," but one and the same ground of redemption is common to each; and eternal deliverance, through His blood, the blessed position of all. Redemption is the bond which unites together the whole family of God.

It was to be a "lamb without blemish." The purity of the victim is marked before the efficacy of the blood which delivers from death is brought into view. Jesus, also, is seen in all His purity, as the spotless lamb—"the Lamb of God"—before His blood-shedding on the cross, presents the full answer to every claim of the moral nature of God. It needs but to refer to the word, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a *lamb without blemish and without spot.*"

But the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel were to kill the

lamb: because redemption is the common need of all who are called to have to do with God. "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." He can surround Himself alone by a people whom He has redeemed; for He cannot be associated with sin, nor can sin, for a moment, abide the holiness of His presence. Hence, before there is any feeding upon the lamb, the blood is sprinkled upon the lintel and the door-posts. For the death of Christ must be known, as delivering from the judgment of sin, before Christ, who is the object of God's delight, can in any sense be delighted in, or become the object of satisfaction to the heart. For in the passover God is seen in the double character of judge and deliverer. His judgment falls, and falls of necessity, wherever the blood of atonement does not shield—for "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." This is seen in the death universally of the firstborn, taken as the representatives of the people, and also in the blood

the entrance of the judgment of God. And did he trust in vain? Did God enter as a judge notwithstanding this pledge? No! He had said, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*" The symbol of deliverance was presented, not to the eye of the Israelite—with him it was dark night—but to the eye of Him who was Judge, and who had given the pledge of the blood, and well knew how to estimate its value. The expression is, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." It is not said, when you see it, but when I see it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart deeply impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on God's seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said, But must I not have faith in

being the symbol of deliverance. The Israelites were not delivered, in this sense, because they were Israelites. For God is viewed as judging sin, and they were sinners as well as the Egyptians. They were delivered from the judgment of God only by virtue of their trust in the sprinkled blood. When God judges for sin there can only be one of these two results—either death, as in the case of the firstborn of the Egyptians, who met His judgment in their own persons; or perfect deliverance, as in the case of the Israelites, because the judgment of sin has been met in the death of Christ, as seen in the sprinkled blood.

"The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and *when I see the blood*, I will pass over you." The blood was given to the Israelite as the pledge of his security when death and judgment were all around him. He took refuge inside the house, when he had sprinkled the blood on the doorway, and trusted that it would be for him a bar against

its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin; your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of *your feelings*. Faith looks at God's thoughts. "When I see the blood," says God, "I will pass over you."

But the flesh of the lamb, roasted with fire, was to be eaten on the night of the passover. The victim, whose precious blood delivers from judgment, having been submitted to the trial of God's holiness, becomes the food of the sheltered soul. Eaten, indeed, with the bitter herbs of repentance, for sin is fresh before the mind, and the judgment due to it vividly displayed. Every part of the lamb was to be eaten, "his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof," because all that Christ is, as having offered Himself without spot to God, is given to us as our portion and our strength. Being shielded by His sprinkled blood from judgment, we feed upon Him by faith as sacrificed for us; and thus have fellowship with God in the per-

fectness of the sacrifice which Christ has presented to Him on our behalf.

The flesh was to be eaten on the same night that the blood was sprinkled, and not on the morning after; for Christ cannot be fed upon by the soul that does not see the power of this sprinkled blood as delivering from the judgment of sin. All thoughts of Christ, apart from His sacrifice, are vain, and are the mere offspring of nature, alike ignorant of its own condition in the sight of God, and of the holy judgment of God. Moreover, the flesh was to be eaten in the blood-sprinkled house, and not apart from it.

They were to eat it with girded loins and shoes on their feet, with a staff in their hand, and in haste. For the passover was eaten in Egypt, where they had been slaves, and where God's judgment was now being solemnly displayed. Redemption by the blood of Christ separates the soul from the world's final judgment, and sets free from its present course. It brings into association with the thoughts and counsels

art no more a servant, but a son." Or if the servant that was bought for money, and afterwards circumcised that he might eat the passover, (ver. 44,) be looked at, it is the same. For "ye are not your own: for ye are *bought with a price*." And again, "In whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands."

But the ordinance proceeds, (ver. 46, 47,) "In one house shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it." The flesh cannot be carried abroad to be the portion of those who are not in the blood-sprinkled house. Men may pretend, by means of outward ordinances, or in ways of their own, to give a participation in Christ, while they are strangers themselves, as well as those who are led by them, to the faith which brings a sinner in all his sins to find a refuge in the blood of Christ; but it can never be. Christ is no portion for those who despise the

of God's goodness; and while it makes the world no longer our home, it is because it presents to the heart a better home of God's own providing.

The passover made Israel pilgrims under the guidance of God, instead of leaving them slaves in Egypt, and exposed to its judgment; and it put Canaan before them as their hope, instead of leaving them in "the iron furnace," and to such present ease and plenty as might be gathered by them in the land of their oppressors.

"The ordinance of the passover" (from ver. 43—45) brings into view the relationship in which the believer is set toward God by virtue of the death of Christ. No stranger was to eat of the passover, nor an uncircumcised person, nor a hired servant. And how simply does scripture show these relations to exist, and these barriers to beset aside by association with the death of Christ! For it says, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of *the household of God*." And again, "thou

efficacy of His precious blood. The fruits of His death will never be participated in by those who have any other hope of meeting God or of being delivered from the judgment of sin but through trust in that death. This point is especially guarded here. Security was alone found in the blood-sprinkled house. There only could the lamb be eaten with bitter herbs. It was not allowed that the eating of the flesh should be so far dissociated from the sprinkling of the blood as to be partaken of on the morrow. And in the verse before us, "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof." [It is not a Christ mutilated by man, but solely offered in sacrifice to God, that is our portion.] And "*all* the congregation of Israel shall keep it." Redemption is the only link of connexion between the sinner—any sinner, a sinner in any circumstances—and God.

The feast of unleavened bread, to which the passover introduced, (ver. 14—20,) comes in to strengthen this

position. Christ, in His unleavened perfectness, is indeed the food of the believer; but not until he has fed upon Him as a sacrificed Christ; until he has thus eaten His flesh. It is not Christ in death only that we are called to know, with all the grace that brought Him there; but Christ in life also, in all His perfectness as a man subject to God; "the bread of God which came down from heaven to give life unto the world." But He is not thus fed upon, cannot be, as the power of a believer's separation to God, until He has been known in death. Holiness (of God) follows, not precedes, redemption. The passover introduces to the feast of unleavened bread, and not the feast of unleavened bread to the passover. Holiness, or separation to God, begins with the knowledge of the death of Christ for our sins. It is the fruit of His death that we are delivered from this present evil world. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

has fallen to them in Christ comes afterwards, (ver. 11,) as a subordinate thing. Hence we have the union of the Church with Christ as its Head, exalted above every name in this world and that which is to come. Hence, the vivifying and raising up with Christ, and setting in heavenly places in Him, where all difference of Jew and Gentile is for ever lost, and our creation again in Christ. The Holy Ghost, according to the mystery hidden from ages, but now revealed, becoming by His presence, the power of the Church's unity as the habitation of God, and the conferring of every gift necessary for the perfecting of the saints, for the gathering and edifying of the body by the Head on high, who had received the Spirit to this end, for the members thus united to Him. Thus viewed in its Head, and in the power of the Holy Ghost on the earth, the Church has a heavenly character, and as its privileges take this elevated character, so also its testimony, its difficulties, and its combats. (Compare chaps. i. 3; ii. 6; iii. 10; vi. 12.)

Eph. vi.

The Epistle to the Ephesians has a peculiar character. It considers man, not as having a life of sin, which he has to hold as dead in principle, and to resist in practice; but, in order to give God His own full part, and the blessing He gives its full character and perfection, it treats man as *dead* in trespasses and sins; and hence his whole moral existence is a new one, and depends on God, and is derived from His power; it has its origin and subsistence from His creative and life-giving energies. It is a new creation.

Hence, in the first chapter, before even speaking of the redemption which meets the necessities of man, the Spirit directs our eye to the eternal counsels of God's grace, towards those chosen in Christ, (ver. 3—6,) the unspeakable riches of the blessings to which they are destined. The inheritance which

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For in the measure in which our spiritual position is raised, so, of course, do the difficulties and exercises of heart assume a character which requires greater experience and greater power. Our spiritual advance introduces us necessarily into them. But God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. We could not expect a babe in Christ to be exercised as an apostle. Still the principles of all temptations are in general the same, and the experience of an apostle would render him capable of entering into the trials of an infant all the better. His more thorough knowledge of the wiles of Satan, enables him to expose those wiles in their true light to the more inexperienced Christian. Because they have ceased to be wiles for himself, he can expose their wiliness to him by whom they are as yet unsuspected, or imperfectly judged. By following the word of God the simplest soul avoids danger, though it may be inexperienced in the devices of the enemy; for in that path God is found, and all is

simple. One is wise concerning that which is good, and can be simple concerning evil. Still such as we are there are exercises; and the same human nature is in the oldest and in the youngest saint. The form of the trial may be different and suited to the progress made; but the principles are the same, and the means of defence too. One may, if humbler in spirit, use them better, but God's weapons do not vary in their nature. The apostle will explain their use to the young soldier; but he uses (if with greater expertness) those he explains.

But before I enter on the character of the armour, a few words as to the position of him who is called upon to use it. It will be remarked that the spiritual use of the armour is found at the close of an epistle in which all the highest spiritual privileges have been spoken of as the portion of a Christian. He is looked at, all through the epistle, as in the heavenly Canaan; blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; quickened with Him,

of Christ, that is, through redemption, passes into a new scene, where he is for ever beyond all that was his plague and sorrow before his deliverance. "Thou hast led forth the people thou hast redeemed, (says the song of Moses, Exodus xv,) thou hast led them by thy strength to thy holy habitation." Not only the blood on the door-posts had sheltered them from the just judgment of God, but the active power of God had now delivered them entirely and for ever from the condition in which they were lying. The only difference in the Ephesians is one we have noticed, that the previous troubles and sorrows are passed over. Man is looked at as *dead* in trespasses and sins, that all his privileges, and the whole work of God, may be looked at in their full extent in themselves. I pass over the desert, which represents what this world is become to the redeemed, and which is characterized by the exercise of faith and patience, not by spiritual combats in order to realize or to maintain privileges given.

raised up, and sitting in heavenly places, in Him. He has redemption and forgiveness. The desire of the apostle is that he may know the fullness and extent of his calling, of his inheritance, and the power that has brought him into it, in spirit and life, if not in body. On the earth he is looked at as builded together with all saints, as God's habitation by the Spirit. Hence, when the apostle treats of warfare, it is not carried on in order to enter into these privileges, but in order to maintain oneself in them, and to realize them by the power of God. When the apostle speaks of not combating with flesh and blood he refers to Joshua and Israel. Now the combats of Israel were not in Egypt, nor even in the desert, as such. They were oppressed in Egypt and slaves there, as the unconverted man is a slave of sin and Satan. God sees his afflictions, comes down to deliver him. He leaves his misery; weakness he cannot escape, and is cast on God as a Saviour, and through the death and resurrection

In order to enter fully into these, we must realize our own death and resurrection *with* Christ; not merely that He is dead and risen for us. We must pass the Jordan, and thus enter into the land, in spirit. The Red Sea prefigured redemption by the death and resurrection of Christ; Jordan, our being dead and risen with Him, in the power of the Spirit of God, so as to enter in spirit into that which is within the veil, according to the power of the redemption which has been wrought for us. And remark that on the entry into Canaan, as depicted in the Book of Joshua, the portion of Israel was not rest. Their combats for the enjoyment of the land began then. Jordan was doubtless the figure of death; but properly of death with Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, so as to be risen in spirit, in the liberty with which Christ sets us free; that we may realize and live in the heavenly things into which He is entered as our risen Head. As soon as Israel had crossed the Jordan,

before a blow was struck, they eat of the old corn of the land. They were, as to title, in full possession of the country. But to possess it actually they must combat with the enemy. The principle of the christian warfare is the same. "All things are ours." As regards our title, we are sitting in heavenly places in Christ, eating the corn of that land. But conflict then begins, to hold our ground against the enemy, and realize the sum of our privileges through every attack he makes upon us. For in holding good our ground against his attacks, there is continual progress in the realization of that which God has given to us, though in the conflict itself we have only to hold fast faithfully. If we sit in heavenly places, as to title, and our place with God, as to possession, we must make it good; for spiritual wickednesses are there.

Having made these general remarks on the position of those engaged in this warfare, I return to the Ephesians.

In this Epistle, the blessings, the

saints themselves, the witness of the Church, the combats of the saints, all is in heaven. The rest will be there, as in Canaan, (figuratively,) for Israel. The combat is there, as in Canaan, under Joshua. But now the combat is not with flesh and blood, but with the prince of the power of the air, the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. Carnal weapons and carnal wisdom are of no avail. One may be victorious over the instruments of Satan's power, in our reasonings, and be overcome by himself. There is no safeguard but the armour of God; and to maintain one's ground continually all the pieces of it are needed. What should we say of one who, armed in every other point, forgot his helmet or his sword? He has forgotten his enemy and his own capability of being wounded. Thank God we have the word and wisdom of God to tell us what is needed, that we may stand! Satan has no power to touch what is born of God. He who lives and

walks in the Spirit is not reached by his weapons, nor subverted by his wiles. But the flesh has no power against him; and if this is exposed, we are exposed to be subverted by him. Hence the Spirit of God shows us what is needed.

The first thing is that we remember, what I have just remarked, that the armour is that of God; that no human power, no wisdom, is of any avail. Satan's weapons or wiles go clean through them at once. The use of such weapons is the foolishness of confidence in self, which is, (witness Peter's case,) exactly what exposes us to him. Let us remember, too, the foundation we have laid: that the conflict with Satan here spoken of supposes peace with God. If I am really on my feet, combating with Satan, and armed by God, I have no question with God as to whether He is for me. My combats are not with Him, my fears have not Him for their object. The anxieties of the unreconciled soul have the dread of God, the uncertainty of His thoughts,

for their source. The combats of the reconciled soul are with the enemy.

Remark, further, that it is not in the time of combat, in the evil day, I am to put on my armour. I enter into it armed, at least if I enter into it aright, and in the way to be victorious. The armour we wear is our abiding state as regards this world, though with God all be peace.

In the next place remark that those parts of the armour which relate to the spiritual condition of the Christian's own soul and his walk—what relates to the subjugation of flesh and self—come first; then the maintenance of practical confidence in God; (and how true that order is;) and then the activity of the believer as regards others; all closed in by the expression of entire dependence. It is not the force and power of Satan which we have to resist, but his wiles. When really resisted, he has no force against us, for he is overcome by Christ; and the new nature he has nothing in or for. When the inclinations of the heart are unjudged, then he has the

power to deceive us. Hence, as to receiving any truth, the state of the soul is really what is in question. When this is not right, reasonings are vain. When the eye is single, the whole body will be full of light. So when the flesh is not judged, the enemy can overthrow and trouble us. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The first part, then, of our armour is to have the loins girt about with truth. The word first girds about my own loins before I can use it as a sword. The girding about the loins is that strengthening and giving of firmness to the whole man, which cannot be if all is left loose in his ways and mind, and which flows from the application of truth to his soul. And this application of truth to his soul, though an internal operation, has a double bearing. It is the application to the heart and conscience of all that is revealed in Christ. Now, this first judges all that is not of Christ, detects it and judges it; at the same time, what is in the heart is seen in its true

They are girded up, restrained, given moral tone and firmness, by the known value of that which is an obligation, because it is in Christ; a delight because it is good. For in man obligation, where it is in grace, gives strength. That is when the thing itself is delighted in, not imposed on, as a law. It is a governed heart, not an ungoverned will. Yet it is intelligent, and delights in what it sees in Christ. It governs itself. The girding about the loins with truth then, is the application of the truth to the affections, so that a man is braced up, having to do with what is right, in authority over his soul, while he delights in it too.

There are two passages to which I would draw the reader's attention, in connexion with the first part of the armour. Heb. iv, "The word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

light as compared with what I see in Christ revealed as truth to my heart. I have judged what springs from the flesh and is adapted to it; it has lost its false appearances and deceiving power, and, as Christ is really there, its power altogether. I do not let my heart go after it; it has lost its place there, because seen not by the flesh, but judged by the Spirit. Instead of having any attractions for the heart inspired by this, it has its true, hateful character. Christ, as truth, has put it into its true light, out of the affections, and into its own judged hatefulness. It is no longer myself as a moral affection at all. It is sin and flesh in my eyes. But besides this, there is what has wrought this judgment, the revelation of the truth itself of Christ in the heart. Hence what is good is loved, has power in the heart, authority there; the will and affections are bridled by what has authority over them—instead of being let loose—while they, at the same time, delight in what exercises this authority over them.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Here it is, evidently, the searching character of the word; and "thy word is truth." It is divine, living, and efficacious. Nothing that is creature escapes its penetrating judgment. The declaration of scripture does not here go beyond this. But if I have an earnest desire that all things should be "of God," in me, according to the new creature, (2 Cor. v,) and have learnt that as to what is of the mere creature, in so far as it has a will, all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are only evil, and that continually; if my heart is divinely right, I shall be most thankful for this detection of all that hinders my spiritual life, and comes between my soul and God, mars alike my communion and my walk, and brings the hindering inclination into the all-judging and delivering presence of God.

John xvii goes somewhat farther:

"Sanctify them" we read there, "through thy truth, thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." Here we have the word bringing in its positive formative action, as well as its detective; and Christ also set apart as the perfection of that which we are to be, that the revelation of what He is to the soul may conform us to Him. It is evident that such a communication of what Christ is, while attracting and delighting the new creature, would in everything judge the old; but it is more than merely the divine word as a sword, as the eye of God on us, discerning and detecting; there is an attractive and an assimilating power. It is a man whose nature I have, (for He is my life,) in whom I see all this moral perfection, love, holiness, truth, absolute purity, grace, patient kindness, devotedness beyond all measure, to us self-sacrifice, and an absolutely single eye in devotedness to God His Father's glory, and all the life-giving fullness of God, in all these things. All

have a right to live, and over which Satan has no right and no power; and in which the flesh has no claim and no part; and which is freely and new-given of God, so that none else has any claim over it. Hence the absolute and exclusive claim of God is brought in, and with delight to the soul; delight, because obedience to Him is now delight. We love Him and His claims over us. It is delight, because the things He calls us to walk in are enjoyed morally by our souls. There is an intelligent nature which is of Him, and from Him, having the delights and desires of His nature, and rejoiced to have the perfect expression of its own desires in God's claims over us. For we are "partakers of the divine nature, having *escaped* the corruption which is in the world through lust." Hence it is called the perfect law of liberty. "He who hath looked [looked down closely] into the perfect law, that of liberty, and continueth therein, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of work, that man shall be blessed in his doing

this is in man, and in one with whom I have to do; who loves me; with whom I am one. He has sanctified Himself for our sakes. By the communication of all this, and much more than this, in the truth, we are sanctified. First of all in believing, so as to have a share in it, and then by daily realization of it in detail, attaching the heart thus to Christ. "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, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Blessed portion! Used, it is true, in the passage which occupies us in the Ephesians, more in its guardian power than in its delight and advantages; in its moral bracing energy, than in its joys in communion; but profitable alike for both. The truth, then, as this divine revelation to the soul, by the word, detects all that gives a handle to Satan in us, and destroys its hold on the soul. It causes that we are no longer debtors to the flesh; for we have a new life with God, in which we

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[it]." There is our own delight in good thus, the authority of God in it; the rejection of evil, yet not in haughtiness, for God is there; and the authority of God over us, yet in personal delight in what is good, in a nature which loves it for its own sake. What hold has Satan there? The mind is braced up, the loins girt about with truth in the midst of the dissolution and uncertainty of the world; dissolution to which the flesh would yield itself at once. It is girding the loins.

In heaven this will not be needed. The flesh will not be there. All that attracts will be divine. We can let ourselves freely go to it. There is nothing but what God has authority over; nothing but what answers to His will, His nature, and His glory; while authority is perfect and delighted in, there is nothing to watch and guard against. We can let out all our affections there. The more we have the better; at least all we have are rightly in exercise, for God and the fullness of Christ entirely fill the scene. Here we

must have our loins girt about with truth. Blessed that we can, and have this privilege in a world of which we once were ; a world of dissolution. Blessed that we have God's truth to do it with !

But when the heart is thus kept, the conduct will follow. The breastplate of righteousness will not be wanting. We must remember that in the passage we are occupied with, the subject treated of is what is needed in conflict with Satan, not what is called for that we may stand before God. Christ is our righteousness before God, perfect and unchangeable ; and without that we could in no way make head against Satan ; but it cannot assume the character of a breastplate when we consider it as our righteousness before God. All is peace in this righteousness ; peace is made, there is no combat there. Christ has met and overcome the enemy, and is become my righteousness ; and this is the foundation of all. God is truly with me and before me. But in my conflict with

shows rather indifference to sin, or an effort to carry on appearances, when the heart is not right. But if the conscience be good, the walk upright, there is confidence in God, and self has not to be thought of. One can do God's work freely. Thus Paul—"Pray for us, for we trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." And again, "Herein do I exercise myself day and night, to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." The second part of the armour, then, is a righteous walk, a walk with God. Only remark that, as to confidence in service, it is not merely evil known, or easily to be known to others ; it is all allowed evil. Because Satan can use this against the conscience and make it timid ; and certainly the Holy Ghost will not make it hard or indifferent. A good conscience before God is acquired by one thing alone, by the blood-shedding and work of Christ. But the result of this is the presence of the Holy Ghost in us, and then a good conscience *against*

Satan, while I cannot do without this, I need something else—practical righteousness. My conscience must be without reproach, in order to combat with him. If my conscience be not purged with the blood of Christ, I have not yet peace with God ; I am still in Egypt ; though I may be striving to get out of it ; I do not yet know the power of redemption. I cannot say that God is for me, nor that I am for God in this world. I need to be delivered and reconciled. But if I am, a conscience practically bad will make me weak before the enemy. How can he, whose conscience reproaches him, whom the world could reproach if aware of it, how can he go boldly into the combat ? He is afraid the blow may reach him there ; he is obliged to think of that : he is not free to think, in simplicity of heart, of nothing but the service which is before him. The Spirit of God also is grieved, and lets him, if he go on thus carelessly, feel that he has failed, as Israel before Ai. For boldness when we have failed

Satan is only when the Spirit has not been grieved by anything done contrary to the light He has afforded me.

But many have not the courage to go on in God's warfare, because they hold to something which is inconsistent with the light they have received. Perhaps, alas ! they lose the light which they have not acted up to, and Satan is able to bring their mind under the darkness of his good reasons for staying where they are, without conquering more territory from him, though they are uneasy, perhaps bitterly hostile, when light reaches them from without, which threatens to awaken conscience again.

The existence of flesh in us, though judged as sin, does not give a bad conscience, nor interrupt communion ; but the moment it is allowed, even in mind, it does both.

If the Lord will, I will send you some thoughts on the remaining parts of the armour, at another opportunity.

COMPARISON OF PSALMS LXIII AND LXXXIV.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DELIGHTING
IN GOD WHEN "THE RAIN FILLS THE
POOLS," AND DELIGHTING IN HIM
WHERE "THERE IS NO WATER."

These two Psalms are brought together with the view of showing the difference there is in the character of the blessing, and enjoyment of God expressed in them. Both are most blessed, and, in one way, each is complete in itself. But there is a marked distinction between them. The former expresses perfect enjoyment in *God Himself*, and in *Him alone*; the latter, the enjoyment of Him in the midst of blessings with which He, in His mercy, surrounds us, and *in fellowship with them*. As saints we must realize God in both these ways; though, in His mercy, His *general* way of dealing with us is rather that of the 84th Psalm; that is, granting us the assistance, the help, and the comfort of outward blessings, and communion with fellow-

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christians. The 23rd Psalm is another example of this. It opens with what one may call the natural condition of a saint, the quiet, peaceful enjoyment of the green pastures, and still waters of the Good Shepherd. But that does not continue always; it is not the experience we get. Sorrow, and trial, and failure come in, and then we learn that He *restoreth the soul*. And by His strength made perfect in weakness, and the table spread in the presence of our enemies, we gain the knowledge of God, which says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And our hearts need this sort of discipline, that we may not merely, as in the first moments of our salvation, rejoice in the love that has redeemed us; but that we may know with what a God we have to do, and learn, *apart from all extraneous helps*, what our portion is in Himself.

In examining a little more closely the Psalms before us, we may notice the opening of the 63rd. It begins

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with the address: "Oh, God," not "Oh, Lord of hosts," as in the 84th Psalm. It is not His title in covenant with Israel that is before the soul, but the individual apprehension of what He is in Himself. "Oh God, thou art my God. My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, *where no water is*." Such is the land in which God is learned as *our* God—where there are no springs of refreshment by the way, no outward comforts, perhaps even no sources of spiritual help and strength, no "courts of the Lord," no "tabernacles." True, we may have seen and rejoiced in God's power and glory in these at other times; and so we ought, for they are divinely-appointed means of grace and help for us; but the psalmist, in verse 2, longs to see these "as I have seen them in the sanctuary." To see them in the dry and thirsty land is by no means so easy. They are not so evident there, and the heart sometimes finds it hard to say, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life"—better than all that ministers to life, than all

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the blessings and enjoyments in which life consists, and which are (whether spiritual or temporal) the offspring of the very same love and kindness of God. But we must realize the loving-kindness itself to be *better* than all the blessings it gives, and find it our joy when they are all withdrawn. If we have once really tasted it, we never enjoy it so much as when we have nothing else to enjoy. The Lord Jesus was, of course, the perfect illustration of this trusting in God, and finding joy in Him, too, in a dry and thirsty land. We know in what sanctuary He had seen God's power and glory; and His life proves He saw them *equally* in this land, which was to Him, how far more dry and thirsty, than to us! He could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of;" and pray that *His* joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. "My soul shall be satisfied as with *marrow and fatness*,"—this, too, in the same circumstances of barrenness and death. What a contrast between the actual position of a faithful saint and the joy

which he derives from the presence of God. The 6th verse is but another expression of the loneliness and absence of all external sources of help and support. The light of day, even of the presence of others, all gone. Still the experience of what *God* has been gives confidence, and joy, and peace in the shadow of His wings; and the dry and thirsty land—the place of death to the natural man—becomes a place of blessing, and of proving the Lord's right hand upholding us.

The 84th Psalm is quite another thing, as to circumstances; though, of course, all the joy and blessing of it spring from the same source. It is the full confidence in God, and desire after Him as a God that has been known and loved; expressed in Jewish language, as the tabernacles, courts, and Zion show, and having an application to Israel, of course; though I take it now in its spiritual bearing. The tabernacle is to us the heavenly places, where we enjoy God's presence, and which are the home of our heart; just as

tle. It brings me where I want to be; and a smoother, pleasanter path, in *another* direction, will not even have an attraction for me—it does not lead *home*. It gives great decision and firmness to the christian character, to keep this simply before the mind. And after all, the valley of Baca is turned into a well to us; and we often find a deep source of spiritual blessing in the things that cause the trials. They are not pleasant, of course, but they are the means of breaking down these miserable fleshly hearts, and of making them fit to receive the blessing our God designs to bestow. Then “the rain also filleth the pools.” Streams of *heavenly* blessing come pouring in upon us, making our path a continuance of refreshment and help. Thus a rough road, and *His strength* and help along it, is our portion. Then we are led from “strength to strength.” The strength is ever tried by the needs of the way, but ever *renewed* by the grace of our God, “till we appear before Him in Zion.” The only thing for

the nest is the home of the swallow, and the place where she finds rest and joy.

It is, perhaps, as especially assembled together, and privileged for a while to shut out all, save our heavenly home, that this Psalm regards us in *this* sense. “They that dwell in thy house shall be still praising thee.” Praise is here the one legitimate object of our souls, and employment of our lips. In secret with God, conflict and petition, and the like, have all their place. In His house, our one occupation is to be still praising Him, who is our strength here, and the object of all our desires. These desires will never be satisfied until we are for ever in His house, until we get to our God in glory; and therefore till then, the *way* thither must be the thing that fills our hearts. “Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways.” These ways may be rough, for they lead through the valley of Baca, the place of tears; but what matters this, if they lead *home*? If my heart is set on the end of my journey, the roughness of the way matters but lit-

a Christian in this world is the path towards glory, which leads *out of the world*. In that path he can never fall; the causes of tears become means to him of grace, and of the powerful refreshings of the Spirit. Living waters from above divinely reanimate his courage, and all this because the *anointed* is there: God looks on *His* face, and so all is secure to us. Nothing shall separate us from His love. “Neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall ever separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord,” prone as our poor hearts are to let any creature do it now.

Well, beloved friends, we must all learn God in these ways; learn Him in the midst of His blessings, and in a measure *by them*, perhaps, first; but sometime or other we must have our hearts *tested*, by being cast over on *Himself*, and *nothing* else — being brought into a position where nothing *helps God to make us happy*, if I may use such an expression, and where we must find in Him alone our *all*,—our

joy, our strength, our peace, our hope; find Him such too "in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Still, blessed be His name, He has given grace, and will give glory, and withhold no *good thing* from us. Well may we say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

GROWTH THROUGH THE TRUTH.

Eph. iv, 15.

A person may be honestly delighting in what he hears, and yet not connecting it with Christ, so he does not grow a bit: he knows nothing; for then what he hears is as an object before his mind; whereas, when mixed with faith, it connects his soul with Christ, and he gets it livingly in Him. Whatever is revealed of Christ, judges something of the old man antagonistic to it, and then there is growth. If I hear and delight in the truth, and yet do not detect and judge the old man, there is no growth. So, as to detail, verse 22.

The converse of this is also true. We know that our works are unholy; and when our souls are truly awakened we look at ourselves as being the spring of these unholy works; and thus we learn that in heart, and spirit, and nature we are far from God. Then I am grieved, not only for *my sins*, but because it is *I* who committed them. And this is a present thing. If I am looking at my works, I may put them off till the day of judgment; but for myself, personally, I cannot be satisfied without the sense of the present and immediate acceptance of God. I must know that I am at this moment standing in His favour.

It is not said that God accepted Job till the end of his trials. And what had his friends done for him during the sifting through which he was passing? Well might he say, "Miserable comforters are ye all." They had no true apprehension of God's character, and so were unable to understand His dealings with a soul. They had no proper sense of sin, and therefore knew

HOW THE LORD ACCEPTED JOB.

Job xlii.

We see in Job's history the workings of God in the soul in bringing it to Himself, and the exercises the heart passes through when learning itself in the presence of Satan and in the presence of God Himself.

"The Lord accepted Job." It does not say that the Lord accepted his acts, or his works, or anything connected with him; but that He accepted himself. And that is just what we want. The moment our souls are really awakened to a sense of what God is and of what we are, we then want to know that we are accepted of God. Till that is known, we may try to bring our acts and our works to clothe ourselves with them; but when we have really come into God's presence we clothe ourselves with *nothing*, and then we get the sense of the divine favour.

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not that if God would deal in blessing with man, it must be entirely on the ground of grace. They did not know how to meet his case; and though they had said many true things, yet they had not said one single right thing in its application to Job, for they did not understand him.

Job had never really been brought into the presence of God. There had been a certain work in his soul, which produced fruits. But in the xxixth chapter we evidently see that he had been walking in the sense of blessings from God, and in a measure in the sense of the fruits of grace produced in his heart. He was resting in what he was to others, and not in the favour of God Himself. He owned God, it is true, and bowed under His hand; but notwithstanding, he had never been truly in His presence, and consequently his heart had never been searched out. It was not a question of fruits, but a question of *what he was*. So God goes on dealing with Job, till in the very thing in which Job was most famous,

he is brought to nothing. Job, the most patient man, curses the day of his birth. Why is this? Because we must be broken down—we must be brought to the sense of what we are, as well as of what we have done; and then God can deal with us out of His own heart. Thus God's dealings with us are intended to bring out really what we are *before our own eyes in His presence*, in the presence of that eye which looks on while we see what sinners we are. Thus God went on dealing with Job till Job was brought to say, "I am vile, I abhor myself."

In the xxiiiird chapter we see Job's confidence in God, and his desire for God, although the stroke was bitter. He said, "Oh! that I knew where I might find him!" He did not attempt to keep away from God. He had that kind of sense of what God was that he wanted to get to Him, "even to his seat." It is true he speaks of "ordering his cause before him;" but in the ixth chapter, where he is speaking of man being justified before

God, he says, "If he contend with me, I cannot answer him one of a thousand;" and again, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." Here we find that Job was thinking of being in God's sight. There was not the wretched, hypocritical attempt to keep away from God; there was the consciousness of having to do with God; and in heart he desired to get to Him, though his conscience kept him away. Thus there was much more truth in Job than in the see-saw truths of his friends; for conscience was in full exercise in him, and not at all in them.

There was also more grace in Job's heart now than when he was floating along in prosperous circumstances. It was, in truth, wretched, miserable work; but still he was finding out what was in him. And what grace it is in God that He should take up a heart, and thus wring it out, that the soul might be brought, *such as it is*, into immediate dependence on Himself.

The sinfulness of Job was brought out, so that he could not say it was

not there. The sinfulness of his heart was brought upon his conscience; it had come fully out; and a terrible thing that is. We know what it is to the unconverted man; it makes him reckless in iniquity. Let a man think that he has lost his character, and he will then run loose in wickedness. When a man comes to this it thoroughly breaks him down. It is one thing for a man to lose his character with himself, but it is another and a very different thing to lose it with his neighbour. But when Job has lost his character—when it is entirely gone, then God comes in.

After all the sifting, Job is brought into God's presence, and then "the Lord accepted Job." In God's presence his mouth is stopped; then he said, "I am vile;" "I will lay my hand on my mouth." But Job must be brought further, because God is to bring him to Himself; he must be brought to confess not only that there is *no good* in him, but that there is a great deal of evil. And this he does, as in verse 3, "I have uttered that I

understood not." For now it is not a question of condemnation, but of sin. When the sinner has judged himself, the fear of condemnation has passed away. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Thus Job takes God's side against himself. He laid himself before God, and abhorred himself; and then he repents in dust and ashes; for it is only in the presence of God that we learn repentance. In its fullest sense true repentance is, when our sin is so thoroughly brought out that we are taking God's side of the question in judging ourselves, and in justifying Him. Then it is that He justifies us, and makes us accepted in the Beloved. Then it was that "the Lord accepted Job." And blessed is the man whom the Lord accepteth. May we indeed feel the need of Him, and not rest in the hypocritical quiet of keeping out of His presence.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

1 John i.

The great purpose of God, in all His dealings in grace, is to bring us—and to bring us individually too—into fellowship with Himself. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father.”—Thus we have the full knowledge of God, as far as it can be known out of Him, and that in full communion with Himself: not in the way of creation—that is, not merely as creatures, but in “union;” and we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost that there may be power; “we dwell in Him and He in us.” There cannot be anything more intimate.

It is not knowledge or science that has anything to do with this; for if it be but the human mind working on the things of God, it is but that “high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” Babies in Christ have possession of these things, they have not to seek for them, they are in

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possession of them, though of course they have to ripen in acquaintance with them. Knowledge itself, mere knowledge, puffs up; but being brought low, the Spirit of God can act upon the soul and give knowledge in communion and in fellowship with God.

Although the Epistle of John is very abstract, yet it is abstract about things that the very *feeblest* saint knows in Christ. God is brought down to our nature, for God can come down to us in our weakness, in Christ. The difference between the writings of Paul and John is this, that Paul unfolds to us the counsels of God in creation—the counsels of God towards the Jews; (there are various developments of Christ's person, as in Hebrews and Colossians;) but John may be called more abstract, because he speaks of the nature of God Himself. The purpose and object of God is to bring us into full fellowship with Himself.

There are *three* things, I would here notice. *First*, the work of God by which we can stand in His presence

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perfectly free from any question of sin, so that we can enjoy all that God is. *Second*, justification by faith and acceptance in the Beloved—the perfect cleansing of the conscience, knowing we are accepted so as to be able to be before Him in perfect peace. *Third*, the new birth, commonly called regeneration. There must be a new nature capable of affections towards God. An orphan who never knew a father, has the affections of a child, is capable of loving a father, and is often very unhappy because without the object towards whom those affections would naturally flow. So the capacity to love God is that which we get by being partakers of the divine nature. The Holy Ghost is that which gives us competency to enjoy these things. We have an unction from the Holy One given to us, to enable us to enjoy what God has given to us. There must be our standing in the presence of God without our conscience being at work at all; a nature capable of enjoying God—a new nature; and

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power to walk in that new nature, which is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us.

The thing brought especially before us is what that is we are to enjoy: the nature of the things brought down to the understanding of a poor sinner; and that tries the conscience, just as it moves the affections. God is light, and if I am brought into the blessedness of what God is, it must put the conscience to the test; and I ask, am I standing in it? If I am capable of it, then I enjoy all the blessedness of standing in the light, and am in a position to test all that pretends to possess this character. “God is light.” He is bringing this home to the hearts of the saints. And this must be by presenting Christ Himself. There was, at the time this Epistle was written, a great deal made of development, and He wants to bring them back to the truth. Science, so called, had got in. The character of apostolic teaching was to bring them back, “earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” “But *continue* thou in the

things which thou hast learned." "That which was from the beginning." My soul ought to know Christ better every day. The moment I get "God manifest in the flesh," I cannot know anything out of that, but that which is false. The question of knowledge is to give place to Christ. If I get there nothing can shake me. I am in Christ. "These things write we unto you that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Do you believe on the Son? *then rest there.*

1st verse.—First, it was from the beginning; second, it was a real, substantial person they had known familiarly, *not a doctrine*; that is the blessed secret of all. If they have Christ, then they have all that the Father has, all that is revealed of Him: and they cannot go from that without being wrong. They have *got eternal life*, the perfect revelation of God—the power of life in Christ. This is what is presented to us as the full enjoyment and the safeguard of the saint. It is ours, though that which was with

the Father, yet was so near to us; (not union;) but so near to us that nothing could be so near as Christ Himself. Instead of wanting anything between myself and Christ, it is revealed to me, so that nothing could be so near to me as Christ Himself. This is the eternal life that was with the Father. And it is as we study the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall have affections established towards Him, which nothing can break. The poor woman who was a sinner had that confidence in Him that she had come to Him, and *loved Him*; but the secret of our joy is to know the *love of Christ* to us; and then we have confidence in Him, understanding that God has come so near as to reveal Himself, and inspire confidence. The more we go out and study Christ—the more we penetrate into His ways—the more we learn the depth of all these riches in Him, the more is His divine fulness revealed to us. If it is His taking little children up in His arms, I see in it what God's character is. "He that has seen me, has seen the Father."

Having *truth* thus revealed in a person, I get it for the humblest, lowest, poorest sinner, because it is a personal *act* of our Lord Jesus Christ. "That which was from the beginning." And now mark this "word of life," while it shows what God was in Christ, shows it communicated to us; and everything, true or false, is tested by this. So he asks, "Is there love?" No. Then it is not of God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." That is now what he teaches. He brings me up to the object—what God was. "That which we have seen with our eyes;" "God is light;" "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" the communication of life in the Christian; the height of the source of the life communicated to us. But in the gospel of John you will find, "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,"—"which thing is true in him and in you." "An old commandment which was from the beginning;" now a new commandment, become true in Him and in you.

He called it a new commandment, though an old one—a simple truth that Christ Himself is become our life. "That the life of Christ might be manifest in our mortal bodies." If a poor sinner is converted, he has the life communicated from Jesus up there, and yet it comes down to the lowest need in us; and yet how high it rises!

This gospel begins before creation; Genesis begins with creation, and gives the scene in which all is to be acted; but John gives Him who created, and having stated the pre-existence of God,—"Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," "thou art the same,"—we get Christ before the creation, and then in creation. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and became the source of life; and we receive our life from Him who existed, before all worlds, from everlasting. We receive our new nature from Him, and are united to Him who was before the world, and who created the world. This has a double effect,

(if right with God,) lifting our hearts up in ten thousand, thousand thanks, if it does manifest the life of Jesus. The least thing manifests the life of Jesus. Whatever does not manifest Him is of the world; whatever is not the manifestation of the life of Christ in our souls, that is sin; and do not think that a hardship. No; rejoice in it. I would have your hearts enlarged; as the apostle says, "be ye also enlarged." Oh to have Christ so before the eye as to be able to judge everything in His light! Do not think it is great learning; no: there may be the lust of the mind as well as the lust of the flesh; but if in communion with God, it discerns all things.

I call your minds back to see the way we received the life; it was in the humblest and simplest way. He who came into the world to save sinners, He has made us vessels of His fulness. Thus we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and display it. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

The effect is, we have the Father and the Son, and we have nothing more to seek. I have the Father and the Son. Can I get truth out of the Father and the Son? I may have more to learn. If a man is on the ocean, there may be a great deal he has to discover of it, but he has not to *get* there; he says, I *am* there. So I *am* in the truth. I have got a great deal to learn; but I am in the Father and the Son, and I am in the truth. I do not want to seek it if I am in it. I have the very eternal God in whom I dwell—I have come to the Father. When there is a consciousness of this, oh, what comfort! what peace! It not only guards us from evils without, but it gives spiritual rest within. If I am striving to get something, I have no communion. If I want to get to the sovereign, when I am in his presence already, I have no communion; and if I am not brought up there, I cannot have the sense of what the conscience ought to be in God's presence. The joy is, that our fellowship is with

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the Father, and *not* that of getting there.

"These things write we unto you that your joy may be full." There is where God brings the saint if there is humbleness. And if there is not humbleness, we shall slip. When we lose the sense of God's presence, the sense of it, I say, (because we are always in His presence in truth,) we are at the point to sin. My natural character or flesh will show itself if I am out of His presence. There is such a thing as the saint's dwelling in the conscious presence of God without fear. If there is anything between me and God, my conscience will be at work; but when the Spirit is not grieved, the soul is in the presence of God for joy; learning holiness, it is true, but in joy, because occupied in communion instead of in detection; and that is a great thing. There is such a thing as being in His presence without the conscience having to be exercised, and in perfect joy. "My peace I give unto you." What was that peace?

There were no vagabond affections—there could not be, and so there was full peace of heart with God. He was divinely perfect—all His affections always in tune with God. Now, through the grace and power of God, we may be brought to that, Christ having been revealed to the soul, the world is cast out, and Christ is everything, and there is perfect joy. This is often what our experience is after conversion, but afterwards the love to Christ grows less fervent—the world creeps in little by little, and we have less joy.

There are three things which characterize a Christian. 1st, "He is in the light as God is in the light." Now God had said to Israel, "I will dwell in the thick darkness;" and at Sinai told them to keep off; "for if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned." There was a great deal of good there, but He was in His pavilion of darkness, not seen. God *acted* towards Israel, but did not *show* Himself. *Now* the veil

is rent from top to bottom, and all is light. It is the very nature of the truth we are in that God is now manifestly revealed, and He that is come in through the rent veil stands in the light of God's holiness, perfect purity in itself, and it shows everything that is not so. 2nd, "Fellowship one with another." We are there together, and all have fellowship by the same Holy Ghost dwelling in all. 3rd, We can be there because "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The more thoroughly in the light, the more it is seen that there is no spot on us through that blood. This could not be said of a Jew; but now the righteousness of God is set forth, and we are brought into the light as He is in the light. Is this a thing that makes you unhappy, or gives you joy of heart? If we are true of heart, we shall be glad of the light to detect the darkness in us. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the

easy and smooth with us, our hearts attracted by the grace of Christ; but if failure comes in, conscience is awakened, sin alarms, and we lose our peace, so that we do not know where we are. Until we have apprehended that we are brought to God—where we never could be brought if there remained a spot of sin upon us—we cannot know settled peace in our souls, as spoken of in Hebrews, "no more conscience of sin"—and that is enduring peace. The power of the affections of the new nature forms a link of fellowship with God; and only as we keep in the light, shall we know the practical enjoyment of it. We must be in the light that evil thoughts may be shut out, so that we may have fellowship with God. In how many things, in our intercourse with one another, or with the world, self comes in, and is not judged by us. There is a practical consciousness in the Christian that he cannot go on without God, and he judges, waits, and confesses, trusting in God, and thus his heart is kept calm and in peace.

way everlasting." We do not want to escape from the light, but to be searched by it—not with a pretension that we have no sin, but the consciousness that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. For the effect of being in the light is, that we confess our sins. "In whose spirit there is no guile." There are two things there, the confession and the love.

From the 1st to the end of the 4th verse is that there may be no deception. Then in the 5th verse, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Now that is the test,—when Christ is known in the presence of God there is no question about sin—How came I there? I came through the blood—then I have got peace. If I am reasoning about God, that is another thing; but if we have got there, we got there through the blood, and that gives peace, a peace which is never lost. There is a peace which may be lost: happy at first, while fresh from conversion, and all i

There are two things—1st, The manifestation of the eternal life—for it has been manifested to us;—2nd, we are partakers of it, I have fellowship with the Father and Son. He has communicated to us that nature, so that we can delight in His fellowship. The Lord give us to keep ourselves in the love of God—in His presence, in the light, detecting everything that is not of Him, judging it, and thus to be in the enjoyment of His love.

BELIEVERS THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST.

2 Cor. iii, 2.

It is good for our souls to dwell on what it is to be an epistle of Christ, though I am sure none of us can express the greatness of the calling. Any gathering of the saints is the epistle of Christ, "to be read of men." They are His letter of recommendation to the world. The world needs to ascertain what Christ is from the lives of

the saints; although they might learn it, it is true, from the word. And the great importance of this place of witness is brought out by the tacit contrast with the law, "written in tables of stone." Just as the ten commandments were the declaration of the mind of God, under the dispensation of the law, so now the Church is the engraving of Christ, "written, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," to show forth the virtues of Him "who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

I would refer to one great thing in the life of Christ, namely, that He never, in one simple act, word, or movement of His heart, did a single thing to please Himself. "Christ pleased not himself;" and so "we ought not to please ourselves;" for "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Jesus said, "that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." This was obedience flowing out of love, and

was brought out to meet man's sorrow and misery, and to bear on every earthly circumstance. In this we often find our failure. Even when the motive is right, the manner is wanting in graciousness. But it was never so with Christ. He was always seeking to promote the glory of God; but never did He, in manner, on any occasion, depart from the spirit of grace. We often are not close enough in our communion with God to have confidence in Him. We become impatient, and resort to means that are not of God, as Jacob did, who had not confidence enough in God to say, "He will secure the blessing." Would not God have made Isaac give the right answer? Surely He would. So we often fail by not waiting upon God, who will bring the thing to pass, most surely, though we know not how. So it was in the sorrowful case of Saul. He would not wait; yet Samuel came at the end of seven days, and Saul lost the kingdom. And those who really are the children of God always sustain loss when they

manifesting love. Nothing ever moved Him from that. The temptation to move from obedience to a commandment might come in a very subtle form, with all the ardour of affection; as when Peter said, in answer to the Lord's word about His sufferings and death, "This be far from thee, Lord." This was affectionate in Peter; but the Lord would not own it, for that would have been to turn from the Father's commandment. And what does He answer? "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Another thing I would remark. Not only was Jesus heavenly in His nature, but, as Son of man, He lived in heaven—as He said, "the Son of man which is in heaven." The whole spirit of His mind, the tone of all His feelings and thoughts, was heavenly. So if there is any motive in my heart which I could not have if I were in heaven, I am not like Christ.

Again, all the grace that was in Him

depart from confidence in Him. Christ was always trusting in God, and always waiting upon Him; and so He was ever ready for every sorrow and misery; ever ready to bring out the resources of God to meet every necessity. It is touching to read the vth chapter of Matthew. Every beatitude is a lively portrait of Christ. Who so poor in spirit as Christ? who mourned as Christ? who so meek? so hungering and thirsting after righteousness? His whole life was hungering and thirsting after righteousness. "The life was the light of men."

But, further, Jesus was the victorious man over all opposition, even though it were death itself. There is a great difference between good desires and power. The quickened soul may say, "O wretched man that I am;" but we cannot be the full epistle of Christ, unless we exhibit power over all obstacles—even over death. Death is given us. The believer, living in the power of Christ's life, has entire power over death.

Again, the Lord Jesus, amidst all His zeal, never failed in love. Strictly speaking, there is no motive in love, though there may be joy in its exercise; and this is our triumph. If I look for a motive, it is not love. Therefore love enables a man to meet all trials. Should one spit in his face, this makes no difference, for love abides; because it never draws its strength from circumstances, but rides above all circumstances. Nothing can be presented to a saint which can separate him from the love of God. The love which he enjoys triumphs over all circumstances. If we do not show this heavenly-mindedness of the love which is of God, doing nothing from any motive but obedience, we are not a true epistle of Christ. I might be walking lowly, but if I did not show out Christ, I should be nothing. So Christ. He gave no answer when God gave no word. And we, in passing through the world, should stand still and wait if we cannot see how we may so walk as to please God.

grace. Israel could not look at the reflection of the glory in the face of Moses, poor though it was; but now man can look plainly—wonderful to say—at the full glory of God, because it is now in the face of Jesus. It is this very glory that tells me of the putting away of my sin. I see the glory of God, not dimly, but as of one who put Himself in my place as a sinner, and who could not be in that glory if He had not put away all my sin; for my sin is enough to dim any glory. What a glorious thing, not only to see God visiting my soul in grace, but that, so to speak, the glory has taken the place of my sin! The transition from the cross has left nothing between them! Thus we get righteousness in our Head, and the Spirit goes with the message, so that there is power, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

The soul that submits to the righteousness of God becomes the epistle of Christ, because he is looking at Christ in the glory. This cannot be

In the latter part of the chapter, the apostle tells us how we may be acting as the epistles of Christ—ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit. The letter refers to the requirements of God from man, which necessarily was a ministration of death. But the gospel is the manifestation of God, not from Sinai, requiring righteousness; but from His own throne revealing the accomplishment of His own righteousness, and sending a message concerning it to draw our hearts to Himself. To those who submit themselves to this righteousness, the Holy Ghost is given on the foundation of the righteousness, and He is in them a Spirit of power. So now we can use great plainness of speech, because we are speaking of grace. We can tell men that they are wicked, wretched, and helpless. We can speak all things plainly, because we are not expecting anything from them, but telling them of God's grace to just such as they are. We can speak plainly of God, for it is of the God of all

while only looking at Him down here; but when the eye is fixed on the Lord Jesus in glory, we get changed into the same image. The heart living in the glory counts all things else but dross and dung in comparison. This is the real victory—when all of this world surrounds me, to say, I do count them but dross and dung. This is being like Christ. We soon learn the weakness of the flesh in this, but the faith that thus looks to Christ is the true victory. The apostle said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” We sometimes say this too lightly, for we have not proved it. We may say a believer can do all things, but he could say, I can do all things through Christ, for he had proved it by deep experience and arduous conflict.

The Lord give us so to recognize the power there is in Christ, as that we may heartily walk in the strength of it—though it humble us in the dust.

UNION WITH CHRIST.

People have a notion of a mystical union with Christ as an ideal thing. But the word is very explicit, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." I am more really united to Christ than my hand is to my body; for the life of the latter union is in my blood, but that of the former in the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is an amazing truth—that I am livingly united to Christ at this moment. It is not merely that He has done certain things which suppose that I was in Him, as to their value, so that I have peace, but a whole class of affections spring from the realization of this union. I am drawing life from Christ with every affection that Christ has in me.

And as to power—I am in the Lord; and when strong in the Lord, whatever Christ is competent for, I am competent for; or, as the apostle has it, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

REST FOR THE WEARY.

Matt. xi.

Sin against God may be looked at in two points of view: 1st, as seen in Adam's transgression in the garden, when he broke the first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" 2nd, as filled up in Cain's slaying his brother, who thus broke the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

But there is another character which sin takes, and is seen in connexion with the pains God takes with the sinner, thus in his sins. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and set to work to make himself comfortable away from God. Now, suppose God sent messengers after him and pressed him to return, his remaining away would, in such a case, be additional guilt. But if God Himself came out and entreated him to return, and he would not, this would be a much greater sin than his having at first left him. *Carelessness* may take a man

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away from God; but refusing to return when besought is positive *hatred of God*. Not merely does the sinner see no beauty in Christ, but God has now to deal with him on the ground of refusing the activities of His love. Sin, therefore, now takes a new form, far more dark and more deadly, namely, that of a positive refusal of God's dealings in love.

The Jews were put under the law and failed, thus proving that man could not keep the law. But the rejection of Christ is a proof of what men's hearts are. If you take a piece of ground by the sea shore, and plant it, and then find it fruitless, you reject the whole shore; not only the piece you cultivated, but the whole shore. So the gospel proves what all our hearts are in the sight of God. God has given us the history of the Jews, not to tell us what the Jews are, but *what we are*. Thus do these plain testimonies about ourselves prove that our dependence is only on grace; for "*by nature* we were children of wrath, even

as others." What resource have we, then? None, but to turn to God's nature, which is "rich in mercy." This is what the apostle is doing in Eph. ii, 3, 4. He there takes up what man is, in contrast with what God is. After speaking of the sins of Gentile and Jew, he sums them up by saying, "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others;" and then he turns to God's nature, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,—by grace ye are saved," &c. God has now given up seeking fruit from man *as man*. (From the saints He does seek fruit, the outward manifestation of the life within.) Christ came to the Jews seeking fruit, but finding none, He will thoroughly purge His floor. Then, as a certain King, God made a marriage, but those bidden would not come; "they all with one consent began to make excuse." Thus they rejected the one, as they had failed in the other.

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." And why? Because their natural conscience was not hardened by a *profession of religion*. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell," &c. The nearer they came to God outwardly, the farther they were from the reception of the truth, and the more hardened they became. They said of Christ, "Is he not mad, and hath a devil?" So now, men call themselves Christians from mere outward profession; this has the evil tendency to harden the heart against the truth.

But the peculiar feature which characterizes the saints of God is, that they hear the voice of the Shepherd. "My sheep hear my voice;" that is, they believe Christ's testimony. Christ

is received into the soul, by His own testimony. "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but *we have heard him ourselves*, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Every witness to Christ must come in on the same simple ground of Christ's testimony to that individual soul. As a matter of testimony, John did bear witness to Christ, and yet John comes in as one who must take the testimony of Christ about Himself. Christ testified, "Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in me." But woe unto him who rejects the counsel of God against himself. John was a believer, knew certain truths, and said, "there is One to come;" but that was not the point. It was the fixing the truth upon his mind, the testimony of Christ concerning Himself. The soul that hears the voice of Jesus Himself, and receives His testimony, is thus a believer in Jesus. You know that nothing can cleanse but the blood of Christ, that Christ is the only Saviour; yet, per-

haps, like John, you are saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" You have not yet got your confession from the word of Christ Himself, that "He is indeed the Christ;" for when the sheep has heard the voice of the Shepherd, there is never any uncertainty about it. Moreover, He calls His own sheep by name. The moment He said, "Mary," she immediately responded, "Rabboni," without any hesitation or uncertainty whatever, because she had received the testimony of Jesus about herself. The voice of Jesus had reached her soul; she was sure it was the Jesus she loved, and she was happy. It is not merely a spiritual hearing of the voice, but receiving Christ's testimony about Himself. When Jesus had come to the house of Zaccheus, He said, "This day is salvation come to this house," because Christ's testimony about Himself had been received. The testimony of the Holy Ghost is still to the same effect, as we see in Acts xi, 13, 14, "Send for Peter, who shall tell thee

words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." And the testimony of a soul that has received Christ is this, "I know in whom I have believed." There is a conscious apprehension of the connexion of the soul with Christ, which it is not in the power of Satan to undo.

John sends to Jesus, and the Lord turned round and gave a testimony to His servant. It was Adam who named the beasts, and not the beasts who named Adam. So now Jesus must give John his character. "What went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet," &c. The Lord's heart goes out in delight in testimony to John. The Lord delights in His people; and if John is suffered to doubt, and be a mark to others, it is but that he may receive a greater testimony from the Lord Himself.

Men were brought to the trial in two ways. "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not

lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil." Why? Because he did not go on like other men. Men, who have fallen into the hands of the devil themselves, account that, when any testimony from God comes in, it must be of the devil, because it is not after the manner of men. John came in the way of righteousness, and therefore he could have nothing to say to any one; he could not eat and drink in company with any one, and therefore he went into the wilderness. He who was to testify about sin, said, "The axe is laid to the root of the trees," &c. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor," &c. Thus John was pleading with their consciences. Jesus came eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. When John does not do as man does, they say, he has a devil; and when

Jesus comes in the way of man, "eating and drinking," they say, He is the worst of men, "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus they rejected the testimony of God, whether it came in the way of mourning or piping; and rejected it with the full testimony that God was there: "they repented not."* John could not forgive sin, therefore he went into the wilderness away from it; but Jesus could forgive sin, and therefore He went amongst it. He had "power on earth to forgive sins," as we see in the case of the adulteress and others. Therefore He upbraids those cities; for, do what works He might in them, they rejected Him in them all.

But in this He submits to His Father. "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things

* It is strange to think that while Jesus could not mend the world then, men can now. A pretty mending they will make of it! When they have brought men to do without God, in self-sufficiency, they will then think that they have done the work.

from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Having bowed His heart to the will of God, at once the glory breaks in: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." As the rejected one Jesus has received all the glory of heaven and earth. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." To bring man out of his lost condition the Son must reveal the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The grace that is in Jesus alone can reveal the Father's love. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus healed the lame, gave sight to the blind, forgave sins, &c.; and what did these mighty works bring Him? Did they believe on Him? No; they rejected Him and knew Him not. Yet "at that time Jesus rejoiced in Spirit." And so He says, "Come unto me, I will

give you rest." He knew where rest was to be found; and as having experienced the bitterness of trial and sorrow all the way through His labours on earth, He knew how to give rest to the weary. Therefore He says, if you are seeking rest for your souls, come unto me, for I know what is to be found in the world, for I have passed through it and tried the hearts of men; and I know where alone rest is to be found. Therefore "come unto me, and I will give you rest." How many a heart may be *weary* that cannot say it is sorry for sin! Well, then, if there be a weary heart, come unto me, and I will give you rest. And where did Jesus find rest? In the perfectness of the Father's love, and the wisdom of the Father's ways. Jesus came to reveal the Father; and He revealed Him as He knew Him. "The only begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And what did Jesus know of Him? Nothing that saved Him from the troubles of the world. If Jesus has

revealed the Father, what more can you seek? That is perfect rest—rest, the perfectness of which nothing can disturb. It is a rejected Christ who could thus speak. For He has blotted out, by His blood, all that could have been against us, so that God has nothing to look for, or to seek about our sins. To speak otherwise would be to deny the efficacy and power of the blood of Christ. It is by coming unto Him that we get this rest; and when we have come to Jesus Himself, there cannot be a cloud to disturb it. There is no uncertainty there; the troubled soul has done troubling then.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.” He had to bow his heart at every step, and this is the yoke put on the Christian. He gives us the rest, but puts this yoke upon our necks. He reproached the cities, but had Himself to bow—“Even so, Father.” Then immediately He adds, “All power is given to me in heaven and earth.” Therefore He is saying to each of us, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of

me, for I am meek and *lowly in heart*, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,” &c. And mark here, that no man ever gets to the point, and discovers it to be the will of God, but He finds a *perfect rest* in God’s ways and bidding. It comes in and meets the soul as it needs it; and the soul thus practically learns the blessedness of following in the path of Christ. If you are weary and heavy laden go to Him, and He will give you rest. Perhaps you are not troubled about your sins, not feeling the greatness of them, &c.; but He well knew them all, having borne the judgment due to them; and He is now saying to you, if weary and heavy laden, “Come to me, and I will give you rest.”

CONFLICT WITH SIN.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—1 John i. 9.

We hear of nothing in this place but confession for forgiveness of sin;

because God is faithful and just. I would commend the faith of the power of confession for bringing the power of God to cleanse from the practice of sin;—sin as embracing everything adverse to the new nature in Christ.

However slow, or by whatever number of stages, we come to the truth that except or besides Christ there is, and can be, nothing accepted in the presence of God, yet is many a sin and a full variety of evil excused, undiscovered, and slumbered over; and this in many who have come to the full knowledge of the ways of God, and have their portion therein. It is, however, a position of peculiar danger to know, and yet to remain stationary; it morally hardens the soul; for it habituates to evil in the light of God. Evil is permitted by habit, and hypocrisy is not far off.

Again, how sad it is that many a soul dear to God is deeply troubled at sin as it rises to the surface. It struggles, resists, and prays, and is uninformed of the provision of God to meet the

desires He has implanted there—a thirsting after the image of Christ—blessed be His name for ever! Let us suppose peace—unquestionable peace and acceptance in the risen Jesus—being in the light. Now if the Christian keep to the faith of life, and so in the consciousness of it, and of his calling, I doubt not hitherto undetected sin will often be revealed to him, and it is in God that it should be met, and before God; and confession is the way; and in God’s presence will the light make it manifest, and abiding in it complete the circle of the image of Christ in the soul of the believer. To *abide* until we receive what we look for *is faith*. It will come, and come effectually, even in the power of God. It is here the conflict is to be carried on—here the heart is broken—and blessing in new affections received. The previous question will only be—will he that has the conscience of sin consent to pass by his affections that are in the world, and enter there where he is to lose them? Has the Christian

been contending with sin without the precincts of the presence of God? Then he has been contending where the enemy has the vantage ground; where habits may be altered, but where affections are never really relinquished; for the heart bargains for the *sight*, or *thought*, at least, of what is forbidden; but all *must* be swept away in the presence and power of God in the new creature. It is contest enough to pass by the affections that detain him, into the presence of God, which he now knows, and knows they are there to be relinquished.

A sense of sin, if we have been awakened, would send us *naturally* to struggle in ourselves against it, and with calling on the help of God, while we do not discover that it is, in this case, under the law that we do it. How sincerely is this often done! Prayer—vexation with self—shame (but as if from *our sense of sin* we had a right to be free) possess the souls of such; and the love that God has to them for their mind towards Him, in their

grace attracted by that love, has received Christ; Christ has become his life, whether in capacity of object, which God now is; or in actual condition, developed or undeveloped.

So little is commonly known of the calling of a child of God, or of the Church, Christ's body, in heavenly places, and of the grace the member of Christ receives in confession of Christ, and as witness in the *kingdom* into which he has been called, yet walking here below where Christ, as *Lord*, is nowhere acknowledged, that conscience is continually at fault for any resolution of its difficulties. It is often engaged in regulating that from which it should be wholly separate and free. Conscience in such a case vacillates, and its guidance is not to be relied on, because it can alone receive firmness by waiting on God; and, (I may say, without being misunderstood,) waiting for God, that having His mind, on however isolated a point, I should be in the way of a more enlarged understanding of His ways. If I had not my place with God in

thoughts of sin, and the partial success even they may gain, keep them in the path of weakness, and frustrate them of their desires. They must come lower yet. If they really examined their souls, or rather let God examine their souls, they would find that *they* have not really such a sense of sin as they suppose. They have a sense of the dishonour of it, but not of the character of it in the light of God; and that is the reason why the taste of judgments alone really alienates them from it. But these they accept, because they are content, at all cost, to be brought nearer to God; increasing with the increase of God. They learn the judgment against sin in the presence of God; and what they learn in communion is what will be revealed.

But the most important of all is the ground on which judgment is given, and to what the evil is in contrast, while he that confesses his fault is shielded from the burning rays of God's glory by God's love in Christ. That ground is that the believer, by

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grace, I should be still incapable of coming to any resolution; but having that place, and knowing I have it, but not what it is, I enjoy His safeguard, as well as all that is needful to life and godliness, as part of His gift. I say this independent of any use of the word, for there may be great incapacity to use it, and yet the conscience is not to be neglected. Doubts therefore as to the world and relationships in it, and as to those arising out of it, can be well held, though God's presence be sought. As soon as I know that I am not of the world, but of Christ's kingdom, and chosen in Him, it settles a host of questions; but I have a conscience in Christ which brings many things in doubt, it may be, long before I know that; for His life is the light of men. I have received in Christ the capacity of receiving God, as an object; but Christ known in glory, becomes necessarily the veiled Christ of the world; so known to him that is a stranger here. Whenever I receive this intelligence (the gospel of the glory of Christ) I find

my way with much less fear and trembling.

A definite direction to obedience in the confession of Christ's disacknowledged rights, and the fulfilment of all headships,* will be found in the word, and as regulated by the Head of the body. Without this, and the faith of what we have in Christ, indwelling in our hearts by faith, (and one may say here, too, without faith it is impossible to please Him,) all the Christian will present is a moderated world and a moral man. But when I do know Christ in me as the hope of glory, the presence of God is sought for the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new. This brings in quite another order; and the greater obstacle to a conscience, being thus clear in its judgment, is put away. Sin lives in the mind by neglect. The flesh, in

* "Works foreordained that we should walk in them," (Eph. ii, 10,) does not, I apprehend, imply that we are ordained to them, though that also is true; but that the works are fore-ordained what they should be.

the life. I am not cleansed by the death, though pardoned by His bearing sin and its penalty for me. It is by the blood that has been drawn forth to the death that I am cleansed. My heart is *sprinkled* from an evil conscience by the application of the Spirit of the blood-shedding unto death—I am *washed* by the blood. Nor is the dead lamb left without its use. It is the moral power of the cross on the old man. And I observe that the intent is that the dead lamb roast with fire should be *wholly* eaten, and what remains uneaten be burnt with fire; and in the same way in the sacrifice of the peace offering, the intent is that none should remain till the morning; and if it be a vow or voluntary offering all that is left on the third day shall be burnt with fire.

It is surprising how the slightest matter defiles—unguarded intercourse—the eye—the ear; and what wretchedness to a tender conscience (in the new creature) which has not escaped from under the law and has not its laver in heaven! But where habit has

very incipient, voluntary action is contrary to the new nature in Christ; and if these have found no home in us, be the occasion what it may, blessed be God. But if they have: the sense of their evil is perfected in the presence of God, and by confession there, yield to His grace. The power also that would regulate what is still to be acted in the flesh is found there, for the presence of God is the place where moral failings, which affect our duties, and their sources, are discovered and remedied. God in Christ is there. The new man in Christ is the eighth day of the cleansing of the leper, and we know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us—ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand, &c.

There is a peculiar conjunction, and yet a difference, between the death of Christ and the blood of Christ, blessed and holy is His name. The spilling of the blood is the death, for the blood is

been contracted, before the soul is regenerate, how humbling, how painful, but how cleansing the work of the Lord in confession. How much worse if engendered after!—what labour in watchfulness to be free, and how sad its condition if not labouring under grace and in the presence of God. In whatever remains of the old man one fault hides a deeper, and the mass would terrify, if seen at once. But oh! the blessing of unpalliating confession! God would not have provided Christ had He not been a pure God, or had not the body of sin been to be destroyed. The character of *the law* carries trespass—the character of *grace* a new creature in power possessing the soul, becoming its life and movement. Man by it knowing his Father in heaven, and his Master at the right hand of glory; with a conscience formed by the Spirit. Where else than to the presence of God will the Spirit lead us about our soul? It is here, therefore, the soul is to be laid open to God, for Him to tell it of

itself, of the judgment of sin, and of the fulness of His grace; here to become acquainted with God; and here to receive the white robe at His hands.

"THE SON QUICKENETH
WHOM HE WILL."

John v.

All through these chapters the Lord is bringing out the power that is in Him, in contrast with the means of Judaism. These means could not give life. The law could not give life. Regulations could not give life. And ordinances—helpful after there is life—nevertheless could not *give* life.

Whether we look at the guilt of sin, or at the power of sin, the law cannot take either away. Now this is the very thing that God has done in Christ. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c. That is, Christ has died for the sin, and guilt is gone; and Christ is now my life; and over this life sin has no power. God condemned sin in the flesh. Not merely has Christ died for my past sins, but sin—my whole condition—has been met in Christ's death.

"Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." There was the remedy; but the disease he had got hindered him from using the remedy. Now that is our case, as sinners. There is the law. If we keep it, well. But sin has

taken away our power of keeping it. And you cannot help a sinful *nature*. The *will* is wrong. How can you help one whose will is wrong?

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" Here the Lord brings him to the conviction of his want of power, in order to smash all hopes of getting better. The impotent man wanted to get into the pool, and this very desire made him the more miserable from the feeling that he could not go in. He must be brought to the sense of his impotency.

But the Lord is there, who gives life, and with one word the thing is done. The whole thing is changed. The paralysis is gone. He does not say, "Get first into the pool," &c.; but from His own love, and in the power of His own word, He says, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." "And *immediately* the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."

"And on the same day was the Sab-

bath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." They were professing to keep Sabbath. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Ah! says Jesus, There is no rest; God is not resting. For sin had come in. Now God cannot put up with sin. He must either sweep it all away, or work to put it away. Now this last is what God was doing. The very effect of the sin on God's heart is that He sets about working in grace to put it away. 'God is working,' said Jesus, and 'I am working.' Thus I see God working for my salvation! My heart has got this principle, that the love of God is such that He could not rest because of what I was, until He had "made peace by the blood of his cross." I have no power to put myself right; but here I find One working who has power, and who has had love enough to take up the work. Now it is just because we needed it that He is working; and our

sin—alas! we had spilt in His face—our sin did not hinder Him. The more it came out, the more need it showed of His working. Oh! this love in the Son, come down into our midst to work for our salvation! It is not that we have to take a long journey, and then when we get to the end, He will have us. No. He has taken the long journey and come to meet us just where we are.

In the verses which follow we find two things presented: first, that the Lord Jesus gives life; and, secondly, that He executes judgment. These two things are never mixed. He does not give life *to judge the one* to whom He has given it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Here I find the Son of God in the world. How comes He here? Because I was lost! God sent Him to give eternal life. And my sins did not hinder

entirely on what God is, and what God has done, then the simplicity of the Gospel is apprehended. But not till then. Here it is called "that which remaineth."

And truly this is what conforms to Christ, as the last verse shows. No responsibility can bring to this. How can I be an epistle of Christ, if I am trying to get to Him? It is Christ that is ministered; and through the ministration of Christ we are put in the presence of God, without fear or torment, so to enjoy the glory as to reflect it. It is Christ glorified in heaven who is thus graven on the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now what is the Christ thus ministered? A Christian is a person who carries Christ graven on his heart before the world. What is this Christ? Is it a Christ graven on stones? No, that was on the outside. When God puts man under responsibility He gives a rule outside of man. Christ, even, *as an example*, was outside of man. He was perfection; but I am broken-hearted because I am not it. But if Christ is written on my heart, *I am it*.

When the Gospel is presented in its simplicity there is great plainness of speech. Nothing can be simpler in itself than the Gospel. Nothing simpler than this: you

Him from coming. But I have not power. Well, Christ has. He has got life, and He has come to give it. The Father sent Him to give it, and that I might know the love that sent it. He tells me the truth about my sin—why I am lost, and that I have no power to get better; but He also tells me that He came "To seek and to save that which was lost."

SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

2 Cor. iii.

It is astonishing how hard it is to get the heart of man to believe in the efficacy of the work of Christ. Even in the case of those who have felt their need of it, the simplicity is unseizable; and, therefore, their power is lost. There is liberty before God, and power where there is liberty. It is of this full and blessed liberty which belongs to the believer in Christ, that it is so hard to persuade. I am sure the more I go on, the more I see how little those who believe enjoy the full and blessed grace in which God has set them. When once we have seen our entire ruin, and are cast

are lost. Nothing simpler than God so loved us as to send His Son to die for us, that we might live through Him. But what the apostle is doing here is showing what men are doing—that they are mixing up law and grace; not taking up pure law, but a mixture of law and grace. And that is done in two ways: in the way the natural man takes it up; and in the way the quickened man takes it up. Pure law no man would take up. At bottom no man would pretend to stand by it. So they say that God is merciful. But mercy with them is God's treating sin as lightly as they do. A quickened person will not go so far; yet in his case the mixing up of law and grace is far deeper and more subtle.

When Moses came down the first time his face did not shine. Then it was pure law. But when he came down the second time, the skin of his face shone, and Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him. Now it was on this second occasion that the Lord proclaimed his name. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, and that will by no means clear the guilty." That is what men say they wish to stand on. But that is precisely what they cannot stand on. True, there is the revelation "forgiving iniquity," &c.,

but *Moses brought back the law*, and the authority of God's law cannot be given up. That is what men want. They wish to use the mercy of God to weaken the authority of the law of God. But this God will never do. He will never weaken the authority of His law. If one ray of the glory of God comes in on the principle of law, it will terrify you. Israel could not look at it. Moses said, "If thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." But God answered, the man that sins, him will I blot out. You must either destroy the authority of the law, or rest under death and condemnation.

But the moment I am brought, in my conscience, to bow to the condemnation which is my due, and so am cast entirely on God, I find that what the law could not do, God has done for me by the death and resurrection of His dear Son. Now I get two things in this ministration of Christ; righteousness and the Holy Ghost. "And where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." Thus I find that God can meet me in my sin; that God is so entirely above sin that He can meet me in my sin, in order to this wondrous deliverance. One thing is needed to understand it, and that is confession.

quent relationships in which men are put, through the grace which justifies them in His presence.

The great subject of the New Testament is the manifestation and communication of the divine life, the making us partakers of the divine nature, and our presentation before God, and enjoyment of Him in that nature. The child derives his life from his father; thence results, not merely likeness of character, but also the peculiar relationship of a child.

But the better to comprehend this, I would here recall the four truths prominent in the New Testament. 1st, There is the manifestation and communication of *divine life*. 2nd, The counsels of God in the accomplishment in Christ of all the *promises* given from Adam downwards, made good to the Jews, His people. 3rd, The *mercy* granted to the poor Gentiles, as in Rom. xv, 8: "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles

In taking up this Epistle to the Romans, I purpose, guided I trust by the Lord, not to enter into every detail of the Epistle, but to trace its leading idea, the intention of the Spirit of God in it, and the course of the apostle's reasoning, trusting that the Lord will give some practical exhortation to the profit of souls.

In speaking lately of the Epistle of John, I remarked on the distinction of the writings of Paul and John. The subjects of John's Epistle being the character of the divine life, which was *with* the Father, manifested in the Son, and communicated to us through the Spirit; so that the divine nature in us should be traced out in the affections of the child of God. In sum, the general scope of John's Epistle is, first, the manifestation of the divine life; and, secondly, the communication of it: Paul's Epistles have another character altogether. They reveal the counsels and the ways of God, and the conse-

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might glorify God for His *mercy*. 4th, *The Church*, as united to Christ its Head. The first is in John's Epistle. The manifestation, then the communication of the divine life. The 2nd and 3rd are found in Romans, with only a glance at the 4th: individual relationship with God being the main subject of that Epistle. This 4th and last is brought out in Ephesians. The Church is only hinted at, not taught in Romans. The 4th point of truth, which is revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is distinct from the promises to the Jews, and the general idea of mercy to the Gentiles; being a *new thing*. The seeing these distinctions greatly facilitates the understanding of the Epistles, and clears up passages otherwise obscure.

We have seen that in Romans there are *two* great subjects brought out: the accomplishment of the promises made to the Jews, and mercy to the Gentiles. In treating these points, the apostle lays the foundation of all relationship between God and man. Thus

the commencement of the first chapter is an introduction to all that is afterwards unfolded in the Epistle.

The Epistle to the Romans has this large character, naturally enough. It consists well with an address to the great centre of the world's empire; for Paul was writing to the Romans, whom he had never seen, as the apostle of the Gentiles, and takes his stand on the high ground of being the one to whom God had committed His counsels. Peter, in addressing the Jews, presents resurrection as a living hope; and speaking to them on this new principle, addresses himself to them as to strangers and *pilgrims*, &c., thus carrying out that which was consequent on this principle here below, as regards those who are to participate in the resurrection itself.

Thus the varied Epistles are suited to the varied need of those addressed: as in Corinthians, to the case of moral evil; Colossians, slipping away from the Head; Galatians, falling from grace; Thessalonians, deep affliction, and the

clearing up of the doctrine of the Lord's coming. But the Epistle to the Romans, addressed to the capital of the world, where the apostle had not yet been, takes the great principles of God's relationship with men, and that which He has with the Jewish people, in connexion with these principles.

There are two parts in this Epistle. From the beginning, up to the close of the viiith chapter, forms the first part: the ixth, xth, and xith chapters form the second: the concluding chapters are occupied with precepts. In the first part you get both Jews and Gentiles reduced to the common condition of sinners. But some might object, and say, if this be so, that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, how, then, admitting that the law only aggravates the sin of the Jew, is God to make good His promises to the Jews? The infallibility of the promises of God is shown, and this truth reconciled, and that from the Jewish history and scripture, in chaps. ix—xi, the common ground on which

both Jew and Gentile are set in perfect salvation, common to both, in Christ Jesus. In the next place, mark the way in which Paul sets man aside, as being proved a sinner, poor, vile, and lost; and that he does this to bring God in. It is not merely that he introduces man, as a sinner; but man must be thoroughly put down, to bring in God Himself, in the place of man, that God may act towards man in His own way, and according to His own character. As in Ephesians, after Jew and Gentile are spoken of as children of *wrath*, the apostle passes over at once, to that which God is in grace; and God is brought out in His own character, as "rich in mercy;" and what *He* has done, and what *He* is to such as they are, is unfolded. We can have no settled *peace* or rest of heart till we are on this ground; nor can we know God, so as to trust Him, to rest in Him and adore Him, till we know Him *thus*. Then it is a settled question, and our hope and trust are in God. As it is written, "Who by him

do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be *in God*." Therefore the apostle does not say, we are justified *before God*, though that also is true, but "it is God who justifies," that the heart might be brought to rest in *God Himself*.

Paul himself had gone to the extreme extent of sin. It was not a mere looseness of expression when he called himself the "chief of sinners;" for Paul in heart was the wickedest man that ever trod the earth; not guilty, of course, of immorality—as he says of himself, "after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee,"—but the most deliberate and ardent enemy of God's anointed. When he reached the highest point of his wickedness, "being *exceedingly mad* against *them*," at that moment he was separated unto the gospel of God.

We will now rapidly go over, without entering into the detail of it, the history of what man was. God had borne with man, leaving him at first to him-

self; but the result of leaving man to himself was, that, so great was his iniquity, he must be destroyed from off the face of the earth; and it became necessary to put a close to his abominations by a flood. The law followed, and that was broken. The prophets came next, and they were despised, stoned, and were sawn asunder. Last of all, God sent His Son, and Him they killed. It was not all, therefore, that man had broken God's law, and slain His prophets. The goodness of God had come, and men hated the goodness, and Jesus was rejected and crucified. But even then Jesus prays for His murderers, pleading their ignorance: "Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*" As in the case of the one who owed the ten thousand talents, forasmuch as he had nothing to pay, his lord forgave him his debt. And this is what I take to be the meaning of this passage. Israel was guilty of the death of Christ, yet in the testimony of the Holy Ghost, God deals in forgiveness with them; but they reject

that had visited and pardoned so bitter and determined an enemy. All that God could do to reach the heart and act on the responsibility of man had been brought into operation in this testimony, and Paul was found in the most active hostility to it, being determined to put a stop to the testimony of grace and goodness if he could. While thus occupied, the Lord appears to him in glory, revealing the Church's connexion with Himself, "Why persecutest thou ME?"—for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Thus Paul sets out as the leader of this active energy, in opposition to God; and is called, in the midst of his career of enmity, that he might be a perfect witness of the grace that overcame him, as he himself sets it forth, testifying that there is grace and forgiveness for one such *as he*. "That in me first," he says, "Christ might show forth all long-suffering." Everything that could have religiously sustained his heart was broken down when God met him by the way. Take conscience, for instance:

the principle of grace. And mark here, that the Holy Ghost takes up again, and carries on, this very intercession of our Lord, as forgiveness of sins is preached by Peter at Jerusalem, saying, "And now, brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also *your rulers*. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Did they repent? *No*. Not only had they killed the Prince of life, but, in stoning Stephen, they now fill up the measure of their iniquity by rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the grace and goodness of God. Just at *this* point, in the history of man and of Israel, it is that Saul of Tarsus comes upon the scene, as the participator in this hostility to the testimony of God; and so mad was he against it, that he became, voluntarily, the very apostle of the enmity in the heart of man, against the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the grace and goodness of God. But here God meets him in the way and his mouth is closed in conviction, and to all but the grace

how very terrible it must have been to Paul to find that his natural conscience had been all wrong. He had thought that "he *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He was an enemy of the Lord in doing it. All his thoughts are upset. Three days *without* sight, he neither eats nor drinks. Then take the law. He had been blameless as regards its enactments; zealous for it; but he is the Lord's enemy by his zeal. It is his ruin before God. Then the priests, the pharisees, and his own zeal, had only led him into opposition and open rebellion against God; and everything in which his heart had trusted, every prop suddenly broken, and its falseness and futility shown to his amazed heart, left him a mere sinner, naked in the presence of the glory of God. Thus ended all *means*, leaving Paul a child of WRATH, even as others.

But the consequence is, through grace, that Paul starts, not from what he is, but from what *God* is. His will is broken, too, before the divine presence,

and he commences his onward journey, as the Lord's servant. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He starts in his career, and so addresses the Christians at Rome, as a called apostle, separated* unto the gospel of God. It is not merely, remark, the gospel of Christ, but the gospel of God: and it is a wonderful expression. The gospel of God is the activity of God's love, going out into a world of men, as hopeless and bad as Paul had been. It is not dealing with man on the ground of what man may be, save as ruined and miserable, but on the ground of what *God is*. The gospel of God is God's own good news in giving His Son to carry this message of mercy and grace to lost man. It can well be called the gospel of Christ also, as it is He who brings the message of salvation to man,

* This last expression, however, refers more to the mission from Antioch. He was called by the Lord on the way to Damascus, but specially set apart for the work by the Holy Spirit who said, "separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost," &c.

comes in here as the servant, or slave, bound to the work, and bondsman to Christ; separated unto the gospel of God. That was his business. If he could further the gospel by making tents, of course he would continue to make them; but he was an *apostle called* to the gospel of God; and where God gives ministry it is as the vessels of God's activity in grace, for the calling of sinners and the building up and edification of His saints.

It is very important to distinguish between teaching to the Church and the testimony of mercy to the world. The Old Testament is full of mercy; but that is not the Church: nor is what He had promised afore by His prophets, in the holy scriptures, the Church. The Church was not the subject of promise, but the gospel of God was: "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The Gentiles had not the promises; for the promises of God were made to the second Adam, and not to the first. The promises in Genesis that the ser-

and who declares Himself to be the only way of access to God.

The Jews accused the Lord of breaking the sabbath. The sabbath was the sign of the covenant between God and His people, and to be kept on the seventh day. It was also the expression of God's rest in the creation, which He had pronounced very good. But that covenant is set aside—buried in the tomb of Christ, where He passed the sabbath which characterized it. But besides this, as we find in John v, 17, there was no sabbath, for sin had come in; and there is no rest for a holy God where sin is—none for a God of love, where the misery it brings in reigns. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." It was not that the people were to work; but God had come down where sin was, and God was working in grace; and His Son, too, was working in the accomplishment of that grace. Such is God's place, as revealed in this glorious answer of Christ to the malicious accusation. God might destroy in judgment; but grace in the Father and the Son works in redemption. Paul

pent's head should be bruised, was made to the seed of the woman, which Adam was not. So it is said, to Abraham were the promises made and to his seed, that is, the promises given to Abraham were confirmed to the one seed (Gen. xxii) offered and received from the dead in figure. The promises, then, are entirely connected with Christ, who is the *seed* in whom all these promises centre. The person of Christ is the great subject of the gospel, even before His work. This point is of all importance. God is now claiming subjection to His Son. There is not an infidel, nor a rebel, however great, that shall not bow the knee to Jesus. If in grace it is salvation; but if the heart does not bow to the grace, the knee must bow under the judgment.

In this 3rd verse, "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," the apostle is bringing out the double character of the Lord. In the first place, we have the person of the Lord as the subject of the gospel.

Then, secondly, He is presented as the seed of David according to the flesh. Then, thirdly, Paul brings out definitely the character of the Son, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." There is the accomplishment of promise and the introduction of divine power in the deliverance of man from the state in which he was lying. Then we have the Son of God with divine power, though clothed in humiliation. Further, we have the Son in the midst of defilement, according to the spirit of holiness. This was shown all through the whole scene of evil through which He passed, untouched and unsoiled by sin, though in contact with it, and touching it all round. Separate Himself, He touches the leper. Was He defiled? *No*. In touching it He chases away the uncleanness without becoming unclean Himself. None but the Son of God could do this. But His was perfect grace coming down into defilement, banishing it and dispelling it without

receiving defilement Himself. Such was Christ living in the world.

Further, the manifested power of Satan was this, that he had the *power of death*. This Satan had by the judgment of God Himself, for God had said, "in the day that thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die*;" and God could not go from His own word. Thus man was under the power of him "who had the power of death, that is the devil." Therefore, if the Son of God is to deliver man from under this power of Satan, He Himself must go down to his stronghold, this last citadel of Satan. He must Himself go down under the *power of death*; for God's judgment was there as well as Satan's power, "that through death he might deliver them who, through fear of *death*, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He, the Son of God, feared it as the judgment of God, but "He was heard in that he feared." He broke all the bars by which Satan held us, and has set us free. Satan committed himself entirely by putting his

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hand on the spotless person of the Prince of life, who bore our sin. By His rising from the dead the judgment of God, the sin which was its cause, the power of Satan in death, were all gone for him who had part in this work. The resurrection shows the divine power of the Son of God. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the *living* God," the Lord said, "upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" that is, neither the power of death, nor Satan who possesses it, (for that is the meaning of the gates of hell or *hades*.) shall prevail against the Church, which is founded on Him who has the power of the life of God in Him. Man had been tried by every means besides the law, which gave the measure of His responsibility. He only brought forth wild grapes. It was in result double death, while holding out the promise of blessing to obedience. But if the foundation of blessing be the Son of the *living* God, the gates of hell, the *power* of

death, shall not prevail against it. The power of the spirit of holiness, which characterized the life of Christ, is demonstrated by* resurrection from the dead. If we consider the resurrection, as it was displayed in Christ, and will be in the saints, it is the power of God coming into the place of death and breaking its bonds in those that are His, and taking them out from among the wicked dead. This resurrection in spirit is our present state, though we still wait for the redemption of the body. The very same power, we learn in Eph., which raised Christ from among the dead, has wrought in us and quickened us together with Christ. The Son of God goes down in grace for us to the very place we had got by sin, and by His own divine power breaks the bands of *death*, and takes us up from under

* The expression is abstract. The resurrection of all—of Lazarus, of Christ, of the saints, of the wicked, all show the power of the Son of God. Though, of course, as to His person, His own resurrection was the great proof.

its power, placing us, according to the efficacy of His *own work*, in the presence of God. Thus all that my sin could do has been met by divine power and put away; rendering void of power him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. How marvellous the grace! The consequence is not merely that there *ought* to be holiness in us, but that there must be holiness. How did Christ get out of death? By His own divine power. Well, it is the same divine energy raising me from the dead that will be the power of a new life in me. All that He has done is mine as righteousness before God; but I enter into it by virtue of a new life, which is a holy one. It is not merely a *duty* to be *holy*; but there is holiness in us, because we are partakers of justification by means of a life which is essentially holy. Let us ever remember this wonderful truth, that the Son of God has come down in divine power into the place of sinners, and broken all those bands by which Satan held us, and set us free. This is the gospel

of God, God in the activity of His own love in the person of Christ, coming down here and walking in holiness where sin was, going down under the *power* of *death*, that He might deliver us from Him who had the power of death; for I am raised now spiritually and morally by the very same divine power that will take up my body.

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations." All are called now to bow to the revelation of Christ, who was dead and is alive again for evermore. The expression "called to be saints," is incorrect; it should be, saints called, that is, saints by the calling of God: the same principle here as the *apostle called*. We are saints called, thus showing the grace of God. It is not to us by birth or descent, as to the Jews; but it is all of grace: so Abraham was called, and chosen, and faithful. If we are called, it is not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of *God*. And

we are bound to give thanks, in that "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." What a very different thing it is in our souls, (for what a very different thought we have of God) when we believe the activity of His love! It is not only that *God is love*; but that God is *ACTIVE IN HIS LOVE*. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Alas! we pass over these gracious words very lightly; and what is there that we do not pass over lightly? The apostle felt what he said in the power of the Spirit. Favour and peace from the Father and the Son. *Mercy* is only added when the epistles are addressed to individual saints. But when the saints are looked at as a whole, they are seen as the objects to whom all "mercy" has been already extended, being seen by the eye of God as under the influence and energy of the love and grace that had saved them. Still, as individual saints, they need *mercy* every day. The apostle looked at them as under the eye of

a Saviour God, and he wished them to have the full manifestation of what was in the God that had saved them—all the effect of there being not a cloud between them and God. God is never called a God of joy, though He gives joy; but constantly He is called the God of peace. The apostle desires their peace from God should be undisturbed—that they should have perfect peace in Him in the midst of this wilderness. He desired for them all the effect in their own souls of the consciousness of their position—the full exercise of what God was to them in this relationship. If a child feels towards his father as towards a master, he does not know his position. If we have not unlimited confidence in God as our Father we have not found our place. All these relationships are known, not by the intelligence placing us in them; but in the exercise of affections flowing from the consciousness of being in them. A child addresses his father as such—why? a servant his master as such, and why?

They live in these relationships. The saints, in the love of the family, will address God as their Father. In the government of the Church it is the Lord Jesus we shall address. This distinction will be always marked when praying in the Spirit, not by an effort of attention, but by being in the spirit of the relationship. In all our petitions, as children, even in our failures, confessions, and need, we go as individuals to God as our Father; but in everything relating to the Church—conduct and order—we go to the Lord Jesus, as Head of the Church. The consciousness of our relationship is of great importance in our daily walk; for the character of our walk, and the state of our souls depend upon it. If our souls have not unlimited confidence in God to go to Him with our very follies, we do not know “*the Father*.”

If Christ said, It is my meat to do His will, Paul could say, “whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son.” It is no service at all, if it

be merely outward. Unless we can say, “Of thine own have we given thee,” it is no service at all: true service must flow from communion with the source of service. It is *no* service if we are not drinking in Christ, and conscious that we are doing His will. If I could take up any service without being confident God would have me do it, there would be no power in it. Service, then, if real, must flow from direct communion with God. We may go on in a course of action, as a consequence of communion, for a good while. Thus, for instance, contrast the Thessalonians with the state of the Church at Ephesus in Revelation. In the Thessalonians Paul knew “their work of *faith*, *labour* of *love*, and patience of *hope*.” Here we see the three cardinal points, faith, hope, charity, springs of the activity displayed by the saints; so that their service had all the freshness of the source from which the service flowed. Not so in the address of the Lord to Ephesus in the Revelation. There was work, labour, patience; but there

was not the present spiritual power of that which comes direct from God. Therefore we find the candlestick removed. They had left their first love. How often does our service flow rather from something we may have to do, than from direct communion with God. It then becomes the mere activity of the flesh, or of habit, or, at best, a mere duty; instead of serving with “my spirit.”

What a comfort, that all my life through I may be serving the Lord with my spirit. This would be a wilderness, a labyrinth, but God is guiding us through it. When Israel was in the wilderness, was there any path for them? None. “They wandered in the wilderness where there was no way.” So we read that Moses said to Jethro, his father-in-law, “Leave us not, I pray thee, forasmuch as *thou* knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness; and thou mayest be to us *instead* of eyes.” *No*; God says, *I will be as eyes* to you; for as Israel departed from the mount a three days’

journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days’ journey, to *search out a resting-place for them*. Now the ordered place of the ark was in the midst of Israel; for they were to keep the charge of the Lord, and they were to journey as they encamped. But when Israel journeyed it went before them *as eyes* to them. Again to Israel: “Though I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to *them a little sanctuary* in the countries where they shall come.” And is God less than this to us? *No*; He is leading us through this world’s wilderness, where there is no path, no way, but Jesus; for He is our only track in this wilderness of sin and sorrow. But what an unspeakable comfort to have such a *track*; for if we are perfectly dependent, we shall discern the perfect path that has in it the stamp of the Lord’s own footsteps. But to this end *flesh* must be practically mortified and the *WILL* subdued.

“Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” See

the apostle's wonderful energy with God. And this is one mark of spiritual power—the capacity of keeping up in his own soul, an interest for all saints everywhere. In practice he intercedes for all saints in every place. This leaves him in entire dependence on the will of God; for no real spiritual power takes us out of the place of waiting on God. So it was with Eliezer. He said, "Lord, let the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, . . . be the same thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac." And when the woman had given him drink, and his camels also, he does not say, Oh! here is the answer to my prayer; but he is still waiting on God, and, "wondering at her, held his peace; to wit, whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." And when the camels had done drinking, he said, "Whose daughter art thou?" And when he found that she answered the description, that is, according to the will of God by the word of Abraham, "he bowed his head and worshipped

His nature. It is not merely certain acts condemned, according to the measure of a revelation, in which God remains as yet veiled in His own nature. He is revealed; and hence what is contrary to Him is judged. But then in the gospel He is revealed to meet what *man is*. God now looks at what man is, in the presence of what God is. But it is the very perfectness of the activity of grace that has brought out what man is. Is it claiming righteousness? *No*; for now man's righteousness is entirely laid aside. It is God's righteousness made known; not something which is to grow up to righteousness, but that which is perfect now. It is *revealed from faith to faith*,—that is, faith is the principle on which it is revealed; and henceforth, wherever it is found, has part in it. God's righteousness being a perfect and existing thing, complete in itself, is revealed on the principle of faith. The man that has faith gets it. If it were given on the principle of righteousness, the righteous man would have it.

the Lord." Success often takes us out of the place of communion; because it is *our* success when we do not acknowledge God in it.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." It is God's coming in in power. That is the true character of the gospel. It is complete in its object, and in the means it employs to effect it. And it is God who works in it to produce this effect; it is not a mixture of man and God; but God acting for, and in quickening power in, man, justifying the believer by the work which He has wrought, and creating us again in Christ Jesus. "The wrath of God is *revealed* from heaven." It is not yet manifested, though it was seen, to a certain extent, in the deluge. On the cross it was complete in the moral sufferings of Christ, though not yet executed against the sinner. But the nature and character of God is brought out. Hence, necessarily, all that is contrary to His nature and character is necessarily judged. Wrath is revealed against all that is opposite to

I would desire that our hearts might rest on this wonderful truth—the activity of God's love coming down into a world ruined by sin, and under wrath, when every remedy had been tried, and nothing would do. But God Himself has come in, and done it, and *there we rest*. The more pains God has taken to set men right, the more only was it proved that the more you dig and dung a *bad tree*, the more bad fruit it will produce. But God, from the beginning, has had His own way of salvation; and He who undertook the work comes down into the stronghold of Satan's power and God's wrath, and by rising from the dead, has openly declared that Satan's power is destroyed, through death, and God Himself is satisfied in this righteous claim.

And now there is a perfect revelation of God's righteousness—not of man's working or man's righteousness, but of God's working and God's righteousness—to be trusted in and believed, that it may be by grace. It is *God's* righteousness, and given to *us* at the

same time, according to the spirit of holiness. He Himself is the rest of our souls and conscience, as He is the guide all the way; His divine favour and unchanging love and goodness accompanying and abiding with us all the journey through.

The Lord only give us the simplicity of faith, that we may see this activity of love, that we may apprehend His ways in grace, and thus know Him,—know His grace in working, that we may know Himself.

1 PETER, IV, 7.

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” Pray always, and faint not because of the difficulties by the way; for it has been said, “that all *in* the way is a mere circumstance; but God is above it all, and *faith* knows Him to be a very present help.” “Be sober,” and cast off the “works of darkness,” for we are “children of the light,” and “in his light we shall see light.” “Be sober, and watch unto prayer,” for the master is coming, and looks for faithfulness in service. “Be sober,” for “the night is *far* spent, and the day is *at hand*.” Remember the words of Jesus, “Behold, I come quickly.” May our hearts reply, “Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

retained; and second, the *creation*. The invisible things of God being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse. “Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” &c. “Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts.” For if a man has left God he cannot suffice to himself;—that is the prerogative of God—he always turns to the lusts of his own heart, and to objects below even himself. Hence if they had not discerned what became God, they should not be able to discern what became man. It is God’s way, when the light He gives is rejected, to give those up to blindness who have rejected it; and this giving up by God is an act of judgment on God’s part. As these Gentiles, not liking to retain God in their

I have just taken the close of this chapter, as being the summing up and application of the apostle’s argument, which he had drawn from the sin of Jew and Gentile. Then, in chapter iv, he passes on to another principle, as brought out in the testimony of Abraham and David. After the opening introduction, at the beginning of the Epistle, in which the apostle presents the mission with which he had been charged, and consequently, as we have seen, grace and righteousness revealed to man in the gospel, he turns to unfold man’s need, and the way in which it had been met, as that alone on which the soul could rest. He opens out the horrible evil of the Gentile, and of man generally, throughout the world; and he then shows that, without any *inspired* testimony, the two great testimonies that ought to have acted on their consciences, were first, *the knowledge of God possessed by their fore-fathers*, but which they had not

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knowledge, *God* gave them over to a reprobate mind. It was so with the Jews in rejecting the testimony God had given them; God says by the mouth of the prophet, “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (Isa. vi, 10.) So will it be with professing Christendom. In 2 Thess. ii, 11, it is said, “God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” Thus we see, whether Jew or Gentile, or Christendom, the effect of man being given up by God. We see what man becomes when left to himself. It was not all, as regards the Gentile, that natural light was given in the beginning in the testimony of creation, but men did not like to retain God in their knowledge, when that knowledge was there. Every man has a *conscience*, distinct from grace; but conscience cannot bring us to God. Conscience is the sense of responsibility, united to

the knowledge of good and evil; and if the conscience becomes awakened, and there is not the power of life drawing to God, it only drives us away from God, like Adam in the garden, hiding himself from God. The Gentiles did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and God gave them up to a *reprobate* mind: properly, they did not discern (in the way of moral approval) to retain God in their knowledge, and God gave them up to an undiscerning mind, i.e., a mind incapable of distinguishing what was good, with approbation of it. So the Jews, having rejected God's testimony, sentence is passed upon them by Isaiah, seven hundred years before it was accomplished. "Make the heart of *this people* fat," &c. Also, as Stephen says, "Ye do *always* resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did (before Christ) *so do ye*," (now that He has been revealed.) Both are guilty of the same sin. As regards the public state of that people, they were adjudged to blindness; and so it will be at the close of the present

state of things. Those very things by which, according to Peter's testimony, Christ was testified to have come from God, will be the very things, according to 2 Thess. ii, that will lead the Jews (as it will doubtless others) to receive the false Christ in the latter days. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words, *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by HIM in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*" (Acts ii, 22.) Compare this with 2 Thess. ii, 8, 9: "Then shall that wicked be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of *Satan* with *all power, and signs, and lying wonders.*" In Greek the words are the same, 'power' in the one being the same as 'miracles' in the other. Thus as the Jews rejected what *God* did in their midst, by Jesus of Nazareth, so they will be allowed to receive what *Satan* will do by that wicked one; and all this, as the apostle goes on to say, "because they received not the love of the truth,

that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

From the 17th verse of chapter ii, the apostle speaks of the Jews; and finally, from the 3rd verse of Ps. xiv, and other passages of the Old Testament, in the 10th to the 18th verses of Romans iii, concludes all are under sin; the Jew under law, as well as the Gentile without law, are alike guilty. For if the Gentile be given over to a reprobate mind, the Jew is proved by his own scriptures to be just as bad. Thus "there is none righteous, *no not one*; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh." *The will* is gone wrong. They are blind in mind, perverse in will, and guilty *before* God. Not only was the nature sinful, but they had slighted the testimony, and rejected the light God had revealed to them. Such was the state of the Jew, for the law spoke to him. Natural conscience sufficed to condemn the Gentile; but the God of judgment was there to discern the

truth of the state of those who boasted of the law; and now it is proved that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be saved; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Thus we see those under the law are brought under condemnation. It is no use for the Jew to attempt to get his part before God, in virtue of the privileges and condition in which God had placed him; for the law, of which he boasted, condemns him. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The viith of Romans springs out of this. The Gentiles had no right really to put themselves under the law; but we all do, somehow or other, put ourselves under the law; and see where it brings us to: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God." And werethere any? *None.* "*They are all gone out of the way;*" and the Jew, if he listened to the law, learned that on his own ground he was utterly guilty; though the apostle does not bring against them their hardness of

heart in rejecting Christ. But both Jew and Gentile are alike thoroughly guilty.

But now it is the righteousness of God without law: and here the apostle carries on this great principle to its full extent. He states it in a direct and absolute manner: righteousness is altogether on a different principle—it is the righteousness of God; and it is a righteousness without law at all. It is God's righteousness, and who can give a law to Him? And being God's righteousness, it is altogether on a different principle to law? for law requires from man; but here the righteousness is God's. God's law, consequently, only condemns, for it requires righteousness, and it cannot give life. Put a man under obligation, as a means of righteousness, and it is all over with him, because man is a sinner. He is blinded in mind and perverse in will. Man has a will, (that is not obedience,) law brings it out, and man's will never submits; for it would *cease* to be *will* if it did. God never meant righteous-

ness to be by the law. It would have been cruelly mocking man, being a sinner, to have proposed it to him with this object. "The law was given that the offence might abound." Not, mark, that *sin* might abound; for sin was there and abounded before the law was given; but it is not *offence* until there is a law. Thus it is that the law worketh *wrath*; for where no law is there is no transgression; but sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful. Thus every mouth is stopped, and all the *world* is brought in guilty before God; and now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. Remark that it not merely exists, but that it is manifested; it exists ever in the purpose of God, and hence promises were given, to which faith clung by grace; but it was not *manifested* till the gospel was brought out; therefore the apostle says, "to declare at *this time* his righteousness."

No sinner ever stood, or could stand, in God's presence, from Adam downwards, but in God's righteousness.

But it had not been manifested *until now*. "But *now* the righteousness of God without [the] law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Thus the law and the prophets only showed what God was going to bring in. But the church of God is founded on God's righteousness, and is in the light as He is in the light; therefore it is manifested at "*this time*." God's righteousness is brought in without law, but witnessed by the law and the prophets; it was witnessed to before it was manifested. We do not get into the Church position till we get into the ivth chapter. In the iiiird chapter we get all brought in guilty before God; and then how we are to get into the presence of God. Can man, that is a sinner, approach God in himself? No. But Christ has been made a sacrifice for us; He has answered for all we have done in the old man; and as the new man, He is in the presence of God for us, and we are there in Him, in all the favour and acceptance in which Christ Him-

self is: always there as *He is*. Thus it is man gets, or rather becomes, the righteousness of God. The claims of God against the old man have all been met in the new man, Christ Jesus: and we are made the righteousness of God *in Him*. In the end of chap. iii, we have the answer to God's perfect demands;—the sin, whether of Jew or Gentile, put away by the *blood-shedding* of Christ Jesus, and God's righteousness brought in; for Christ has perfectly glorified God in respect of good and evil. In chap. iv, we have another thing, resurrection, at least in principle: "Abraham believed God." And not only did he believe in the resurrection, in spite of the principle of death which was in him; but he did so, as believing the God who could raise from the dead. So we, as the apostle states it, do not merely believe in Jesus, who rose from the dead, but in the God who raised Him. Thus we, having entirely done with law, by which sin is imputed, get the second of the two great principles on which the gospel is

founded. The first is blood-shedding, the second resurrection; and the Jew, who might be put to silence on the ground of law, might appeal to Abraham; but here the doctrine of faith, and righteousness by faith, comes clearly out; for in referring to Abraham, who had nothing to do with law, he says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." It is not said that he believed *in* God, but he *believed God*, and that is how he got his righteousness. So also David; he believed God. Thus we see that Abraham and David alike found righteousness by grace, through faith: and the faith of Abraham, in this respect, is our faith; only we believe not that God can, but that He has raised Jesus. Thus it is that Abraham is called the father of the faithful,—first publicly called out from the world to righteousness and relationship with God by faith. Having touched this point of the resurrection, before going farther I would show its use in the following chapters. Christ having

taken, in resurrection, the place of the accepted man, after having been delivered for our offences—justified by faith, we are at peace with God, stand in His favour, and repose in the hope of the glory. For there Christ is before God. This brings out the great doctrine of our standing in the first and second Adam; constituted sinners by the disobedience of one; righteous by the obedience of the other.

Having thus, in the vth chapter taken up the *two men*, the old man, the first Adam, and the new man in Christ, the second Adam,—in the vith chapter he goes on to show that some will say, 'Oh! if Christ's obedience alone has made me righteous, and grace reigns, it is no matter what I do. If it is righteousness *without* works, then we may walk as we like.' *No*; it is not so; for we cannot have part in this righteousness but in Christ. Now Christ has died to sin, and lives to God. Hence in Christ I have not only righteousness, but have it as in Him, dead to sin, and alive to God. I can-

not be righteous but in this condition; for such is the Christ that I have it in. If I have a part in justification, I have necessarily a part in life, and that a *holy life*; not that the life is the same thing as the justification, or the cause of it, but the two are always united. I am risen again in Him to be in this new position of justification. Now a new and holy life brings with it *hatred of sin*. The same principle of resurrection is applied, in chap. vii, to the law. If I am dead and risen again, the law, which is binding on a man as long as he lives, has lost all claim upon me; I am dead to the law by the body of Christ; I am delivered from that which has power over me, that I might serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. We have the application of the risen life to man as placed in justification before God, as in a risen Christ, in chap. v; as dead to sin, and alive to God, as risen again in the power of a holy life, in chap. vi; as dead to law, in chap. vii; for the law has killed us, therefore it can do

no more; its greatest work was to kill Christ; but He rose again, and we in Him, beyond the power of the law. Chap. viii then brings out the Christian in perfect liberty, in virtue of our being risen in Christ, justified in Christ, our affections showing our life in Him; "he that is joined to the Lord is *one* spirit;" and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." Being thus fully and freely justified and accepted in Christ Jesus, we are only waiting for the redemption of our bodies. It is now no *man's* righteousness, it is God's righteousness for all; and no man can come in in any other way, if it is God's righteousness. He cannot accept a Jew in preference to a Gentile; it is "to all;" it is as free to sinners of the Gentiles as to the Jew. As regards the standing and peace of the soul it is deeply important to see that what we are ever struggling for is to get something in which we can come before God, while it is God who *comes* and presents to us Christ as our only righteousness. "It is unto all;" *but it is upon those*

that believe. Mark here another thing that is connected with peace of soul. Some may say, 'I do not deny His divine righteousness; I believe it; but how am I to know that I have a share in it? Is it applied to me? I want it applied to my soul.' Well, God does work by His grace to make you believe, (and He alone can,) but what do you mean? If, by divine teaching, you believe you are verily guilty, and look to Christ's work as your only hope, then God has applied it to you. If in the consciousness of your sinfulness you have believed the record God has given of His Son, then you have had it applied to you, *for it is upon all them that believe.* You are righteous. It is bad if, when awakened of God, we go on tampering with sin, or with the world; God must work this out of us; and thus it is often long before the simplicity of faith is there; but the thing that is believed *is what* His Son is, and has done. If there is tampering with sin or the world in our souls, it prevents our laying hold of the truth;

all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being *justified* freely by his grace, through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus." Here we have the absolute freeness of divine grace, the sovereignty of God's own goodness, in His being glorified in respect of our sins, by virtue of the efficacy of the work of Christ, which has met and put them all away, having discharged everything that was against us. That is the efficacy of His death; and being in Christ, I rest upon the acceptableness of His person. Many a Christian would be glad to rest there; and why don't they? Because they have not really learned the value of the cross; for if they had they would not be trembling, as if their sins were not put away. You say 'you have no other confidence than the cross;' as to the conviction of your heart, that may be true; and 'that you feel your need of it;' that I suppose, or you would not look to it. But you have not yet learned the value of the cross; and the

neither can we have, consequently, the joy of the Holy Ghost in our hearts; for God must be *real* in His ways with us. The Holy Ghost cannot tamper with sin, and if He work in us, He will make us recognize and judge and resist sin. But it is not by seeking fruits we shall find peace; for till the Holy Ghost is there in power, there can be no fruit; and for this we must submit to the righteousness of God. He it is that takes of the things of Christ, for the joy of our souls. But if God has fixed the faith of your hearts on Christ, God *has* applied this divine righteousness to you. But if there be any sin or worldliness lurking in the secrecy of your soul, God being real and faithful to you, He must work it out in judgment in your soul, to bring you to lean on Christ as your righteousness because of it; and of course while that process is going on in the soul there cannot be joy.

But we are returned to our main subject. "The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ *unto*

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secret of it is that you have still a little bit of your own goodness lurking within. You do not think yourself as thoroughly bad as God says you are. You have to learn that it is the *ungodly* that God justifies. You do not think yourself ungodly, and nothing else, and *to be nothing else*, in order to be justified; and therefore you have not yet realized God's justification.

Here, "being freely justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," is not mere justification, but actual *deliverance*, entire redemption. In the case of Israel it was a question between God and Pharaoh, "Let my people go." It is a real, positive redemption, not merely a forgiveness. Christ has bought us, free from all Satan can have against us. If I buy a slave, he is mine, and no one can have any right over him; and that is true of us. Even with regard to our poor bodies, though not yet redeemed by power from sorrow and suffering, they are free from Satan's power to serve God with. The body is for the

Lord, and the Lord for the body. God will have us entirely for Himself, by the work of Christ; for not even the smallest *particle* of our *dust* shall remain in Satan's kingdom; and this is why redemption is mentioned last in 1 Cor. i, 30; it refers to full, final deliverance, and includes the redemption of the body. Such was the typical order of the deliverance of Israel in Egypt; it was one thing for them to be screened from the destroying angel, by the blood on the door-posts, when in Egypt, and another, and very different thing, for them to be brought clean out of Egypt by the passage of the Red Sea, thus being entirely delivered from the *power* of Pharaoh. But more than this; Jesus has broken and destroyed all the power of death, by which Satan held us, taking them captive whose captives we were; and is now making us, who were Satan's captives, the vessels of God's power and testimony against Satan.

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,

to *declare* His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the *forbearance* of God." Here we have the connexion of the blood of Christ with God's righteousness. It has been *declared*. It rested only in promise till Christ came in the flesh. It was not manifested until then; so that, take Adam, Abel, or Job, they rested on the promise of righteousness, because the blood was yet to be shed. But now it is declared as having been fulfilled, and it is an amazing difference between resting on a promise, though that is blessed, and on a fulfilment. A man in prison, with a promise that his debt shall be paid, though relieved by the promise, is not in the condition of him who is walking at liberty, with the knowledge that it has been paid. It is not forbearance now, but accomplished salvation. It is God's own righteousness declared: can He *forbear* with *that*? The time of forbearance was in the time of the Old Testament saints. Then God was forbearing because of what He was going

to do; but that is not our condition. We have God's righteousness at "*this time*," this *present* time. He is not speaking here of that which is past of our natural life, but of the time passed before Christ's death. This is part of that "better thing God has provided *for us*." For if I sin, I do not want a prophet, as Nathan, to come and tell me my sin is put away. I can say I *know* the blood has been shed, therefore I know, as a *present* thing, that my *sin* is *put away*. It is a settled question. It is such a righteousness that He who accomplished it is set down at God's right hand, and our life is in Him there. Abraham could not say, 'I am one with the man at God's right hand,' for Christ was not there *as man* then. But the believer in Christ can say so; for as surely as the first Adam was turned out of paradise, so surely has the second Adam entered heaven, and I am as sure of my place in Christ as of my place in Adam. Well, then, it is such a righteousness as God recognized, and, as regards the blood, such a work

as has fully satisfied God. He is *just* to forgive. It is His own righteousness which is upon the believer, and he must own it; and here is the resting-place of faith. This is justice; but the opening of my heart is at the outflowing of love. For the opening of the heart is under the sunshine of grace. To see ourselves perfectly cleansed makes us hate sin. A man who is thoroughly clean will not like to get a spot on his garment; while he who is already somewhat dirty will not care about getting a little more dirty. When the blood was put on the lintels of the door posts, it was to keep the God of judgment out, and He passed over; for had He come in, He must have judged them, for they *deserved* judgment as much as the Egyptians; nay, more, for they *knew better*. Therefore it was grace keeping God out. But at the Red Sea they were to stand still and see the salvation of God. It was God over-riding every barrier and coming in and taking them out of the place of judgment altogether,

and bringing them to *Himself*. While the one was keeping *God out*, the other was bringing them *to God*, on His own ground and by His own arm. As an ungodly man I am justified by His *blood*; but as a Christian I am accepted in Him. Has the cross then left me outside? *No*, it has saved me from judgment, therefore I value it. I see a sinner trembling at the foot of the cross, feeling his need of the cross, or he would not be there; but not seeing the *value* of it, so he gets no further. He thinks he values it, but if he valued it aright he would not be trembling any longer at the foot of it.

Where is boasting then? It is all gone, as it is God's righteousness by the law of faith without any legal deeds whatever. Recollect we are not under law as innocent; for man is a sinner, and the law cannot allow of even a lust. Then where is the use of giving a law to man that is a sinner. What is the use of my giving a righteous law to a man who sells fraudulent goods? What is the use of my giving a true measure to

him, but to teach him where he is wrong? So God never gave the law to make men righteous, but only to convict them and show them their sin. Men may abuse the grace to continue in sin, but that does not alter the nature of God's righteousness. If a law is given to man, already a sinner, it must be to make him know himself a sinner.

Is He the God of the Jews? Yes, and of the Gentiles also; for He will justify the *circumcision* by *faith*, and the *uncircumcision* through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? No, we establish it. Not only Moses's law, but the principle of law. If a thief is hanged on a tree, is that making void the law? No, so far from making it void, it establishes it. So when Christ died, He established the law; and faith comes in and says, So far from making void the law when Christ died on the cross for my sin, He established the law: but that does not put me under it. If under it, I am lost, not merely as a sinner, but also by the law itself. Nothing establishes the

law like the death of Christ. The first chapters give us the Gentile, *lawless*, and the *Jew*, *under law*, condemned out of the law. Christ was born under law. He kept the law and died under its curse; and is He under it now? No, He is dead to the law and risen again. I am the dead sinner; He died for me; He has borne the curse, and it is all gone, and it has lost all power to touch me, for I am one with Christ. I stand *in Him* in the presence and favour of God, as dead and risen again in Christ. He gave all His sanction to the law and suffered it—glorified it, but delivered us from it.

In chap. iv the apostle refers to Abraham and David, as believing God; for if the law did not bring in righteousness, this does not dispose of Abraham, who was before. His testimony, therefore, is brought in. He goes on, therefore, to show the ground on which Abraham gets the promises, and in what state he was when he got them. He was accounted righteous through faith, and it was in his uncircumcised

state that he obtained the promises. As righteousness was reckoned to Abraham in uncircumcision and on the principle of faith the Jew's mouth was stopped and the promise available to the Gentiles. Then in David we have the same thing. "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." The law worketh wrath; and therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace, so that the promise should be sure to all the seed of Abraham; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all before Him whom he believed, even God who *quickens* the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they were;—thus introducing us as raised men in Christ into the presence of God. Beloved, in a day like this, what a thought it is to be set in God's righteousness. Christ has set aside all man's reasonings by the manifestation of God's righteousness, as the rising sun not only dispels the darkness, but

causes even the stars to vanish by reason of its brightness. When Christ is first revealed to the soul, it is always humbling, because it displays to the soul what it really is. I do not say that the affections may not be moved towards Christ without this; but there must be, sooner or later, such a revelation of what Christ is, as to show us what *we are* in the presence of Christ; and it is *that* which breaks down all inside the soul—foolish and vain desires, self-will, sinful thoughts and feelings, and everything that is the opposite of Christ; thus showing us, not only our need of Him and our committed sins, but that we are sin. Then afterwards we understand how we are brought into the unclouded favour of God, according to the love which sought us and gave His Son for us.

WORSHIP.

Worship is the rising up to God again from the believer, or from the

Church, of His own thoughts about His beloved Son, and about what He has done.

Confession is not worship. We have constantly to confess *before* worship, because we cannot worship while there is a spot on the conscience, but if we stop there, we know not worship.

It is when I have passed through the blood of atonement, and (if needed) have used the sin and trespass offering, that I have *fellowship* with God, which is being led, through the power of the Holy Ghost, into God's estimate of the beauty and the humiliation of Christ. It is when resting, in the Spirit, between the Father and the Son [that I have this fellowship]; not telling about my sins—for God's mind is not filled with my sins, nor is the Holy Ghost taken up with thoughts about my sins—but with that in Jesus which put my sins away.

Worship is being nothing, and having God's thoughts about Jesus rolling through my soul.

When Jesus, Jesus, is everything, I

am acting in the power of that life which is by and by more fully to be manifested. If we act upon this life, we shall then, from Jesus risen, have the flow of glory in our souls; for we are in Him now, and have the mind of God about His Son. God is not occupied with what *I am*, but with *what Christ is*.

God wants us, as His children, to know, not only that we are within the Father's house, but within the Father's bosom also. He wants to have our minds filled with a volume of thoughts about His Christ, and when a saint is full of this, and it ascends up to God, that is worship. And there is transforming power in Christ to change us into His likeness while we are in communion with Him and with the Father about Him.

Worship is the being *lost in wonder* at what we find in God and in Christ.

When the Spirit has led us to know the blood on the Mercy-seat, He does not send us back to feed with the swine,

but spends His time in taking of the things of Jesus and showing them to us, and thus supplies food for worship.

In the burnt, meat, and peace offerings, we have Christ presented to us in type as the subject for worship. In the burnt offering, His perfect self-renunciation and devotedness to God, even to the death; in the meat offering, His life in action; in the peace offering, as the link between God and the Church, that on which God and the Church together feed in happy communion. When this worship is interrupted by sin or defilement, we find, in the type of the sin and trespass offering, that God has already made provision beforehand in Christ, to restore the soul, as soon as confession is made, to the power of worshipping.

PEACE OF CONSCIENCE AND PEACE OF HEART.

Peace of conscience and peace of heart are two distinct things. A per-

son may have peace of conscience, knowing that he is a forgiven sinner, and yet not have peace of heart. He may say to himself, I know that my sins are forgiven, but I am not happy. And why? Because in heart he has been wandering from Christ: one thing or another occupying his heart rather than Christ. And whenever a person goes vagabonding from Christ, he is sure to lose peace of heart: and the secret way to know this is that his thoughts are all turning round himself and not Christ.

HOW TO BE SIMPLE.

If a person does not say more than he has to say he can be simple. But when we want to please people, a quantity of things come up in order to do so.

I am speaking right when I say something God bids me. But when giving out my own thoughts, I have a thousand things to enquire, How far they go, &c.

FAITH AND WORKS.

James ii.

It is a simple and general, but safe, answer, to any question arising on this chapter, i.e., as to that part of it relating to this subject, that God could not accept hypocritical faith. We are told by the truth that God cannot be mocked, and the conscience receives a safe direction on the matter by such an answer. But if the enquiry be pressed farther, it comes to a question of truth, of confession, and of glory; and the place requires a farther elucidation.

The God of glory is presented to us from the first. The God (not the Father) of our Lord Jesus Christ. To us, indeed, He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but God as the God of glory is the pivot of the truth revealed.

The God of glory appeared to Abraham, and called him, in the power of glory, (*κρατος δοξης*) from home and kindred and father's house to a place

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that God did not, but *would*, show him. The sight of the God of glory was the secret spring of Abraham's path; for when he had come into the land which God had in mind for him, when He called him, which he was not then to possess, he refused to take possession of so much as a foot of that which he was to receive, in his posterity, at the hand of God, in God's own time. Abraham, individually, waited for and gets a city whose builder and maker is God. This was the faith of Abraham. The word of God is his perfect reliance, his dependence is on God; and he looks for all subsidiary things at His hand, and is chastised when he fails. He is invited to walk before God and to be perfect, in the hope the God of glory showed him. To do the reverse, that is, to distrust God, was Adam's sin, and to *trust Him* is faith. In this view all the difficulty of this chapter is dissolved.

We must now recur a little to the habitual—we trust habitual—thoughts of the believer, of the well-instructed

believer at least, full of the joy of privilege and of his nearness to God, by the faith of the Son of God. Such a one knows and has believed the wonders of the grace of God in Christ, the sonship he has received in Christ, his union with Him, his place in the heavenlies, the hope of his calling, the love of the Father, and his worship of Him in praise and thanksgiving. If son then also heir, saith the scripture. Of what is he heir? That of which Abraham is heir—that of which Christ is heir—heir of the world, as joint heir with Christ,—but this linked, in pure grace, now to the child of God in grace. The sinner, the rebel in heart, corrupt, under judgment to return to the dust and not to die there, is sought and found of God in grace: his confession, as convinced by God of sin and of incompetency to good, leading in the path of God's mercies. To him then, so found, that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto righteousness;

and now, not only to forgiveness and the non-imputation of sin, but unto imputation of life also by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now faith was the special characteristic of Abraham, which makes him the father of all that believe; and therefore it is said, if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed; for they have believed unto righteousness, and so heirs. Now here follows this great principle, that that characteristic must be carried into every relation to God.

The apostle Paul is at great pains, so to speak, in the ivth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, to prove that it was by faith and not by law that we became heirs; for Abraham believed, and his faith was counted unto righteousness when he was in uncircumcision, (of which we are,) and the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham and his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Now the effect of the appearance of the God of glory was to bring Abraham

out from the world in which he was, and to keep him out of the world into which he came in Canaan, while looking for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, even the heavenly kingdom. This is different from the position of the Church, though linked to the Church. It is linked with the Church as its heirship, which is attached to it in Christ,—if sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, which shall be manifested in the dispensation of the fulness of times, but pregnant with present duty.

No one ever trusted God and was confounded. Christ was the head and leader in this trust, and found resurrection. Abraham found all, too, in God. Christ was the author (so translated, but perhaps likely to give misdirection to the mind) and finisher of our faith, who endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. The obedience of Christ to all the thoughts of God about the world,—in His love to it,

and in the full knowledge of its enmity, and evil, and desperate condition; (He came because its condition was desperate;) His separation from it unto God in the midst of it; His obedience unto death—gave Jesus Christ His place, as Son of man, in glory. Abraham was also separate unto God. The God of glory was before both in their spheres. Christ came from the bosom of the Father. The appearance of the God of glory to Abraham made every word a sure ground and *substance* on which his soul rested and questioned not. Christ is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Under such an aspect of truth no difficulty can occur as to the mind of James. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be

naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot

justified by works when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James ii, 12—26.)

With moderate examination it will be seen that the work of love (mentioned at verse 14) is but an illustration which would simply stand thus—You will allow, without question, that if a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not the things that are needful to the body; where is your love? What reward have you? Have you loved Christ? Have you lent to the Lord? Surely not: you have mocked Him in such a feeble pretence to love. How shall you argue about faith otherwise than you would about love? Now Abraham's work of faith, in reliance on the word of the God of glory, was to leave his home, his kindred, and his father's house,—made

him yield up his son, though all the promises of a land of earthly inheritance and universal blessing depended on this his only son. The more, in fact, that depended on that son, the more it was (in reliance on God's word) the occasion of a more ready yielding of him up, and he accordingly received him back again in a figure. The wisdom of the Holy Ghost in selecting this as the example of the work of faith in Abraham is most precious, inasmuch as it shows the depth of Abraham's faith above all other examples. It is more than abnegation. It was, together with a renunciation of hopes, *the crucifixion of the affections*, so concentrated we are told here; and he receives him back the new and risen man, the indefeasible surety of the promises. He refused to accept a foot of land, though using a portion as a purchase to bury his dead. The effect, therefore, of the appearance of the God of glory, as we have seen, was to bring him out of the world, to keep him out, and to cause him to yield up

all to God. Rahab's work of faith was in preferring the people of God to her own nation, receiving the spies from their camp, and was saved by the type of the cross. Now these are marvellous types of the works of faith in heirs of the kingdom. Of the extent of the faith of Rahab we do not so distinctly read as in the case of Abraham, but it was enough to bring her into the genealogy of Christ as her reward. Of Abraham's we hear plainly in Genesis, and in the xith of Hebrews; and Abraham and others, as this chapter tells us, confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth. The works of faith, then, as heirs of the world, are characterized by the works of Abraham and Rahab. Where shall the saint understand them better than in the place where grace has placed him *above* in Christ. He finds there Mesopotamia and Canaan all alike to him. He leaves one—he dwells a stranger with his own in the other. The world has so absolutely departed from God, and is not only

not subject to Christ, a condition to which sin had reduced it; but has driven Him out of it, and become guilty to final condemnation. He would have become the Saviour of the world, and He will, when, as heir to it, He takes possession with all His saints; and they shall be destroyed who destroy the earth. No thought that earth forms about Christ, no attempt to fit Him to it, does anything but falsify Him altogether and all the thoughts of God. This it is that makes it so difficult for those, to whom the grace of God in Christ has become known through the Spirit, to find their way in the midst of a false Christianity. But can the heir of the world, i.e., the saint, for he is joint-heir with Christ his Head, have any rule for himself but subjection to Christ as LORD, waiting for his inheritance. Show me your faith by your works. To me, therefore, the setting forth Christianity as blessing the world in its own course, and as being compatible with the claims of the

world, its organization, direction (at least) of its services, its application of judgment, its ambition, its contests, its alliances, and its policy, is a denial of Christ as LORD, into obedience to whom no Christianity as it is can reduce them: nay, these have a course to which Christianity must submit, or rule in giving way and becoming more corrupt than itself.

It is quite true (and blessed is the case of such a one) that the affections I have above may form a taste and a conscience too, which, if waited upon, would repudiate the world, and its ways, and its acknowledged pursuits; but the line of demarcation, which the faith of Abraham and Rahab gives me, has not yet helped me, though the yearnings of the Spirit of promise has; while God surely intended that the heavenly kingdom and its glory should have made the path plain, so that the way-faring man should not stumble therein. The work of faith of Abraham was leaving Mesopotamia, and remaining a

the place to be judged. They are only safe if out of it. And when God finds His saints there, He, in grace, touches and reproves—He breaks them to deliver them ere the day of visitation come. If they deny Christ as Lord, He cannot deny Himself. He, for His part, will deny them before the Father.

A failure of understanding in the truth of faith and works, as exhibited in this chapter, and in the truth on which it is built here, brought the same confusion as the mixing of the dispensations has in other cases.

The word "if," so often puzzling to the saint, generally applies to the judgment and reward of obedience in the heirship. We see the promise plainly conditional in Rom. iv, 12: TO THOSE WHO WALK IN THE STEPS OF THE FAITH OF OUR FATHER ABRAHAM. So absolutely is the walk connected with the heirship of the world and the glory of Christ.

The hope of the Church is the being taken away to be with the Lord.

stranger in Canaan. The deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, and the passover, and the redemption through the Red Sea into the wilderness, was a closer type to the Church. The wilderness was the place of instruction. They had been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Many saints die in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua, alone of the stock that left Egypt at the age of intelligence, inherit in Canaan—God can bring in. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." (Rev. xxi, 7.) It is a sad thing for a saint to die in the wilderness. This may not grieve, as it should, an indolent saint, who likes not the pain of confession unto reproach, and to be thought worthy of that kingdom for which he would suffer. Let them, however, consider that joining themselves to the world they must be scathed in its judgments. The saint who knoweth these things, or only feels them, laments the madness of those who shelter themselves, or rather think to shelter themselves, in

The hope of the glory is the manifestation of the Son of God at His kingdom. There is a special application of "if," just in a contrary direction. "I tell you, *if* ye be circumcised, ye are debtors to do the whole law. Whosoever is justified by the law is fallen from grace." Here the condition is that you shall *not* work; if you work, you break the condition of grace. You can offer nothing. What is given in grace to the believer is beyond work. The Church does not purchase its place by works. The righteousness of God by faith, the possession of Christ as that righteousness, who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, does this.

I am sure true-hearted souls will feel the value of the distinction made through this paper. In a concurrent publication, and with the same ends, in Vol. vii. page 284, (without, indeed, due clearness and development,) it was shown that the declension of the seven churches was from the confession of

the *kingdom* having failed in Christendom. The cognizance of heavenly things alone lets a Christian pass through the world on easy terms, and a slight sneer or charge of peculiarity is all that will be suffered. It is true of him that is born of the Spirit, (as of the Spirit,) that the world knoweth not whence he cometh and whither he goeth; but he is so far comparatively little heeded; but the steps of the faith of our father Abraham bring about another aspect of treatment. Christ, the leader and fulfiller of confession, though full of all unfailing grace and virtue, is sure to meet the contradiction of sinners, and we are all of one, and therefore He is not ashamed to call us brethren. If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together.

There is another difficulty which the distinction solves, which is the question of judgment. The Church, as the body of Christ, the persons being His members, is past the judgment: there can, therefore, be no condemnation. Her judgment was in Christ—she shall

not come into it; but all that is not of Christ, and all that is done in the kingdom, does come into judgment; and our path on earth is there, and His reward is with Him when He comes. But how needful it is to be occupied with the blessings of the Church where faith of the gift and grace of God brings experience of God. From the place of the Church even His presence in the heavenlies is strength brought for confession, and the joy of the Lord is her strength. It is here wisdom and guidance is sought and found. In the midst is worship and the praise of God the Father and of the Son, for the place of her worship is there too. Here, therefore, the sight of the God of glory is granted, by whom in us the WORK OF FAITH is fulfilled in power.

NOTE.—There are many unsuspected places of the New Testament that would receive a perfect elucidation from these things, which have vacillated between many interpretations, or been done wrong to, or passed as merely general when their appli-

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cation was most strict. We can justly understand the expression, "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your charity aboundeth." If faith meant faith in the ground of peace, the quantity of faith has nothing to say to it, but the value of the object. So the difference between the "work of faith," and "the labour of love." The expression of James, "Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him," receives its just force; and corresponding texts also, "The meek shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are ye poor," and giving this the sense of the spirit of poverty to the expression, "poor in spirit," declining the greatness of this world. The position of poverty held in faith saves so many of the positions easily felt to be necessary to the position of this world, if there is an heirship to the world to come, and that the present world, and every part of its constitution contrary to God and to Christ, except as to the bare fact that power belongs to God. If the position of the heirship of the kingdom is held in poverty, how naturally and without question is the saint free of the world and its ambitions, its frowns and favours. The utmost that

those that *possess* can do is to possess as though they possessed not, to use as though they used not. It is an *abuse* to do otherwise, and in respect of the kingdom, (in fact its revelation,) loss. The work of faith will make this world a very wilderness. The labour of love one to another is called for: the walk of faith in it opens the way to, and is the field of it; in fact, mutual help and love among the strangers who wait for an enduring substance. The more thoroughly the possession of the kingdom is realized, the more steady must be the recurrence to Gilgal, and the creeping in of Babylonish things, and the value of this world's goods, guarded against. We shall not be separate before God unless our hearts are bound up with Christ, it will be a meagre and failing confession without Him, and it should be "*true in him and in us.*"

Lastly, the duties and the relationships of the saints on earth, such as are recognized by Christ, are ruled by the Master and done to Him, and they receive the reward of the inheritance, because they serve the Lord Christ; He is confessed in all things, and every thought is in subjection to Christ; and *His* name is on their foreheads, both here and hereafter. (Rev.

xxii, 4.) We have not to go out of Christ for anything. "We are complete in Him (and this is, I believe, the true and only sense of the word in Col.) who is the head of all principality and power."

There is a point which receives perfect elucidation from this position of the believer. The truth of the place of Melchisedec, in this respect, has, I believe, been rarely fully, and clearly understood. We find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Melchisedec spoken of as entering in, but there is nothing of His coming forth. Again, happy souls know that it is not intercession that keeps them in the place of grace. They are *in Christ*, before the Father, in Christ in whom they have believed. Placed there in the settled claims of Christ, to be there unreprouvable in the sight of God, and yet the office of Melchisedec is intercession while above, not only of advocacy in case of failure, (1 John ii,) but of intercession for them in the difficulties of confession; compassed with the consciousness of past infirmity, (though without sin,) and a compassionate High Priest. Even the ignorant and those out of the way are the object of His graciousness. Held, indeed, as safe in Him, they, as the objects of His Father's love, are His charge while

heaven," nor whether he subsequently wrote what he tells us it was "not *possible* for a man to utter," that I would now consider; but a point of far more practical importance, namely, the conditions on which the grace and strength of Christ are imparted to believers for their daily walk and service.

When the question of salvation is in view, one does not speak of conditions—for it is God's grace to sinners—but when it is the believer's walk with God it is otherwise. Here there are conditions. If it be as to the certainty of divine knowledge, it is "If any man *will do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine;" or if it be the sustainment of the soul in trial, or the impartation of strength for service, it is, "My grace is sufficient for thee, *for* my strength is made perfect in weakness." For, if the apostle's case was special, as to revelations and the necessary counterbalance of a thorn in the flesh, and the buffetings of Satan's messenger, the principle which it brings out, in the Lord's answer to his thrice-repeated

on Satan's ground, and He becomes, to all who look to Him, the strength of their confession, and the leader in the path they walk, the beginning and end of their faith. Heirs with Him in a usurped country, seeking wisdom to distinguish between God's and Cæsar's, they confess Him not only in His grace, but in hope and patience, "in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," desiring to be with Him, and looking to be in His image. The fitness of this High Priest is most instructive. He who has received this office from the Father is in His place, where He intercedes, and from which He sends His help, and whence the love that animates the saints comes, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, becoming those who are to follow Him, in whom they stand, and in whom they are presented to the Father.

THE BELIEVER'S RESOURCE.

"When I am weak then am I strong."

Read 2 Cor. xii, 1—10.

It is not what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" might be, nor the nature of the revelations he received in "the third

supplication for the removal of the cause of his trouble, is absolute and universal.

There are two points in this answer: first, the entire sufficiency of Christ's grace to meet the exigency; and, second, the conditions on which alone that grace is imparted. Now the grace of the Lord Jesus is *the only sufficiency* of a Christian. "The flesh profiteth nothing." Yet Christians often act as if they themselves were sufficient for everything, except to meet some great trial, or to cope with some great difficulty, which drives them to their knees, and forces them to acknowledge their weakness, and to seek for Christ's strength.

This was not, however, the case with the apostle. He habitually leant upon that grace, and not on his own strength. He says, "we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." His ordinary course was not to go on, like many, in the spirit of neglectful unconscious independence, until some

crisis in his experience, or his circumstances, made him feel his dependence, and turn to the source of his strength. But even he had to learn that there was a fuller sufficiency in Christ's grace than he had ever yet experienced, or even imagined. His crushing trial drove him to the Lord as his only resource, and the intensity of his feelings is seen in his earnest prayer for deliverance; but he had no thought of a grace that could sustain under it, and make it an occasion for the fuller display of Christ's glorious power. Still, when the answer comes, it shows how simply Christ's glory was his object, and not his own ease, or credit, or anything else. We hear no more of the pricking of the thorn, nor prayer that the messenger of Satan might depart from him; but he says, "Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The paradox, "When I am weak then am I strong," by which he closes this account, shows how entirely his heart assented to the

and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii, 5-8.) And if Paul was taken to "the third heaven," where none but himself had ever been, his heavenly elevation must be balanced by a corresponding earthly depression; or else he would not have been able to use this token of the Lord's favour for anything but self-exaltation, which is but to corrupt from its true end what Christ bestows. Hence the necessity of the flesh being mortified in proportion as spiritual advances are made. If I enter into the truth, practically, of being "risen with Christ," the other side of the question is, "mortify therefore your members which are on the earth." A ship must be ballasted in proportion to the sail she carries, or she will inevitably be capsized. In the school of Christ the spirit is taught, on the one hand; and the flesh is scourged into submission on the other: and the proof of advancement in the knowledge

conditions of his strength, and how thoroughly he had learned the force of that word, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

And how many practical lessons are to be drawn from this narration!

In the first place it is manifest, that the higher we reach in heavenly things, the lower it will put us in the estimation of ourselves, and in our condition as to this world. He who was highest of all in heavenly glory and heavenly worth, was lowest of all in earthly circumstances and human estimation. "I am a worm and no man," was His declaration in the hour of His sorrow; and "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," shows the condition in which He pursued this earthly service. But even in this He is our example. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,

of Christ is found in increasing distrust of self.

In the next place, it rebukes that vanity of mind, which esteems everything of little worth which cannot be displayed for the admiration of others. The mere reference to what he had been taught as to "visions and revelations of the Lord," the apostle characterizes as speaking "like a fool." They were afforded for another end than to bring *himself* forward. And if he could not talk about his experience, in the best sense, namely, what Christ had taught him and wrought by him, without being in danger of becoming "a fool," I wonder what those are who are constantly talking about themselves in connexion with what the flesh and the devil accomplish in them! Moreover the apostle could not communicate to others what he had learned in the third heaven. The revelations were abundant, but it was "not possible to utter" them. As good not to have them, then, (says the foolish heart,) as not to be able to use them. But why is it

necessary for the heart to disclose all its treasures, like Hezekiah to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon? Is there *nothing* that Christ teaches me for *myself*? Must I count that as nothing which I cannot vainly show to others, or even use for the edification of others? Why should I hinder Christ from giving me a "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which *no man knoweth save he which receiveth it*?"

But the non-removal of the thorn in the flesh, moreover, teaches us the folly of thinking a change of circumstances, or the removal of trial, necessary to one's service for Christ. If we want to *shine* ourselves, circumstances of trial will hinder our shining; and Christ sends them for the very end that *we* might not shine. But if we want Christ's grace to shine, that will shine most by means of the very trial and difficulty we may have longed to get removed. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness!" And this was to bring out in the apostle, "Therefore I take

pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Circumstances may have their effect on our own spirits, but, unless they are sinful, (and then we must get out of them,) they are certainly no hindrance to God's Spirit. A man may feel his hands to be always dirty in the world's service, and yet if he leans on Christ's grace, which is sufficient for him, he may have his heart always clean for the enjoyment of Christ, and for the service of Christ. Such a man serves Christ in his daily toil; and if he cannot always be reading and praying, he may, nevertheless, be always in communion. A mother, with half a dozen children, which occupy her hands through the day, and often keep her awake through the night, cannot serve Christ as she sees, perhaps, some others; but if she owns Christ in her circumstances, and hangs on His grace, while she is rocking one child in the cradle with her foot, and mending the clothes of

another with her hands, may have her heart fed by the hidden manna from Christ's own hand, and serve Him, whom she loves, more effectually than if she had all her time to herself, and thus felt less the necessity of the injunction, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end."

I want no change of circumstances, nor removal of trials, to enable me to pursue Christ's service; I only want to know the truth, practically, of the word, "my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But then the sense of weakness, which alone makes room for Christ's strength, is what nature always shrinks from. "I am *so* weak," is often on the lips of Christians; and it often means that they expect strength in themselves instead of in Christ; or, that they have hitherto leant on a strength which has now broken down. In either case they have yet to learn the solution of the enigma, "When I am weak then am I strong." A Christian ought always to feel *himself*

so weak as to dread to undertake anything in his own sufficiency; and yet so strong in Christ as to be able to accomplish everything through His grace. The sense of weakness, from which nature shrinks, is essential to the display of Christ's strength. Without it we should neither know the extent of our dependence ourselves, nor should we use the grace communicated for the glory of Christ. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah xl, 29—31.)

THE EFFECT OF PAUL'S LIFE.

I do not know anything that humbles one more than Paul's life. You get judged by Christ's life, but Paul's was that of a man of like passions with ourselves. Such thorough abnegation of self! Such death as to everything in himself.

TWO REQUISITES.

There are two things we need in order to the understanding of our privileges. The first is to have a consciousness of the love of God. Even a gift from a father is a mere sign of approval otherwise. The second is to measure the outgoings of God's heart by Christ as the object of it. We get oppressed otherwise if thinking of ourselves. We must first know grace, and then see that it is in Christ. Thus it is far easier to understand it. The moment I am rooted and grounded in love, I can believe that God can give me anything.

than faith, though founded on it; other than the certainty of salvation, though the crown, and seal, and realization of this. The abstract certainty, the consoling certainty, that my Father loves me, and will not, nay, cannot, do otherwise, is another thing than happy intercourse with this love; with no consciousness of anything else, or of anything in the way of that enjoyment. The certainty of love in God constitutes the bitterness of the sense of the loss of the enjoyment of it,—for I speak only of saints here. The Spirit's seal to the truth assures of God's love; and Christ, if we fail, intercedes for us. But the Holy Ghost being the spring of the enjoyment of it in the heart is another thing. The one—the foundation, it is true, of all—assures that God is for us: the other is God in us, filling the heart with joy, with communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There are two ways, very distinct indeed in their character, in which I may fail in this communion; one ne-

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

(Continued from page 215.)

Although the Christian who walks faithfully, clothed with the whole armour of God, enjoys the effect of its use, in the peaceful joy of communion, the difference must have, perhaps, been felt, between this state and the loss of communion, to know the immense importance of this armour, or rather of wearing it. Far better, however, to enjoy the confiding peace, which accompanies its use, than to know its importance by exposing oneself without it to the assaults of the enemy. Communion with God is a real thing, in which He pours into the soul, in a greater or less degree, the deep joy of His presence,—of that favour and perfect love in which He communicates with the soul, revealing Himself,—and gives, by His presence, the happiness of a relationship, in which no breach is suspected, nor thought of, in which the soul lives. It is more

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gatively, where negligence has deprived me of positive and sensible intercourse with God—the heart is cold and indifferent; the other, where the conscience is concerned, and, the heart having allowed the enemy to prevail against it, the Holy Ghost becomes in us a stern reprover; and while never destroying the sense of God's love, makes us bitterly bewail the loss of the inward sense and enjoyment of it, and makes us taste, more or less, the fruits of sin, as, in its nature, separating the soul from God; and thus makes it horrible to us, not as feeling *with God* its evil morally, but as in its nature separating us from Him: not as to faith, indeed, allowing us to suppose that He will give us up at all, but to feel what it is. But this last is an extreme case, and discipline, on God's part, and very severe discipline too. The other, alas! is but too common. They are very different. Many Christians live frequently in a state analogous to the last case I have supposed; but in them it is from being yet under the law, and

from their not being established in their relationship with God; and the distress, consequently, is not so great, because there has not been the same nearness to God. I have said these few words as to the result of not using the armour with which God has furnished us. I return to its character and use.

I have spoken somewhat of the loins being girt about with truth, and of the breastplate of righteousness; of the affections being governed and kept in order by the truth; the revelation of Christ, and the walk which flows from this; and godly vigilance of an unassailable conscience. Thus the soul is in practical peace—has not to occupy itself with itself—can walk in unsuspecting openness and confidence. When the heart is full of peace, and enjoys the unsuspecting sweetness of it with God, it walks in the spirit of peace. This peace characterizes all its ways and relationships with others. There is not effort or constraint,—nothing to guard

or keep back. The course is natural, unconstrained and unsuspecting.

There is not fear of evil because there is not the consciousness of it. Not that the soul is without wisdom; that cannot be in such a world; but it is wise concerning that which is good, and simple concerning evil. It does not much fear evil befalling it, because it has a portion of peace that outward evil cannot touch; nor does it count on outward good as its resource. In this peace, the heart depends on God; and as above evil in this sense, it brings peace with it into the scene through which it passes.

The expression, having the feet shod with it, is beautiful, as showing the habitual character of the walk. Such was the character, especially, of Christ. He brought in peace—rejected, indeed, but not the less true—the great peacemaker. He declared such should be called the children of God. These three first parts of the armour are practically expressed in the words, as far as relationship with the saints goes:

“Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another.”

Thus governed within, and walking in peace without, the soul is free to trust in God. All three parts of the armour are, indeed, worn together, but there is a moral dependence and order. Internal condition goes before external activity; order in the affections and practical righteousness, before the spirit of peace in our ways with others; and both before that confidence in God, which shields from the assaults of the enemy. It is not that the confidence flows from this walk—it is in God only; but it is in this soil that it grows, in this state that it has its free exercise. It is as important to remark that it does not look back or calculate on any state of the soul, as that that state of the soul is that in which this confidence is found in free exercise. When we enjoy our health, all depends on the state of the body; but because it is in health its energies go out on their just object, and the health is not thought of at all. Faith here is the

full confidence in God, which counts on His goodness and faithfulness, and that He is for us,—which trusts a God who is entirely for us. Without this, all is despair, or near to it, in a conscience which feels that it has to do with God. Satan has got in; and to the soul who feels the need of God being for it, there is left only the agonizing feeling that He is not. Hence the Saviour prays for Peter, that his faith might not fail; that is, that in spite of his dreadful fall, he might not be left to the thought that therefore God had abandoned him, was against him, and that there was no hope. The fiery darts of Satan are not his efforts to seduce, by acting on our various lusts; but where, by any means, our hearts are turned away from God, the inroads he makes in the form of unbelief and despair. This is the force of the passage in the Corinthians, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency. The evil was there, the incontinency was supposed, the temptation was the power of Satan over the soul, which was the

result. It is, evidently, a different power from his seductions. There is no pleasure in despair, but deep agony. The flesh finds its pleasure in satisfying its lusts, but there is no lust of despair; it is as a consuming fire in the soul.

We may see, in the temptations of Christ, as far as He could be on the same ground as we, this same difference. There could be no lusts and no despair; but Satan sought, at the beginning of His career, to seduce Him from the path of obedience; and brought all the terror of death upon Him at the end. Only in the former case He maintained His first estate; in the second His agony only led Him into more earnest communion with His Father. But He went through, for us, the whole pressure of Satan's power; for us in both respects, only was never reached within by it, so as to turn Him aside from God, in the perfect path of obedience.

The fiery darts of the enemy are the power of the enemy over the soul, when it has been left exposed to his inroads, by the shield of faith (an en-

tire confidence in the grace of God, in His favour, as that in which we dwell, and changes not) having been down.

Such, I doubt not, are his fiery darts; and terrible they are, when, from the shield of faith not having been our safeguard—having been dropped, we are exposed to them. But I would add, that I do not believe that this is ever a simple case: that is, that it happens by itself, without some producing cause. The passage I have alluded to in the Corinthians explains what I mean: Satan tempted, for incontinency, a heart which had opened the door to him, by lust; which had even strayed out, in spirit, into his domains, forsaking God—not in will, perhaps, but in heart—in letting itself loose, exposed itself naturally to his power; particularly in these lusts, which a corrupt will nourishes, which, as the apostle expresses it, war against the soul, and which are so contrary to the very nature of God, to His purity and holiness. Where these are, in any degree, wilfully indulged by one who is

a Christian, it is well if the result be not this terrible power of Satan over the soul, which for a time at least, darkens the light of God in it, and hides His favour; the knowledge of which only makes the loss of the sense of it more terrible to him who suffers under it: it seems to be gone for ever,—at least it may reach this point. At any rate it is the most terrible chastisement which can reach a human heart. If a soul belong to God, it will surely be delivered; but who can say how long it may suffer. The great remedy against such a danger is to have the soul frequently, in a positive way, in God's presence. To walk there constantly is our privilege and supreme joy. But I speak of a positive entering into His presence, who is light, that all may be clear in our conscience, all free in our heart. In a word, that we may not only enjoy blessings from Him, but be, as He graciously permits us, before Him. I have gone through the effect of not having the shield of faith up, and particularly what is the

cause of it, as a warning; but the case, blessed be God's grace, is as rare as it is terrible.

But something of an analogous nature takes place, in a different state of soul, as to what is not unfrequently called the fiery darts of the enemy. I refer to those cases where blasphemous and infidel thoughts seem to arise in the mind. They are not desired, not the effect of reasoning, but present themselves unsought, to the great distress of the soul. But this, I believe, happens when the soul is not set free in Christ. When once we are really introduced into the presence of God, in the knowledge of His favour and love, are there before Him, enjoying Himself, Satan cannot get there, cannot thus reach the mind. In the state of despair, spoken of previously, feelings of rebellion against God may and do arise, but these are the working of the mind itself, in the state it is in; whereas the suggestions of which I am now speaking are foreign to every feeling, and every acknowledged thought. But

there is not, I believe, the true, personal knowledge of God in grace, though that grace may be admitted as a truth, and as the only ground of hope. These thoughts distress and harass the mind; and persons assaulted by them sometimes draw dismal conclusions as to themselves, as in other such cases they think they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. General deliverance, and the true knowledge of God, is to be sought here. The liberty wherewith Christ sets free—for this deliverance is real—brings us, as freed from everything that was against us, to God Himself. In the case, then, of the trying suggestions, of which we now speak, the shield of faith is not dropped; it is not yet up, has not yet been borne up on the arm of faith. The shield of faith, then, is that entire confidence in God, flowing from the real, personal knowledge of redemption, which silences every doubt, and prevents every question, by the personal knowledge of God's love, which instead of having questions with God,

of this condition of soul, closely allied to it, yet different,—the knowledge of and possession of salvation. The difference is this: it is not abiding confidence in what God is, but the joyful certainty of what He has done, the consciousness of the position He has set us in.

Confidence is dependence, a blessed, right, and softening feeling; though emboldening in what is right, and as against the enemies of our souls. Salvation gives boldness and energy: we hold up the head, so to speak, a head covered by the strength and salvation of God Himself. Would to God, says Paul, that not only thou, but all that hear me, were not only almost, but altogether, *such as I am* save these bonds. Was he—after two years imprisonment and wrong, in the presence of judges, as a chained prisoner, without resource save in God—was he disheartened or fearful in spirit? The helmet of a known salvation was on his head. Yet (to be possessed in glory) all was his in Christ, all was his in his own

reckons upon Him, against everything else. If God be for us, who can be against us? It is not merely peace, as regards evil, through the blood of Christ, but confidence in God, resulting from His being thus known. If I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, says Moses, let my Lord now go with us, *for it is a stiff-necked people*. God is our resource and help against ourselves, our security against all else. Satan may prove a thousand things against us; our knowledge of God is the answer to them all.

Entire, unwavering confidence in God Himself is the spring, then, and source of energy; the efforts of Satan to break and enfeeble it are quenched by the shield of faith. Maintained practically in its place by walking with God, it rests in itself on the true divinely given knowledge of God, as for us, as He has revealed Himself in Christ; a knowledge sustained and fed by the grace and intercession of Jesus.

But there is a further development

soul. He was what the love that was in his heart could wish others to be; the consciousness that it was his, animated the love which expressed itself towards others,—gave it its object in its own happiness. His relationship to God was known; his being in the light as God was in the light, in the blessed joy of holiness, sin and evil and all confusion outside; Jesus' glory complete; the Father's love unbindered by any thing in the state of the object is rested on. This secured by the cross, so that it could fully flow in now; the possession of Jesus' love, in whom it was all secured. Salvation was a helmet to his head; he could lift it up before all. Nor is it less such to us in the day of battle: we have not to think about ourselves; that is secured, for that helmet is riven by no blow: we are free to use our wisdom and strength undisturbed by any fear for self in the conflict in which we are set. We can seek victory and blessing for others, glory for the Lord, success before Him. He has thought of us and put us into

the place where we are, and have more than man's heart knows how to desire. And secure in it we can think of serving Him. Evidently this, as all else, must be realized by the ungrieved power of the Holy Ghost, to use and walk in it.

In all these parts of the armour we have found what relates to our own standing, our enjoyment, in governed affections and godliness, of our blessed relationship with God which is given us in the new position which the second Adam has, and which we have in and by and ever with Him. This is our security, our defence, in the conflict. Thus nothing separates us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. But there is *active* energy, arms which we wield in the power of the Spirit of God, which silences flesh, and baffles the power of Satan, and controls those who are under his power. When fully in the power of our relationship with God we can take the sword of the Spirit, which is His word. If the soul be not in communion with

light thrown upon his wiles. It detects and judges them appositely; and a deception laid bare is a victory over the wiles to which no answer can be found. See the Lord's use of scripture, as an example—ever matchless—of this weapon. How were His adversaries put to silence, no man daring to put to Him any more questions. How was Satan himself reduced to leave one whom he could not touch. For this weapon repels all the attacks of Satan, as it confounds, by its power, all the force and wiles of the enemy. We have no other weapon; we must have skill to use it, which no practice but the power of present grace alone can give; but it is the weapon of God's own mind, and light, and truth, in the midst of the darkness by which Satan would overcloud man's mind. An arm of a peculiar and distinct character closes the list, showing how all are used in entire and constant dependence. The first parts of the armour, we have seen, are defensive, those which hinder Satan from touching us,

God it cannot wield His word in His name. It is not a carnal weapon to be used with carnal force or wisdom. It is the Spirit's sword: sharp, reaching the conscience, and of the most hardened where rightly applied, and bowing and subduing the most haughty. But if the soul be not with God there is not the thought of the right passage, nor the power of God with it. It is not spoken of here, mark, as the means of edification—it is not a sword there—but of conflict. The weapons of our warfare are spiritual, to the pulling down of strongholds. The word of God in conflict, when spiritually used, carries light with it to the soul, as to our whole position in conflict—the light of God's mind on the whole scene and question before us—which inspires a confidence, of which he who has it not has no idea. Satan's object is to deceive; the conscious possession of the divine mind only makes the discovered deception an element of strength, in the knowledge of whom we have to do with, and of God's being in the

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connected with the judgment of self and godliness: after these the active energy of the word of God, the sword of the Spirit; but the Holy Ghost, which alone can enable us to use the word, cannot do so by putting us in a position of independence; it is contrary to His nature and service, and to the moral effect of His presence with us. He puts our souls into connexion with, and dependence on, the source of all power and grace. He cannot be separated from those in whose name He acts, from whom He comes forth, and by His very presence He puts us in communion with, and dependence on, them. It is thus it is said of Him, "He shall not speak of Himself," that is, unconnected with the Father and the Son, as it is said, Sayest thou this of thyself? as an isolated spirit might say things of which himself was the source. But there is more than this, because the Holy Ghost acts in us morally, and makes us feel, as new creatures, our entire, and I may add, glad, dependence, on so blessed a

source of activity and power, as God Himself. We know we are so. It is a creature's place: it is a godly creature's place, and his willing place; for the heart, led by the Holy Ghost, is rejoiced to receive all from God, as it knows, also, it can receive nowhere else what is good. But this is exercised in confidence; we ask, we express our dependence; we supplicate, both in the sense of need, and in the earnestness of desire for the accomplishment of what we are thus enabled to succeed in or obtain for others. The mind, though in dependence, is brought into the channel of God's desires and blessing, by the operation of the Holy Ghost—given a share in this energy of divine working, though in the sense of entire dependence on God. God meets, answers, shows His concurrence in what He has put into our hearts by the Holy Ghost. We are occupied with what He works in, and works with, and for us. Not only are our desires accomplished, but we have the consciousness of God's

with Himself in confidence for every answer of His love and strength. It will be remarked that it is on every occasion—always. This is one mark of our living in this state of communion, that the heart turns at once, naturally, there. It does not set about to consider, when something arises, but to pray. God's answer surely comes. Next, remark, it is in Spirit, that is, in the power of the Holy Ghost working, in our communion with God. But another element is put before us here; the active exercise of a vigilant mind, so that all turns to prayer, and that we observe that as to which we have to pray. There is the active interest of love, which is awake and alive, does not sleep over the interests of the Church of God, over the holiness and communion of the saints—cannot if we are near to God. For there is an active, living energy of love, which, in the desire of the blessing of the saints, thus draws near to God. This gives perseverance and earnestness; for whatever our confidence in the love of God,

concurrence in them, and that we stand, on His part, in our conflicts and service, while we have the joy of everything being His. Nor is this all; it is not only our own part in this divine conflict that occupies; love to others, those without that are His, and united thus indeed to us, acts in the grace of intercession.

Everything is found, in this (seemingly, to human judgment, so feeble) instrument, above all precious, because it is an unseen one. Need is there, earnest desire of others, good in love is there; desire for God's glory, confidence in His love, in His word, dependence on Him, reality of intercourse with Him; while, as a consequence, every inconsistency is brought to light in the heart by this nearness, not only as respects holiness, but as it touches confidence in this nearness. Besides this, there is a close linking of all the whole body together, in its dependence on the head. What a place is this to use the given sword of God; His own thoughts in power, and to be

affection is earnest and persevering; and here, above all, it is that divine affections, our personal participation through grace in the interest God takes in blessing, are brought out. Here, as elsewhere, the apostle therefore brings in all saints. (Comp. i, 15; iii, 18.) The apostle knew what it was, as all abundantly testifies, and he knew its value. It is a privilege of all saints on which an apostle himself is dependent. All have not distinguished gifts, but all have the privilege of drawing near to God as child and priest. (See 2 Cor. i, 11.) Divine power in us is the fruit of dependence on Him who gives it. The Armour of God, then, begins with all being inwardly right in affection; then in practice; then peacefulness of walk; and so it is, for sin is restless, and impatient; then security, by unfailing confidence, from Satan's attacks, the joy and power of salvation before God; and finally, the active energy in which we can use the word in all; and behind all dependence exercised in prayer.

It is a wonderful mercy that the scripture is so plain as it is; for the mind of man reasons about truth, therefore the heart rejoices in the wonderful plainness of scripture. Its depths, it is true, are infinite and unfathomable; but all that the salvation of the soul rests upon is perfectly simple. The more you examine the word of God, the more you find its perfection. The word of man may dazzle for a time, and seem to be clear, but it is found afterwards to be full of flaws and obscurities.

In this Epistle to the Romans we are not to look so much for the development of the Church, as for the relationship of individual souls with God. The question is—how can God and man meet? First, the blood satisfies the justice, and saves from judgment: as we saw by the blood being on the doorposts, when Israel was in Egypt. Secondly, Christ came down, and was made sin for us, and having gone through

all the wrath of judgment due to it, He rose from the dead, and ascended an accepted man into the presence of God; and now all that was His by right is made ours *in Him*. At the close of chap. iii the value of His blood-shedding is settled as the ground of acceptance; and the epistle goes on with the results of this. Chap. iv shows us righteousness imputed through faith: Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Only there is this difference between Abraham's faith and ours. Abraham believed God was able to perform His promise; we believe He has raised up Jesus. It is not so much here the believing on Christ and His blood, as the believing on Him that raised up Jesus from the dead. The subject is the intervention of God in power to bring us up accepted in the Beloved. Christ had come under judgment, and God, by raising Him up, raised us up also: "raised us up together," &c. Faith also sets us there. Chap. v follows out the subject, and is divided

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into *three* parts. First, our condition before God; (the basis having been laid;) second, he reasons on the consequences of this condition as to our present state and feelings, and shows what we get, unfolding God's ways and our portion in Him from ver. 2 to 11; third, from ver. 11 to the end of the chapter, points out the contrast of the first and second Adam, and heads up the family of nature and of faith in one and the other. The last verse of chapter iv is connected with the 1st verse of chapter v; and here I would remark, that it is not properly "raised *because* of our justification"—as has been often said, but that it should be, as the text has it, "delivered *for* our offences, and was raised again *for* our justification." The reason for this we see in the first verse of the vth chapter. "Therefore being justified by *faith*," &c.

Thus I see, in scripture, that God never separates *justification* from *faith*; for we cannot have justification without having our souls brought into living

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connexion with God, by the exercise of *individual faith*. There are three things brought out in the first verses: first, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God;" secondly, "Access into this grace wherein we stand;" thirdly, "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." First, *Peace with God*. All the past, all connected with the old man, not only our *actual sins committed*, but whatever *can die* under the judgment, is put away—is done with—to the saint: hence perfect peace. Secondly, the present divine favour in which we stand, as a positive thing, a personal introduction to the full favour of God. But not being yet in the glory, we are, thirdly, rejoicing in *hope* of the glory. Christ has borne all that deserved judgment, and has entirely left behind him in the grave everything to which judgment can apply, and is now set down at the right hand of God without it; all therefore that respects judgment, in connexion with the saints, is ended to God's satisfaction. Though, of course, there will be the Father's chastening for

their profit; but it is impossible that judgment can be executed on those who are "the righteousness of God in him." It is as impossible as that Christ's worth should be *inadequate*, or that God should punish the same sin twice over, or rather put it away and then punish it. So impossible is it for God to punish for the sins of those who believe. If any one had to be shut out of heaven for my sins, it must have been Christ, for He bore them all, but we know He is raised and gone in to glory. It is this, either He *has borne* them all, or else I have to bear them myself, and then I am lost. But Christ *has borne* them, and was accepted and received up into glory; therefore the question is settled, if I believe Heb. ix. 26—28; "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away 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 unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He did not hold back. *Sin*, in all its horribleness, was laid upon Him, as on the day of atonement, when the sin was laid upon the head of the victim, and judgment was fully passed upon him. But when "He shall appear the *second time*" it will be *without sin*, not merely in His person, He was always so; but as having nothing whatever to say to sin as regards them that look for Him; having perfectly settled about sin when God dealt with Him on the cross. No sin *there* and then escaped the eye of God, as seen on the spotless Christ; all was perfectly brought out; dealt with and put away, and Christ is not now on the cross, the positive value of His work having taken Him up to heaven. The judgment of my sins has all been settled between the all-seeing God and His spotless Son. We have, therefore, not merely a hope, but settled *peace*.

"When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down." He must have failed or else I have perfect peace, and I know He did *not* fail. "Being justified by *faith* we have peace with God." The reference of *faith* is never to itself—to our own feelings and experience, for they may deceive us, and refer at any rate to our state, not to Christ's work; as the reference to faith in this passage often deceives people who would make *their faith* the object, and so turn back upon themselves for something to give them peace. *Peace* never rests on the *experience* of anything in ourselves. There will be experience, but the perfect justification of the sinner (who believes) does not rest on experience, but is the answer of God to all that exercises me about myself, (and rightly exercises me too.) When I get peace in God's way then I get the answer of God to my soul. I can trust the heart of God, for I know what it is, having learnt it in the gift of His Son; and it is in believing what that is, through

His work, that I find peace to my soul; and the more that freedom is worth and to be valued by us, the more horrid must be my own self, and selfishness in the sight of God, if I bring anything of it, or of its pretended righteousness into it; even as "dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour;" and the better the ointment the sooner will it be spoiled. I cannot trust my own heart or its feelings, for it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; God's I can, and His who will keep me to the end, His has never deceived me.

Faith is not experience, though we shall have experiences of what we are; but I am not justified by experience; it is the answer of God to these experiences that gives peace. Peace is not joy; those often have joy that have not settled peace: but this rests on feeling. When the graciousness of the Lord is seen and one forgets oneself there may be *joy*, while the conscience may not be purged; but *peace* rests on that which is settled.

Faith looks at its *object*, and not at itself, and the soul has peace with God and not with itself.

I do not want you to be at peace with yourself. We are not called on to believe that we do believe, but to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, by whom we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and are brought into perfect favour, every cloud that would hide God's love removed; and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His favour is better than life, therefore I can praise Him while I live. So in the midst of wilderness weariness I can rejoice.

I have been lately greatly struck with Rev. iv, in connexion with peace of soul. You find God's throne here in its Sinai character, and not the throne of grace. The twenty-four elders are sitting on their thrones in perfect peace while the terrible judgments are going on towards the earth, but when it is said, Holy, holy, holy, they all fall down and worship. The thunderings and lightnings do not move them at all,

given. As man, I find trial is not pleasant, it is not joy to realize being put into the fire to be refined; but it is most important in all the tribulation of the way to know that my peace is settled; that the matter of my justification is a finished thing; else when I come into trial I shall be saying, how can I suppose now that I have God's favour, when everything seems against me? If the believer be not quite settled in God's favour, he cannot "*glory in tribulation*;" but if I know my condition before God, then I am able to understand what I am going through, and learn the result of tribulation, which is patience; for "*tribulation worketh patience*." I find all sorts of things hindering me: I need *my will* to be broken; I shall hope to get a thing, and perhaps expect to get that which I shall never have. I may have to cry to God for three whole weeks, and fail, as Daniel did, to learn patience, and in it learn the rashness of my heart, that would expect everything at once. Thus, "*patience works experience*." The

but when the worship commences they are all in action.

"Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God:"—how could I, a man, think of being in the glory of God, save through perfect grace? Thus God had not only given us blessings, but associated us with the Blessor. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them." Thus, in these first two verses, we have the Christian, as such, brought out: past, present, and future, all settled. The old man all atoned for, and the new man in Christ before God. For the past, for all that concerns the old man, perfect peace; for the present, perfect favour; and for the future, glory. What more do I want? What more can I have? Yes, there is more.

"Not only so, but we joy in tribulation also:" there are present realities for the saint to learn in the wilderness. "*Tribulation!*" The more faithful the saint is, the more trouble he will have. The more blessing he has, the more trial: because there is much to remove which would hinder the blessing when

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saint feels the process; but he does not see the progress in himself. Others are to see that, and they do see it. The saint is thus taught not to trust in himself; and not to be in such a hurry, but to wait on God. A man may be in earnest, but in such haste, that he will break down, because of not waiting on God. "He that believeth will not make haste." See Moses and his devotedness: he goes, in true devotedness, but in the energy of the flesh, (learnt in the palace,) and kills an Egyptian without God's bidding. Pharaoh hears of it; Moses flees, and abides for forty years in the wilderness, to have his *will* broken; for where faith is not the power, the strength of God is not. When God was going to send Moses for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, Moses says, "who am I that I should bring forth Israel out of Egypt." Now we do not find as much energy here as when slaying the Egyptian, thus shewing that where the energy of the flesh is not mixed up with the Spirit, *man* is not up to obedi-

ence. Moses left the court of Pharaoh's daughter, where he had been brought up, and preferred taking his place with a parcel of slaves, because they were the people of God; but though sincere and devoted, and with a right intention in giving up the position in which providence had placed him, (for the Holy Ghost in Heb. xi specially marks his giving up his providential blessing as *pleasing to God*,) he must be cast aside and made nothing of; then he gets that "strength which is made perfect in weakness." But first his flesh had to be broken down; and this was done through forty years' tribulation in the wilderness, keeping his father in law's sheep. He was learning experience, and "experience worketh hope;" because in this kind of experience I learn what God is, and detached from the world and its promises my hope is then resting above. Moses had more knowledge what the people of Israel were to be delivered for when he went to Pharaoh by God's sending, for he knew nothing of the

Canaan they were to go to when he slew the Egyptian. "Hope maketh not ashamed." In learning experience it may be a struggle with God, but we shall find it is of no use to struggle against God's hand in tribulation, for He will hold us *there* until we submit. But in the end it will cause me to hope, because the love of *God* is shed abroad in my heart. Not only has He given His Son for me, but God, who *is love*, *is in me*, God's own love is enjoyed in my soul. But how is it that I get this? By the Holy Ghost which is *within* me. He has shed abroad this love of God in my soul by the Holy Ghost, and this brings us back to a strength of hope which nothing can shake. I may be going through all sorts of trial, but resting in Christ and having this testimony of the Holy Ghost in my heart, of the love of God for my soul to rest on, I can go on calmly, whatever be the trial. Also, observe, that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who maketh intercession for us according to God. A

man may say, in the face of all this truth, but suppose I do not *feel* it. Your saying so proves that you are gone back from faith and are looking to your own feelings; and the moment you lean on your experience or your feelings, that is not faith. But then how do you know you are the object of this love? Are you perfect? No—the *enjoyment* of it is within, the *proof* without.

I *know* it, because I see that "Christ died for the ungodly," and I am simply an ungodly one, if the *ground* of my hope is inquired after, and in myself have no feelings, no strength at all. But His strength is made perfect in weakness, and Christ died when I had no feeling at all. Christ died when I could do nothing at all. What better proof could you have than that God has given the greatest thing in heaven for the worst, the vilest, thing on earth, a *sinner*? I am a sinner, and therefore Christ died for me. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet per-adventure for a good man some would

even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This is what distinguishes God's love from man's. While man must have some motive on which to act, something to draw out his love, God's love, on the contrary, springs from Himself. For God could find no motive in us, for we were *hateful* and hating one another.

Here mark the glorious character of the reasonings of the Holy Ghost. They are exactly the contrary of those of the natural man, and even of the quickened soul. What work it is, what havoc it makes, to reason from man to God. When man reasons, he judges of *what* God will be towards him, from what he is towards God. The Holy Ghost says, "when ye were yet sinners, Christ died for you." He reasons from what God is, and has done, to what He will be and will do. If, as a quickened soul, I judge of God by myself, I should say, God must judge me, for I know that I deserve it; but *that is not grace*; for

"God commended his love unto us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Much more being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. The Holy Ghost reasons downwards, from what God is, and not upwards, from what man is, as man always does. The Holy Ghost unfolds what God is to meet the wants of my soul. It is true that the sinner does deserve judgment—not with any hope, however, that he can be made better; for give peace to a conscience charged with what is *past*, and guilty before God, and take the law in addition, and that only shows a man that he is lost; as the apostle declares in Romans vii, where, after useless efforts to satisfy the exigence of the law with a sinful flesh present, the soul is brought to the consciousness that it wants somebody to deliver it, for it cannot deliver itself. Man needs a Saviour; well, this is reasoning which God will follow till we have got a Saviour, and are forced to cast ourselves on Him by our hopeless

need. But here, where the Holy Ghost is reasoning from what God *is and has done for the sinner*, and not from what the sinner is, it is quite another thing. It is much harder to learn that we are without strength, than to learn that we are *ungodly*. If a dead Christ will save an enemy, surely a living Christ will save a friend. There is divine beauty in God's reasonings, for God knows our hearts are such wicked things, that faith in Him is the hardest of all things to us. Satan's effort is first to hide God's judgment of sin from us, saying, "Thou shalt not surely die;" and when that has not succeeded, he then tries to hide from us God's grace, so that man should not be with God. If a dead Christ is made a Saviour, a living Christ will be a friend to you in all your need. *A dying Christ*, the weakest thing, as appears to nature, though it was God's strength, has saved you when a sinner, will He not do all you want of Him in *His life*? If He died for you when your sin was upon you, how much more will He care

for you now that it is passed away? A living Christ cannot be to destroy you, if a dying Christ has saved you. And mark, not only the *power* of the argument, but its *grace*, in taking away all torment from the heart—for "*fear hath torment*."

Verse 11—"And not only so, but we also joy in God." Now that you have this point of salvation settled, and that you can rejoice in what you will get in the glory,—for your boast will not be merely in joy and happiness for yourselves, but, better still, you can joy in God. We first rejoice in the things given, but we do not rest there. We rejoice in Him who gave them, and delight in that which God is in Himself. His very *holiness*—a thing that would naturally terrify us—is now my joy; and all in which He has revealed Himself becomes my portion and my joy; for He is my God, and what He is is my delight. We are in the light as God is in the light, where no spot nor cloud can ever come. I can now delight and make my boast in God Himself.

After speaking of the peace, the enjoyment of grace, and the hope of the Christian, the apostle shows we can then sit down and enjoy the *source* of all our blessings. But if my will is not broken, it is true I cannot joy in God; He has then to deal with me in such a way as to break my will; and, of course, we never like that process. But when He has broken it down then we can joy in Him. So if I stray in practical walk, I do not doubt my salvation, but then I cannot *joy in God*. We only joy in God when walking with Him. If I stray, I can *reflect* about the joy, but I must take a double step in getting back (the judgment of sin on the cross, and God's unchanging grace) before I can again joy in God. (Ver. 12.) Such being the blessed result of God's dealings and of justification, the Holy Ghost now goes on to show *in whom* we have this justification—its grand and unchangeable basis—and draws the contrast between our headship in the first and second Adam; thus laying a great foundation for the principles He

is going to bring out. Verses 13 to 17 form a parenthesis, and this you will see if you read verses 12 to 18 consecutively. The noticing this makes the passage clear. In verses 12 to 18, the Jew and the Gentile are equally headed up in the obedient man and the disobedient man. Death passed upon ALL men, and grace heads up the new and living ones in Christ; but the unbelieving ones are left in the first Adam. It is not here the bride, but the children of God looked at as in Christ. We get, then, the doctrine of these two men, the first and second Adam, in their relationships to us, in the 12th and 18th verses; but before turning to that more particularly we will look at the contrast of grace with law, of which the whole parenthesis treats. See Amos iii. 2: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." Now "until the law sin was in the world," &c. "But the times of this ignorance God winked at." God winked at the evil in other

nations, inasmuch as He did not treat them as breakers of the law, where there was no law. But when there was law, they (the Jews) were governed by law, therefore Israel had the rod held over them, and they were to be chastened for breaking the law; and we know they were banished ultimately into captivity on account of it. But of the Gentiles who had sinned without law, He says, I will judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, &c. Law never *made sin*, but law made *transgression*, which is disobedience to a law made. The sin was going on all the time from Adam to Moses; as the sign of sin's reigning was present, when there was no law, for *death* was there. My child may have a bad habit of running about the streets, and it is a bad habit that cannot be allowed; but if I command him not to do it, it is another thing; for if he does it then, it becomes *disobedience*; and the thing I correct him for is not merely his bad habit, but for his disobedience to my command. But before I forbade

him it was only a wrong thing he was doing that needed correction. If we know the scriptures how simple they are! For the want of this what absurd mistakes are made! what volumes have been written on this passage, which has been applied even to the salvation of infants, and all sorts of fancies! But how clear it is when it is seen to be a quotation from Hosea vi, 4, 7, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For they, like Adam, [*margin,*] have *transgressed* the covenant." Some have not transgressed, like Adam, but they are sinners still, though they have not broken a given law. Sin is always, therefore death is always; but *law* is not *always*. The argument of this passage is, you are not going to shut up God to the Jews only. There are plenty of people who have sinned before Moses, but the sin is not larger than God. If sin and death have been there, God must go there. Christ did not come only for those who had sinned under law, but for those also who sinned

without law; for sin and death reigned between Adam and Moses, and grace overrides it all. "Law entered that the offence might abound." You Jews have added offence to offence, therefore you need justification and grace all the more for having the law; for you have been guilty of positive transgressions. Then how beautiful the contrast in the 17th verse, where the Spirit is still making God more excellent in His ways than the just fruit of sin. It is not merely that life is reigning, but "you shall reign in life;" a crown of royal glory shall be yours with Christ Jesus; thus showing God's heart to be greater than the evil that has come in.

Verse 18 marks the *generality* of this address, "upon [or rather *towards*] all." It flows "towards all," to condemnation; accomplished, not in *result*, but in its own proper and natural effect: grace comes in to deliver. So by the righteousness of one the *free* gift came "*towards all*;" that is *not* in the sense of application; the mean-

ing is TO ALL in its direction, and *not* UPON *all*, ("εις παντας.") As Adam's sin did not rest on Adam alone, but ran over to many, so Christ's righteousness did not end in Him, but abounded unto many. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

In verse 19 we see, where it is a matter of *application*, the word "many" is used, and not the word "all," as in the preceding verse. The 18th verse is the abstract thought; and thus I can go and preach the gospel to every creature, saying to the sinner, "the blood is on the mercy-seat, come to God;" but to the believer I can say, "you are righteous in Christ." "By the obedience of one shall many be made [constituted] righteous." Man may say this will do harm. Well, but God has said it; and what a comfort there is in the simplicity of scripture!

In the next chapter we get, as the certain effect of this, newness of life. You may have got the principle of

bounded grace did much more abound." And abounding grace has been shown! Wonderful is the way of God! He gave man his own will, and sin is suffered to rise up to its full height in wickedness, even in putting Christ to death. Then, to show how powerless sin is, in the height of God's grace, that very thing, in which man's sin was at its climax, has put sin away. It is a glorious thing that God should thus manifest the utter impotency of sin in the presence of His grace. If righteousness had reigned we must have been sent to destruction; but it is grace reigns, though it is through righteousness: it is not righteousness hath abounded, but *grace*, (through righteousness, of course.) Grace means love working where there is evil; righteousness is being consistent with what God is. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Then, if there be the reign of grace in the heart, there must be practical holiness—a righteousness consistent with it. If God's love works in the

resurrection, so as to have new tastes and desires, but if you do not see the need of your having the righteousness of Christ, you do not know yourselves; if you do not know the holiness of God's heart, you do not know the unholiness of your own. Christ's death may be considered, as in itself, glorifying God, apart from its results; it may be considered, also, as His being efficaciously substituted to bear the sins of many. We have the double aspect of the death of Christ shown in the two goats, one of which was the Lord's lot, and the other was for the bearing away, into a land of forgetfulness, the sin of the people. The first was for the glory of God, the second for the conscience of the sinner. *Both were needed.* I am a sinner, says the awakened believer. Yes, but all your sins were laid on Christ.

Verse 20.—The place of the law was that the offence might abound. Wherefore the law? Not to make sin abound, but the offence abound, so to make sin exceeding sinful: "but where sin a-

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heart it is to produce something like itself. God's love is such as has never been seen before in heaven or on earth. His perfect love, and grace, and righteousness, bring out what God is, in a wonderful way. It is grace reigning because God has the upper hand, even in our sins, and has put them away.

GRACE FOR THE WILDERNESS.

Rom. viii, 18, &c.

There are two things needed to make good our journey through the wilderness; first an object, a divine object; and second, the assurance of the love of God as the foundation of all our hopes.

Another thing, however, comes out before the glorious object is reached, and one which underlies the whole relation of God, and that is, the path we have to tread, from the time of our knowing redemption to the obtaining of our rest. Thus, when the Lord

visited Israel, redemption of the good land was promised, but not a word was said of the wilderness; for the wilderness was no part of redemption properly speaking. God would show them what was in their hearts, and thus what was in His heart; but this was not properly the fruit of redemption work.

In the fifth of Romans we have, first, "Peace with God," "access by faith into the grace, in which we stand," and "joy in hope of the glory of God:" in all this not a word of the wilderness. But when he says, "and not only so but we glory in tribulation also," *there is the wilderness*. This is not properly a part of redemption, but rather the exercising of us for the discovery of what we are, *but in the presence of the God who has redeemed us*. The danger is in not holding the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. There is no doubt of the faithfulness of God to lead us on to the end; still, as regards detail, there is danger in the journey. When the joy of deliver-

ance is first known, confidence in God is unbounded. But then we have *to learn* the unbelief and waywardness of our hearts. We own it, but we have thus to learn it. And if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, these exercises will not in the least touch the sense of our relationship with Him.

The secret of getting on our way rightly is holding the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. For we have a difficulty, when conscience is lively, under the sense of failure, in laying hold of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to apply it at all times to our need. It is not that the Lord would have our consciences unexercised. Paul's was exercised night and day. But the danger is in this, that the eye which is turned in, and conscientiously too, is apt to be turned off from Jesus and grace. Now remember all this exercise we get as the fruit of redemption. All experience previous to that is to bring us to feel the need of redemption.

In chapter vii, when he found the difference between getting better and being saved, and was rendered hopeless of the former, then he is willing to be saved as he is, ungodly, and without strength. Then God comes in, and there is "no condemnation." Now he is brought as a believer, *as saved*, into the wilderness. Now, we are apt to be either careless, saying, It is all grace, or careful, asking, Is it all grace? We may be honestly searching our hearts; but if not *with God*, we shall do it imperfectly. But if *we are* sure that God is for us, we shall spare nothing. So in Psalm cxxxix. It is flesh that weakens confidence.

After all, though exercised, though brought under responsibility, it is Christ that is carrying on the work all through. It is grace from beginning to end. It is not merely priesthood; there is a third thing. He is the "apostle and high priest of our profession," but also "Son over his own house." Moses was not only a messenger, but a constant manager over God's house. He

was to be faithful; and generally he was faithful. "But Christ as a Son over his own house." Moses was not over his own house, but over God's. But Christ is not in faithfulness, as a servant, but over His own house. He has an individual interest in it. The good Shepherd sought His own sheep. Christ is carrying on, not only God's house and affairs, but His own house. He takes the immediate care of what is His own: and He is doing it all as God. Thus we have all the nearness of being His own house, and yet it is God who is over it. He never fails in taking care of His house.

In the failure of Moses, we see that He did not get up to this principle of grace. But man can never be brought through the wilderness but by grace. The rod is the authority of Christ, but it is authority which has life-giving power. We need grace, special grace, which will not pass over a single fault. It would not be grace to do so, for it hinders our enjoyment. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Fa-

ther." He will not pass it over, but work in our hearts to show us the root of our sin, that it may not hinder our fellowship. He carries us to the end, but not blindfold, but through faith. Moses did not sanctify God. How? He did not manifest God. But God did sanctify Himself in spite of the unbelief of Moses, by giving all the water needed.

When we see redemption, we see God to be for us. But do you say that all the way? Alas! no. You see failures, and then you think anything but God *for* you. But why? has God changed? No; but you have. Then comes exercise to bring this out, and to deepen the soul in the knowledge and enjoyment of the unchanging love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

END OF VOL. I.

G. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row.

Mrs. Lee J. Wells

THE
Eleanor Pike

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

The Bayly
1929

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."—Eph. vi.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1857.

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PREFACE.

It needs but few words of introduction to this little volume, since, whatever its aim may be, its character and worth must be judged of by the truths it contains. A preceding volume has been spoken of, in reviews, in terms of praise which the editor would not like to employ or repeat; for thankful as he is for any acceptance that the Lord may give this effort for the good of souls, he would deem it its best praise if Christians were enough interested in it to pray that its future pages may be more under the guidance of the Spirit than the past, and that they may thus minister Christ more effectually to the conscience and the heart.

THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

THE ADVOCACY OF CHRIST.

1 John ii.

THE beginning of this chapter refers to the preceding chapter. There he is speaking of the manifestation of that eternal life which was with the Father, and the revelation of the perfect light in God, in Him of whom we read in the gospel, "the life is the light of men." Walking in the power of that life, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son; for this life is in the Son. Still, God is light: and if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But in the light, by life, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. Then in the first two verses of the iind chapter, the apostle speaks of the resources of a Christian

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A

when he fails, (viewed as placed in this light,) as, alas! we know that we all do fail. In the former chapter we have seen three things: 1st, the Christian is in the light, as God is in the light; 2nd, he has fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This can be and is because, 3rd, the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. This depends on the possession of life, and makes the Christian's standing complete. Then in the iind chapter, the bearing of our practical feebleness here below on this is met, by grace, in another way; the Christian, having sinned, we have an advocate with the Father; and this is bringing out quite another principle altogether. It is not merely that the saint has a divine nature, making him capable, through the Holy Ghost and the efficacy of Christ's blood, of communion with the Father and the Son; that nature he has when he fails; but he is not walking in the power of it, and consequently fails, and therefore needs an advocate with the Father; and this is quite another aspect

other, on what our real state is. God demands righteousness, but it is not, as many think, that the work of blood-sprinkling has to be done over again, or that our righteousness has failed before God; for the moment I believe, I am righteous as He is. *There is no decay of it*; it is always of the same value. This is a question of who He is—who is my righteousness. The advocacy of Christ is founded on this unchanging righteousness, and on the fact that it has brought us into the light, as God is in the light; and it reconciles the circumstances of feebleness or failure of our actual state with the privileges of our standing in the light, through righteousness divine. It is founded on the fact of the new exercise of heart and conscience into which I am brought, by being placed, through Christ's blood, in the perfect light and love of God, with a nature formed to enjoy them. The advocacy of Christ is thus founded on the fact that, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, I have my conscience exercised in a way I

of grace, from that of communion. It is not joying in God, the just state of the Christian, but the interference of God in grace, in the person of a mediator, one between God and us. Now, what is in question here is not our justification. There is no possibility of anything being imputed to us. He was made sin for us, and the work of Christ has put us in God's presence without a question remaining as to righteousness, and that position we never lose. It is not that which is here touched on, but another thing of all-importance to us, the daily exercise of spiritual affections in free communion with God. It is not that we fail, as to our standing, *before Him*—Christ is that, and He cannot change—but down here we do. "In many things we offend all." We fail constantly, inwardly and outwardly, but the exercise of our affections must be, if they are real, according to what we are down here, dependent, on one hand, on our increasing in the knowledge of God, and of what His love is; and, on the

could not before, in view of the light and love of God, in which I am, to which I belong, in my new nature. It could not be exercised if the righteousness were not complete; nor, if it were not, could God deal with sin as He does in discipline and tenderness, through the priesthood of Christ. But He is, as here expressed in connexion with it, Jesus Christ the righteous, and the propitiation for our sins. He intercedes on the ground of our present standing in righteousness, in the presence of God, in Him, and of the propitiation having been made for the sins in respect of which He intercedes. The righteousness is always in the presence of God. He has not to look for that now in His dealing with us, for Christ is always there. God has been perfectly displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and perfectly glorified, as to sin, by Him; and now I can go into His presence and not be afraid, because of this righteousness. But how is my intercourse with God to be carried on by such a poor failing thing as I am,

and that in the presence of light, and called to walk in it as God is in it? It goes on in virtue of what I am in Christ. Christ, my righteousness, does not need to be maintained or renewed. He fails and changes not, nor does my righteousness; but I need to be sustained. Suppose I have failed, my communion is at once interrupted: God cannot have communion with evil. Well, here the advocacy comes in; Christ's priesthood comes in to meet me; it does not acquire the righteousness, but lifts me up, if I fail, in virtue of it. The intercession of priesthood imputes to me, as my abiding position in divine righteousness, what I am in God's sight, to lead me to judge myself, according to the light I have been brought into by this righteousness. My judgment of good and evil increases, no doubt, as I grow up before God. But from the beginning of my justified career, the standard of my judgment is the light of God's presence. There are two things needed: grace to keep us in the way, and mercy to restore us

to communion, when we have got out of it. In the enjoyment of these, our great High Priest secures us,—all the grace, in a word, we need by the road, while He maintains us in the abiding assurance of our position before God. Peter did not lose his trust and confidence in God, though he denied his Master. Satan might come and say to the soul, "it is all over with you; you are too bad; His sentence is gone out against you, and there is no hope;" and thus confidence in God, our only resource in failure, be lost. But before Peter failed, Christ had prayed for him: thus he learned what he was in himself, and knew the grace that sustained him; and then he uses it to profit: "Strengthen thy brethren." He was competent to help those who were weak and failing like himself, because he knew his weakness and the blessed resource of grace. It is exactly the same grace that met us at the first, that sustains us all the journey through.

Here is the government of God, as

a father with his family. It is not like "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." This is the most dreadful of all chastisements, the leaving us to eat the fruit of our ways. God surely will never finally forsake us, but He may leave us to the fruit of our own ways. This is an extreme case. In general He will deal with us in present discipline, according to our ways. As I have before remarked elsewhere, this government of God, in this sense, His love, the present exercise of manifested affections towards us, is made to depend on our acts and doings, as in John xiv, 23; xv, 10. God's love to us, as sinners, we well know, does not, nay, cannot, depend on our love to Him; for it is as sinners He loves us in grace; and so, even as to our conduct, (for, after all, it is grace that enables us to go on well,) He deals with us always in grace, and can be nothing else towards us; still it is here connected with His righteous ways. He takes notice of our conduct, of the state of our hearts, our walk. God deals with

His children. And so Christ as a Son over His own house. If we speak rashly to our brother, or walk abroad carelessly through the streets, and see some vanity and are distracted, we shall find the effect of it in our own souls at the end of the day with God. If an angry word escapes me, I feel the effect at the end of the day with God: better still if, at the moment, judging oneself. Grace will restore us. God will follow us, and bring us back. If we had a child that was unruly, we should not give it up, but wait upon it in love, and correct it in hope of reclaiming it. I might see a child go wrong, and leave it; but if it be my own child, if it be mine, I must go after it, and bring it back. This is the patience of His grace. At the same time God can never give up His holiness. No, He could not pass by or suffer unholiness in His child,—indeed it were our infinite loss if He allowed it in us. Therefore, also, was it needful that Christ should die. Thus God was debtor, so to speak, to Christ, on ac-

count of His work, for the glory of His character. "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." "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Thus nothing is passed by; but this is accomplished once for all. But the same thing is true in regard of Christ's advocacy for us. If there is failure, God sees it; but Jesus comes in and intercedes for us, that it may turn into an occasion of instruction, correction, and profit. Some say that we have to use the priesthood of Christ, that is demand Him to exercise it; but it is not so. Christ uses it for us. Why do I turn to God when I have failed? It is because Christ has used it, and fresh grace is applied, which has drawn me back to Him; fresh grace has wrought in my mind, in virtue of the intercession to which *my wandering* gave occasion. There is nothing in us brings us back to God but fresh grace working in our consciences. There-

of Jesus that I can get to God about my evil thoughts. All the consciousness of failure, all the exercises of heart, are the occasion of my going to the Father; and form so many links to link my soul to God: we learn it in our every-day wants and failures; we are all astray if we do not see that God has a holy foundation for all this. It does not follow that we *must* fail. God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. The roots and principles of sin ought to be judged in communion before God. We ought not to fail, though we all *do*. Our wretched self-confidence makes us fail, and then comes in the priesthood. It is the rod of Aaron. Moses had, indeed, smitten the rock at the first, that the people might have water, but this was not to be repeated; but it was Aaron's rod that blossomed and bore fruit; and he was to speak to the rock, and it would give its water—divine prevalency in priesthood. That is the way grace takes away the murmuring of the heart.

fore it is said, "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." It is not "if any man *repent*." It is just as much pure grace as at the first looked upon us, when we were in our sins. In the case of Peter, the Lord foretold him what would take place, "Satan has desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee." He needed this sifting; and Christ does not ask that he should escape it; but before Peter got the sin, or run into the danger, the Lord had prayed for him; His grace was in exercise, and at the moment when it is needed. "He looked at Peter," and grace wrought its work. His weeping was the fruit of Christ's intercession and grace, not the cause or motive of it. The grace and intercession of Jesus is exercised towards us in all the grace and wisdom of God. It is grace which makes our very failure the occasion of God's coming in with more grace. The righteousness is not called in question; it is not touched. It is through the intercession

Two years Israel was in the desert; and thirty-eight years more, because they did not go up and take the land, as they had been told; and if we, like Israel, will not go up, it detects our state—we are making the way long. Israel had not the faith to go up to the Anakims. If we would break with the world, and take up the cross properly, it would give us the enjoyment of the full power of communion with God at once; if not, we must learn, by its daily mortification in the desert, what flesh is. If we think to escape dangers by leaving the path of faith, we shall surely get into sin. Israel found the same Anakims in Canaan, the giants still there, when they got into the land at last, that frightened them at the first, and hindered their taking possession. What is the reason Christians have often more joy on a death-bed than all their life through before? Why, the reason is, they had never till then surrendered up all for Christ, had never before learned Christ to be everything, and everything else to be dung and dross.

But Israel's raiment had not waxed old for forty years in the wilderness, neither did their feet swell. They learned in all this way the wonderful detail of all God's goodness. The manna never ceased, and the patient grace never fails to the end. Our foolish hearts, alas! will not trust God, and so the Lord shows us the patience of His grace. He goes with us wherever we go, even in our failures, as He turned back with Israel through the wilderness; and if our hearts have experienced the exercises of the desert, we have learned the vanity of earthly things, and after all find it better to give it *all* up, and trust God that He may be everything to us; and if we had done it at first, we should have had it at once. But to continue. The constant exercise of Christ's priesthood is carried on in heaven, in connexion with our heavenly standing, and is made to bear on our actual daily state down here; we are to be heavenly men on the earth. Christ was the heavenly man down here; we are joined to

God would not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but would, with the temptation, make a way for you to escape. We may be weak, but that is no hindrance to our walking as He walked, for His strength is made perfect in weakness; but He cannot be the strength of our will. One born only yesterday may follow Christ as much as an old Christian, and Christ is as much for him; there may not be so much wisdom, but in the child in Christ there is often more singleness of eye and more undividedness of heart; the great thing is that the will does not work. There it is, again, we see where Christ was so perfect. Still I see in Jesus that He comes down to the first moment in the divine life in sinners. This we see at the baptism of John. John calls to repentance, and they go, and Christ goes with them. He needed no repentance, as John insists, for He had no sin; but in them it was the first step of spiritual life, and Christ accompanies them there. From the first step which the work-

Christ by one Spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Mark the effect. What was Christ? Not only the obedient man, the perfect man under the law, but He was the perfect manifestation of the divine nature in a man; there was in a man all the effect that Godhead could produce of goodness in a man, (I am not speaking of miracles,) patience, endurance, love, purity, holiness, and every other grace. It is not that we can be as Christ *was*, because sin is in us: there was none in Him. But we *are* called to walk as He walked, through the power of His grace making us walk in the Spirit. There is not a willingness always to walk: there is *a will in us*. He must break our will. So long as our walk does not flow from the word of God, there is flesh working, and there must be weakness in the ways of God. "Well, but," one may say, "I am so young a Christian; I am so weak." It is not a question of age in grace. If your eye were single, and there were not self-dependence,

ing of God's word in them produced, in this baptism by John, there is not one that Christ does not take with them; no spiritual step in the whole course of our life in which Christ does not throw Himself into our path. He is the life, in which we walk in it. The will of God was the spring of all Christ's conduct. He was come to do *His* will: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "Mine ears hast thou opened."* That is, He put Himself in the place of obedience; and hence the rendering of the passage is accepted: "A body hast thou prepared me." He became a man, that is, took the place of a servant; He was to walk by what He heard. He was willing to do this, "Lo, I come." "Not my will, but thine be done." The will of God was the spring of all His con-

* More exactly *cut or dug* for me. It is not the same Hebrew word used elsewhere, as in Isaiah 50, for example. That was daily opening, this the taking the place of hearing the commands of another, even of His Father. This was the body being prepared; for in becoming a man He became a servant.

duct. He was not only the obedient One, as we commonly understand obedience, that is having a will of His own, yielding it up when prohibition came; such, and in a certain sense justly, we should call obedience in a child: Christ never had such. His Father's will was His one motive for acting. Where no word from Him was Christ remained still. He might be hungry, but would not use His power by His own will,—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." He might love Martha and Mary, but He waits God's time and will to go to them. "The Father has *sent* me," He says, and I live by [or properly on account of, in virtue of my connexion with Him] the Father," &c. We are not only *so* to walk, as to acts, as He walked, but the way He walked, in principle and motive. *Right* conduct does not suffice, it must be *obedient* conduct. The spring of Christ's conduct was never His own will; not that His will had to be corrected, but He came to do His Father's will. Satan

never shown; it was perfect obedience; the humble, holy, patient life, that does not stir without God. If you will not do anything without a word from God, then you are sure to have the strength of God in what you do. "Cast thyself down." No; He would not put God *to the test*. He was not going to tempt God by trying whether He would protect Him. He had confidence in God. As we read, "the people tempted God, saying, Is God among us?" They would prove whether He was among them or no; and this is the scriptural sense of tempting God. He was sure in the way of obedience to find Him. When Mary and Martha sent to the Lord, saying, "Lazarus is sick," He does not stir; He had no word from God; and he died. Mary might think it cruel that He should abide two days in the same place, and not come immediately to heal him. If He had been there He might have wrought a common miracle; but His raising him from the dead is for the glory of God. Satan tries him; but there was no will which had self for its

tried to hinder; man tried to hinder; but He goes through it all. He takes the first place, as indeed He must go first in the difficulties. "When he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them." He was led by the Spirit to be tempted; everything that could put His obedience to the test must be tried on Him. He learned it by the things which He suffered. Yet even here we see the difference in the glory of Christ's person and another. Moses had to fast forty days to be with God on the mount: Christ, as a living man on earth, was always with God. He fasts forty days to be with Satan, tempted in the wilderness; and you could not see Him in those circumstances without seeing who was there. If all the glory of the world was offered to Christ there, it is offered to you in detail every day; and we see, in a day like this, people are hurrying after it with all their hearts. Well, Christ meets him. "Make these stones bread;" satisfy your hunger by your own will. He had no word from God for it. His will was

centre and object. Satan must betray himself at last. "If thou wilt fall down and worship me, all shall be thine." But a manifested Satan, to the obedient servant of God, is a conquered one: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Still He takes the word, "it is written," as the obedient man; but this is power. Satan has power against pretension, against knowledge, but no power against obedience, if we are acting by the word, with no will of our own. He took His conduct from the word. It was the source of His conduct. "If we say we abide in him, we ought to walk even as Christ also walked." Satan was baffled; the strong man was bound; and that is how He bound him, by simple obedience. He then exercises, freely for man, the power which overcame the enemy: that is a distinct subject. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out devils, raised the dead; He could have set men in blessing here, destroying the works of the devil, if they had been capable of happiness, and prepared to enjoy God. But man's heart

itself was enmity against God. Will and lust were there, and another work, redemption and a new creation, were needed: but Christ passed through everything that could be put before Him, to hinder Him in the path of godliness; *everything that could test the divine life*. Christ knew in that sense what it was to be tempted like as we are, sin apart. It was all the exercises He went through which prepared Him to be our High Priest. Man will say, and has said, He cannot feel what I feel of inward conflict. I answer, we need sympathy in the exercises of the divine life in our souls, not sympathy in our lusts; those we must practically kill, as we have a right to count ourselves dead. But everything that could try a living man He passed through, perfect in all; and He learned the application of His Father's love to His heart in it all, in the peace which He experienced: and now He can say to us, "*My peace I leave with you,*" and "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. If the world has hated me, it will hate you; but be of good

are under grace; we are under law if it has. The most cases of distressed hearts who would seek Christ's sympathy in their conflicts need to be set free. They are under law. Strength against sin we do need, and that Christ will surely give; but if we are under grace sin has not dominion over us. There may be careless failure, but this is not the case of distress we speak of. It rather needs a rod, though God may graciously draw even out of this. But in sorrow and trial we have Christ's sympathy.

The Lord knew what trouble was; His soul was bowed down with trouble, but the first word is, "Father." The first moment we are in sorrow, instead of looking around for comfort, for sympathy, or looking to the actings of the flesh, as to what I have *done* or what I have *not* done, and pouring forth our sorrow in nothing but fleshly murmuring, let us turn immediately to God; and then the heart would be cast down, indeed, perhaps,—Christ's could be;—but in perfect submission to the will of God, and thus the sting of the sorrow

cheer, I have overcome the world." He knew and understood experimentally and practically, as a man, in passing through this world, how divine favour from above flowed in the comforts of a tried soul, and applied itself to every exercise such a soul went through here below, in the midst of ruin and the presence of the enemies;—how it was sufficient for every soul's need to live **in holiness**, and enjoy God in spite of everything that beset Him in this life of holiness. He who lived it is become our life, and He strengthens our human hearts in the pain and trial of living it, which He has felt. Do we want to be comforted, when sin is at work? No; we want what is sharper than any two-edged sword for that. This judges the intentions of the heart, there where the sin lies. For the infirmities we have our High Priest, who feels them. He has suffered, being tempted. He will strengthen the new man against the lusts of the old. As to imputation or distress arising from that, it is gone for the believer; as to dominion, sin has it not over us, if we

would be removed. The instant there is perfect submission, there is perfect peace. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour, yet for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The deepest depths are the occasion for Him of the deepest submission, and all is light. "Not my will but thine be done," is the expression of His heart, when finally tested ~~with that~~ which He could not, because He ought not, but to have wished to pass, before which He righteously feared—God's holy wrath. But I return a little back to give its true character to this last trial, as regards us, and one that Christ could, as we have seen, so far as victory over Satan's power went, have brought in all the promised blessing at once. He could have raised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as He did Lazarus. But, alas! another awful truth was brought out. It was not merely Satan's power and its sad effects. *Man did not like Christ to be there*, even though He delivered him. He would not have God, even if He came to

bless. He showed himself to be alienated from God in his own mind, and was proved utterly incapable of enjoying happiness where God was the source of it. The carnal mind is enmity against God; dreadful thought! "Now have ye seen and hated both me and my Father." Christ could not have anything to do with the world in its moral state. But did grace and divine love cease to work? No; of course God knew all this; and this very rejection brought out the full purpose and work of His grace, and the trial of Christ, which hung on the accomplishment of it. He now had to meet the effect of sin itself in the power of Satan, holding man captive under death to the judgment and wrath of God, against sin—for I still speak of the trial, not the work of atonement itself. But He had to redeem man; and if Gethsemane was, as He declares, the power of the enemy, the cross was the judgment, the terrors of which the enemy sought to use against him. And now He takes the place in resurrection, to apply redemption; the

with their brotherhood, their arts and sciences, their social intercourse—making themselves happy without God; for while they make a show of their cleverness, and talk a great deal about acknowledging God's gift in the skill and ability he has bestowed upon man; they do it to exalt man, and continue still to reject both God and His gifts. They will not have a *God in Christ*. Men think the world can be set right by cultivation and science, by encouraging the arts, and such like. Why Christ could not set it right: infidels are saying, christianity is only a figment, for it has not set the world right, and men are taking the words of Christ in their mouths, saying men should love one another as brethren, and bringing all nations together to cultivate amity and good will, and the very words that they take in their mouths, while they are thus seeking to make the world happy, are the words that the infidels use. They would make it happy, too, in the same way. Christ knew it could not be, and declared plainly it would not be the effect of His coming. No: as

righteousness was worked out, that we should take our place in heaven; we must be broken off from the world. He gives us everything in the way, but never presents it as our end. It is neither Canaan nor Egypt, but a wilderness. By clinging to it we are not in the wilderness, but in heart turned back to Egypt. And that is why so many need chastening; for if we would ~~make~~ **make** a Canaan of it, then it will become Egypt to us. The moment we make it our home, and settle down in it, it is our Egypt; and the Lord must break our will, thus keeping us there. He says, "A little while and the world seeth me no more." For Him it is entirely done with. He puts a distinction between Himself and the world. Therefore if we take Him we cannot have the world, and if we take the world we cannot have Him; we cannot have both. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." Men are everywhere playing into the infidels' hands, in thinking to make the world better

to the world, its day is over. Christ was rejected by the world, and its day is closed. God's grace is gathering out sinners; but as to the world, the Lord said, "it seeth me no more." Either it is to get better *without Christ*, or not to get better at all. "It has hated both him and his Father," and its day is over. "I have got one Son," we read in the Lord's description of His Father's ways, "it may be they will reverence my Son." They took Him and slew Him, saying, "the inheritance will be ours." And this is what has been done, and now men are making the world comfortable as their own inheritance. The Lord preserve us from all the deception which, by the side of Christ, close to Him, we so soon detect. He has taken a heavenly place. "Such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." He exercises His ministry where we belong. I do not belong to the earth. We have a heavenly calling, and need a heavenly priest, who has gone up on high to take our hearts up

with Him. Our body is not gone up yet, but we have our place with Him up there. Christ Himself, who was a man on earth, manifested a heavenly character down here.

Christ having given us our place on high, after having put away all our sins, sends down the Comforter that we may manifest Him in our walk down here, being living epistles of Christ "known and read of all men," a heavenly people on the earth. God loved us when we hated Him. We are to love those who do not love us, and thus show the character of God down here. Christ was the living expression of it as a man. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked." As High Priest, Christ obtains for us all we need, and lifts us up if we do fall; but He sustains us to walk as He walked, having the word of God as the source of our actions, as God was the source of all His thoughts; but if we fail, there is grace to restore us. (ii, 1.) "That ye sin not," is the object of revealing our privileges and the grace that has placed

us in communion with the God of light; "but if any man sin we have an advocate," &c. Flesh ought never to work; your life ought never to be an expression of the flesh, but of the obedience of a child. The youngest child in Christ cannot walk as a father in Christ, but he can walk in the obedience of a child with Christ. We have the flesh; but if I am in the light, practically, with God, I know what the flesh is; but then all that I am, as regards the flesh, is judged. A child of *two* years old can be as obedient as a child of *twelve* years. It is not a question of age, of strength, but of obedience. We have the pattern of Christ at twelve years old, who was obedient to Joseph and his mother, and went home with them, being subject unto them. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk." Is this the delight of your soul, to walk as He walked, as self-denying, as separated from the world, with as much love; or would you spare something?—a little bit of the world, a little bit of comfort? Christ never did, or you could not have

been saved. Peter said, "this be far from thee, Lord:" spare thyself. His reply was, "get thee behind me, Satan." How often does our wretched heart say, spare thyself. That is not walking as Christ walked; not doing His bidding as our Master. Have your hearts been attracted by the beauty of Christ? It is real liberty. The world is merely a snare to entrap us: not that I would scorn the world, Christ did not scorn it; but the world is just this—Satan using all manner of things to seduce the flesh, and *that* is the world. Satan attracts us by his snares, and has the soul in bondage; but the liberty in which the Son has set us, is to be free from the flesh, the world, and sin, and Satan; not only to walk as He walked, but to walk with Him in perfect freedom, and in the comfort and consciousness of walking with Him. May we find our joy in Him, not pursuing a life of our own hearts, but a life of His grace and goodness, and may He keep our hearts fixed on Him; and a crown with Him will close in eternal blessing the history of His grace.

BAPTISM.

In considering this great subject, (though in few words,) it is intended to avoid *all* question of the time of the application of it, and the like; and to regard in it only the mind of God as the object of faith.

The first and fundamental character of all baptism, as an appointment in the outward sign, is, that it is *unto* something. The children of Israel were baptized *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea: that is, unto the covenant they were to receive at Mount Sinai, in subjection to him who was over God's house; separated from Egypt and all that was in it, and from the rule of its ruler, by the cloud that stood between them and the land of Egypt at Migdol, as afterward by the sea.

Those who came to John were baptized *unto* repentance, John saying that they should believe on Him that should come after him, even Christ. The Messiah was about to appear to Israel as the reformer of their state;

and the new covenant was the law written in their hearts; and Christ was to rule as the Head of His own house. The word repentance at once betokens what they were to be separated from, namely, the departure from God in the existing state of Judaism, which, as it was, rejected Christ when He came.

The baptism the Lord left was *unto Himself*.* *Faith was come*. The covenant of righteousness of life and of power in Christ by GRACE. Those who received baptism, as confessing the name of Christ, (in baptism they put on Christ) were evidently in a very various state of advance; some were zealous of the law, others capable of being shown its weakness, but the relationship to Christ in character was an established thing, and every advance only left more behind, in the separation first indicated. The baptized Jew, now zealous of the law, might ad-

* So εἰς ὄνομα, *unto* the name; ἐνονοματι, *IN* the name, occurs but once, in the case of Cornelius, on whom the Holy Ghost rested as at the beginning.

of ordinances that was against us, from sabbaths, and the like, and from all else that is not now by the living God applied to our soul in Christ, *through faith*. We are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power.

Further, it is most important for us to see that the things really left us by the Lord relate to us *as on earth*. HEIRS BY GRACE TO THE KINGDOM, *we are separated in the world, by baptism, unto Christ*. Nor is it needful to look for significations in these things, for us on earth they can be something. To this the expression of *burial* directs us. Baptism is given us as the *grave* of Christ, and all the things which life in Christ has stamped with death are *buried* with Him, and we and they with Him, in baptism. We are buried (thus can those that are dead in Him look at it) in His grave. We are buried with Him by baptism. The mind of God in it is the object that our hearts are directed to. It is practically important. There is power in measure, through faith, as appealed to by the

vance to an apprehension of being dead to the law by the body of Christ, and to the knowledge of union with Christ by faith. Such would not be baptized again. If this baptism were *into* anything, (as may be considered shortly,) it is not into Christ; but the separation is from all that was evil, and all that was old, whether the soul realized it or not, and that Christ supplied the place of all. It was in truth, then, a separation from law, from the world, from the rudiments of the world, and from all that applied itself to man, in his various pretences as capable of good, and from ordinances UNTO Christ. The doctrine of Romans vi, stands out pre-eminently as marking the separation from the old man in the fruits thereof, in being buried with Christ.* In Colossians ii, separation is from philosophy and vain deceit, from the traditions of men, from the hand-writing

* I believe the expression in Rom. vi, 4, of baptism into or unto death, is a collective expression, describing what baptism characteristically is, as given of God.

apostle in Romans vi. It is important to say that the old man, in his sinful habits, as on earth, is buried. This is being buried with Christ by baptism into or unto death.* The living subject of baptism sees the assigned place of these things. We who are alive and conscious are so to see them. Christ, charged with them, went down into the grave, and came out of the grave without them, and we, coming out of the water, leave them all, and all that can apply to them, being weak through the flesh, *in* the water, in the mind of God. We leave ourselves there. We look back on our baptism in such an aspect, and are called on by the apostle to do so.

The Church, *as divine*, is baptized with something else, namely, with the Spirit of God, uniting her to Christ in living existence. The baptism of the Church, as conferring its special character, is *heavenly*. She has a time to sojourn on earth, and to this baptism refers. The Church, as on earth, has

* See Note, p. 35.

a subjection and confession to fulfil to the Lord, who hath purchased her for Himself, and given her, besides, a character as joint-heir with Him; and her holiness on earth is in being true to it to His glory. The difference between these two greatly affects the application of terms in scripture, which may in no wise be confounded. It is the mingling of that which is of earth and that which is of heaven that has been and is injurious to truth, and to the use of the things of God according to God.

It is not that we are not to see, as on earth, something more than that which is merely significant of other things. It is not intended to enter on them in this point of view now, and they are quite distinct from them.

But to resume: the moral necessity of the truth connected with the reality of baptism, as the burial of all that could usurp the place of life, is evident. The divine truth, that the power of Christ's death upon all evil is the necessary preliminary to the expansion

of the divine life, is instructive; that carries us far into the divinely moral order of our restoration in the image of Christ. That this is expressed in baptism, over and above the actual burial of the old things, is manifest from scripture. The old man, and all that could attach to him, is to be never seen out of the water again; for it is in this burial we divinely rise, by the regenerating power of God, "through faith of the operation of God." It is not *out of it*, but *in it*. (Col. ii, 12.) So it is in Rom. vi, in its proper proportion. We are buried into the death—in fact, in this aspect, the old man is in the grave buried, that we might walk (being risen in the power of God) in newness of life. So in Peter iii, 21, We are *saved* by baptism—clearly by what must die (in order that we should live) lying buried there; in the answer of a good conscience in the living and divine condition of the living man; in fact by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whenever all that was to be buried rises, it causes to

sink, so to say, all that which ought always to be above the place of death in the power of the glory of the Father. This is the divinely moral truth given us in these things.

As divine and heavenly, the Church can know nothing but the Spirit of God, as above with Christ, having spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. Christ is our righteousness; ordinances, therefore, receive a secondary place only. This, their real place, should be seen, lest otherwise they make a gift of God for blessing in the place assigned to them, an occasion of stumbling, and they become a door to the apostacy; and such have they become, and become fixed, as such, through the tradition of men. They were given to serve the purpose of separation. All ordinances were, and those left by Christ as well,—baptism administered by others; the Lord's supper—the act of the living adoration of the Church. We may be in a state of imperfect knowledge as to either, but except as an act of living adoration

of the Church in worship in the Supper of the Lord, the knowledge of and faith in the mind of God in them will make a great difference in our blessing. There are many things we have to know about them, which, as they are gradually received, are better sought in the word. Nor ought we to close these remarks without some direct reference to the necessary truth, that we must die in order to live, applying it *immediately* to our consciences. Found of God when we sought Him not—sought in the wonders of His grace—we are exhorted to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. This is in the shape of motive, but the matter also lies deeper. The actual relationship of death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness, that being by nature born in sin, but now the children of grace, we may be moulded daily into the likeness of Christ, is the work of God by faith—changed into the same image, says the apostle, from glory to glory. "If," says St. Paul, Rom. vi, 5,

"we are (or have become) plants together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be plants of his resurrection, (or plants in the likeness of his resurrection.)" Justly the same fountain should not bring forth sweet water and bitter. How can there be growth in the Spirit (putting all seeming aside) but in the declension of the flesh and its lusts. If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, saith the apostle, ye shall live. If ye walk after the flesh ye shall die. Let that mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who on the cross condemned sin in the flesh in dying. It was truth told to us in Him, in whom was no sin. If ye are Christ's, ye have crucified the affections and the lusts. There is no room allowed of God for the old creation and the new in the same man. According to this truth is the death *intimated* to the Christian in his baptism and in the mind of God in it, and in it is the resurrection he finds in its realization, by the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who

the true and divine riches, those only called "our own," may be duly estimated as enduring for ever; while He will not leave nor forsake those that are fed of His bounty in the wilderness, or as strangers in the land.

Now the Lord increase us in acquaintance with the ways of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, unto all fruitfulness unto eternal life, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

THE NATURE AND EFFECT OF DISCIPLINE EXEMPLIFIED IN GOD'S PEOPLE.

ADAM.

No subject can be more deeply interesting to the saint, than the nature and effect of discipline, which our God, in the plenitude of His love and wisdom, administers to each of His people.

Interesting as the subject is, and one so necessary to the secret exercises of the soul, yet it is little understood; and the dealings of God are either

believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

The separation of us from the world is more on the surface, but is as express. The apostacy has so far grown that its use of baptism is an entry into the world, instead of a separation out of it and from it; while the baptized should, as thus passed the Red Sea, look over the closed waters on the towers and pyramids and glories of Egypt, shut out from them for ever, while they rejoice on the way. Let every Babylonish garment, every pursuit of forgetfulness, of which Satan makes such use,—not to say the enticing pursuit of the world itself,—be seen as cut off from us in the water. The pursuit of the world's possession (amidst which God may in His grace have given on earth duties of application to His glory,—and yet, blessed are the poor) shall pierce the soul through with many sorrows, sent in grace that

counted strange, or there is no just or useful solution of them.

I propose, therefore, in the Lord's mercy, to present, in a series of papers, the peculiar discipline, its object and its effect, as detailed to us, respecting each distinguished witness for God on earth.

I am induced to do this, in order to accustom the minds of saints to study more a subject which of all others connects us with the secret, loving thoughts of our God about us.

I accordingly begin with Adam. Though not properly heading the life of faith, yet he was the subject of severe discipline, and is a remarkable illustration of its effects. Adam at one time needed no discipline, a state unknown to any since. When he fell the day of discipline began. He that was made in the image of God, that approached nearer to God than any creature, even he is now imbued with a spirit and a nature so adverse to God, that if he would live for God he must learn to renounce his own will, under the training of the mighty hand

of God. To Adam this must have been a strange contrast to the once easy acquiescence of his mind with the will of God. Consequently he must have felt it the more; and as the rebellion of his heart was subdued, he could contrast the rule of God with the powerlessness of innocence. As innocent, he fell; as fallen, the hand of God exalts him. Not ignorantly, or passively, but in all the activity of anxious conviction. Innocence with him was a weak thing; the power of God subduing his nature, no longer innocent, was a great thing. He never would have sought the innocent state, for he knew how weak it was. He knew now that he was able to do more with the power of God in a fallen state, than in unassisted innocence he ever could aspire to. As innocent, he had no sense of life; as fallen, yet believing in the revelation of God, he could now name the only creature he had *not* named, *the mother of all living*. Under the sentence of death, he could speak of life; while as innocent, his fear and his penalty, (if

disobedient) was the loss of it. Innocence had no charm for him now. True, it was a moment of wondrous bliss; but a flight so high only ensures precipitation to disgrace and dismay. Surely, then, he could not seek a return to it. He had been advanced to where he could not stand; but now, under discipline, he stands *morally* higher, though in *condition* he is lower. Adam was not deceived, but he was influenced. He early discovers the propensities of nature (no doubt in their best estate) which eventually led to his fall. Neither the world, nor its glory, nor any class of the inferior creatures, supply the craving of the sociable heart of Adam: for him there was not found an help meet for him, and it was not good for him to be alone. The instincts of his nature must be satisfied; but still more, when his wife was deceived, he yields to her influence, as he himself admits, "she gave unto me, and I did eat." The first man disclosed this secret of his heart, that he was dependent on an-

other; so that when Satan would not venture to beguile *him*, the object of his affections successfully tempted him. Now they are both naked, and both estranged from God, and hiding themselves from His presence, the first lessons of His grace are propounded to them. In discipline there is properly *conviction* of sin, as well as correction of it. With a saint it is never penance or compensation for wrong-doing. Chastening or correction is to make me a partaker of holiness, not a sufferer for sin. It is not to improve my nature, but to so convince me of its utter helplessness that I may be devoted unto God, which is the true and distinct meaning of sanctification, and without which no man shall see the Lord. There is exceeding pain in being convicted of sin; and if there be not a strong sense of the grace of God when we are convicted, there will be great depression, and a tendency to give up all in despair. Hence the exhortation, "faint not when thou art *convicted* [Greek] of him." God does

not convict hastily. He likes that our cogitations on our own acts should convict ourselves. It is very little use to tell a vain man of his faults; it generally only urges him the better to conceal or extenuate them. It is very hard to induce a person in ill health and unconvinced of it, to adopt the necessary regimen; the more you remonstrate with such an one, the more strenuously will he endeavour to prove you mistaken, and you exasperate the malady you would assuage, while the really sin-convicted soul, like the patient tremblingly alive to his danger, is ready to receive every true palliative and remedy offered. When Adam had *perfected* the devices of his now estranged and corrupted heart, when the aprons are on and he behind the trees, the voice of God searches him. We are continually allowed to run to the end of our own plans, and thus to learn how futile they are. Many a weary hour and long day is squandered in the execution of plans which, when tested by the searching word of God, must be en-

tirely abandoned. What is the nature of your plans? are they to distance and conceal you from God, or are they to bring you nigh unto Him, and to unfold to Him the minutest secrets of your heart? You may thus test your plans. Adam's were to cloak himself and to escape the eye of God, and God allowed him to complete his schemes. Oh, how well each of us knows what this is! The poor prodigal tries the far country, but returns to his father's house a really humbled man. The many inventions are all tested and found to be as husks, and then the soul listens to the gracious tones of that voice it would fain escape from. It is a terrible question to answer, "Where art thou?" when you find out the insufficiency of all expedients to screen your conscience from the action of God's word. Did the prodigal like to answer it when feeding the swine? Did Peter like to answer it when enjoying the cheer of his Master's foes, when warming himself at their fire? Did Adam like it

when he remembered the position which he occupied in contrast with the one he had forfeited? The answer to that question tells his state. The voice of God searches the conscience, and if it has not learned that it is with God it has to do, the history of it must be, "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." Concealment is the first effort of a suffering conscience. You neither like to see yourself, nor that any one else should see you, as you are; and when *God's* voice reaches you, you hide yourself; while concealment betrays distance as well as evasion. There must be some activity in the conscience when concealment is resorted to, especially when no penalty (but the fact of your guilt being known) is attached to it. The babe who breaks a toy conceals it! Concealment is, in fact, resorted to in order that we may appear better than we are. If we were willing that every one should see us as we are, there would be no concealment. A disguise was never yet adopted but for self-exalta-

tion. A lie was never maintained but to give us credit we did not deserve. When God deals with us we learn that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The word (see Heb. iv) acts on our conscience, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" but it conducts us to God. It is with Him, and not the word merely, "*we have to do.*" The voice of the Lord penetrated the soul of Adam; and though girdled with fig-leaves, which satisfied his own standard of morality, yet when the word came it tried him, and he was afraid because he was naked, (naked before God,) and he hid himself. It is important to study those two actions of the conscience. They give rise to much exercise and trouble in the soul, because they are confounded; that is when one has satisfied his own conscience, has adopted some system which conceals from himself and others the real state of his

soul, he floats for awhile on peaceful waters; but no sooner is the voice of the Lord heard, but all the elements seem to him involved in a mighty tornado. His sleep is broken; he is another Philippian jailor, "he is afraid." The fact that he is naked and opened before God flashes fearfully before him, and so much the worse because he had deceived himself, and his reputation with others had helped it on. The action of the word of God would be desperate and overwhelming to the soul if we had not a "great high priest passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." His sympathy, on the ground of His atonement, in full effect before God, sets the convicted conscience at rest, and at the throne of grace, *too*, to receive the grace and the mercy it needs. This is just what Adam had to learn; consequently the voice pursues him to his hiding-place. It is in vain that one seeks to escape the eye of God. When He determines that it shall search you, if you take the wings of the morning and dwell in the utter-

most parts of the sea, even there He will reach you! Oh, how the conscience that seeks escape from God overshadows itself within the foliage of this world! It engrosses itself with man's leading and most ambitious pursuits, but in vain. The "watchers" will cry aloud, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves." The refuge of lies shall be exposed, and the soul must have its account with God. It must answer, "WHERE ART THOU?" and all the answer needed is the tale of the plain and simple facts, "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself!" The moment the soul of the saint is in full confession, he is in the region of forgiveness and restoration, and the Spirit expostulates with it as man would with his fellow. Adam tried his own expedients, and they were vain and profitless; now he will be a listener to the grace that tells of the sure and perfect remedy. But mark, he first discloses the true and full tale of the condition of his soul; he confesses his fear—his

in this kind of reputation. What you admit to me, I in return admit for you. If a girdle of fig-leaves measures the demands of *your* moral sense, and you accept it as sufficient for *me*, I in return do the same for *you*. This is the essence and true character of all human and religious reputation. But the voice of God sounds, and Adam is troubled in his deceitfully serene and false position. That voice probes the entire condition, and at last he finds himself "naked and opened before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." He confesses all, and he is on the uppermost form for instruction with an humble and a contrite spirit. To the divine challenge he admits (though with an excuse and mitigation) that he was tempted and had eaten. His justification lowers him morally more than the charge he seeks to justify. Yet it is a confession, and it is accepted as such; and our God enters on the gracious work of unfolding His counsels. To each actor in this wondrous scene is now meted the judgment

nakedness—his *effort* to hide himself! Discipline had effected this. Now God instructs him. Adam is "meek," and God will teach him His way. He has learned that innocence was no protection against an undue influence, and that the absence of evil motive is no guarantee for true moral action. He, of all men, knew what this was pre-eminently, and yet it was no safeguard. He was tempted, and he yielded to it. Conscious, indeed, that innocence was gone, and evil motive could rule, he still trusts to himself to screen and rectify his disgrace. The expedient he adopted satisfied his own moral sense, and, what was infinitely more delusive, the moral sense of the one whose good opinion he loved to secure, and whose satisfaction was a bulwark to his own. This is a snare that few, even godly men, escape. It is, in other words, the reputation with one's friends; pressed on the conscience as the verdict of the last court of appeal, and conclusive to it on any recurrence of anxious enquiry. There is a reciprocity

due to the part he has played in it. *Satan's* sentence is first pronounced, and while *his* doom is fixed, the deliverance from his power and the eternal remedy of the gospel is declared to the listening and convicted Adam. It is the divine way, in restoring a soul, to establish it *first* in the power of God, and in His grace. The draught of the fishes and the words of Jesus taught this to Peter. It is the ground work for all godly improvement. When the heart is established, as David's was, ("the Lord has taken away thy sin,") then it can bear to hear what is the discipline necessary to correct that in him which sin could act on. It is important to carry with us the process by which the Lord reveals to the soul the discipline which He will impose. Whatever has provoked our failure is denounced, not in general terms, but in the proportion, and in the order too, of its guilt; at the same time commanding and promising the true mode of deliverance. Satan is not only sentenced, but the effect of his malice on man will be his own irremediable

retribution. Man shall be avenged of his enemy. The serpent is not only assigned, as a signal judgment, to crawl and to eat dust, in perpetual hostility to the lord of the creation, but its "violent dealing shall come down on its own pate;" its head shall be bruised. The next brought up for judgment is the *woman*. She was the proximate cause of Adam's failure; but as the principal had received his sentence, she must now hear hers. She is condemned to times of great sorrow on every addition to the human family which she has been instrumental in subjecting to the power of death; with unconditional subjection to her husband, the want of which bore its first-fruits in her own fall, and led to Adam's also. Each transgressor is not only sentenced to a penalty corresponding to his guilt, but the relation in which that guilt has affected Adam is also markedly repaired. God's servant must not be touched with impunity, but he must not err himself. The righteous God will avenge his cause, but only in *righteousness*. He cannot

wife's request in opposition to the word of God. Probably he did not do so with intent; that is, not after weighing both he decided in favour of the former. But the word was not hid in his heart, and did not control him; for if it had been he would not have hearkened to the voice of his wife. But having surrendered his place, he is to bear the penalty of it, and become the great slave and labourer on the earth, of which he was the ruler and prince. Everything on it would bear indications of insubjection to its rightful master. To assuage the evil, he should spend his life and live thereby; but in the end return to dust, as dust he was. There is deeply instructive teaching in all this; even that if we surrender the position in which God places us in any relation, the one we retire to will inevitably notify to us, in fearful reminiscences, what has been our forfeiture. The smallest thorn and briar reminded Adam that he had surrendered his lordship in hearkening to the voice of his wife. If David retires from the duties of the king, he must surrender, in a

overlook the frailty of His servant, though He will rescue him when the unmitigated sentence is executed. When God enters into judgment, even-handed justice is dispensed. But acts are criminal in a greater or less degree: that which implicates God's witness in distance from Him being more so than the failure which that witness evinces by being drawn into distance. The one who misleads another comes under a severer penalty than he who is misled; though he is not exempted because he discovers moral feebleness. The infliction of penalties are not necessarily for correction, nor is the discipline. There was no hope of amending Satan, but yet severe penalties are inflicted on him because Adam had suffered from him. Man was God's representative on earth; injury to him was treason against God. Hence in divine discipline there is always a correction of the evil principle of nature, and also correction for the trespass we may have committed on our fellow-man. This is exemplified in the sentence on Adam. His sin was yielding to his

painful way, the honours of one. He is reminded how lightly he regarded them by the successful rebellion of his own son. "Cursed be he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently." All the influence of Barnabas would not induce Paul to take Mark who had returned from Pamphylia. The refusal of the apostle reminded him how he trifled with and abandoned the post once his, but easier lost than regained. This is the nature of Adam's discipline. He is reminded by everything of what he surrendered, and the less carefully and diligently he laboured to subdue the numerous reminiscences of his failure, the more they increased, and the less able was he to sustain himself against them. By the sweat of his brow he regained his position for his own need. David returned, after a severe campaign, to the throne. Mark was profitable for the ministry after the discipline had produced its effect. Faith always walks above discipline, though walking under it. Adam hears the sentence on all, and, in faith consenting to it, rises above it, and calls

his wife's name Eve, because she is "the mother of all living." Faith reaches unto God, therefore it can submit to the position which judicially and correctively falls to an erring soul, and looks to God for His own time and mode of deliverance. It accepts the punishment of its iniquity, not as retribution for it, but as correction. Discipline has in fact produced its greatest effect where the soul submits to it as trusting in God. Adam shows this in making amends to his wife (in thus naming her) for his former reproaches; and what was, in unsubdued nature, the agent of harm to him is now, in the eye of faith, the channel of life. Adam, disciplined in faith, God clothes him, yet discipline must not be arrested nor reprieved. God drives out the man, and sends him to till the ground from whence he is taken, to find out what sort of a man he was, and to learn how his faith would sustain him.

It is in our immediate relations of life, in the innermost circle, where there is least reserve, we most truly disclose ourselves. A man who cannot rule

64 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

to teach him, namely, to act for God, above all influence, and not to allow any influence to distract him from the path of faith. He appears to have learned this in the last recorded act of his life, a very pleasing consummation, showing the effect of discipline; and a very fit and happy finale to his history. To sum up, we learn from this history that innocence or absence of evil motive is no safeguard *against* influence. That satisfying our own moral sense, or the moral sense of any one else, is no proof that we can answer, or have answered, to God's claim on us. That if we cease to maintain our divinely appointed place, we are sure to fall, and the word of God, which would have preserved, us in our place, does not act on the heart outside that place. But that learning to follow our own inclinations, our discipline will always be of a character to correct our failure, and to remind us, in very minute ways, (as did the thorns to Adam,) what our frailty has reduced us to.

Lastly, when discipline has effected its object, our history closes.

his *own house* how shall he take care of the Church of God? Power is more effective applied immediately than at a distance. If Adam is learning from his discipline, it ought to be seen in his power to avoid the evil for which he was suffering. It does not appear that he does; for *Eve* assumes the place of naming his eldest son, again losing sight of her own place, and again, beyond doubt, filling her first-born (which his name alone would suggest) with aspirations which led to his fearful contradiction of it, as well as the painful evidence of her own misapprehension of God's promise. The introduction of death where life was expected; the fact that one child was murdered and the other the murderer; the one in whom their hopes centred must have been a trial to Adam that we can little conceive—a discipline which had its effects—for though it is said that *Eve* named Seth in the first instance, yet it is also written that *Adam* called his name Seth, showing, as it appears to me, that he at length had learned what the discipline was sent

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content." (Phil. iv, 11.)

There is a secret of happiness which none but a Christian possesses, and which a Christian possesses in its full power only when he is living in communion with God, in the region of faith. "I know," says the apostle, "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." Now, this principle depends for its strength on the certainty that God's will cannot be defeated, and that His will arranges everything for the best for those who commit their way to Him. It also depends on the apprehension of the resources of our happiness being all in Christ, independent of all the circumstances which may affect the Christian in this world. Things in the world may be all confusion, and things in the Church may

appear to be but little better, but this is not sufficient to destroy, or even to neutralize, the power of that principle of happiness of which the apostle speaks. God's counsels cannot be defeated—the ends of Christ's death cannot be frustrated—and the springs of the happiness of a risen man in Christ do not ebb and flow with the changing circumstances which may chequer his earthly course. If outward prosperity makes me happy, it is plain my happiness does not spring entirely from the will of God; if, on the other hand, when things go contrary, I lose my enjoyment, it is plain that all my happiness has not been based on the will of God, which is always perfect. Christ's love never changes; His relationship to His Church never alters; the hope of His coming abides till His coming makes it no longer a hope; and, more than all, His present care of me, and of all that connects itself with the eternal good of His Church, is daily exercised.

Then why am I unhappy? Why am I downcast? Is it not because I want

things, through my own selfishness, either in the world or in the Church, different from what Christ wills them? For, if Christ be the object of my heart, I have the certainty of God's eternal counsels concerning the glory of Christ for the ground of my assurance that I can never fail in the object I pursue.

It may be a hard lesson for such hearts as ours to be satisfied with this "secret of happiness;" but as there is no other for the servant of Christ, so is it unfailing where the heart is committed to it, and to it alone.

People little suspect that all the secret of their unhappiness is in their own hearts, and not in the circumstances through which they are called to pass. If the world or self occupies any place which belongs to Christ, this principle of happiness will always be weakened, since no theory of the truth will ever keep the heart happy, without the power of the Holy Ghost. But Christ, and not the world, or the cravings of nature, or the pride of life, is the staple by which is pro-

duced in the soul the joy of the Holy Ghost.

I must learn to be dead to the world, if I am to live the life of Christ. But this is not the happiness of indifference, it is but the allowing God to have His place in wisdom, in goodness, and in the immutability of His counsels of grace in Christ Jesus. There may be exercises of soul with regard to the service of Christ in His Church or in the world; but then these exercises, so far from destroying my happiness, only carry me to Him who gives me rest in the knowledge that it is His care and His power that accomplishes everything; and that I have nothing to do but to follow His will, which can never fail. Christ was so sufficient for the apostle's soul, amidst dangers and difficulties, and wasting labours, and apparent discomfiture, that he wanted nothing else, and He is equally sufficient for you and me. And if we cannot in a moment leap up to this position practically, because we have been living at such a distance from God, and because

Christ has been so little the object of our souls, and the power of our walk, it is, nevertheless, a great thing to see clearly where the "secret of our happiness" is, and where the "secret" of our weakness and unhappiness lies.

THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.

I propose to consider the exhortations of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as suggested by the passage in chapter xiii, 22: "I beseech you, brethren, suffer *the word of exhortation*; for I have written unto you a letter in few words." In this passage the whole epistle appears to be designated, "the word of exhortation;" and the peculiar structure of the epistle is confirmatory of the thought.

The ordinary form of the epistles of Paul is the presentation, in an orderly and consecutive way, of, first, the doctrine of the epistle, and then of the practical exhortations. But in this

epistle it is otherwise, as exhortation runs throughout; and there is not an important doctrine stated, or subject introduced, without having grafted upon it its appropriate exhortation. There is only one exception to this, connected with the subject of the priesthood of Christ, which is pursued from the seventh chapter to the middle of the tenth chapter without a break, or the introduction of any exhortation at all, until the close of the subject. This exception is striking and full of instruction, as will be seen when we reach that part of the epistle.

As to the general subject of the epistle, it is God's exposition of the grounds of the setting aside of a religion of ordinances, which had originally the divine sanction, by the introduction of that which is distinctive of Christianity. It is therefore addressed to the only people who were ever possessed of a ritual service and a priesthood and ordinances appointed by God. This truth is thus briefly stated, chapter ix, 1: "Then, verily, the first [covenant] had

ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary;" and it was with regard to the establishment of this that Moses was thus admonished: "See [that] thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

Now a divinely established ritual—a worship which had, in every respect, the sanction of God—could not be rudely and arbitrarily set aside, and those who possessed it be called upon to leave it all, without any ground for doing so but simply the divine command. The grounds of this subversion must necessarily be presented in order to afford the basis of faith for the worshippers; and the mind must be satisfied that the introduction of that which was new was but the accomplishment of that which, up to this time, had claimed the obedience of the worshippers; and was thus but the full exhibition of the counsels of God, to which the dispensation which was now passing away pointed as an index in the way of shadows and types. The apostle says,

"The law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." This is important; because whenever man seeks to set up a religion, or to establish a worship, which has not a risen Christ for its centre, and the Holy Ghost as its power, it is invariably composed of these very ordinances, or the like, which by the coming, and work, and sacrifice, and priesthood of Christ, the Spirit of God by this epistle shows to have been for ever set aside. If ordinances, which had a divine sanction, are thus set aside, and called "beggarly elements," what must be the folly and sin of men who seek to set up a system of ordinances without any divine sanction at all, or to return to those which, under the solemn teaching of God's Spirit, are declared to have for ever passed away? Every attempt to set up again the efficacy of ordinances, and the power of a priesthood, which is the essence of Popery and Puseyism, is in direct contradiction to the whole purpose of God's Spirit in this epistle, and a virtual denial of the efficacy of

Christ's sacrifice and heavenly priesthood.

But there is another general remark which may be necessary in order to the right understanding of those solemn warnings presented in the sixth and tenth chapters of the epistle: namely, that the epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to a *body* of persons who had ostensibly left Judaism, and were under the responsibility of the profession of Christianity. Now if a *body* is addressed in connexion with a given profession, it is plain that there may be departure from it in the way of apostasy, and which thus may open the door for the most solemn warnings against such a departure, but which nevertheless were never meant to weaken the grounds of individual salvation, which rest entirely and absolutely on the finished work of Christ. For example, in connexion with the warnings of the sixth chapter, the apostle says, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

And again, at the close of the warnings of the tenth chapter, he says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward;" and again, verse 39, "We are not of them which draw back unto perdition, but of them which believe unto the saving of the soul." But see especially chapter vi, 16—20, "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which [hope] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, [even] Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

A *body* may be apostate from the

JOYING IN GOD, AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.

2 Thess. iii, 5.

There are two things which constitute the joy of a Christian, to be his strength on the road, and the object constantly before his heart. The first is, the hope of the coming of the Lord; and the second is, present communion and fellowship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these two cannot be separated without loss to our souls; for we cannot have all the profit without both of them. If we are not looking for the coming of the Lord, there is nothing whatever that can separate us in the same way from this present evil world; neither will Christ Himself be so much the object before the soul; nor yet shall we be able, in the same measure, to apprehend the mind and counsels of God about the world.

Again, if this hope be looked at apart from present communion and fellowship with God, we shall not have

truth, and may therefore come under the threatening of excision and judgment, while the individual believer is built up in his "most holy faith:" see the epistle of Jude. Moreover, in these warnings, that passage of scripture is accomplished, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on and are punished." In other words, believers through grace heed the warnings, and escape the consequences of the neglect of them, while others remain in security in "the forms of godliness without the power," and perish. But they perish not unwarned.

Moreover, it must be remembered that the epistle is not occupied in unfolding, for the first time, the primary truths of Christianity, like the epistle to the Romans; but is rather designed to fortify the faith which was failing, and to restore the footsteps which were already slipping back, as is seen in chap. x, 32: "Call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions," &c.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

JOYING IN GOD, ETC. 77

present power, the heart being enfeebled from the mind being too much occupied and overborne by the evil around; for we cannot be really looking for God's Son from heaven without, at the same time, seeing the world's utter rejection of Him, and that the world itself is going wrong; its wise men having no wisdom, and all going on to judgment; the principles of evil loosening all bonds, &c.; and the soul becomes oppressed and the heart sad; but if, through grace, the Christian is in present communion and fellowship with God, his soul stands steady, and is calm and happy before God, because there is a fund of blessing in Him which no circumstances can ever touch or change. The evil tidings are heard, the sorrow is seen, but his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, which carries him far above every circumstance. Brethren, we all want this. To walk steadily with God we need both this fellowship and this hope.

I do not believe that a Christian can

have his heart scripturally right unless he is looking for God's Son from heaven. There could be no such thing as attempting to set the world right if its sin in rejecting Christ were fully seen; and, moreover, there never will be a correct judgment formed of the character of the world until that crowning sin be apprehended by the soul. To a Christian who is looking and waiting for Christ to come from heaven, Christ Himself is unspeakably more the object before the soul. It is not only that I shall get to heaven and be happy, but that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for me, and all the Church with me. It is this that gives its character to the joy of the saint. As Christ Himself says, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also"—when I find my delight, then shall you find yours also, I with you, and you with me,—“For ever with the Lord.” You may think to find good, or to produce good in man, but you will never find waiting for Christ in man. In the world, the

saints full and everlasting rest. Still, it is not that we are to be “weary and faint in our minds.” It is not a right thing to be weary of the service and conflict. O, no! rather let us be victorious every day. Still, it is not rest to be fighting.

However, when walking with God, it is not so much thinking of combat, as joying in God Himself. This I shall know all the better when I am in the glory; my soul will be enlarged, and more capable of enjoying what God really is; but it is the same kind of joy I have now as I shall have when He comes to be glorified in His saints; only greater in degree. And if this joy in God is now in my soul, in power, it hides the world from me altogether, and becomes a spring of love to those in the world. For though I may be tired of the combat, still, I feel there are people in the world that need the love I enjoy, and I desire that they should possess it; as it is the joy of what God is for me that sustains me, and carries me through all the conflict.

first Adam may be cultivated, but it is the first Adam still; the second Adam will never be found there, being rejected by the world. And it is the looking for this rejected Lord which stamps the whole character and walk of the saints.

Then again, there is another thing connected with my waiting for God's Son from heaven. I have not yet got the Person with me I love, and while waiting for Him I am going through the world tired and worn with the spirit and character of everything around me; and the more I am in communion with God the more keenly shall I feel the spirit of the world to be a weariness to me, although God still upholds my soul in fellowship and communion with Himself. Therefore Paul says, in 2 Thess. i: “To you who are troubled, rest with us.” So then I get rest to my spirit now in waiting for Christ, knowing that when He comes He will have everything His own way. For the coming of the Lord, which will be trouble to the world, will be to the

So that our souls should be exercised on both the fellowship and the hope; for if I look for Christ's coming apart from this fellowship and communion with God, I shall be oppressed, and shall not go steadily and properly on. When the love of God fills my heart, it flows out towards all those that have need of it, towards saints and sinners according to their need; for if I feel the exercise of the power of this love in my heart, I shall be going out to serve others; as it is the power of this love that enables me to go through the toil and labour of service, from that attachment to Christ which leads to service, though through suffering for His sake. If my soul is wrapped up in the second Adam, attachment to Christ puts its right stamp upon all that is of the first Adam.

When this love has led out into active service, then the conflict, doubtless, will be found, as in the first chapter of second Corinthians: there it is present blessing in the midst of trial. But in the first chapter of second

Thessalonians, it is tribulation, and not rest out of it, until the Lord comes; "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In 2 Cor. i, 3, 4, there is present blessing in the midst of the trial,—“who comforteth us in all our tribulation;” so that if the sufferings for Christ’s sake be ours, there is, at the same time, the comfortings of God in the soul. How rich a spring of blessing is this in return for this poor little trouble of mine! I get God pouring into my soul the revelation of Himself; I get God communicating Himself to my soul; for it is really that. I find it to be a present thing; it comes home to me, to my heart, the very joy of God, God delighting in me, and I in God. He identifies Himself with those who suffer for Him. There is no time for God’s coming into a soul like the time of trial, for in no way does He so fully reveal Himself to the soul as when He is exercising it in trial. There is astonishing power in this; for the amazing power with

enquire about the things of which they spake. In the Prophets the Spirit of God is communicating a certain message, and this is occasionally seen in the Epistles, as in 2 Thess. ii, for example; but in the Epistles (I am not here speaking of the Apocalypse) it is not so much a message delivered, but the Spirit of God down here, as being the soul of the body of the Church, entering into everything. Paul tells out all his thoughts, his affections, his consolations, and all that he feels. He not merely gives the details of Church order and discipline, but all the sympathies and trials of every day domestic life. Take this epistle to Philemon, for instance, where the Spirit enters into all circumstances of receiving back a runaway slave, who had run away from his master; and tells us in what spirit he is to be received back by his master. The Holy Ghost leads into the high and deep counsels of God, and also into all the minute details of the saints’ walk down here. “Christ that descended is the same also that ascended

which Christ is to us present power and consolation is by His coming in, in present living power, even whilst these poor mortal bodies are unchanged. Our bodies are not yet redeemed with power, though they are bought with a price; but we have in Christ the life and the power; and, in spite of all, God is pouring in these consolations when we are in tribulation, showing the kind of power in Christ by which I am lifted up above every circumstance of trial. “The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

CHRIST IN EVERYTHING.

Philemon.

It is interesting to remark, in the Epistles, the way in which the Spirit of God enters into every minute thing that concerns us. Not like the prophets of old, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, &c., who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, with a “Thus saith the Lord;” and they had to learn and

up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” The Holy Ghost therefore enters into them all, that He may bring them into the every-day walk of the saints; not by way of message sent to men, like the prophets of old; nor yet as servants, by way of commandment; but by entering into us as sons. For the Son of God having passed sinlessly through all the circumstances down here, the Holy Ghost enters into them also, that He may show them unto us in every difficulty through which we may be called to pass. And this it is which forms part of Christ’s glory. Were it not so, as human beings, men down here, we should be without Christ. But thus the Holy Ghost consecrates the whole heart, thoughts, and ways of a man to God in Christ. While unfolding and bringing us into connexion with all the riches of God’s counsels, it is remarkable how the Spirit of God connects those mightiest things with the most minute. We are so thoroughly and entirely brought into the new

creation, being dead and risen with Christ, that we cannot properly touch a single subject without bringing Christ into it. See the word to servants in Titus ii, 10: "Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." This shows the way in which the Holy Ghost enters into everything, bringing into every detail the fulness of Christ; thus humbling the man, and yet exalting him, too, as partaker with Christ. It is in virtue of this connexion with Christ that every direction is given as to the long hair and head-dresses of the women, in connexion with Headship. "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." So also the servants' not purloining is in connexion with "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Again, when the mind of the Lord is given as to women speaking in the Church, the whole mind and thoughts of God about Adam and Eve are brought out.

see that we are utterly lost, we see also that the perfect answer is given by God to the conscience; and the sinner, once condemned, is brought to God, standing in perfect righteousness.

To bring the conscience into the presence of God it must be perfect. God cannot brook sin, and an unpurged conscience cannot stand in His presence. So there never can be perfect peace until it is understood that the question of righteousness is settled; only then is unhindered communion established. But then how blessed! Stumbling as we are, failing as we are, in conflict as we may be, between us and God there is not a cloud, not a question. We joy in God! It is not a question, then, of seeing whether a man can be presently saved—whether we can *get* a standing before God; we are set there on the ground of what Christ is, in the unclouded brightness of the presence of God.

Dear reader, let me ask you, Is your conscience purged in the presence of God? If it is, you do not want help

If we look into the word of God, we shall be astonished at the way in which the Spirit of God takes the soul up to Christ, and uses Him in all these things that are brought out in the New Testament.

BOLDNESS TO ENTER INTO THE HOLIEST BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

Hebrews x.

The gospel sets the conscience at rest, and gives perfect peace with God. God made man upright, and so there ever is in man a clinging to goodness. But the fact is, that the more upright I am while under the law the less hope I have; though where the Spirit of God is working there is always a glimmer of hope. Yet we must remember that the gospel is not setting *hope* before a man, but actually revealing salvation. The gospel so perfectly sets the conscience at rest, while bringing into the very presence of God, that while we

to stand in the presence of God to-morrow; you are there to-day. Your privilege is to be spotless before God now. When brought there how happy we are, how blessed! His own grace has brought us near to Himself, and set us there cleansed. Boldness is given us to enter into His presence,—into the holiest of all. How do we get there? Because "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "By himself he has purged our sins." If done by Himself, how perfectly done! By Himself we enter, through the rent veil.

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ has so entirely put away the sin that I was guilty of, that I enter into God's presence. God has been glorified by my entrance there, by the putting away of my sin. It is by virtue of the sacrifice that I am in the presence of God. And what is its virtue? The putting away of sin. There is no more memorial of sin before God. What is there, then, before God? Christ is there. There is always a memorial of

righteousness. I, too, am there by virtue of an eternal righteousness before God, a righteousness which enables to enter heaven itself, and not only this, but which enables to enjoy God Himself. There the soul gets confidence, and learns how God has ordered everything for the soul's enjoyment of Himself. There righteousness gives strength to enjoy His love; the love that brought me there, and brought me, too, with an unclouded conscience. The heart that knows this cannot do without Him,—“we joy in God:” and the result is we want to walk with Him. He gives an eternal redemption, an eternal righteousness. I not only get peace, but rest. I not only live by Him, but walk with Him; and, abiding in His presence, walk in the light, knowing that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The high priest stood because his work was not perfect; Jesus sat down, and I am at rest. Where? In the presence of God, and by that which rent the veil, the blood-shedding of Jesus.

sight all that is bad in me. The Lord give us to know how to abide in His presence. In this lies the secret of all strength.

PLANTING IN GRACE.

Ephesians ii.

The planting of the soul in grace is the withering of the principle of legality. The principle of blessing for service is really horrible. Am I never to do an action but to one who deserves it? Is the blessing God gives to be measured by what I deserve? What I deserve is condemnation, and the knowledge of this by the Holy Ghost withers up this self-righteousness, and throws me over on grace. Thus I get to know God.

In the first three verses of this chapter we get our whole history, all that we were according to God. “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.” This world is Satan’s world, and now it is given up to judg-

And now I am not waiting to have my conscience purged, but waiting for Jesus from heaven.

You will know no rest, until you have no hope left of being better tomorrow than you are to-day. When the conscience and God come together, and not till then do we know that we are saved. This is the ground of walk with God. For communion is interrupted by sin. A light thought cannot be had in communion with God.

It is the blood that makes the conscience perfect. Has not God accepted Christ? I go with His blood before God, and I am cleansed, and I worship and adore God. He saw me a slave to sin and Satan, and redeemed me. I am in the house by virtue of what He has done. I never should have been there had He not washed me in the blood of the Lamb. I should have fled from God. But He brought me in; not in my rags, but in the very best robe; and I got rest, and peace, and joy, because God has given me all that is good in Christ, and put out of my

ment. The condemnation of the world is a settled thing. In 1 Cor. xi, it is said that believers are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. The world is thus a finally condemned thing; and this too since Christianity began. For until Christ was rejected, God was going on with the world; but the crucifixion of His Son proved, that *by nature* men were *children of wrath*. Then again, we were, besides, under the power of Satan, and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Well, it is all this that casts us upon God. And what we want is to be cast upon God. When we are entirely thrown upon God, He takes us out of the whole thing.

This is what we get in the fourth verse. There the apostle turns at once over to the other end, passing over regeneration, &c., and showing another spring of blessing altogether. He turns the eye away from everything in man, and shows us what God is. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved

us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." First, we have God rich in mercy; and then the power by which He has quickened us together with Christ; Christ being looked at as dead for our sins. What He has done for me in Christ is the way I come to know what God is, and I delight in it. I delight in what God is: of course, I must have the nature to understand it—love; this we have, and so we understand that what God is for us is love. The more we are cleared from mere nature, the more we understand Christ's ways, why He did things, and how He did things. What was He in the world? Why? Everybody's servant, no matter what they were. Dear me! I say, Is this God? Yes! He hath declared Him. What a new set of thoughts and feelings this produces in the soul! God's nature becomes worked into it. There is an individual link of the soul with God; and it is life eternal to know God thus. It may be that a person cannot explain it, but

dividual is indissolubly bound to every other. You have not one Holy Ghost and I another. So far as I have life in Christ, I have it for myself, and not for another, but it is the same Holy Ghost in all. As there is one soul in the body, so there is one Holy Ghost in the body.

Thus God has wrought in us individually, and, besides, by one Spirit builded us together. He has awakened and created us anew by this glowing and blessed revelation of Himself. What a thing it is to know God in this way!

What is especially important is this individual communion with God; and we grow in this by studying that which produces it, what God is in Christ.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." (Prov. xxviii, 13.)

he has got it. It is a kind of reasoning for which human reasoning is not a match. Thus the soul comes to know the wondrous blessed harmony of what God is for itself, because, in Christ, He has condescended to every want and weakness.

In the end of the chapter we have the Spirit as the power by which we have access through Christ to the Father, with all this revelation of God, full unhindered intercourse with Him. It is the Spirit of God who reveals God's nature to me and in me, and so makes my heart answer to the love of God, for God is love. And just as the love comes down, my heart goes up. What a divine character of communion! It is true worship. It is the divine up-flowing answer to divine down-flowing love.

And besides this individual communion with God, we are indissolubly united to one Head,—“builded together in him for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus there is unity and fellowship. Thus every in-

“THE WORD OF EXHORTATION.”

Hebrews i—iv.

(Continued from page 75.)

It is not the exposition of the doctrines of the epistle that is here pursued, but the exhortations founded upon the doctrines.

The deductions from scripture and practical exhortations of the most devoted and spiritual may sometimes be wide of the mark, or at least may fail to present that which is the real point of importance; but in the exhortations and deductions we are about to follow, the Spirit of God has, in each case, without question, presented the very point of truth it is of the deepest moment for our souls to heed, and the absolute practical use which should be made of each of the various statements that are presented in the epistle.

As to the exhortation itself, it commences at chap. ii, verse 1,—“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest

heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" This exhortation naturally flows from the subject of the first chapter, which is the presentation of the dignity and intrinsic glory of the person of God's Son, by whom the mind of God is now communicated. For He "hath in these last days spoken to us by *his Son*." But it will be observed that all that is here ascribed to the Son is ascribed to Him as the man who had been known here on earth in humiliation, and sorrow, and death; but who in truth was the Prophet from among their brethren, whom God had

One who was far above prophets, and above angels (as is argued in the chapter) the appointed heir of all things, as He is the maker and upholder of all things, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. *He* it is by whom God now speaks, and His dignity and glory, as well as the subject of His communications, demand for Him a solemn and heedful attention. It is not of judgment that God now speaks, as in the days of Noah, nor of the requisitions of His holiness, as in the fiery law which was given through the mediation of Moses, but it is of accomplished salvation that He speaks by His Son. For it was "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high;" thus attaching all the dignity and glory of His person to the work He has accomplished, (so giving eternal rest to our souls,) as well as to the message He delivers, and thus investing it with supreme authority. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the

raised up unto them. It is the opposite point of presentation to that which is given in the first chapter of John. There it is what He was essentially from the beginning, before He was manifested in humiliation. Here it is the ascription of all that was true there, to Him who was known as sojourning here on earth; whose glory was hidden when here below, but is now unveiled, that we may know *who* it is by whom God has spoken, and by whose faithfulness and worth the glory of God has been accomplished, and the salvation and blessing of His people eternally secured.

Formerly God had spoken by His prophets, and their message was invested with all the authority of the word of the Lord; but now it is the *SON* who takes the place of Prophet, or communicator of God's mind. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." "God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son."

things which we have heard. There is a double principle of responsibility here, that which belongs to all men who have heard the gospel—for God has spoken by His *Son*, and man's carelessness cannot undo that—and He will hold them responsible for the acceptance or rejection of the message He has delivered. "For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be *spoken by THE LORD*." But there is also that which belongs to those who have believed, that they give a heedful attention to the things which they have heard, that they may retain, in all their brightness, and in all their force, by the power of faith, the things which they have heard, and which have been thus communicated. Let the one and the other think what they are doing if, either in whole or in part, they are neglecting this great salvation. A salvation, as it is insisted on, which first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by the apostles, God also giving His attestation, and the

Holy Ghost setting His seal to its proclamation, by the wonders that He wrought.

Let me ask, Is there no need for this exhortation? What can be thought of the fate of the man who neglects what God, by His own Son, has proclaimed? What the condition of him who neglects a salvation that could alone be accomplished by the mission, and sorrows, and sufferings, and death of God's Son? What also the folly of the believer who, through negligence, or worldliness, or the indulgence of the flesh, allows these bright and blessed revelations to escape from his mind? Does not the condition of those who profess the gospel merely, and in great part of those by whom it has been received, through grace, proclaim aloud the deep necessity for this exhortation to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip?

God will vindicate His word when spoken by angels; but much more will He visit for the outraged dignity and the

rejected love of His Son; for the despal of that grace which flows alone from His glory, His sufferings, and His death!

It is a serious thing for men to neglect their *own salvation*, and it is a legitimate thing to reason with them on the hopelessness of the condition, which such a neglect involves. But there is something deeper than this presented here; it is the neglect of *God's* salvation; the neglect of that intervention of mercy, which can alone render it possible for any sinner to appear in the presence of God. This is another idea than the neglect of my own well-being. It is the neglect of God, of His glory, of His holiness, of His authority, of His grace, of His love, of the provisions of His mercy, the neglect of the salvation accomplished in sorrow and suffering, by His only begotten Son, and is now proclaimed, through the testimony of the Holy Ghost, sent down from above.

But if the dignity of the Son, as the

communicator of God's mind, forms the basis of the exhortation to give a more earnest heed to the things which He has spoken; the grace of His heart, in associating those with Himself of whom He is the Captain of salvation—their rightful deliverer—is the ground of the exhortation, to consider Him who sustains for them the offices of Apostle and High Priest.

He who, in the world to come, or in the habitable earth in a future age, is to be set, as the Son of man, supreme over all the works of God's hands, reaches this place of exaltation, through suffering, and humiliation, and death. Not that He personally needed this, but if He is to associate others with Him, if He is to bring many sons to glory, He must, as the Captain of their salvation, be made perfect through sufferings. For there was that to be met, which the holiness of God and the claims of His justice required, as well as the accomplishment of the results of grace, in bringing many sons to glory. Hence it is said, that "he

who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He so accomplished His work that the sanctified are brought into the same position as Himself, who is the sanctifier. There is one sanctification for Him and for them; for the holiness of God's presence could admit of no other standard. He is the accomplisher of this sanctification; believers are the participants of it; but it is the same sanctification, or setting apart, and on the same grounds. Hence the Lord says, in John xvii, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be truly sanctified." Wondrous position! Wondrous grace! But "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Thus alone it is that He can call them brethren. He came down in grace to their condition that He might raise them to His. The children were partakers of flesh and

blood; and He partakes of flesh and blood. We were under the power of sin; and He *Himself* purged our sins. We were under the power of death, and He submits Himself to that power; and in the very domain of death conquers for us; and by His resurrection delivers from the fear of death those who were subject to its bondage. In grace, He who, as the Son, was all that the first chapter declares, "was in all points made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." It behoved Him to take this place, that He might maintain our position before God, and, in sympathy, minister the needed grace to us here below.

On all this is based the exhortation, "wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

This title of "holy brethren" is thus bestowed on all believers, and its force is seen by a reference to the 11th and 12th verses of the chapter,

where it is said of Christ, that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*" This declaration of God's name, by Christ, to His brethren, is presented in its wondrous bearing by the Lord when, after He was risen from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto *my* Father and *your* Father, unto *my* God and *your* God." This is the blessed title of the relationship which God bears toward every poor sinner saved through the grace of Christ. It is no place of assumption for believers, nor is it a title to which attainments may give a claim. It is the place and title which Christ's grace establishes for those who know Him in the reality of His sufferings, His humiliation, and death. The position of Him whose calling they obey gives its character to theirs, whether viewed in relation to their inheritance above, or to their sojourn here below. It is not an earthly, but a heavenly calling that believers are brought into by Christ.

Called from earth to heaven, they are to know the place of Him who is the Captain of their salvation and the first-born among many brethren.

The exhortation is to consider Christ in the two offices which are here expressed, the apostle and high priest of our profession, offices which are shadowed forth by the position toward Israel of Moses and Aaron. The profession of Christianity, in distinction from the law, is based upon the fact that God has spoken to us from heaven, through Christ, who is the apostle of our profession; and that we have a High Priest in heaven who accomplished eternal redemption by His own blood-shedding while here on earth. The point of the exhortation is to consider *who* it is that sustains these offices, and *how competent He is* to the discharge of all which they imply. He was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as Moses was faithful; but He was as much above Moses as the owner of the house is higher than he who is but a servant, though faithful, in the

house. Christ was the builder of the house, and thus has more honour than the house. He was the builder of all things; and "He that built all things is God." Thus, by the simplest human footsteps, (if I may so speak,) are we led upward to see this blessed lowly One, who was not ashamed to call us brethren, sustaining the office of apostle, or communicator of God's mind, and the High Priest of our profession, as bringing us into God's presence by virtue of His accomplished sacrifice, not merely as "a son over his own house," the Head and Lord of that house; but as the sovereign Creator of all things, the eternal God!

These offices were familiar to the Hebrews; they had their typical presentation in Moses, the prophet of the Lord, and in Aaron, who was the consecrated high priest; but they are now sustained by Him who is at once in grace the first-born among many brethren, and in intrinsic glory the Son of God, and Creator and upholder of all things.

Christ having been thus presented in these offices, of which Moses and Aaron presented the illustration, believers are at once viewed as morally in the wilderness, and on their journey to a future rest, as Israel, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, were travelling through the desert to the rest of Canaan. Redemption from Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea, in their immediate effect, only put the people of Israel in the wilderness; however they were journeying toward the promised rest. So the Hebrews are reminded that this higher redemption, by the blood of Christ, and His taking the place of immediate authority over them, in its present effect, is but to make them pilgrims through the world, in the hope and expectation of a future rest, of which Canaan was but a type. Thus the whole wilderness history of Israel, with its temptations and provocations, is made to bear on the position of the believer in the world; and lessons of practical warning, in the contemplation of that his-

from its recognition; and it left its victims, as to their carcasses, to fall in the wilderness, instead of entering upon the pleasant land. But unbelief prepares the way for *sin*; for if the sense of God's presence be lost, where is the check to the unbridled indulgence of the desires of a heart that is in its very character enmity against God.

"In thy presence we are happy,
In thy presence we're secure,
In thy presence all afflictions
We can easily endure.
In thy presence we can conquer,
We can suffer, we can die,
Wandering from thee we are feeble,
Let thy love then keep us nigh."

But mutual exhortation is introduced in connexion with the danger of the heart being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The reason of this is plain, for if Israel be the congregation of the Lord, then each person of that congregation is responsible to guard against the power of sin. An

tory, rise up at every step. For "these things happened to them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come." But the two special points of exhortation here selected are against *unbelief and sin*; and unbelief comes first. These were the two evils which shut Israel out of Canaan, and caused their carcasses to fall in the wilderness. The effect of unbelief is noted in the core of its baneful effect, as leading the soul to *depart from the living God*. It is the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God. It is not said, an evil heart of unbelief which will hinder your progress, which will weaken you in conflict, which will bring leanness into your souls,—all these things will indeed result from the master effect of unbelief,—but that effect is described as leading to a *departure from the living God*. Israel's whole strength in the desert was that God was with them; but unbelief lost sight of this great truth, and lost all the springs of strength which flow

Israelite cannot sin alone. Achan may alone be occupied with the golden wedge and the Babylonish garment, but all Israel has to bear the consequence of his sin.

God's redemption and Christ's leadership set believers in a mutual relationship to one another; and it is this which gives its force to the exhortation, "exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

How correctly does the word of God delineate the effect of *unbelief*, in leading away from God's presence; and the character of *sin* as deceitful in its approaches, insidious in its advances, and, when yielded to, preparing for worse results by its hardening effect upon the soul! It is not the effect of sin merely that it deceives the heart into that which is contrary to God and its own peace, but it blinds and hardens against all that which the power of divine grace and the ungrieved Spirit of God would make it impressible to. In the wilderness, then, the

two great dangers are, *unbelief* and *sin*. Unbelief which carries out of God's presence, and sin which hardens the heart against all that is according to God, and necessarily brings His judgment.

But as the end of Israel's redemption was not the wilderness, but Canaan, though the wilderness must be passed through to reach it; so it is not in this world that the believer is to find his rest, but his hopes and his aims are to be directed onward to the rest that lies beyond. Hence, because there is this rest, which God has provided, we are led to the exhortation, (iv, 1,) "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." There is a promise left us of this rest, and the exhortation is designed to bring the heart so under the power of this promise as to induce the believer to be always journeying onward, until he reaches its accomplishment. As the apostle says, "one thing

gospel of salvation that the apostle is arguing in these verses, but is drawing a parallel between Israel's position and the believer's, in relation to a rest of which Canaan is taken as a type. But it is God's rest that is now in question; a rest that is worthy of God; a rest, not only for the believer himself, but in which God will participate. The sabbath rest, at the close of the works of creation, presented its first expression, though man through sin had never reached it. Still "the works were finished from the foundation of the world," and the intimation that God intended to associate those whom He blessed with Himself, in this rest, is expressed in the institution of the sabbath. Of Israel, in consequence of their unbelief, God swore that "*they* should not enter into His rest." But their not entering in did not set aside the rest itself, nor God's purpose in relation to it. Hence it is added, "seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not

I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Israel formerly were those who had the promise and the tidings of this rest—the rest of Canaan. Believers now are the persons that are entering upon this rest. As it is stated, "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them;" or, more properly, "we have been evangelized of a rest," "or have had the tidings announced of a rest, as well as they." In a word, believers have displaced Israel, as to the wilderness and Canaan, which were but types, and they are admonished not to follow Israel's example, who when they heard from the spies the tidings of the rest, refused to believe their report, and to go up and possess the land. "For we who have believed do enter into rest, as he said, I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest."

It is plain that it is not about the

in because of unbelief. Again He limiteth a certain day, saying, in David to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." This plainly shows, that Israel not only did not enter God's rest, however Canaan might be a type of it, but even Canaan itself is to be held, by the elect nation of God, by another tenure than that by which they possessed it as brought in to the land by Joshua. For there is a double bearing in the words "If Jesus (or Joshua, as it should be) had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day," as He does by David, many ages afterward, in the Psalms.

The issue of the argument, thus pursued, is this, that it was not the rest of creation that is in question, nor the rest of Canaan, but a rest that is still future, as it is expressed, "there remaineth therefore a rest (a sabbath rest) for the people of God." The great sabbath keeping of the people of God is yet future, and is thus set before us as the inspiring object of hope. It is

God's rest that is before us, and the thought of that rest may well quicken our course onward, through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness which is our present portion.

It need hardly be asserted, that the believer has not yet entered into God's final rest in glory; but the passage before us is often obscured by the introduction of the thought of there being more than one rest spoken of in this chapter. So far from this being the case, except as the sabbath and the rest of Canaan are used as prefigurements of it, the idea throughout is simply one, namely, that the believer has a future rest with God to be entered upon, as Israel had the hope of the rest of Canaan to animate them through the toils of the wilderness. Hence the consequences of Israel's want of faith, in regard to the hope of Canaan, are urged upon us, as a reason for never losing sight of that hope, which is given to encourage us in our course through the world. That the rest is future is argued from the very

believer, whose course is not animated by its constant operation, in regard to the future rest of God, will assuredly in his course "*seem* to come short of it."

Would that there were less that is equivocal in our course, as to its final object! for, in very truth, the salvation of the soul may, through the grace of Christ, be secured; and the hope of heaven, as to individual happiness, may not be altogether absent; while, with regard to this final rest of God, there may be so little of the power of hope, that many a one may seem to come short of it.

But if unbelief and sin, and the effects of them, in Israel's coming short of Canaan, be noticed, and a warning raised for us on this foundation, it may be asked, by what means is such an issue to be avoided, in regard to those who are now in question? God has provided the means to prevent this issue. The word and the priesthood of Christ are introduced, in this connexion, as God's instruments for bringing His

condition of the believer. For if we had already entered on this rest, we should have ceased from our labours, as God rested from His works in creation, when the sabbath was come. But, instead of this being the case, we are in a condition to need the exhortation to diligence, in ever pressing toward it. "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

It is not salvation, or the rest of the soul in the finished work of Christ, that is here spoken of. For he says, "*we who have believed* do enter into rest;" that is, believers are the persons who are now entering upon that rest. The people of God are to be the possessors of it. Therefore, he exhorts the Hebrews, as believers, to labour toward that rest, and not to repeat the sad history of their fathers, who though called out of Egypt to the rest of Canaan, through unbelief came short of it.

"We are saved by hope;" and the

people through the wilderness. The word reaches the very springs of unbelief and apostacy, and lays the soul bare under the all-searching eye of God. The priesthood of Christ is God's provision to meet the condition of those who are thus searched and convicted by the word, from the edge of which nothing can escape.

The law was sufficient to detect Israel's overt acts of apostacy, and to condemn that idolatry which was the expression of their departure from God; but the word, now, in its searching power, does not stop at the outward act, but reaches to the detection of every secret spring of action, every departure in heart or affection from the Lord, from which apostacy takes its rise, as it is written, "thou hast forsaken thy first love."

Believers have now to do with God's final revelation of His grace and holiness, and hence nothing that is contrary to the perfect light of God's presence can be allowed. "All things are made manifest and reprov'd by the

light." The law demanded holiness from man, in whose flesh dwelt no good thing, but as it did not minister righteousness or life, which man's condition required, in order to his having to do with God, the demand could not be met, and the curse of the law was the only possible result. But now the ministration of grace is in truth a ministration of righteousness, in order to deliverance from condemnation; and the ministration of life, through which we have not alone deliverance from death, but the participation of a nature from which holiness must be the issue and the result. "We are made partakers of the divine nature." Christ is our life.

Hence the word is presented in its absolute searching power, penetrating to the hidden recesses of the heart, dividing between the soul and spirit, discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart. This is what the word of God is; and this is its action on the soul of the believer. It is the expression of God's living thoughts;

and in him is no darkness at all." The edge of this sword pierces through every subterfuge, defies the vain attempt which the heart often makes to disguise its motives, and, like the sacrificial knife, separates the very joints and marrow, and discovers every latent spring of action, laying bare every feeling which the heart would never have the courage to confess even to itself.

But this searching inquisition of the word, this inexorable scrutiny of the soul, in order that there may be truth in the inward parts, is the very ground for the necessity of the introduction of the priesthood of Christ. This is the moral connexion between the word and the priesthood of Christ, viewed in their practical bearing on the believer's walk in the presence of God.

It will be remembered that when the law had condemned, and when Israel's departures from the Lord had brought them under His judgment, and there seemed no other possible issue to their murmurings but, either the entire with-

it is the instrument by which He makes His own presence felt. Hence the transition from the written word, and its searching power, as expressed in verse 12, to the immediate eye of God, in verse 13, where it is said, "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."

Now if this be the province of the word, and this the range of its searching power, plainly its detections will be such as to cast the soul into utter despair, if there were nothing found in the ministrations of grace to meet that which the word discovers in the soul. For what is this inquisition in the soul? It is the unmitigated demand, not only that there should be no wrong action, but no wrong affection, no thought of the mind, no intention of the heart, no affection in excess, but that all in the motives, and purposes, and aims of the soul, shall be such as to accord with the holiness of Him of whom it is said, that "God is light,

drawal of God's presence from the camp, or their destruction, that God introduces the rod of Aaron's priesthood, which was the symbol of living and efficacious grace: as is seen in Numbers xvii, 10: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and *thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.*" For as Moses, the representative of the law, did not bring them into possession of the inheritance; but Joshua, the type of Christ as Captain of salvation; so neither was it the rod of power—even of God's power, which Moses wielded—but the rod of priesthood, Aaron's rod which budded, in which grace has its special exercise—that brings the people, in spite of all their provocations, through the wilderness. So is it now. It is the priesthood of Christ that gives practical power to walk with God in the requirements of His holiness, as well as imparts the grace that is needed to meet our un-

numbered failures, as brought to light by the power of that word by which we are searched.

Most interesting is it to see the difference of the two exhortations, based upon the two aspects of Him who sustains this priesthood. Verse 14, "Seeing that we have a *great high priest* that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, *let us hold fast our profession.*" Verses 15, 16, "We have not an high priest which cannot be *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"

It is the greatness of the High Priest, and the place of the exercise of His priesthood, that are presented as the ground of the exhortation, "let us hold fast our profession." The high priest who sustains the ground of this profession is "Jesus, the SON OF GOD," who has passed into the heavens, to exercise His priesthood for us, in the

immediate presence of God. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. . . . So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. . . . Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. v, 1, 5, 10.)

It has been shown that it is God with whom we have to do, and that it is in His presence, from which nothing can be hid, that we have to walk. And when the light of the word has shown us what we are, and what is in our hearts, and at the same time discloses the presence of God, before whom all this is made manifest, there is nothing left for the soul but to shrink back from the light, and throw up all profession of having to do with God. It is felt, and must be felt, when searched by this light, if there be no other link of connexion, association with God is impossible. For "what

fellowship hath light with darkness?" But to meet this conviction the mind is called to think of the greatness of its resources and the sure ground of its confidence, in the greatness of the high priest of our profession. He on whose sacrifice this confidence is based is the Son of God, who by Himself has purged our sins, and in all the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice, and the virtue of His blood-shedding, has passed into the heavens; and on the ground of what He is in Himself, and what His sacrifice has accomplished, He maintains our position in the presence of God. Allow that the word will not pass by the least shade of sin in my soul without condemnation; allow that it makes me *feel* that "in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing," and that I am in the light where nothing can be hid,—is that a reason for seeking to evade the light, or for the despair which would lead me to throw up my profession? If, indeed, I were left under the naked dissection of the word, when it had done its work in my

conscience, I might, and must, be thus hopeless; but when my eye is turned to what Jesus is, and what He has accomplished, and what His position in heaven for me before God is, then I feel the force of the exhortation, "let us hold fast our profession." For well can He sustain the ground of that profession, since it is based alone upon what He has accomplished: "He suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Self-aborrent as may be my feelings, when viewing what the light of the word has discovered—for I must say with Job, "now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"—still, when it is turned from what the light has discovered in me to what that same light shows to be in Christ, in the presence of God for me, my heart is reassured, and I learn practically on what ground it is I can alone hold fast my profession.

But if the greatness and the position of our High Priest forbid the letting go

our profession, because He is able to sustain the ground of it, there is also the other side, namely, His personal acquaintance with our condition, and the sympathy of His heart, which are presented in order to give boldness under every discouragement. We are encouraged to come to Him, not to soothe us merely by His kindness, or to comfort us by the power of His sympathy, but as to the head and source of all grace, to draw from Him those supplies which will enable the soul practically to walk in the light, as God is in the light. His sympathy and knowledge of our condition—"for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"—are presented to view, not as in themselves to be rested in, but as the certain ground of His ability and willingness to exercise toward us all that active grace which He knows our condition and circumstances require. There is not a single evil that the word detects in my

results from the place He took in redemption, and which reigns eternally in His heart, in order to draw our hearts constantly and with confidence to Himself, that we may find the blessed springs of mercy ever flowing, to cheer and strengthen us amidst the difficulties, and temptations, and sorrows, of our course.

The boldness with which we are exhorted to come springs from the character of Him through whom we draw nigh to God; and the very office He sustains has its fitting exercise in the communication of the gracious help we need. The sympathy that knows exactly how to meet my necessities, and that encourages my heart, because of the relationship which, through grace, He who feels this sympathy sustains towards me, is the very provision which God has made for what His word and holy presence make manifest in our hearts: the whole effect of being thus searched by the light resulting in a practical acquaintance with the infinite grace of Him who for us sustains the

heart for which I cannot find in Christ the very needed grace that shall enable me to overcome it; and it is on this ground the exhortation is presented, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"—the pity which His heart alone can adequately feel, and the help which His love is ever ready to bestow.

"To come to the throne of grace" is a phrase that is often used, as if it applied only to the act of ordinary prayer. It is true that when prayer leads me to call upon the Lord, I do find that He is seated upon the throne of grace; but the thought here expressed is far different from that which is suggested by the use of the ordinary phrase. It is not merely that God is gracious, and will hear our prayers, and therefore we may wait upon Him with confidence; but it is the presentation of Christ as the head and fountain of sovereign grace and goodness to communicate, combined with all that perfect sympathy which

office of a merciful and faithful high priest.

I do not come to Christ to exercise His sympathy toward me, to make my conscience easy in the continuance of that which the light of the word condemns, but to derive from Him the very grace and strength to overcome all that by which my conscience has been oppressed, as searched by that word which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

H' EKKΛΗΣΙΑ,—THE ASSEMBLY.

The assembly is the same in the elements of its constitution as the whole Church, but with the blessing that it is acted on by all that God may send in any part of the whole body, by gift, or by correction needing to be

brought home to it. What is necessary to it is truth and love in the Spirit, and a pressing forward, which will be the greatest reproof of those that lag behind, and thus act as the truest discipline for the remnant in the evil day. The danger will be felt when it is found that we cannot wait for those who are ready to fall away. The end of the counsels of God in calling the saints is the glory of Christ, and in having a body fit to be the company that shall be about Him in the specialty of His Sonship FOR EVER—His bride. Every one, then, who, though with the best intentions, works on any other basis than this in the saints will, first or last, be working to his own glory, (I do not include those who work for their own interest, seeking their own things, as must be to their shame,) and is sure to bring confusion, though he teach the holiest truth, or follow the truest form of working. "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience, and out of faith unfeigned." The assembly is

but if souls, begotten again by the word of truth, having the enjoyment of His grace, and earnestly seeking their way in practical confession of Christ, and that He is again to come, find companions on the way, they are in need of, as well as are capable of, enjoying, in earnest prosecution of their path, *all* that God intended for the consolidation and advancement of their faith and love; and God provides it in His unfailing grace. It is in this very different from the remnant in the day of Antichrist, who, though not the Church, having suffered, reign with Christ. These are real and faithful through all proof, in ignorance, but in a measure of holding out against the enemy, made wonderful by their ignorance; the word, perhaps, hardly known, but they kept of God in tribulation, such as never had been, or should be. Not so *now* with the remnant who keep the truth; beset (at present at least) with subtlety and falsehood, but with the word in constant use, amidst spiritual corruption and dissipation of

the school of the individual (having received the fitness of grace) for the fulfilment of that character in the power of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and is carried out in making him a perfect member in the relationship of that love which is "first pure, then peaceable, and full of good fruits." The Church, in its extent, is the expression of the purpose of God's grace, looking to the time of the heading up of all things; but it is only where that which is necessary to it is found that the thought of God will find a true answer.

In one respect it is not otherwise in this evil day than at the first. A conscience exercised by present evil seeks God, and finding Him in Christ has found a resolution of every difficulty, a teacher and support in face of the enemy, and a guiding light in the darkness. Christianity, corrupt and defiled, adopted by and as yet used by the world, makes no difference whether Christ and His infinite grace has become the object of the soul or no;

truth, the tendency of which is to destroy the peculiarity of the calling of the saint, and the true defence of his position. An evil day, therefore, ever brings with it a more individual cast of confession and capacity, in dependence on God, of confessing Christ under very various proof, and therefore is it said, "keep yourself in the love of God," and otherwise to the man of God, "from such turn away." But this never makes *any part* of the canon of truth necessary to the Church or saint less necessary; while all that is given of God is necessary, and dependence on it, "that the man of God be thoroughly furnished," and fit to help others; nor is the assembly in its power and offices, according to the mind of God, less called for; it is to supply whatever it ever supplied. It seems to stand last, but that is because there must be so much to minister to its right action; but there is one great characteristic which constitutes it at once as such, and that is the faith of the Holy Ghost, sent as a Person

at pentecost to be in the body. "*With them,*" says the scripture, in Christ, in whom He fully dwelt, while Christ was with them; but now *in them* according to promise, and fulfilling the same in every given power to faith and waiting upon God.

The manifestation of the presence of God in action was ever by the Holy Ghost, from creation downwards; but in all God's dealings with mankind lying under sin, the Holy Ghost was never with man personally dwelling in him, as on the Holy Ghost being sent down at pentecost, till Christ, having worked out the full remedy was, because victorious, for man, and as man, at the right hand of God. There never was obedience or life but by the Holy Ghost. There was ever *life* through Christ believed on; and farther, union with Him by resurrection from the dead individually, as with the head, but not the presence of the Person of the Holy Ghost. He in His presence constituted the Church, and no assembly or association of believers,

contained in the word vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost, and understanding of it given. Admission to understanding thus measured was given by Christ while He was on earth, and *now* according to subjection to Christ, by the Holy Ghost.

If the world was convinced of the righteousness of God, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, because Christ was with the Father, the Church, having the Holy Ghost, and believing in the mission of the Holy Ghost revealing Christ, will be always convinced of the same. Giving God the glory of all things, brings Him forth in His all-sufficiency to man returned to Him in Christ.

The cleansing from all sin by the blood of Christ depends on the faith that in God is "no darkness at all." These things wrote the apostle that we might not sin; but if any man sin, &c. Because there is individual communion in any measure, there is blessing in any truth and grace of God, is there not rather the overflowing on all around in the bond of the Holy

however general, ever did constitute the Church, nor could do so to the end of time, nor for eternity. A deference to this truth can alone constitute the assembly, or establish its action as such. "Be it to thee according to thy faith." The Church is the habitation of God, by the Spirit, and not the habitation of God without Him. The assembly of *all* believers would not constitute the Church on earth or in heaven; but as the Holy Ghost is in the body on earth, and is sent, and is ever the same, is it the Church. One body and one Spirit; and farther, the operation of membership to the service of the body, or of individuals of it, rests on the part of the Church and the assembly being the habitation of God, and on regard to it. **BY THE HOLY GHOST IS THE SUBJECTION OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST IN GLORY.**

The Holy Ghost keeps the Church in possession of the truth of the glory of Christ, and of who He is. According to the measure of the subjection to Christ is the revelation of the truths

Ghost? Not but there is individual personal communion beyond what is in company with the body.

If there is indeed a true love for Christ it will be manifested in attachment to all the grace that is in Christ. It is in forwarding of this in souls that all the relationship of the members is engaged subject to the Head. To one ardent of his way, no revelation of his fault is an offence. If Paul, during his presence with the Philippians, (God working in the saints to will and to do,) was suggesting all that was to perfect them, the fear and trembling in which they would seek to please God and abound more and more, in his absence, were but the fruit of this desire. But should there be misapprehension of one's state in this intercourse of mutual help, if it were private discipline, it may call for the patience of a saint, and nothing can happen but what the supply of the Spirit of Christ can turn to account. The heathen could say that it was the part of true friendship diligently to advise and be advised, and if the Church fails, "bearing the prize

in mind," to take advantage of its grace to do the same, surely what hope is there of it? There may be not only misapprehension of state, but of the truth of God—here there would be something to suffer and something to be done; but nothing need be done without advantage. "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." Many forget that grace—grace in truth—is glory begun. Now this course of edification must presuppose both individual desire and love of the Spirit in the body, and the individual seeking "to apprehend that for which they were apprehended in Christ Jesus," and desiring to know "the power of the resurrection," walking in the light, "being made conformable to His death." Nothing binds souls more together in love in the Spirit than the honest purpose of seeking truth, and according to it "to purify themselves, even as He is pure." *It confirms in the faith*, it admits to the true sense in the full assurance of understanding of the mystery of God. (See Col.)

I see in love in the Spirit the whole

course of Christianity. In some sort the way of God has been in the growing day of evil and of worldliness just the reverse. God has provided against such a tendency in supplying peculiarly, in such a day, in the development of the word, all the materials to a saint for his individual soul. Salvation is his wall and bulwark. God knoweth them that are His; but in nearness of communion, and its power, and a simple rest on the faithfulness of God—God transports the soul into Himself, and hides it there. But even so, is there no common bond from God for the blessing of the saints in the bundle of life together? Is it not the bond of the Person of the Holy Ghost sent of God, and to abide for ever? A mere massive association of Christians is totally unfit, from weakness, to exhort one another at the approach of the evil day; or else they fall quickly into the forms of the world, or sink into corruption. The Holy Ghost sent down at pentecost is also the earnest of the inheritance, and keeps the saint out of

of the work of the enemy overthrown. It is the peculiar characteristic of the saint redeemed out of the age of enmity to God, and the conspiracy of selfishness, which is but the concealed enmity of the seed of the wicked one. It is the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of His own, and is full of the peace of God. The form of this love on earth is that of brethren in the flesh, attached beyond the forms of the world, pure and kindly affectioned, considerate, inclined to hide shame, compassionate, but in all things according to the hope of the presence of Christ.

The day is evil and the Church confused, but the word is *light* in the darkness, there is no need to stray. We have but to return to our God; we find Him where *He* was, and always is; it was we who had strayed.

In the day of the blessed Eliakim and the worldly Shebna, they pulled down the houses within to fortify the wall, "and looked not to the maker thereof." Such indeed has been the

the world, and supplies the spiritual need of exhortation in the body. It is not that less grace is needed, though in a different relationship of things, where believers enjoy but little from God, than when there was danger of carnal clashing from the abounding of spiritual gift. The end is the same, the working out of the state is different. The character of love, in its full negative working against the remnants of nature in spiritual men is more needful now than in the days when the Church had yet her garment of glory and beauty, so soon lost. "Love suffereth long, is kind; love becometh not itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Love endureth all things." Men must be on their way to bear this, and if they are so, and have Christ and His grace, in what is it untrue that God shall supply all their need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, members of His body, and heirs of the kingdom? Let

them build the inner houses of the city and their own first. The husbandman must be first partaker of the fruits. Gifts—real gifts—are indeed a blessing of God, but whoso boasteth himself (by knowledge and various talents, perhaps, or various presumptions) of a false gift, is like clouds and winds without rain.

To preach the gospel of grace of the kingdom and of the glory is still given, and the night is not far distant. Encouragement in the hope of the gospel—building—refreshing, is dispensed of Him that abideth for ever. He anoints the saint, who subjects himself to Christ—with intelligence of the word that He has conveyed. He is the tender comforter of the confessor wearied in conflict, and the strength of his confession.

The apostle is gone, and there may be confusion in the joints and bands, but while the communion of the saint cannot be hindered, (nay special provision made for its depth in the revelations of God's love,) the Holy Ghost

sent by Christ from the Father makes the Church the habitation of God for ever, and the union of it on earth, by faith of the ordinance of God in Himself—AND SO OF THE ASSEMBLY—and is power from on high for every saint for the maintenance one of the other BY FAITH. *The assembly is God's or the world's.*

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

Read 1 John i, and ii, 1, 2.

If our hearts were as simple as the word of God, our perception of its truths would be as simple and as easy. But it is not so. In a certain sense it could not be so; nor ought it to be so, till our hearts and thoughts are brought into subjection to God's thoughts. There will be no simplicity till the conscience is purged; because, till the soul is brought to God, all is confusion and darkness on account of sin. In partial and dimmer light there is often terror, because everything is confused. So when the conscience is at work, until we are brought to set to our seal that God

is true, and learn that *all our thoughts* perish, all our ways are foolishness, terror and confusion reign in the soul. But when brought to this, our hearts become as simple as the word. It is a great matter to have the heart exercised. God would have, and will have, the mind and conscience exercised. But till our thoughts are brought into subjection to God's thoughts—our own thoughts utterly set aside—we cannot have blessed and happy thoughts of God. When our thoughts flow in the current of God's thoughts—when His thoughts become ours—it is blessed in every sense. The conscience is blessed, the heart is blessed; and you go on cheerfully. Not so when God speaks, and we begin to reason; setting up our thoughts *against*, or *mingling* them with, God's revelation. That is not simplicity. Till the soul is bowed to receive God's thoughts you cannot, and ought not, to have perfect peace. I have sin in me! how then *can* I have peace? Here is the difficulty. "For, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If the revelation of God in Christ shines into me, I cannot say, "I have no sin." What follows? "If any man sin, we have an *advocate with the Father.*" Here, then, I find

how I can have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Christ, the advocate with the Father, maintains us in the communion we are apt to lose. This is the great secret which breaks down human pride—*entire subjection* to God's thoughts. If God has given a revelation, and I am not subject to it, it is unbelief—it is rebellion. God says, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." If I say, "I have done this or that, and God cannot forget; He knows all, and He must remember;" I am found reasoning, and not submitting to God's thoughts. I am concluding what God must be, from what I find in myself, consequent on the light which has shined in.

How then can I have peace? God does not mean us to take up things lightly, without exercise of soul. When the light of God shines into the conscience sin is felt, and seen too, where it never was seen before. God shines in, and I find darkness. God cannot have to do with darkness. I find that in me which God cannot accept. How can God accept me?

I am always glad to see a conscience exercised thus. It is all useful to convict of sin. It is good for the light to probe to the bottom of the heart. It is awful to

think what the human heart is. I do not mean in the gross forms of evil. There is something in the selfishness, the cold calculating reasoning of man's heart, worse than all the sins one could enumerate. Yes, even of the decent man who keeps his character! Is there one single motive which governs your heart, decent and sober as you are, which governed Christ's? Is there one feeling in your breast which was in Christ? *Not one.* What governs men? *Selfishness.* Not so Christ. There was no selfishness in Christ. In Him all was love. Love it was that brought Him down. Love gave Him energy when hungry and weary at the well. Love carried Him on, one constant unending stream of love. Never was He betrayed into anything contrary to it. Deserted, abandoned, betrayed, still there was one unwearying acting of love. Selfishness can feel love. It is even lovely to man's mind, though he is the very opposite of it. Yet some are amiable and beautiful characters. But how do they use their amiability? To attract to *self*—self governs man. Selfishness need not be put into Him; it is there. All is sin from beginning to end—all self. Whatever be the form it takes it is vanity. Is it not

cry out, "I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes." Beloved friends, if I take the ground of expecting anything from God, in virtue of what I am towards Him, *all is over!* there is nothing but condemnation. God is holy, and I am not. God is righteous, and I am a sinner. The end of all these exercises of soul is to make you cry out, "I am vile," and that is all. God is holy, and I am not. He *is* holy, and must be holy, and ought to be holy. Would you have Him lower Himself down to what you are? No, never. I may tremble before Him when I think of it, but I would not have it otherwise. No person quickened into the divine nature could deliberately wish God to come down from His holiness, to spare one sin, because he has learnt by that same nature to hate sin. My heart has tasted a little of love in God Himself; for He cannot reveal Himself without revealing love. The law shows man what he ought to be, but does not show what God is. It says, love God, and shows me that I ought to love, but does not tell me who or what the God is I am to love! Job said, if I could but find Him! However distracted and broken to pieces under the hand of God, he felt that if he could only find Him, he would love

true of every one that will read this, that some personal gratification, perhaps some little bit of dress, has more power to occupy the thoughts, than the agony of Christ? Not that He would have us always occupied with that; He would have us occupied with His person and glory.

What I want to prove, then, is that we cannot think badly enough of what our hearts *are*. It is well that we should know it, for we cannot have the truth without in some measure judging the root and principle of evil within.

But then have we any power to remedy the evil? No, none. But when brought to God, happily we get miserable about it. When there are desires after truth I hope, because I see some goodness in God; but hope is dashed by seeing some evil in myself. *That* is not simplicity. It is judging God by some sort of knowledge of what I am. It may be true and righteous; but it is *law*. The principle of law is, that God is towards man according to what man is towards God. It is the principle which conscience always will act on; for according to conscience it is right. The evil is not in this, but in the fact that I am not brought to total despair. The light has not as yet broken down the will, so as to make me

Him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" Flesh is always under the law. Realizing by faith the precious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, then all is easy, all is peace. Flesh comes in and troubles, and the soul is down; and it is up and down; and the evil is that the soul gets habituated to such alternations, and not to walking in communion with God.

To think that God is going to condemn me is not fellowship with His thoughts. What is fellowship? Common thoughts together; common feelings, affections, objects; one heart, one mind. Thus we have fellowship with God! How wonderful! Fellowship with the Father and the Son. How so? Why; what have I received, if I have not received God's thoughts? Does not the Father delight in the Son? and do not I delight in that there is all beauty and perfectness in Him? Do not I delight in a soul being converted? Is it not your delight that Christ should be perfectly honoured and glorified? and is it not God's too? If God's thoughts are the spring of our thoughts, can we wonder that our joy should be full? The Holy Ghost gives thoughts, and our hearts are too narrow to take them in in all their fulness and

power; but our joy is full, nay so full that it runs over. It is not that we are not inconsistent to the end. The peace and rest that we get is, that there is no modification, no change, in God Himself. If we say there is this or that inconsistency in *me*, and how can such as I look to God, and begin questioning, we get back to law—to judging by my own good-for-nothing heart of what God is. Would I have you indifferent to sins? No! but I would you had so settled and constant a judgment of the flesh, as vile and *cannot* please God, as to give yourself entirely up. Many of us have to learn this by detail—by failing, and failing, and failing. It is better to learn it by a ray of light shot from God's credited word—to believe, from His report, that from the first shoot it puts forth from the earth, to the last fruit it bears, it is the old tree, and will never bring forth anything but wild grapes. A hard lesson this, but a true one. Are your hearts brought to say, in God's presence, I know that "I am carnal, sold under sin?" Have you come to this point, to accept the entire judgment of God against yourself? Terrible! But you must get these to know more full blessedness. Have you ever sat down satisfied to know that that *self*, that

is merciful and will give a reprieve, I destroy the law,) or you establish the law, *proving its utter condemnation*, and that you are *dead* through it,—a lost sinner—alive by the life of Christ. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (verse 5.) God comes in as light. Sin is darkness. "Light has no fellowship with darkness." Light being come in, we must so stand in the presence of God, that in the full light of His holiness, no spot at all is seen in us. Do you walk thus in the light? It is a real thing. The walk *is* what a man really *is*. Can you stand in the light, as God is in it without a veil between, walking, not according to the light, but *in* the light? Have you ever walked in such sort, knowing, without an effort in your conscience, that you are in the presence of God. If not, how have you been walking—going on for a few brief years? Whither you know not—in the awful folly of the human heart—in a constant state of moral madness! Have you ever had it all told out in your conscience, alone with God, all that you ever did? A long tale! That is what you have done, that is what you have thought, and *I saw it all!* Would you

is sitting there, cannot please God? When it comes to that I give up all thoughts of judging God by what I am; for then He could only cast me out of His presence! I am not looking to gain eternal life. I cannot; I have failed. Where then shall I find that which I so desperately want? Why in this was manifested the love of God. (verse 2.) Himself is manifested. The life you want is come by another. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." You are just the opposite to Jesus. How did you find that out? Jesus is manifested, the eternal life which came *down* from the Father, to you, because you could never have got your heart up to it. If Christ is not my life, where is it? Is Christ my life? Yes! and what a life I have. It makes me see sin in me—true. But if I have the sin, have I an imperfect life? A life which, perhaps, God cannot be pleased with? No! it is given from God, because I am mere sin. God sent His Son that I might live through Him. It is God's *free* gift. Where is responsibility then? As regards *getting*, there is none. It is in the *using*! Do I weaken responsibility? Nay, I give it all its force. If you are under the law, you are either weakening its authority, (for if I say God

like thus to be told out, alone with God, the things that perhaps were not done before men, just proving that you thought more of man than of God? Is it all going to sink into *oblivion*? Have you thus been *manifested to God*, as the apostle speaks? Here is a message—mark who brings it! A message by Christ. To bring me to Christ—to God—to judge? No! But to bring me to one who has *come* to put away all that He has made manifest! I breathe again! What comfort! I can desire now that everything should be known; everything I have even thought of, because it is to Him who came to put it all away. Not to hide, nor excuse, but to put it all away. The Son of God has died for it all. It is God putting *my sin* away, instead of putting *me* away. I am in the light, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. I get the witness of God Himself, God who is light. If He does not show a spot in me, who will? Do I say, there is no spot in my nature? No. But it does not depend on what *I* am; it depends on God, in whose light I am. The God who manifests me tells me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin! God has loved me *perfectly*. How do I know that? Because of what I am? No; I know it

from what *God is*, and from what He has done; and my soul rests in constant, perfect, undisturbed peace; for God has revealed Himself to be what He is, and has revealed what He has done, in that Christ died; and what He has done never can change—He never changes. It is in the power of an *accomplished salvation* that the soul rests, and not on anything that is yet to be done; so that there can be no change. The blood of Christ alone blots out my sin. If Christ did not do it perfectly, when will it be done? But He has done it. “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” When faith, by divine teaching, has laid hold on this, faith does not change either. “The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins.”

One word at the close on that which is important to us all—communion, fellowship. Is communion never interrupted? Yes! But *God's love* is not interrupted, nor my confidence, though my communion may often be; for God cannot have communion with a single sin—with an idle trifling thought—so that when such come into the mind we cannot have communion. What is the resource then? The answer is given in chapter ii, verse 1, “My little children, these things write I unto you that

with you, He is love, and He would have you happy. You cannot be happy in evil. Because He is love He would bring us to know this love, and *find therein our rest*. Aye, and He would have us reckon on Him as regards our failures. I have sin in me, and I have no strength save in Him. If I cannot, or do not, go to *Him* when there is sin and failure, where am I to go for strength? Moses said, *Exod. xxxiv, 9*, “If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.” Could you go up with the stiffneckedness you have without God? “Go with us,” says Moses, “*because it is a stiffnecked people*.” You will never get the victory over sin, nor indeed properly judge it, unless you have God with you! Christ can give us to hate the sin and strengthen us against the thing we hate. God is love. I know it in Christ, and I have Him against the evil that would hinder me—the thing I feared would be too much for me. “We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It is not here *mediator* with God, but advocate with the Father. Communion with the Father has been interrupted. Advocacy is founded on two points. He, the righteous one *being* in God's presence, and that He has made propitiation for us. We have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and we lose it through sin or folly. Christ comes in as the advocate, and the Spirit of Christ works according to advocacy, and restores communion, brings us back to fellowship with the Father and the Son. Here is the remedy for daily failure. Our position is fellowship with the Father and the Son.

That our joy may be *full*. Have you been brought to this? He has made peace. Have you got it? Take no rest till you have it. Tolerate no sin; but see that God has put it all away by the blood of the cross. God forbid there should be any levity about sin. Nothing is so impossible as that God can brook sin. But He can put it away. Have you, by faith, attained this rest, rest in that eternal life which came by the shed blood, never to be shed again? Beloved friends, only be sure of this, that God is love; that in all His ways

THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

BELOVED BROTHER,

I have been occupied, for my own soul, with the enquiry what is the hope of the Christian, and I send you some points of the result, thinking they may be a means of cheering and encouraging some of God's dear children. The first important point which this result brings powerfully home to the heart and conscience is, that the source of this hope, and the only means of rightly estimating it, the only sure ground on which the heart can rest in appropriating it, is that all that I hope for is the fruit of the grace of Jesus, that in which His own heart finds its delight, in giving to us, because it is that of which He knows in Himself the blessedness, and because His love is perfect towards us, His interest in us as perfect as Himself. This is essentially characteristic of perfect love. All this, I need not say, is according to the counsels of the

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Father. "It is not mine to give," says Christ, "but to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." For it is what He takes as man, that He gives to us, and hence, as receiving it Himself as man from His Father, and delighting in it as the expression of the Father's love. This thought brings out another simple, but remembering who Jesus is, a most blessed and wonderful truth, that where there is perfect love on the one hand, and capacity of enjoyment through possession of the same nature on the other, love will seek to introduce its object into the common enjoyment of that which it possesses, and finds its blessing and happiness in. This is true of a friend, a parent, and every genuine human attachment; though of course in these cases, imperfection is attached to the affection itself, and to its power of accomplishing its wish to make happy. But the perfection of Christ's love does not, since it is love to us, make our introduction into the enjoyment of His blessedness a thing not to be

blessedness, this character of blessing shines out most evidently. And it is the elements of our future joy which scripture affords, which I would present to you, though surely grace is needed to give them their value, which will be just proportionate to our personal estimate of Christ Himself; that is, to our spiritual knowledge of Him. Our possession of the life of Christ, His being our life, so that it can be said of it, in its nature and fruits, "which thing is true in him and in you," is the basis of our hope, and that which makes us, in connexion with His work on the cross, capable of enjoying it. He became a man, and having first wrought redemption, and glorified God in our behalf, and put away sin for us, and made peace, becomes, as victorious over death, and entering risen and glorified into God's presence, the source of life to us, nay, more, *our* life. We are thus brought into the place of sons. All the old thing, with its fruits and nature, judged, condemned, and done away, whatever conflicts and exercises of heart

hoped for because it is too excellent; but just lays the sure ground for this hope. It is His own delight to make us happy, a part of the perfection of His nature, His own satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." It is to this I would first of all direct the attention of yourself and your reader. Christ is finding His own delight and joy in blessing us, and in blessing us with Himself, because He loves us; and this blessing must be according to the perfectness of His own nature, for it flows from Him, and is to be enjoyed with Himself, and as He enjoys it before and with the Father. What a scene this opens before us, if we have indeed tasted His love, and yet it is all dependent on His own free goodness, and the fruit and display of it: the happiness itself being dependent on His own excellency. That His grace is the source of it every Christian will recognize; but I think you will find, that in taking scripture to guide us in the details it gives of our future

we may have with it, and through it, while down here. As alive in Christ we stand before God, consequent on the accomplishment of redemption, and in virtue of complete forgiveness. "He has quickened us together with him, having forgiven us all trespasses." We are introduced in the place of sons with Christ, as the result and fruit of redemption, and as really partaking of the life in which He lives. See here the Spirit, in 1 John, (which specially treats of the existence, possession, and development of this life in Christ, and so in us. See i, 1, 2, and v, 11, 12, for the general principle,) connects us with Christ in life, position, and, consequently, hope. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons (children) of God,"—have, by adoption, Christ's relationship with God, yet as really born of God, possessing a nature displayed in the same qualities,—therefore the

world knoweth us not, because it knew him not," (the true and perfect Son of God.) "Beloved now are we the sons (children) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Blessed testimony in all its parts: born of God, we have the nature (morally) and position of that true, blessed, and eternal Son made man, that in His glory we may be with Him, and like Him. *We* are children of God, unknown by the world, consequently, as He was. We shall be perfectly like Him in glory, seeing Him as He now is above in heavenly glory, and hence can bear no lower standard now. Having this hope in Christ, reaching to, and founded on Himself, we seek to be as like Him now as possible, in the inner man, and in our ways we purify ourselves as He is pure. What a picture of the moral position of the Christian is here,

state is capable of delighting in all its absolute and heavenly excellency before us. Its satisfying object, an object which can keep all its powers in blessed and full-exercise, can occupy it with perfect delight. And yet while I delight in Him as supremely excellent, the full display of heavenly excellence, I know that I am like Him. I could not, my desires being fixed on this, having tasted its excellence, be perfectly happy, were I not. Yet in us this excellence is a capacity to be occupied with its perfection in Him. However great our glory and excellency may be, it is only as being *like* Him. He is the thing we are like. He is it in its own proper and positive substantive being and existence. If I am adopted to be a son, am really born of God, a child, He *is* the Son. Hence all our excellence is the means of apprehending and adoring His. We may remark that this is true, both in moral perfections and in relationship. God is perfect in Himself and for Himself. Love and holiness, as indeed every

through His living connexion with Christ! It is sweet to say it is ours, sweeter to say we have it in Him, and that He Himself is the perfection of it. If His life is animating us, through the strengthening grace and communications of the Holy Spirit, what a power and value will such a statement have for us, living by, and dwelling in Him. Here then is one great and blessed part of our hope, "we shall be like him, we shall see him as he is." It is perfectness, in likeness to Christ, in ourselves morally, in its full result, for it is in glory; that is, all the full fruit of the power of this life as in Christ, produced even as to the body, while its internal excellence, likeness to Christ, is perfect, and no hindrance to its exercise, but, quite the contrary, a suited condition: and with the blessed *consciousness* that we are like Him, though we have it all from Him. We shall be like Him: but secondly, in this state we shall have the full blessed *object* in which this perfect nature delights, and in this

other attribute of God, have their joy in themselves, and of course perfectly and infinitely in God. But the creature needs an object to enjoy perfectly what this blessed nature is and gives, even when he possesses it. The new man delights in holiness, but the perfect holiness of God is needed for the perfect delight of our new and holy nature. The new man has a nature imbued with charity, and so can delight in its exercise; but the perfect love of God, manifested in Jesus, and known in communion, is His delight. So in our relationship we are sons with God; but I must learn in Jesus what it is to be a son, and what the power of that word is: "the Father loveth the Son." We share in the glory; but the glory in which we share is His. In the hope, then, presented to us in this passage, we have the Father's love presented as the source, so that we are already children of God, so as to know our position; but this flowing from our being born of God, from Christ being our life, and we as He, so

that even the world does not know us, as it did not know Him; we are so identified with Him, that though what we shall be does not yet appear, we know we shall be like Him when He shall do so; seeing Him in the very glory in which He now is as Son, with the Father, viewed in manhood on high. It is not as this world will see Him, being blessed under Him, and seeing Him so far as He can be revealed to mortal eyes, but being like Himself, and seeing Him as He is.

This leads to another part of the blessing, which is equally the joy of Jesus Himself. We shall be with Him. Evidently, if we love and delight in Him, this is needed for our full joy; and while He ministers this in us now, by being present with us in grace, it is the object of our hope in its full character and permanent fulness. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Remark here, that the apostle, when speaking here of the Lord's coming, does not enter at all, as regards our portion, into the consequences in glory

world could recognize nothing of it: There was no common principle or bond. The disciples had recognized, at least, through grace, that He came from the Father. He could not stay in the world. That was closed. His *departure* forms the ground-work of the whole chapter. Whether He or the world could be owned of the Father could leave no doubt. The Father, and necessarily so, had loved Him before ever the world existed; and if the world rejected Him, the hour was come for the Father to glorify Him with Himself. For the time, no doubt, the disciples were to remain in the world; but He had declared unto them the Father's name, and would declare it, that the love wherewith the Father loved Him might be in them, and He in them. Hence He would have them where He was. They would be able to enjoy it, since they knew the same love, and He was in them to be the power of the enjoyment. It was not only their desire and blessing, but His. He would have them where

and dominion. That has its place; but what satisfies and fills the apostle's heart, when he has the revelation of the way in which God would call up the saints to their enjoyment, is, for his own feeling of joy and delight, all embraced in this, "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

This is, more than once, brought before us by Christ Himself. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The connexion of these last words, with what precedes, throws light on the value and extent of this hope. The Lord continues, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

The Father had to decide, so to speak, between Christ and His disciples on one side, and the world on the other, for the moral separation was complete. What the Father was had been fully shown in Christ. The

He was, if He could not (and it was far better, surely) remain where they must be for the moment. Mark here, that this connects it with the knowledge of the Father's love, as it rests on Jesus. He desired to have them with Himself. It was a part of His delight. He would show them His glory, who had walked with Him in His humiliation. But besides this, there was the capacity of enjoying what He enjoyed along with Him; for the Father's name He had revealed as He knew it, and that the love wherewith He was loved might be in them. What a hope is this, and, blessed be God, founded on a present blessing, only as yet in an earthen vessel, and known in present imperfection. And if we are with Christ, it is in the Father's house, where He is in the Father's love. He is not alone, He is gone to prepare a place for us; nor will He be content to send and fetch us, He will come and receive us to Himself, that where He is, we may be also. This same xivth chapter

shows that it is our present knowledge of the Father, as revealed in the Son, that is the means of knowing what this joy is, and coming to the enjoyment of it. We shall be there with the Lord, ever with Him. No interruption, no decay of joy, but rather ever increasing delight, as there always is when the object is worthy of the heart, and here it is infinite. And this in the relation of the Father's affection for the Son. We are with Him in that place, with Himself, and *with* Him in the joy, infinite joy, which He has in the Father's love, a love resting on Him as Son, but in His excellency as such, loved before the world was, and now the accomplisher of redemption. Some other passages will help to fill up the great leading traits here given, both as to the glory and our living with the Lord, showing our identification or association with Him, and the character of this blessedness. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them," the Lord says, "that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and

tion as saints, it is said, "I have said to Jehovah, thou art my Lord, my goodness extends not up to thee; to the saints on the earth, in them is all my delight." That is, having the divine glory, He associates Himself with the saints on the earth, these excellent in God's sight. At the close He shows, that as one who is the head of these, the path of life is shown to Him. In God's presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This then, in principle, is a part of our hope, as His "companions," though He be anointed with the oil of joy above us. We are in God's presence where fulness of joy is. Where God's presence shows itself it fills all things and excludes all contrary to itself. It necessarily makes infinitely and perfectly happy. It sufficed to Christ's hope—His who knew it best and perfectly—surely, then to ours: and, as we have seen, we have a nature capable, without alloy or mixture, of perfectly enjoying that presence. Let me add too that

they in me." If Christ is in us now the hope of glory, He will be in us then the display of glory. He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. It is not here mutuality, but manifestation, manifestation through the fulness and excellency of that which is displayed, being in Him that displays it: the Father in Christ, and Christ in us. "Thou in me," says the Lord. The Father is in Him, in divine unity and fulness, and yet here mark, Christ is spoken of as one to whom glory is *given*, that is, though a divine person, He is considered also as man. And then, "I in them" so that as the Father is displayed in the Son, as *in* Him, so the Son, Christ, in us, as *in* us. I will now refer to two Psalms, which collaterally throw light on this part of our subject, the xvith and xviith.

In the xvith, which is (with others) quoted in scripture as showing the humanity of Jesus, His taking our sorrows and position of dependence on and obedience to God, that is, our posi-

we shall not lose the Holy Ghost by being in glory, loss indeed it would be. Our nature of joy will be the new nature, the divine nature of which we are made partakers; our power of joy the Holy Ghost who dwells in us. It is striking that even Jesus, after His resurrection, gave commandments to His apostles by the Holy Ghost. (Comp. Rom. viii, 11.) The xvith Psalm gives the fruit of dependence, the xviith, as God will be found as a righteous answer to Christ's claim, in virtue of His walk and obedience, to the beholding the Lord's face, and awaking after His likeness: of this we have spoken on 1 John iii. The beholding the face of God, we find again in Rev. xxii, only it is there, in a more general way, the glory. God and the Lamb are thrown, so to speak, together. It is not the Father and being with the Son. God and the Lamb that was slain are brought objectively into one point of view. The portion there shown to us is seeing His face, His servants serving Him, His name on

our foreheads; that is, privilege in approaching, service as it should be, and the perfect and evident witness in us of whose we are. This is a more external part of the joy, but it is most precious, and not to be omitted.

Luke ix will afford us light also, both on the glory, and living with Christ. It is, we know, a picture, a momentary manifestation of the glory of the kingdom. Moses and Elias are in the same glory with Christ. They are with Him in all the intimacy of familiar conversation; talking with Him. They are talking of what, necessarily, most interests Christ Himself, and man too—of His death, and that in connexion with the great change about to take place in God's ways—His death at Jerusalem. They do so with a divine knowledge, for it was not yet come. The excellent glory too is there. They enter into it. Remark here, that Christ speaks of the same things with the same familiarity to His disciples on the earth. Another testimony gives what is more personal. For all we have spoken of is common

attention. They, that is Moses and Elias, enter into the cloud. Now this cloud was the dwelling-place of the divine glory—"the excellent glory," as Peter calls it. Hence, the three apostles feared, when Moses and Elias entered into it. But not so do we read of Moses and Elias. This, then, is another part of our hope. If a voice comes out of the cloud for those on earth, it is the home of those who have their place in the heavenly glory. I may add, in connexion with this part of my subject, that I do not doubt that the cxith Psalm gives us something analagous, on earth, to the intercourse between the Lord and Moses and Elias. If you look at verses 5, 6, 7, what is, I doubt not, the intercourse between Messiah and the godly, in the excellent glory of Jehovah. But this by the bye. I would have the reader remark, how all this joy has its counterpart and commencement of realization down here, save the glory of the body alone. How the heart knows that, how sweet

to all saints. We shall have a white stone; that is the perfectly approving testimony of the Lord; and on it a name written, which no man knew but he who received it. That is, a joy and communion and personal knowledge of the Lord, which was for him alone who had it, between his soul and Christ. I have thus spoken of what is personally or individually enjoyed: there is, besides all this, the presenting of the Church to Christ; the glory of the kingdom, looking downwards, that is, towards that over which we shall reign. But these are not at the moment my object. But how bright and blessed is the hope that is before us, founded on the acceptance of Christ Himself; to see Him—be like Him—with Him in His own relationship with the Father—to converse with Him with divine intelligence—be before God with Him—enjoy unmingled unclouded blessedness of His presence—with and as Him—yet to receive it all from Him—to owe it all to Him. Another point in the transfiguration is worthy of all

soever the common joy of saints, a necessary proof and accompaniment of the holy liberty of the Spirit, in a pure heart, yet that in joys and sorrows, there is a looking to Jesus, a communion with Jesus, a dependence of heart on His approbation, in which none can participate. On high it will be perfectly enjoyed and possessed, in the white stone and the new name. The heart that knows Him, could not do without this. Let us remark, too, how various the joy is—and so it is now—I delight in the nature of God—I delight in a Father's love—I delight in the glory of Jesus—I delight in my intimacy with Him—I delight in the blessedness of being with the Son before the Father—I delight in His being a man, with whom I am, yet one divinely perfect—I delight in God and the Lamb—the blessed and glorious display of redeeming counsels and divine glory—I delight in being like Christ—I delight in all the saints being like Him—I delight in His being glorified in them—I delight in

adequate service, in a full and perfect witness, in a fit and heavenly worship—I delight in what is proper to God—I delight in what is the glory of Christ Himself—as such, it is what is common to all, and what is peculiar to oneself. The Christian will remark, too, that in enjoying Christ in glory, he will not lose the blessed feeding on an humbled Saviour; we know this also now, we delight in communion, and in hope in the glorified Lord; but we turn back and feed on Jesus, lowly and rejected, on the earth. If He is what we hope for in glory, He is what we need on earth; but our heavenly state will surely not diminish our power of delighting in the perfection of that blessed One. And as a pot of the manna, which had nourished Israel in the desert, was to be kept in the ark in Canaan, that Israel, in its rest, might know what had sustained them in the desert, so we shall eat of that hidden manna, which has nourished and fed our souls in our pilgrimage. But I close. May hope be as living in the saints, as the

eousness; He is power in me; but Christ is my righteousness.

If the word of God has reached my soul, it shows not merely what is in the word, but what is in my soul.

Grace is love working where there is evil.

If any one had to be shut out of heaven because of my sins, it must be Christ, because He took them.

The experience of faith is never toward self—no faith is in my own feelings—I have faith in God.

Prophecy is never about heaven, but about earth.

Events about earth are never the fulness of Christ in heaven.

God never lowers His standard;—“Do thy first works?”

Grace brought Christ where *sin* brought us.

Man is heartless about grace; bold about glory!

Paul never lets his *mind* loose in a sea of motives.

The moment religion accredits a man it is nothing: that which does not

object of it is worthy of all their hearts. May they abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let me recommend, as throwing light on this, the first chapter of Ephesians, where our position before God, our relationship with the Father, and the difference of our calling and our heritage, are very clearly brought out.

APHORISMS.

God will not adapt Himself to *unbelief*; He adapts Himself to the *heart*.

Jews had to do with the *seventh* day of the week; Christians with the *first*—a mingling of time and eternity.

The flesh is always an inhabitant of the earth; for what else can it inhabit?

God was perfect love to me when I was perfect enmity to Him.

A man is never justified by experience; he is justified by faith.

The Spirit of God is never our right-

put the heart to the test costs him nothing.

Fresh truth will never lead a man to give up old truth.

Common topics of truth bring no rejection from the world; but fresh truth tries.

For the sinner, the conflict is between God and the *conscience*; with the believer, it is *between* God and the *heart*.

The place the saint has in the Father's house is *with* Christ and *as* Christ.

Because we are sons, God seals us.

We shall never find thwarted affections in loving Christ.

The darkness of the world is religiousness: “this is your hour and the power of darkness.” It was religiousness that crucified Christ. “If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

To doubt if God is for us, is unbelief.

We are *fallen so low*, that by some means or other man will lift himself up.

If you choose to take your place with the Lord, you must be content to be cast out by the world.

In heaven every one will have his place, and all be looking to God.

Selfishness itself can admire the unselfishness it profits by at the moment.

Would to God Christians were as honest when they have got peace, as they are while seeking it!

Man has turned God out of the world by crucifying Christ.

The law is not grace. Grace may say it is holy, just, and good.

When judgment comes grace is over for ever. "Grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ." The law is neither grace nor truth. Truth is the real condition and relationship with God in everything, and with every one.

Who told the real state of man and of this world but Christ and the cross?

"The kingdom of *heaven*" is said because the King is in heaven. "The kingdom of *God*" could be said when Christ was on earth.

The law showed what man ought to

knowledge, in John the development of the affections.

The new nature is a dependent nature; it never could act of itself. The old man pretends to be independent.

Man gets the good thing, enjoys it, and leaves God out.

Mind cannot measure love. Mind can measure mind. Love is known by being loved.

No knowledge can love; we must be born of God to love; for "God is love."

Truth is authority.

If ministry be real, it brings the conscience to God; if false, it leads from God; it stands between God and the sinner.

The word of God never treats men's minds as competent to judge of it. The power that works men's minds is totally incapable of judging of God's word.

What I have faith in I am subject to. Christians are never put on their own minds to judge error.

Israel undertook, in terror too, what

be before God. The law deals with evil. In the law we find what man ought to be. The law is extracted out of the Old Testament. The law cannot mend what is broken under it.

Love finds its link wherever there is a misery—wherever there is a want.

Righteousness will reign when Christ reigns; "*grace reigns through righteousness.*"

If I take law and judgment, there is only perdition for me; but if I take grace I am brought to God.

What I *cannot* escape, Christ *would not* escape.

We get death by disobedience, *Christ* by obedience.

God shows His love, not in giving us our old nature restored, but in giving us of His *own nature*.

Practice in scripture is always put *after* grace.

Paul brings out the counsels of God. John brings out the nature of God—eternal life manifested in Christ, and communicated to us.

In Paul we get the development of

Christ undertook to do in love. All was living obedience and living love in Christ: the touching living expression of love in spite of sin.

Saul is a destroyer amongst the Jews; *Paul* a workman amongst the Gentiles.

When we lose the sense of God's presence, conscience sleeps, and will awakes.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

Matt. xiii, 45, 46.

From high the Lord beheld, ere worlds began,
As though it was the residence of man,
This teeming earth, by sin and hate defiled
Estranged from God, perverted, lawless, wild.

But underneath the mass of sin and vice
He saw a pearl of untold, matchless price,
On it He set His yearning heart, and then
Gave all He had and bought the peerless gem.

Of it possess'd, His gracious purpose is
To make it shine in everlasting bliss;
To polish it is now His constant care,
His image on its beauteous face to bear.

A. M.

EARTH'S JUBILEE.

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,
as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. xi, 9.

That blessed time will surely come, when all
shall know the Lord,
I find the promise largely writ in God's most
precious word,
When "holiness unto the Lord" shall greet
each gladdened eye,
And oft my soul impatient prays, "Lord haste
this time of joy."

Sweet are the visions of that time, portrayed
by God's own hand,
When righteousness and peace shall reign
supreme o'er every land,
When all shall know the blessed God, shall
know and love Him too,
And earth present the scene again, which
angels loved to view.

No longer Satan's wide domain, creation
ruined, marr'd,
But all earth's kingdoms shall become "the
kingdoms of the Lord,"
No proud usurper then shall rule, no power
acknowledged be,
But Christ, and He alone, shall reign, while
earth keeps jubilee.

How cheering is this prospect fair to all who
now bewail
And mourn the wide-spread evils that so
mightily prevail,

192 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

His Father there was this working of
love to us. Paradise shone in upon
His heart, in comforting the poor thief.
"Go in peace" refreshed His spirit in
the house of the Pharisee. "She hath
done it for my burial" justified Mary
against the reproach of selfish man.
"Thou hast hid these things from the
wise and prudent, and revealed them
unto babes," was His joy in the sense
of the heartless rejection to which the
wickedness of man subjected Him.
How blessed to the heart, besides
learning where His joy was, to think
that He found it in the working of
His love to us!

I am not satisfied with the acknow-
ledgment commonly made of Christ. It
is not whether I am rich or poor, though
the latter is the safer, truer, and better
state. Sacrifice of convenience and
worldly means is no way answering a
character to God's glory, if the prin-
ciple of the world's greatness is avowedly
kept, though perhaps sacrificed to the
dissemination of gospel truth.

THE JOYS OF CHRIST. 191

Who grieve to hear that name blasphem'd, the
only name they prize,
To see poor sinners hate the cross, and mercy's
gifts despise.

Yes, it will come, then O my soul, take courage,
all is well!
The glories of the Son of God creation yet
shall tell;
The groanings of the earth shall cease, all sin
be done away,
Come, Lord, disperse the midnight clouds,
and usher in the day.

A. M.

THE JOYS OF CHRIST.

We ought to think of the joys of
Christ, as well as of His sorrows.
Nothing shows where a man's heart is,
and what it is, more than, when op-
pressed, distressed, and full of sorrow,
where his heart finds its joy, and if it
does find a joy unreach'd by it. We
see these joys in Christ, a secret com-
fort in the midst of His sorrow. He
had "meat to eat," which man knew
not of. Besides, His communion with

"THE MERCIES OF GOD" THE MOTIVE TO A "LIVING SA- CRIFICE."

Romans xii.

This chapter is a great division in
this epistle. It begins with the ex-
pression of the full result due from
the saint, because of all that has pre-
ceded it, in the grace of God, set forth
in the epistle. "I beseech you *there-
fore*, brethren, by the mercies of God,
that you present your bodies a living
sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,
which is your reasonable service. And
be not conformed to this world: but
be ye transformed by the renewing of
your mind, that ye may prove what is
that good, and acceptable, and perfect
will of God." What follows would
also show us that however God acts
first on individual souls, by His divine
method towards them, yet He never
sees them out of the connexion of the
body of Christ, and the building of it
up together in the faith, by the varied
spiritual helps and gifts of the members.

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How we come, through the course of the epistle, to the point to which we are brought in chapter xii is full of interest and instruction. The epistle, it may be said, is, in its general aspect, the theory of grace and salvation, brought in by the mercies of God, on the depth of the ruin and the need of all, and of every man, as guilty before God; and on the way of final condemnation. The course of the epistle has been already marked out by another, so that some repetition will be necessary to bring us to our chapter, and place it in all its force. The guilt of all is the matter of the earlier chapters; and that it is by grace and righteousness alone, through faith, that salvation is given, is the next period in it.

The summing up of the *fulness* of the dealing of God in grace we find in the last verse of the fifth chapter: "That as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The *security* of grace to the believer we find in the

last verse of the eighth chapter: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How blessed is the sense to our souls of the marvellous dealing of our God! Fullness and security of all grace in Christ, according to the purpose of God's own will, in the raising up of the soul out of its ruin and condemnation, to life eternal, and complete in resurrection; carrying with it all that the yearnings of the Spirit of God could teach the soul to desire!

The last verse of the fifth chapter, quoted above, declaring the fullness of grace, is taken up in its proper result in the *first* verse of the eighth chapter: "Now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," because the law of the Spirit of life made them free from the law of sin and death. This is the perfect deliverance

wrought in such a grace. Chapters vi and vii are left to their proper functions, guarding the doctrine given.*

From the *last* verse of the eighth chapter we pass as distinctly to the first verse of the twelfth: "We beseech you therefore," &c. All these places, taken consecutively,† form an unbroken cord of divine goodness in the order of the fullness of grace; the first verse of the twelfth chapter being, as was said, the expression of the full result, morally and divinely, due from all that preceded. Such are the mercies! The believer is addressed now in life and capacity; and, as looking always to the fountain of the grace,‡ is

* The sixth and seventh chapters, being each a separate parenthesis, not hindering, but securing, the argument.

† ix, x, xi, being national chapters, and manifesting, as well, the consistency of the actings of God.

‡ There is an expression in the word, "Through the faith of him," which has not resolved itself to some minds. It is the faith of the person of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

besought to offer his body "a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God."

It is the power of God, introduced through faith, that works the end of the desirous soul, and gives God the glory. How all the imaginations that would charge the way of God in grace, and His purpose to the saint, with failure, because it is of grace, in forming the soul in restoration to His image and separation to Himself, come to nought before such an exhortation! So made ours, and thus continue the blessings of grace, unto all fullness. "These things," saith the apostle, (1 John xiii,) "have I said unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and *that ye may believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" We find the fruit of all the blessed dealing of God ever in the path of faith, from the enjoining believers to reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to the painful process of dying indeed, as a

living sacrifice, and by dying, to live by God our life, and to God; for if we be dead with Christ, we believe also that we shall live with Him.

It is a great fault not to see how God is with us, and not to be using all the power of God by faith, (that it may be by grace,) till every thought is in obedience to Christ, and He lives, not *we*; having our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

It is difficult for human nature to learn—and it never does learn but by the teaching of God—concerning itself and Himself, that faith is now the only way of God, and that there is no other way that God may be known as all in all. This is evidently founded on the truth that we are under the last dispensations of God's dealings unto life. It includes the fact of the failure of man being total, and the reinstatement of man in new creation, as anything, to be purely in grace, and *standing in the power of God*. God, in His divine wisdom, saw that this must come in all clearness to men's hearts, and therefore

we are still waiting with desire to be clothed upon from heaven;) and in the communion that grace by Jesus Christ brought me into, I judge it and find it judged; I confess and find cleansing. How precious is the manifold testimony and power of the blood of Christ! It is the testimony of death accomplished. The life is before me, shed forth, and the blood, now mine, is the cleansing of Him that is alive for evermore; the Spirit serving to apply, through faith, all the grace in which I stand. From whence the Spirit came, thither must the Spirit tend and lead. Nor let any suppose that the action of the Spirit is sensibly separate from the conscience of the new creature. Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith. What is born of the Spirit is spirit. With the new creation, therefore, which is of God by faith, the Spirit of God finds a home, and sympathy, and intelligence; for it is of God. Now faith accepts nothing but what is of God; and whatever word of truth in Christ the soul accepts,

the successive revelations still pointed thither, till this, the last of all, shone out without question. Whatever appointments were made, the *living* God was all in all; and the mystery, that faith in the method of God unto life and salvation, is the established point at which we are. If Paul sends an epistle (1 Tim.) full of the ordinances of order in the Spirit, the "mystery of godliness" is still "God manifest in the flesh," preached, believed on, received up into glory.

Our consciences are set free from the dead works which were of old, whether brought out of the grave of Christ, or manufactured anew by men's vanity. It is the living God we have to do with, and therefore a living sacrifice we have to offer. "I arm myself with the same *mind* that was in Christ Jesus," "who was put to death in flesh, and made alive in the Spirit."

We who are alive from the dead are awake out of the grave with Jesus; we survey, in spirit, as risen men, the sinful tendencies of the old nature; (while

as of God, bears its fruit. We are begotten again by it. He that has confessed and believed is forgiven. He that believeth on Him that raised up Jesus is quickened by the same Spirit; even as Abraham, given in type, was quickened naturally, being as dead.

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, because (*see margin*) of the Spirit that dwelleth in you. All this is of grace by faith. All is of God and not of ourselves, yet of which we are made partakers. Infinite grace! We see how effectually it is ours when we read that the sufficiency which is *ours* by faith is of God, though we are happy in counting nothing as of ourselves, but rejoice in the hope of the glory of God by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

"Be ye not, therefore, conformed to this world," is still, as the rest of the epistle, the dealing of God with the individual; and "the world" is used in the sense of the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eye, and the pride—the showy, glaring things—which the world delight in; and are all, not of the Father, but of the world. The world means also something more than this, as lying in its *general condition* in the power of the wicked one; but the above appears to apply to the individual condition of the saint, because the exhortation continues, “but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds.” In fact the image of Christ taking more and more room in our soul, the glory of this shall be revealed, not only as being clothed, (not being found naked,) but *revealed* “in us.” Being a *living sacrifice* is the foundation to this; and blessed it is to be objects of such an exhortation.

Under such an order of blessing every exercise is to be fruitful of something, and to work such a subjection of our wills as gives to the Spirit the rule of our actions. But the constant sense of being His (and His we are) is necessary to our doing what we have to do to Him and not to man; while it causes the

tion. The brotherly love is of heavenly birth. The relationship is from above, and they are children of the Father; but the family is still here, and the affections are in safeguard. Let each sentence be studied and seen as that which is the saint's way. I question the just translation of “condescend to men of low estate.” We have to look to other portions of the word for the full expression of the relationship of the body.

To him that overcometh the departure of Christianity, of his day and time, are the promises made. Affection to Christ and to all that is of Christ, and from Christ, and is Christ's, will be a mark of faithfulness, carrying its sure blessing, (for have we not all gone astray?) and will return full of desire to Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. And lastly, “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,” which is the fulfilment of the saints' place to the world.

sense of service and of Himself to abide with us. It makes the saint act so as that the Lord will own the works, which shall meet and welcome him when received into the everlasting habitations of the heavenly kingdom, to the glory of God.

But though this epistle is engaged with the dealing of the God of all grace with the individual, yet so large a portion of his character and service is to be formed as a member of the body of Christ (how vain to think to exercise these things in the world) that the apostle could not leave out the saints' place in it. Indeed it seems as if all had been preparation for this; and, if duly waited on, would save the Lord's interference in immediate reproof and discipline. It returns, in the 9th verse, to the personal grace; but it is a divine way on earth, and nothing short of it. The practical form of the injunction in the 10th verse is much to be noted. The “kindly affection” there mentioned is given in a word applied peculiarly in the Greek tongue to natural and domestic affec-

“I WILL COME AGAIN.”

John xiv.

Nothing is more prominently brought forward in the New Testament than the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first comfort of the angels to the sorrowing disciples: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts i, ii.) And if you turn to the first of Thessalonians you will find it presented in the end of every chapter as a common doctrine.

It was not at all a strange thing—immediately after conversion to the living God—“to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.” Again, in Hebrews ix we read that “He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” In the second of Thessalonians it is presented in the way of warning, as well as the object of

the blessed hope of the saints: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

From this we see the amazing difference between the coming of Christ for this world, and for those who trust in Him. To the world He comes as a judge of both quick and dead; (see Malachi;) but in this 14th of John we find a wonderful difference in the whole principle and spirit of a believer's expectation of Christ.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (Rev. i.) "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. iii.)

Dear reader, let me ask you, Can you stand before Him at that day? Do you think that you would have confidence before Him at His

coming? Could you say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him?" This is He whom I have loved and longed for? Men always judge according to what is suited to themselves. In 1 Thess. iv it is said, "So shall we be ever with the Lord." Now, are you suited to be ever with the Lord? Have you this confidence? If it is founded on anything good in yourself it is a vain ground of confidence. Peter, as soon as he found himself in the presence of the Lord, felt that he was not suited for the Lord. I am too corrupt, he said. This was a true judgment of Peter; and love for the dignity of the Lord and for holiness. If you are content that holiness should be lowered that you may get off, you do not care for holiness, though you do for getting off. The moment I have seen the holiness of the Lord, and that happiness is in holiness, there is the immediate feeling of my unfitness for that holiness; though there may be the longing for it, which the Lord will doubtless in mercy answer.

Two things are needed thus to meet the Lord. First, the conscience must be right. I may have the kindest father, yet if my conscience is not right, I cannot be glad to meet him. And, secondly, affections must be there—the Lord must be my portion. If my heart is on literature, or on any thing else here, I shall not like to be where Jesus is. I shall rather be *here* for a time. If you like the world you are fit for the world. Heaven is just the contrary, and you know it; and therefore you do not want to go there, because it would take you from being here in the world. There is the comfort of the gospel. It did bring down to men's consciences all that could attract to God. But alas! men no more desired the Lord's company here, than they do there. The coming and rejection of Christ here is the plain proof that the world is not fit for Him, and He not fit for them.

But now to turn to our chapter. We find persons here the opposite of all that is in the world. "Let not your

heart be troubled." About what? His leaving them. Their happiness, comfort, and joy was in having Christ with them. But now, He says, I am going, but I am not going to be happy without you. There is plenty of room for you. The thing with which He at once comforts their hearts is this, "I'll come again." I cannot stay down here in this vile place, I'm going to prepare a place for you, but I'll come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. The Lord reckons on this satisfying their hearts; and their consciences did not hinder. "The Father's house!" Oh! they could go there. "I will receive you unto myself." He knew the chord that rung in their hearts: to be with Himself, the source of all blessing. Thus we get the character of these disciples: they were persons whom the absence of Jesus distressed, and whom the presence of Jesus would comfort, not here, but with Himself.

There we find what begot this character. It was all founded on His own

word. We do not care for what does not concern us. But as soon as we see a thing that concerns us, it becomes important; and then we want certainty. Now it is very blessed to have God's own word for the basis of our certainty.

For instance, I am a sinner—how then can I get into the Father's house? Because God has said, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Well, God is true, and He will not remember them. Do you say I am presumptuous to say so? I do not say so, *God* says so. And again in John v, 24, "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come into condemnation.*" And John iii, 33, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that *God is true.*" Thus when the power of the Spirit brings home the word, I have certainty. Faith is in the word, but it is about something. Christ is presented, and man is brought to the test. People always judge by their inclination, and not by their reasoning. Now the effect

nothing less than the Father's house. What attracts is found in Christ, and then it gets from Him the certain assurance that He is coming—and coming for *me*. Now when the heart is on Christ, what a thing it is to know that He is coming. Am I afraid? No, I am looking for Him. And it is to His Father's house He is to bring me. All that makes heaven a home to Christ, will make it a home to me. O come, Lord Jesus. If I have learnt to love Christ, I have learnt to love holiness, to love God. God, in Christ, has brought down to my soul all that God is. What shall I get in heaven? Another Christ? Another God? No. It is the one we have seen and known. Whither I go ye know. I am going to the Father, and you have seen the Father in me.

Ah! But He has not given up His holiness, perhaps you reply? No, indeed, He has not. But Jesus knew all that is needed for me to be with Him. And if He will make the heart to love, He will put the conscience

of the testimony of the Spirit of God when Christ is revealed, is that men are not fit for Him, and their hearts do not like to be with Him.

These disciples had loved the Lord. Christ had attraction for their hearts. There, at once, we see the object of their hearts' affections. Christ had fixed their hearts. Take Mary Magdalene, for instance. She was all wrong in her intelligence, yet Christ had attraction for her heart. So with the rest of the disciples. They all ran away for fear; but it was love to Christ that brought them into the place of fear. Thus we see that Christ Himself was the object of their hearts. They were the companions of Christ—all fear being gone—according to His love and grace. "Ye are they" He said, "who have continued with me in my temptations." Why? *He* had continued *with them*; but He speaks as if indebted to them for this fellowship. And being in companionship with Christ in heart, He brings them into all the joy into which He is going—

perfectly at rest, that I may love Him. Will He do that by dulling it? No. He will do something that will enable me to stand in the presence of God, in whose presence I am to find my joy. He reveals fully God in His holiness, and takes away the sin that would hinder my being in the presence of that holiness. And not only does He put sin away, but He purges the conscience *here*, so that I am enabled to enjoy God, in full, free, affection. Nothing is more attractive than the death of Christ; but besides that, it puts away the sin of which I was guilty: an act in which I had no part, an act the proof of perfect love, while it meets perfect righteousness. I had done the sins, and I could not undo them. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." That touched Peter's heart. If you are not cleansed according to my cleansing, according to what suits God's presence, you have no part with me. O what a comfort! Instead of saying, depart from me, Jesus said, "Now you

are clean." And in Peter we see the proof of a good conscience. He said to the Jews, ye denied the Holy One and the Just, the very thing he himself had done, fifty days before. Now a man will talk of every sin but that he is guilty of; he will shirk that. But here Peter was in perfect peace about the very sin he was guilty of. His conscience was perfectly purged.

The happiness of the heart that is touched, is to be with Christ; and conscience is purged for being in His presence. Between the Lord's saying this, and coming for them, He had put away sin from God's sight, and from their conscience. "I will come again, and take you unto myself, &c, and whither I go ye know." There is no uncertainty. We know where we are going to. The soul has found fully the object that has set it at rest, and that will satisfy it up there without fear.

Could the Lord thus address you? Could you say, O that is what I am wanting? Or, are you saying I've got here what I would like to enjoy? Is

that being a Christian? A Christian may vary in strength of affection, never in object. I am sure I do not love the Lord enough, but I am sure it is the Lord I love. I have no confidence in my own heart, but all confidence in Him. He has died for me; that is what I count on: He has put away my sins; that is what I need: He is coming again; that is what I am longing for.

Dear reader, let me ask you, was it ever a trouble to you that you had not Christ? Do you know where you are going? It may be you have hope; but have you certainty? Now we, Christians, have; for Christ is known, and when He is known there is perfect rest in His word. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

APHORISMS, &c.

Jesus had the taste of heaven in everything He did, and the world cannot bear this!

We suffer here because we have a soul risen in a body that is not risen, and that is in a world at enmity with God.

Christianity alone could give great force to individuality and to conscience, and at the same time unite men under the direction of Christ, towards one centre, which is Christ. This could only be possible by the Holy Spirit, who takes away selfishness, while it gives power to the conscience; giving by faith an object to the heart outside of itself—an object which acts on the individual conscience, and unites us all, through one predominant affection, to one centre of affection, by one life, and one only power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit acts as the Spirit of union of the children of God; but conscience cannot be in society, and reject its own individual responsibility. It is *individual*, otherwise God could not be the master of conscience.

The Holy Spirit directs conscience toward Jesus.

If we will avoid the principles of

evil, it must be through conscience; there is no other way.

The Christian who acts from conscience will avoid a thousand snares, of which he is not at all aware.

So far as the Christian enters into the ways of the world, it is a complete prostitution.

Whatever makes the world happy in spite of God, is in the spirit and course of Babylon, and for a Christian to be there is to be in Babylon.

Babylon is the spirit of worldliness, cast out far away from God, as guilty of the death of Christ, and which nevertheless gives itself up to embellish the world. All those Babylonish principles, all that your eyes may lust after for your drawing rooms and for your pleasures, all those things separate you from heaven. It is Babylon on a small scale.

What is often important to man is not so to God; for God has Christ in view.

Man glories in a truth that costs him nothing, inasmuch as it is gene-

rally received, and takes advantage of it to oppose the admission of more light which would demand faith.

Heaven is familiar with evil as judged, as with that which is good, to enjoy it.

All that happens to us is foreknown and prearranged of God, in order that His child may stand in the midst of difficulties. All I have to do is to say God is perfectly acquainted with the position I am in, and He knows the way He has prepared to extricate me from difficulties, if I remain faithful.

When Jesus was on the earth heaven looked on the earth; now that Jesus is in heaven, the Church on earth looks on high. In a yet fuller revelation, as at the conversion of Paul, it is owned as one with Jesus, who is there.

Prophecy is a revelation of future things, to act on my conscience now.

There are always warnings that we have neglected previous to chastisements.

A soul that is unconverted has no idea of a God, tender, gentle, who "wipes away tears."

It is precious to have always God's true object in view, which cannot stop short of His glory.

If one would get at the bottom of the counsels of God, one must look at His glory.

The sight of the glory sanctifies truly, and gives an object far above all that could be prepared to stop us here on earth.

We shall never walk well here below, even in the smallest details, if the great end is not constantly before our eyes.

If I have any object on this side the glory, even the welfare of the Church in detail, my soul will suffer from it.

We want faith to lose our fortune and to forgive; but if it is coming out of the society of man, it is entering into that of God.

The selfishness of the world understands the grace that is in the Christian which can forgive; but in principle that grace is foolishness to him.

If you are wishing for money, or seeking to make provision for placing

your children in the world, or if you have any plans for the future, you cannot wish for the Lord Jesus to come; and if you cannot, then your hearts are not right with Jesus.

It requires more real grace and faith to *pray* for the Church of God than to labour and to preach; though neither can be done rightly without.

It is comparatively easy to love and feel humble when conscious of making people your debtors by service; but when there is neither energy for service, nor power to communicate, this tries what is in the heart.

FOUR WISE THINGS ON THE EARTH.

Proverbs xxx, 24—29.

"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses

in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

In these verses we get many of the principles of faith. We see it first in the ant, who, though she is not strong, prepares her food in the summer. Faith always looks to the future, and gives up present enjoyment for future blessing. The ant may be considered a mean, laborious creature, while it is preparing its food, and others are enjoying themselves in the summer-time; but it reaps the reward of its toil in the winter, when its storehouse is full, and others are wanting food. Thus the saint is despised and rejected now, but he will soon enjoy happiness when those who are happy now will be miserable. In "the conies" we see a picture of the Christian, feeble and unable to defend himself, but strong in the *Lord, his rock*. Away from Christ, he is nothing, but in Him he is strong and invincible amidst all the attacks of the enemy. Christ is our rock, our for-

tress, our God, our strength, our buckler, and the horn of our salvation. (Ps. xviii, 2.) "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." This gives us a beautiful picture of the love and harmony that *ought* to exist between Christians, though they have no visible head, yet should they show the influence of their head in the order and unity manifested in their assemblies. Though the locusts have no king, yet there is not the slightest disorder in their bands; all is closely compacted together, all is harmony and order. In systems of men's devising, there is always some head set up, and the worldling will mock those who have no head, because he would say, "there can be no order or regularity where there is no head." But though the worldling know it not, Christians have a head, and the vicergerent of that head (the Holy Ghost) presides in their assemblies.

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces." Here again we see another picture of the

Christian, disagreeable and contemptible in *himself*, yet he has access into the *holiest*. Mark the ambition of the spider; it is not in the lowest corner only that the spider is to be seen, but even on the golden cornice and the marble stone.

Thus let it be with the saint, endeavouring individually to be like the ant, providing for the future; (Matt. vi, 19, 20, 21;) like the coney, trusting not in himself, but in the Lord, his rock; collectively, like the locusts in love and harmony; and like the spider, having boldness to enter into the *holiest*.

"AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH."

John x, 28.

"Never perish," words of *mercy*,
Coming from the lips of one,
Who, though here a homeless stranger,
Fills the high eternal throne.
Brightness of the Father's glory,
God and man in one combined;
Faithful Shepherd of the chosen,
Safe are those to Him assigned.

224 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

"Never perish," words of *sweetness*,
Dissipating every fear,
Filling all with joy and gladness,
Who the Shepherd's voice can hear;
Bringing richest consolation
To the soul fatigued, oppressed;
Sweet refreshment to the fainting,
And to weary spirits rest.

"Never perish," words of *power*,
Satan now I can defy;
Safe my soul beyond my keeping,
Hid with Christ in God on high.
Come what will, I'm safe for ever
'Tis the promise of my God,
Written in His word unfailing,
Sealed with Jesu's precious blood.

"Never perish," words of *glory*,
Heaven is mine, and all is well;
O, my soul! with rapture burning,
On this precious sentence dwell.
Think not of thy faults and failings,
Nor on thy deservings brood;
What thou art in Jesus ponder,
And this promise of thy God.

A. M.

THE OBEDIENT ONE.

Read Luke iv, 1—32.

In the sixteenth Psalm we find the Lord taking His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight. And we see, in chapter iii of this Gospel, that after His baptism, He was anointed as minister of the circumcision—the Holy Ghost descending on Him—and then His genealogy is traced up to the human family; "the son of Adam, which was the Son of God." His genealogy is not here traced up to David, that being in Jewish connexion. Jehovah having anointed Him to preach the gospel to the poor, and the Lord having taken the form of a servant, (I speak not now of His power in Godhead,) he must fulfil the place of one: and so we find Him calling God His master: saying, in Psalm xvi, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, (Jehovah,) thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee;" or, in other

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P

words, "Jehovah, my Master," &c. As a servant, therefore, we never find He did His own will; for if a servant is doing his own will, he is a bad servant. A servant is to do exactly his master's will, and not his own.

Then again we find Him as the dependent man, praying and waiting on Jehovah for deliverance; and never using His own power to deliver Himself: as in Psalm xl, "I waited patiently for Jehovah, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." So likewise, when the multitude came "with swords and staves," to take Him, He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" It was not merely that He did not have the twelve legions of angels, but having taken the place of lowly dependence on Jehovah, He would not even ask for them. And as the trials thickened, even to the drinking of the bitter cup, He said, "The cup which my Father giveth me shall I not drink it?" If when everything that might have stop-

ped a man in this path of obedience, lay in His way, He went steadily on doing His Father's will, His obedience to the last must also be put to the test. He had presented a *perfect God* to man, for He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and He must, to the end, present an *obedient man to God*. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." It was not in His *will* that He had to learn subjection—that was ever perfect—but He had to learn all that obedience cost, and all that it meant, even unto death. Moreover, if we walk in this same path, beloved friends, we also shall find trial, though we shall find blessing also. For we shall find it refreshing to our souls to tell of His love and grace to others, just as He found it blessing when He said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest, and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice

together." Thus His joy is fulfilled in yourselves.

In all His trials He had no friends to stand by Him; but He was surrounded only by those who were like unto bulls; as He said, "strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." Still it was His meat to do His Father's will—"He must *needs* go through Samaria," although He knew it was the path of rejection.

Thus, as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," He went steadily on in the path of obedience. Not like the first Adam, who went out of the path of obedience; but, although tested in every step He took, He travelled on through every difficulty, till at last He bore God's wrath for man's disobedience.

In this fourth chapter of Luke the Lord's path of obedience begins; and it begins at a time when Satan had the mastery over man uncontrolled. For man had become the slave of Satan, as well as the slave of his own lusts, and so Satan had power over the bodies and over the souls of men. Satan had power

over man in *two* ways, first, by allure-ment, and second by terror. By allure-ment in the way of man's lusts: by terror, as having the power of death. As the tempter he acts on our lusts; as we see an instance in Judas. The spirit of covetousness was in him, and then Satan presented that which met it; and this he is doing with man every day. Then again he has power over man by terror, for "he that hath the power of death is the devil," and through terror he led Judas to hang himself. Therefore if the Lord came down to deliver man, His obedience had to be put to the test, in these two points in which Satan had power over man. In the wilderness Satan presented himself to the Lord as a tempter trying to *allure* him out of the path; but in Gethsemane he exerted all his power of terror, to *frighten* the Lord out of the path of obedience. Jesus was led of the *Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, but *we* are led by our *lusts*; and therefore it is that Satan has power over *us*.

Mark here, that not only was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness, but after being there forty days tempted of the devil, He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Then again the Lord goes to be tempted by the devil in far different circumstances than Adam was in, in paradise. Everything there spoke of the goodness of God; but in this wilderness, the Lord was tried on every hand; and there was no spiritual help, not even a *John*, but He was surrounded by wild beasts, and was hungry with nothing to satisfy His hunger. But amidst all, with everything against Him, He stood firm in this obedience to God His Father.

Then observe that He met all the temptations of Satan just in the very same way that we have to meet them every day, that is, by the written word of God. He did not say to Satan, 'I am God, and you are Satan, and therefore go away immediately;' that would have been no help for us if He had. Neither is it the archangel warring against Satan; but the Lord meeting

power of death, the time for which was not then come. But here was the strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace; but there was a stronger than he to overcome him, and take from him his armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils. While it was in so lowly a house as the human body, that Jesus overcame the strong man, it proved *who Jesus was*. Any other man had nothing to do but to go along with Satan, for Satan goes with him; but here Jesus had to get into the circumstances and to take this body, to visit Satan; and that proved that the person who was there was stronger than the strong man. You never find that any other man needs to be abstracted from men to be tried by the devil; for men are *at home* with *Satan*, while they are strangers to God. If man would be in communion with God, he must, like Moses, go up into the mountain; but Jesus did not need to be away from the conditions of human nature, to be in communion with His Father. He always was this. In grace He served

him as a *man*, with the written word of God, and all His quotations are from the book of Deuteronomy. If the Lord came to deliver man, He must put Himself into the place of temptation and trial, and as *man* overcome where man had failed, and where he was lying under the power of Satan. It was not possible that Jesus could fail. If He could have done, it would have been worse than ever for us. But we see Satan tries to introduce into the heart of Jesus what he had too successfully introduced into the heart of Adam, but He could not, blessed be God! Satan said, "all this power will I give thee, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it." Jesus, who had walked in the constant joy of God, was to be exercised by temptation forty days in the *wilderness*, and to know what it was to have Satan working at Him for forty days.

It is a great comfort for us to know that Christ thus measured the whole power of Satan; for Satan put out his whole power against Him then, save the

men, but His true place was always with His Father. He took a *place* lower than Moses, but His *person* was higher. He took this place in order to meet Satan, which was the strongest proof of His divine love. While other men are at home with Satan and strangers to God, this emptied, humbled one would give full proof of His love, and as a stranger with Satan is met by him in circumstances abstracted from the ordinary condition of human nature, neither eating nor drinking, but afterwards He hungered. Christ would not have His way in anything. Though tempted by Satan to command the stones to be made bread, He would not; for He came to show what man's obedience was, and virtually says in answer, I have emptied myself, and now I must wait for the word of the Lord, for man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The written word of God has authority over man, and it is also wisdom to guide man. 'Here I am the Son

of man, and under the authority of the word of God, therefore I will do nothing but by the word.' 'I live by the Father and speak by the Father, as the Father gave me commandment, even *so I do*.' "By the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Ps. xvii, 4.)

Here we see the amazing importance of the written word. If God ministers grace and life to us, it is through the word; and if He acts on our *wills* and *thoughts*, it is by the word. Jesus did not resist Satan by saying, 'I am God, therefore do you go away;' but He withstood him with the written word; and so now should we. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not;" for in the power of the Holy Ghost he takes up the written word, and then Satan is utterly powerless. The written word is the "sword of the Spirit," which Satan cannot grapple with.

If walking in the path of obedience, that is power, almighty power; for if walking in this path, I am going in a

divine path, and nothing can take me out of it. The child of God, having the Holy Ghost, can quote the word when tempted. One single sentence will silence Satan; and here lies the secret of strength; it is not intellect, but the Holy Ghost keeping us dependent, and enabling us to use the right word at the right time. If some object, and say, "oh, I am so ignorant of scripture, and so weak," the answer to that is, "there has no temptation taken you, but that which is common to man, but God is faithful, (who is behind it all,) "and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Ignorance does not matter, if we are only faithful. The power and grace needed are there, to keep our feet from going astray.

It is by *deceiving* that the devil overcomes us.

That which was a snare to Adam, was an occasion of obedience to Christ. "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it." If any one says, what harm is there in eating when you

are hungry? I answer, no harm: but the harm is in doing *our own* will. The question is not, where is the harm in doing it, but *why* am I doing it? Is it to please God, or to please myself? If it is to please myself, that is doing my own will, and that is sin. If I ask myself *why* I am going to do this or that, if I cannot say it is to *please God*, then *it is sin*.

Some will say, am I always to be under such restraint? Ah, there comes out the true state of your soul; you do not like to be under the restraint of God's will. The old nature hates the restraint, while the new nature will delight in it. "It is written, man shall *not* live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We are quickened by the word of God at the first, and then we are to live by it. Not as the law, which says do this, and do not do that, but having life, we are to live by the word, the expression of God's mind and will, and thus have His will, and not our own, as the motive for all we

do. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Thus living unto God, our reasons and motives being according to His will, it will not be like fencing the old man from the power of temptation, but it will be living in the power of the new man. Man was to *live* by eating.

Power was the next thing. All had been subjected to Adam, and now all was to be given to the Son of man. "And the devil taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me: and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

Now, Satan is openly detected, and hence the word, "get thee behind me, *Satan*." But mark the perfect wisdom of the Lord's reply: He says not a word about taking the kingdoms from Satan, or about prophesies relating to

them, but takes up the first common principle of obedience: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

It is no matter who all the kingdoms belong to; the simple word is a fitting word. It was the heart's question of its relationship with God; and if my heart is right, I shall begin to thank and to praise God before I receive the blessing; and why? Because I have got the God of the blessing. Look at Eliezer! he would not be contented until he had the word that Rebecca was of Bethuel's family, although he had had a remarkable answer to his prayer; but before she promises to accompany him, he bows down and worships the God of his master Abraham; thus rejoicing in the *giver* of the blessing itself. To worship God is ever the *highest* thing, though it may seem to be less. It is the immediate link of an obedient heart with God, and it was this that, in the power of the Holy Ghost, made the Lord look not at whom the *glory* and the *power* really

belonged, but to whom the *worship* belonged; and said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 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." Here the Lord is put into the place of Messiah glory; but what could be more subtle than Satan's quoting scripture promises when tempting the Lord to prove His Sonship? But why should He throw Himself down, before the time came? There was no command for that; and so the Lord replies, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." For *tempting* God is trying God *before* the need comes; not *when* it comes, as many have said. Christ could not listen to Satan for one moment; but, alas! we often do listen to him, that we may get

a little bit of the *world*. Had God told Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple? *No*. Then He would not do it, to prove whether God loved Him or not. Israel did tempt God, by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" After the Lord had been stoned out of Jerusalem He returned *again*; but this could not be tempting God, because it was His Father's will for Him to go there again. Therefore He says, "Let us go into Judea again." How different it was when the sisters of Lazarus sent for Him. He moved not to them, but "abode two days still in the same place where he was," though the sympathies of His heart would have led Him to them at once. But He waited the word from His Father.

Beloved friends, we want the word *behind* us, saying, "this is the way, walk ye in it." It is not what may be *before* us; but it is the word coming to me *before* I do a thing, and not afterwards. If you have not the knowledge of God's will as to any matter, never

do it; for if you do not know that it is God's will you should do such a thing, you will have *uncertainty*, although it may be God's will that you should be doing it; and acting thus you will be stumbled at every step, instead of going on in happy confidence. You ought never to have to question the certainty of God's being with you. Remember also that the word is not power and strength if you are not in the place of obedience. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

Then mark another thing. In Luke we have ever the moral connexion of things before God. Two or three sabbaths are brought together to bring out certain principles, and so the temptations are not given in the order in which they occurred. It is the moral connexion in the human character, and with the human family, the Spirit, by Luke, gives; and therefore the most spiritual and subtle tempta-

tion is mentioned *last*, though in order of time it was second.

In these progressive exercises of Christ, we get the progressive exercises in our souls. Promises suppose trial, and the Lord met Satan in every point which Satan could try us by, where we are; I say, where *we are*, for if Adam had been in paradise, there could have been no question about "the kingdom."

Christ put Himself into all the difficulties which man has made. The Lord has gone through all the temptations any saint can possibly be in. The saint wants the help of the Lord in temptation, while the sinner wants redemption. "The angels kept not their first estate," neither did Adam; and when Christ was here, He was tempted not to keep His first estate, but blessed be God He did; and the saints have practically in their walk to keep their first estate.

I am to reckon myself dead unto sin, and alive unto God. Are we doing this? If not, we are not keeping our first estate.

It does not suppose a man led astray

general condition of man, it is an "evil day." It is of immense importance that we grieve not the Spirit, for this is the secret power of our life.

The power of the Holy Ghost was as perfectly seen in the temptations of our Lord, in the wilderness, as when the Lord was casting out the legion.

I would just turn for a moment to say, that when Satan promised to give the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, as having a title to give, it was true in one sense, and false in another. Satan can give as far as men's lusts are concerned. He led on Pontius Pilate, and he led on Judas, and he still leads on people to seek riches, power, honour, and "greetings in the market-place;" but such "have their reward;" for God sits behind it all as judge. Still it is by men's lusts that Satan works. Yet, in another sense, power belongeth unto God, and He pulleth down one and setteth up another.

The next moral fact in the chapter is, "Jesus came to Nazareth," working, labouring. He was sent to preach, to

by his lusts; but the godly man wants help to walk in the path Christ has marked out for him, being constantly exercised by temptation; Satan ever putting something before him to try his faith. Satan did this with the Lord, but He passed through it all and bound the strong man; and now He enters into all our sorrows and keeps us in the power of God, as He will the remnant in the latter day; so keeping us by the power of the Holy Ghost "that we may be able to stand in the evil day."

The Lord looks now out of Israel, and shows Himself ready to take up any poor sinner that will receive Him, as He says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Therefore we are not always at the evil day work,—there is blessing for some days. If the gospel is being set forth by us in the power of God, it is not in detail *an evil day to us*; but a joyful one if souls are converted. Still, looked at in the

present God by the power of the word. And mark *where* Christ came, when He had all this power—to the very lowest place—"Nazareth," where shame and dishonour were attached to Himself; for that is exactly where *power* is found. He hath chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." They say of Him, "is not this Joseph's son?" "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But will power be found by exalting the flesh? In truth it will not. He quotes from their own scriptures, and says, "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 bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." He is found having the Spirit of power, in this shameful place; neither was He ashamed of being called the carpenter's son. The first link of His soul with God was quite untouched by it; for He being full of the Holy

Ghost, what was it to Him? and when His power is manifested and shed abroad, we find Him in the very lowest place in man's estimation; healing the "broken hearted," preaching the acceptable year of the Lord, "saying this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Here we find it at once. He does not reason with men about it, but says *here it is*, presenting at once what men want, and presenting it to such *as need*,—the poor, the lame, the blind, the halt. He presents Himself to man's need, whatever that need is; no matter whether He be more or less than the carpenter's son, grace has come down where grace was needed; for it is the character of grace to go down to the very lowest place. I would do that for my child, that I would do for no one else, because I love my child; and that is grace. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The prophets were not the gospel; man in his shame, sin and misery are *met* by *God now*. Such is the gospel; and behold *here it is*

comes out. "Do also here in thy country." What grace of the Lord to speak of it as *His country*! The men of Nazareth were amazed, that there is a way in which God's grace can reach outside themselves, the place of man's pretended title as held by the Jews. But God's sovereign grace is above and beyond it all—God says you are bound to me; I am not bound to you. His grace is despised and His sovereignty hated.

The Lord comes to display His grace in Nazareth, and these despised Nazarenes hate Him for coming there; but God will act in grace in spite of them, and take up a poor widow of Sidon, and heal a leprous Syrian. "Then all they in the synagogue were filled with wrath and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

Thus virtually saying that 'God in acting in sovereignty is slighting us.' 'He is not making us of importance enough, and therefore He shall not be

before your eyes; *this day* fulfilled in your ears; God is come into man's misery and finds him just where he is, touching the leper in his leprosy, and cleansing the unclean. This is grace. If I find grace meeting me in my sins, then it must be *God* meeting me. An angel could not touch me in my leprosy; he ought not, for it would stain his purity; but *God* can, and this is grace.

Now the reasonings of man's mind begin. "Is not this Joseph's son?" No prophet is honoured in his own country. If Christ comes down to man, then man says, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

We get in the synagogue of that poor village the meeting-place of God and man. Grace had come down where grace was needed, but it awakens the slights of men, though they wonder; for they cannot help seeing the power of God, for He was God. But they take the very occasion of His humiliation to slight Him. Man despises *grace*, and then sovereignty in goodness

our God.' Christ goes on unmoved by it all, although He felt it, for *reproach*, saith He, "hath broken my heart." But He ever turns to God. If Eliezer, at receiving the blessing, instantly turned to God, so Christ at every fresh trial turns to God. "Father" was the first word that came out of His mouth when in the garden of Gethsemane.

So Paul was not cowed by all the trial at Philippi, although he *felt* it.

Moses fled when he slew an Egyptian, because *flesh* was in it, and that can never stand. Christ turns from the full scene of trial to the perfectness of the scene of *grace*, and He says, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you; how long shall I suffer you; bring him to me." That was God in grace. So here, when these Nazarenes would have cast Him headlong down the hill, He escaped from them and came down to Capernaum in His onward path of grace. I ought to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep," but, how can I rejoice with one, and sorrow

with another? I cannot, I must be an hypocrite, if I have not the suppleness of divine love and grace which abides in Christ, and which can enable me to turn in a moment from rejoicing with one to weeping with another. How we get in Christ man perfect with God; and then turn and see all the blessedness of His grace to man.

What strength it is to my heart to say, there is one who has gone through every temptation for me. All Christ is, as a pattern, He is in grace, for those following that pattern, even now in this scene, where we are, down here.

Well, I have found *God*. I have heard the voice of the good Shepherd saying to my soul, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. If I say, O, but I am a wretched creature of Sidon—never mind, the Lord's grace goes even there! for the Lord having come, He will be to us all we want, even a rest to our spirits, and this we do want, and He can be this to us; for He was a perfect man with God, a perfect God with man.

more than at the beginning, but through what God has wrought. And in the value of that He sees them, not only without iniquity and perverseness, but as trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, at the very time they were murmuring against Him, despising the manna, &c., &c. When He is settling the question with Israel it is very different. He then passes over nothing, but here it is His judgment *about* Israel. He knew what they were when He brought them out and separated them from the nations: and God is not a man that He should repent. What can change His purpose? Hath He said, and shall He not make it good. And remember what He has said of believers. Balaam would gladly have found means to bring a curse on God's people; but he is obliged to say, "He hath blessed, and I *cannot* reverse it." If God be for us, who *can* be against us? When it is a question of justification He beholds no iniquity in His people. Experience of the wilderness makes us need something more than

GOD'S JUDGMENT ABOUT HIS PEOPLE.

Numbers xxiii, and xxiv.

Balaam's four utterances give four pictures of blessing. 1st, the people of God called out; (xxiii, 9;) 2nd, their justification and entire safety; (ver. 20, 21, 23;) 3rd, the present proper blessing of God's people; (xxiv, 5, 6;) 4th, the Lord's coming; (ver. 17—24;) the latter in Jewish connexion, not that of the Church. Consider the circumstances in which this prophecy was given. Not when Israel sang in the first joy of redemption, but after they had gone through all the difficulties of the wilderness, after they had known failure. The question now to be settled was, whether Satan had a title to shut the door of the kingdom against them, because of failure after redemption. This is met by learning the abiding power and value of God's work. His all controlling power will bring them in, in spite of everything. It is not through what we have wrought that we are brought in at the end, any

Exod. xv, even that which this chapter teaches us. It is said of Israel, all the way through what hath God wrought? It is not "what a heart there is in me," so desperately wicked even after conversion! but what a heart there is in God for me. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob:" Balaam in vain attempts it; his efforts only bring out each time a fresh declaration, a further aspect of blessing. Note, Balaam never said, "let me live the life of the righteous," he had no heart for that, "but let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." It is *God* who brings us in through *His* work. *His* worth, *His* word are mine, to rest my heart upon. God must fail before a believer can be lost.

APHORISMS.

It is better to keep Christ's character than one's cloak.

The world never draws towards Christians, and it cannot do so, for its

own nature cannot allow it; but Christians may, to their own loss, draw near the world, because the old man is still in them.

You cannot be in the truth if you ramble from the person of the Son of man.

The things which God will separate in judgment are already separated in His mind, and they are as much so now as when they will be seen, the one in the lake of fire, and the other in heaven.

Christian liberty is never liberty of *will*: the liberty of the Holy Ghost is absolute.

The seventh of Romans presents the legal form of the conflict: the Galatians the Christian form of the conflict. In the seventh of Romans there is nothing about the Spirit; but Galatians speaks of the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusting against the flesh. In Romans it is about the *law*, and not about Christ nor the Spirit.

There may be great activity of service without its being the service of God in the Spirit.

"That we should be holy and without blame before him in love," is that we should be there according to God's nature and character. For He is holy, blameless in His ways, and He is love.

The difference between the Holy Ghost's reasoning and the saint's is seen in this, that the Holy Ghost reasons from what *God is*, to what we shall experience from Him; while the saint reasons from what *he is*, to what he may expect from God.

The question of justification is presented in Romans and Galatians; divine government in the wilderness in Peter; the communication of life in John.

"OUR REST IS NOT HERE."

"This is not your rest, because it is polluted."
Micah ii, 10.

"This earth is not thy rest,"

Beloved of the Lord;
Of higher hopes possessed,
Than it can e'er afford.

Thou hast this faithless world resigned,
That thou a nobler rest might find.

"This earth is not thy rest,"
Thou art an heir of heaven;
To mansions of the blest,
A title has been given;
To thee, and all the ransomed band,
A title signed with God's own hand.

"This earth is not thy rest,"
'Tis a polluted place;
It spurned its heavenly guest,
And set at nought His grace;
And still it hates His cross and name,
And glories in its sin and shame.

"This earth is not thy rest,"
Then why of griefs complain;
Him, whom thou hast confess'd,
Knew sorrow, too, and shame.
Thou would'st not be unlike thy Lord?
Thou would'st not falsify His word?

"This earth is not thy rest,"
Then make it not thy home;
Build not on earth thy nest,
But wait for Him to come;
Who'll take thee to thy proper rest,
Amid the glorified and blest.

A. M.

TRY THE SPIRITS—CHRIST THE TEST.

1 John iv.

When this scripture was written, it was not any more than with us, merely, the setting forth of the grace and goodness of God in a world that knew Him not—in a world of sin and misery—though it was a blessed privilege to be the channel of such a testimony as the gospel, the messenger to bring in the wondrous message of love to this wretched world; which of course met with opposition, but was a wonderful and sensible blessing to man. The Spirit had another service to perform—another truth to unfold. "Ungodly men had crept in unawares," and it became necessary to warn against evil.

Now it is far more difficult to preserve blessing when it is brought in, than to testify of it at first. So we find in Jude the exhortation given "earnestly

to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints:" not merely to publish the tidings of the blessing that had been brought in, and so testify of the common salvation, but earnestly to contend for the faith, that they might preserve the blessing, that had been thus brought in, pure and uncorrupted. And here we read, "Believe not every spirit." It is far happier to have to say "Believe the spirit," but because of error it had to be said "Believe not every spirit." The mystery of iniquity, which was to come in, and was already in the world, required it. All the apostles had to warn thus against the evil which had come in; and John more especially, as being the last of them. "Try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Men had slept, and the enemy had sown tares. Satan always seeks by violence and opposition to resist the coming in of truth, and to hinder its reception; and if he cannot do that, then, when it is come in, he will corrupt the truth.

no knowledge, no doctrine. That is what infidelity always will do. But there is difficulty in every truth. The consequence is, when men get tired of their sins, and think about giving them up, they begin to enquire about truth, turn very serious for awhile, and attend to their religious duties as they call it; but, finding it difficult, they tire and soon grow weary of it, and seek to get hold of something that promises certainty, and at the same time saves them the trouble of knowing truth for themselves. So they look for something established on human authority, and lean on the judgment and opinions of men. This is authority in a bad sense, man's word. God exercises true authority over the conscience. The truth is authority. But men want something that will save them the exercise of their hearts and consciences before God. In human authority the conscience is not with God, and man would be independent of God. Now this degrades man beneath what he was intended to be,

Evil men have crept in unawares, false prophets or false spirits are gone out into the world; holy kind of men it may be in their way, but false prophets, who attack true and simple souls with great apparent power, and with the mingling of much real truth with their error. But error must be put down in the heart and conscience.

It is a great mercy to have orthodoxy professed. By orthodoxy I mean the cardinal truths of the gospel, although of course the profession of orthodoxy is not life. There may be orthodoxy and not life, especially in these days; and we have to come back to where the Spirit of God will keep the soul in the profession of the truth. There may not be salvation, though there may be orthodoxy of profession. The Lord may allow intellect to work, and then the question may arise as with Pilate "what is truth?"

We find in men two things, scepticism and infidelity. The sceptic doubts all truth; the infidel denies the truth altogether, and says, there is no truth,

for his true position is to be dependent on God. This is man's true glory. The conscience must be brought into contact with God, into the presence of God; and that which accomplishes this is true ministry. *Whatever ministry fails to do this, or has not this for its object, is not of God*; because it is putting something between the soul and God. If ministry be real, it brings God directly to the conscience through the word; whereas that which is false, stands between God and the conscience; and this will enable us to detect the difference, and to discern at once whether ministry be false or true.

God has promised to guide the humble, and He will secure the humble soul against false prophets.

The word of God never treats man's mind as being competent to judge it; for it would be the judge itself of what is authority over the conscience. People have confounded the power of the word to work in the conscience with a competency to judge the word;

and it is an awful thing. Man's mind is incapable of judging God's word. If it were capable, the word would not be God's at all, for that would be supposing man's mind to be equal with God, and there would be no God. The natural conscience may judge of individual commands, such as, "Thou shalt not steal," &c. I am capable also of judging so far as to know that it is good, *when it has acted on my soul*. It is like taking food. I may be entirely ignorant of the processes of nutrition and digestion, yet I may know the full value of food, and be conscious of the invigorating effect produced by the food when eaten. There are many things that may be estimated when they have acted on me, though I may have no competency to judge of them but by their effect. God's word tells me that I am thus and thus, the soul receives the effect by divine power; *that* is the word judging me, not my judging the word. But the word can produce in me the competency to judge, and these are often confounded in reasoning.

not be an evil spirit if it were. "Try the spirits." Unless Jesus Christ is owned as God manifest in the flesh it is not of God. "Many false prophets are gone out into the world," and the owning the lordship and authority of Jesus is to be the test of everything. You will find a thousand things set up instead, but whatever spirit does not bow to the Lord Jesus Christ is not of God.

"Ye are of God little children." He had no thought of putting them on their own competency or ability to judge, or on the authority of other men, but on the Spirit of God. "And have overcome them, for greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." It is as though he said, if the Holy Ghost is in you, it will overcome, if not, Satan will surely get the better. The Church of God is, as it were, the great prize between Satan and God. So with Pharaoh and Israel when he refused to let the people go. "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go." Immediately the answer is, "who is

Where am I to find the competency? That is the question. It is in the word, because it comes and approves itself to the heart by acting with power on the conscience. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," it begins with power.

"Believe not every spirit." It is not simply the truth and man's mind are at work: there are false spirits acting on man's mind. While poor man thinks himself independent, there is a spirit working which is either of God or the devil, either bringing truth or error to the soul. "False prophets are gone out into the world." The confession of "Jesus come in the flesh is of God." That which puts all to the test is the real acknowledgment of Christ come in the flesh. It proves the truth of the person; it is the proper faith of him who speaks, and not a mere confession. Because if I have faith in a thing I am subject to it; that is, confessing Christ, I am subject to Christ. No evil spirit is that; it would

the Lord that I should obey him," though there it was to bring out the manifestation of the power of God in His judgments upon Pharaoh that He might prove Himself the mightier, as Jethro said, "now know I that the Lord is greater than all Gods, for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them. (Exod. xviii, 11.) By and by He will shew this out more fully when the Lord appears and Satan is bound. Then there will be an end of this conflict; but now it is carried on in our individual walk; and God would now exercise men's faith and consciences, and manifest His power in keeping them.

We get here the power of walk, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." One of the most alarming symptoms in the world, the religious world, in the present day is the idea that there is power in the truth to preserve. There is power in the truth to preserve; but the question is whether the soul holds fast the truth. *Unless my thoughts and my heart are in*

the truth, there will be no power in the truth to me. It is very certain God will keep His truth, but is my heart kept? if not, the expectation of being kept is the mere confidence of man's mind. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." The only power of victory is the power of the Spirit of God on the affections and consciences of the saints, and then the heart will be set on Christ and the things of Christ, to love Him, enjoy Him, and serve Him better. The conflict and difficulty are rather when the truth is brought in question, than when it first goes forth in power. If I am not kept by the Spirit of God, I shall not be able to resist the daily solicitations of sin.

Man may grow tired of his sins, and tired of the world, for he has long been in bondage to them, and desire sincerely to break off his sins. He is attracted at first by that which promises him deliverance, and is glad to close with the offer, and so breaks off from his sins for awhile, and is very religious,

therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." "But ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them." If God were in them, they were kept; if not, they would fall away from the truth. We must rely on what has been declared by the Spirit of God, rather than upon what is the expectation of man. The apostle himself believed in the power of truth as much as any now, but he had not the vain expectation that the truth had power to reform the world. "Ye are of God, little children." This is the guard, not of the power, but of the means.

"We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us." It is not said 'he that overcomes,' but he that heareth us is of the truth. He had the spiritual power of discerning what was truth. The means of ascertaining truth from error was the recognition of the word; whosoever did not submit to the written word was not listened to. Though they might speak like angels, it was not

and seems devoted too; but his soul does not continue; he does not like the trials and tribulations which arise; he cannot bear to lose his friends, and his prosperity and his place in the world; and then error is found the easier thing, and there must come a falling away, and so it will be but a little flock. False religion might make a monk, but can never put the conscience into the presence of God. Error quarrels not with men's passions, for false religion, in the main, ever ministers to the passions, the thoughts, the feelings of men: and thus it is false religion which suits the world better than truth, because it suits itself to man, and the mass will ever follow error. So Paul had to say, "All Asia is turned away from me." The apostle did not expect that truth would have power over the world, but plainly declared that error would. So we see when the Lord allows the sifting of a large body of people on a point of truth, the greater number will adopt the error. "They are of the world,

of God, it was of themselves. "He that is of God heareth us." I could not say, you must hear me or you will be lost; but I could say this, if you do not hear the message of the gospel, which I speak to you, you will perish, because it is the truth of God, and you are to search for yourselves and see. I am no guarantee of truth; I have it from God; but in the apostles I get the guarantee and the test of truth. They could say, a man must hear them or be lost: they were, so to speak, the depository of truth. One may come to me and say, it is difficult; well, I reply, be humble, be patient, and you will learn. God has given something that is to be the test of truth; if you are of God you will believe it. But if any one hindered any from hearing an apostle, he could say at once he was not of God; for "he that is of God heareth us." Their *immediate* testimony is the test; God was telling of truth and error. No man now is the immediate vessel or guarantee of truth.

Mark further. The moment I require anything to establish the authority of the word, I take away the authority of the word: for the thing rested on is of course that which is supposed to establish the word, and not the word itself. If I take anything as proving the word of God, and so believe it, that is not believing the word. The Spirit of God and the word of God must go together. The word will not do alone; for I may attempt to judge of the word by my own private judgment, and so get wrong. The Spirit of God will not do alone either, for I may mistake my own fancy for the Spirit; they go together. Then the moment the word reaches my heart, it is absolute authority, and the word judges me. When they are both received into the heart, when thus in complete possession of me, Satan cannot touch me, because they will allow nothing of the flesh (self-will, &c.) to work. Is there evil in me? They will enable me to judge it in myself, and in everything around me. Such an one is guaranteed against

all error. He has the Spirit and the word. These are the comforting, peaceful, blessed means of guarding us from all evil.

The effect of a man's being regenerated is, he is brought to God, having perfect peace; brought into an entirely new world, where God is revealing Himself in His word; and he has his soul constantly delighting in the word. There all the wisdom of God is brought out for my soul to be exercised in, (endless and safe!) learning all that God is; and what we have all to seek is to be occupied with the truth, every day knowing more and more of Christ; delighting in and feeding on Christ as the true God and perfect man, subject in all things to His Father: and all this not so as to be able to write an essay, but as the Christ in whom I know God and man; loving Him every day; living by Him every day, as He lived by the Father; depending on the Father. Then everything that is not of Him strikes upon my soul; it is THAT CHRIST who is touched, and it

affects the whole harmony of the soul. *Be sure of this, if it is not the living power of a living Christ, known and enjoyed in your soul, you cannot withstand error.* It must be truth held in communion with the person of Christ, or it will not guard you against error. The mere truth is no match for Satan. I would not venture to meet Satan on the truth, if I were not called to do it to serve the saints and for the glory of God, because I should be afraid. I know God will keep me when in His service, but I do not therefore cast myself down from off the pinnacle of the temple because it is written in His word, "He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

We get the traits of the two families set forth in Cain and Abel; in Cain, hatred, violence, and wickedness; in Abel, suffering, righteousness, and love. The eternal life which was with the Father is communicated to the Christian, producing in him Christ's ways, thoughts, and feelings. "Every

one that loveth is born of God." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, for God is love." Love is the inner development of the divine nature. As I cannot enjoy or exercise the faculties and affections of a man if I have not the nature of a man, no more can I enjoy God's affections unless I have the nature of God. It is an old remark that "knowledge cannot love;" you must have this nature, you must be born of God, for God is love, or you cannot love. Man's searching gets nothing. Unless he knows the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot love. Suppose there is a general notion of God, and that His eternal Godhead is seen and acknowledged; if I have knowledge and try to understand things I shall be confounded; for when the state of the whole world is looked upon what do I see? Why, three-fourths of it given up to idolatry, worshipping the devil; and oppression, degradation, and misery overwhelming all; aye, multitudes even in this great city: (London:) and the

mind gets into confusion. Men may try to say that it is all needful for the general government of man, but this will not do for those who are suffering. If it be said, sin is the cause of it all, then I say, if sin has come in, what can I, as a sinner, have to say to God? how can I meet God? It is of no use to tell me that He is good: He is that; but I am responsible to God; and the more I get into the truth, the more I am confounded and thrown almost into despair. Neither scepticism nor authority will do anything for me here. But the moment I get Christ, the whole thing is clear; Christ clears up all. I have not got something now that *can* deal with it, but God who *has* dealt with it. God is seen in Him as dealing with this creation in all its sin and misery. Then I say, sin has ruined us; all are guilty; I am guilty; but He has met my sin in the very way I wanted it. When I was in perplexity and despair about my sins, and when I found no way of meeting God, then it was *God who met me*, and

showed me how He had settled it all to His glory in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who met all for me, coming into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, coming into all the misery to put it away and give Himself as the source of life and putter away of that sin which would hinder the enjoyment of God; and then for the perfecting of this love to introduce us into that which is above. He came down that He might take us up with Him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Herein is our love (or love with us) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world." I get the love manifested in His coming to me and taking me up into the presence of God perfect in Himself. The communication of the nature gives the power to love; and then we get the object, "Not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for

our sins." Thus we get the object for our love to rest upon and be occupied with; always elevating, always satisfying. It is not the mysticism that delights in its own exercise, working on itself; but there is an infinite and blessed object, and we are brought into association with, and likeness to, that blessed object; not allowing in us the least fear, all being taken away by His divine work, and we at rest perfectly and happy with God.

Whatever does not make our hearts know God as perfect in love to ourselves and in ourselves is not the whole truth; whatever does not set me in the presence of God without a single fear remaining so that I can enjoy His love, is not adequate to His love to me. The Lord make us of quick understanding in His fear, and direct our hearts into His love, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

THE CANON OF TRUTH.

There is a very common mistake as to the sense of the word *heresy* in scripture. It may be something definite; it may be truth, it may be error. But no just apprehension can be arrived at as to what it really is, except by looking to the essential meaning of the word. It simply means "choice;" and thus it will not be difficult to see how this transgresses against God and against the place we should hold towards Him, and in respect of all that we are to receive from Him. As to ourselves, we know the word of the Lord, "You have not *chosen* me, but I have *chosen* you." So also in all revelation made to man, it stood in God's good pleasure to reveal what He pleased; in His divine wisdom giving such relations between truth and truth as was necessary to make Himself duly known. To reverse this order is *heresy*. Man a sinner, (and if such be the mercy vouchsafed,) recovered to God by grace, is himself the choice of God; and grace forms the place and rule of subjection and dependence. Treating it, however, as confined to truth revealed, it is the duty of the believer humbly to be subject to it, rightly dividing it; since the word, accord-

ing to the Spirit, teaches those who are obedient to Christ. The separation of truth from Christ Himself must prevent blessing and growth, and is often the cause of the endeavour to combine in a formal creed the truth necessary to the child of God and the Lord's servant.

There is another source of this evil, viz., that however needful one portion of the truth may be at this or that season, there is, (notwithstanding a succession of revelation) a need of every part for the work of God; for His husbandry and for the building up of the saints. However the spirit of apostasy may work, inasmuch as the promises are made to the overcoming of the corruption of the day and time in Christianity, those Christians are the most "thoroughly furnished" who respect the whole canon of truth as given to complete them in Christ. Truth will not be found in parcelling it out and in balancing it. Such a course would make us think that souls, in conscience towards God, were not the intended objects of it; whereas, as seen in God, all is perfect, and each part is a whole; but so a whole as to be in perfect relation to the rest, and without the exclusion of any. *Christ* is what we receive of God; and if any portion of truth be taken, as in Christ,

for it, makes such strides; and the dissolution of all that imposed any wholesome fear on man progresses so rapidly that a distinctive view of what constitutes "a good confession" will call on souls, desirous of walking with God, to enter earnestly on the question of the "canon of truth."

What is intended is not *the canon of scripture*, (that has its own various ground and evidence,) but the canon of truth, as needed in confession, and for the enjoyment of the peace and the power of God; and for practical ends, as a sequel to them, in the knowledge of His will, in wisdom and spiritual understanding. The value of this must be apparent.

The principle of faith, excluding every object that could come between us and the Lord, is the point on which he who had been in the third heaven made an unrelenting stand in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Faith is towards the future, because the future is towards that which is unseen; and it accepts its rule from God. Nothing could be more righteous than the demand of faith from man, as the road of return afforded by God to one who had sinned, and who continued in insubjection through sin, and had become subject to another,

it will never exclude any other portion, and it will ever have its proportions fitted to Christ, and to which every other part can attach.

If there are particular times and seasons when some portion of truth is specially called for, so there are times and seasons when some portion, which may be highly necessary and important is, either through ignorance or corruption, omitted. Or, if what is material being omitted, a sickly demand of one truth occur in minds from defect of another—all this is, or borders on, heresy.

No truth and no order promulgated of God is needless. Hurrying forth when we discover some revealed truth, instead of waiting on God for its certainty and its place, or founding anything merely on the contradiction to falsehood, is in likelihood an approach to this sin.

What shall we say then? Conscience before a holy God is the needed condition of the soul; and, in subjection to Christ, a simple acceptance of the word—even if that word appears unusual—giving time to the soul in the presence of God, will keep it in the safe path.

These considerations are the more needful because apostasy, or all that prepares

even to the enemy, the revolted one. Distrust of God was the door by which he left God, and the door of entrance to his lost and estranged condition. He had eaten of the fruit of the tree, and was shut out thenceforth from the tree of life in the garden. God now plants the tree of life outside the garden, and outside the camp too, and calls on man to eat of it. Because in this tree of God's planting is found sin and death undone, and life restored and unassailable. Here was faith, as the reverse of man's departure from God, and restoration thereby. Wonderful and righteous are the ways of God, full of grace and mercy and truth! This then is the way of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." And, this being accomplished, it is given to man to wait for his being taken in again to a higher paradise; and therefore it is said, "to wait for the Son from heaven." To as many as receive him he gives power to become the sons of God; even to as many as believe on that name—the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Now, being sons, it is needful, in order to obedience, to know what confession we are called to as waiting for the Son from heaven. All the remainder of the canon

of truth lies here. The Lord is coming to take to Himself His great power and reign; in which time the earth shall be subject, and a king shall rule in righteousness, and princes in judgment, and we as sons of God, and therefore heirs with Christ, shall reign with Him. It is nothing therefore but the present knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that will afford a rule of confession and obedience. For the whole frame of the world, its order and objects, can be no guide, since it is in independence still, and not returned to God; and under its present rule never to return. The believer is in Christ and the world is not. The child of God waits for the Son from heaven—who is Lord of all; and the world awaits but the doom of its final departure from Him. "The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full," therefore God did not bring His people into their inheritance. So it is with the world now. We see Him at the right hand of God, as Lord of all, according to the will of the Father; though the time is not yet of all things being made subject to Him. The external form of our obedience is in acknowledgment of Him there, and to come: sanctified, or separated, not only out

the interest of the saints in heavenly places is appealed to. The epistle to the Hebrews, of Jude, and James and Peter are confined to it. The speciality of the Church in heavenly places, and her union with Christ by faith of His name, as Son of God, and the revelation of the power of resurrection to the believer was reserved to Paul. The character of the grace is everlasting and indefeasible; its place the place of communion; and its hope the being taken before the trial; walking with God in the judgment of the world and loving the coming of the Lord. The divine life, and the practical result in blessing given to communion, is the department given to John. The canon of truth can bear no omission but with damage to the perfecting of the saint in his relation to God, and to his confession in the world of Christ and His glory.

To lay stress on any of these things to the exclusion of the other, is an evil choice in order to clothe oneself with the peculiarity of the doctrine, and it is not subjection to *truth*. If I take the kingdom, and leave out the Church, I deprive the saint of the highest consolations, and lower the ground of his affections, and alter injuriously the character of his hope. If I leave

of our once lost state, but sanctified to Him and justified in the grace of our God, out of the world which lieth in condemnation and in the power of the wicked one. It is not a question of being morally better than the world around us (though this is the case essentially by grace) in an external respect: but of being separate as subject to Christ, who is at the right hand of God:—and subject for suffering in obeying Christ; and in the intelligence of Christ, subject to the authorities that be, yet taking no part, in ordering the world, which is in disobedience, as are all that connect themselves with the world. We are "called unto the kingdom and glory" to be revealed. I speak of the regenerate, by the faith of the Son of God.

To these things the gospel of the grace and the gospel of the kingdom are the introduction. For, though the proclamation must be grace, it is the kingdom of God that is specifically preached. God now establishes the way of grace, and it is by faith, that it may be by grace. This would conduct us through the epistle to the Romans; the church being only touched upon at the very close; and it is to a considerable extent the force of those to the Thessalonians, though not exclusively, as

out the kingdom, and take the Church as my exclusive theme, I render the walk of the saint unstable on the earth, and cut off all the doctrine of godliness, to be exercised while in the body, in subjection to the Lord. If I adopt the divine life as the sole relict of truth, I leave the saint to be absorbed by the frame of the world and to a defective conscience, which sanctification to God in the world can alone sustain.

If the character of the service of the divine life was revealed last, it has, nevertheless, without doubt, its appropriate fullness within itself; but I speak of the evil of the heresy of excluding what preceded it, and is necessary to complete the chosen one in Christ. The divine life and attraction to it creates a fund to the soul in an evil day, which the ruin around makes needful, and God, in the wonders of His grace, has not left us without. But "there must be heresies that those who are approved *may be made manifest*."

The internal man is not the same as the external man as confessor of the Lord. The new man is the risen man, the healed leper of the eighth day. Where the blood has cleansed there the Spirit can follow. When death has worked there is life; and the saint becomes the living sacrifice, and

by faith advancing continually in the divine character lives in the atmosphere of the love in which God lives, and bears testimony of it.

Part of the "canon of truth," and indeed very much, may be at times in the world in abeyance, by ignorance and corruption, and the revival of truth (which is the work of the power of God) makes the saint very responsible; as also the preaching of the good tidings makes the world so.

The knowledge of righteousness, before the reformation, and the peace wrought for the believer, were forgotten, and were brought to light amid the darkness. The truth of the Church and of the functions of the Holy Ghost were not reached by the reformation. The truth of the kingdom has been perceived; but its place and importance for practical ends in the saints, being heirs in a country not yet their own, but strangers in it, though under their Lord, has been but little apprehended. It is a kingdom of which the saints are expectant heirs; and where they receive the reward of present faithful confession, and reward of service and duty, at the coming forth of their Lord in glory. I believe this confession is often referred to under the name of "the faith." See the

as Lord and Saviour, and, in a good confession they overcome by His blood and *their* testimony, and shall sit on His throne as He overcame and sits on His Father's throne.

FRAGMENT.

It alters the character of Christianity to make it a system of commandments. Give me *an express text*, says one, and I will bow to it. Now this is an unholy and bad principle. If a child knew the will of its father, and yet demanded some express command before it would obey, that would be a bad child. It is a very common evil of this day to demand an abstract command. If I have the Holy Spirit I must do what I know to be the mind of God—of course checked by the written word—but wherever I have the knowledge of God's mind it is binding on me.

end of 1 Timothy; and "the good confession of Christ that His kingdom was not of this (present) world, else would His servants fight. To wait thus—serving the Lord that is looked for—severed from the order of the world, and returned to God and dependent upon Him, is "the faith" in this respect. (The Gentile Church neither stands in goodness nor in faith in the living God by faith.) Christianity either says, "Lord, Lord," and does not; or denies the Lord to whom glory alone belongeth. Nations are, often, a mock Israel; but they shall come into the tribulation and judgment; and the Lord will be magnified with His saints in the day of His appearing.

The kingdom of our Lord which, with the virtues and grace that are appropriate to it, is the distinctive confession of the saints on earth, forms the conscience on earth, keeping them for the Lord. The affections as well as the knowledge of the risen Jesus cast a gloom on any part the saints take in the world. Whereas the place given them as expectant heirs marks easily the present things (except as immediately ordered by the Lord) as in the hand of the enemy; while the love of God shed abroad in their hearts glorifies Jesus

WHAT IS DEATH?

For the unbeliever, nothing can be more terrible than death. It is justly and scripturally called "the king of terrors." It is the judicial close of the being of the first Adam. What is beyond? It is not merely so for the animal nature, though that be true, but the more it is considered in connexion with man's moral nature, the more terrible does it become. Everything in which man has had his home, his thoughts, his whole being employed, is closed and perished for ever. "When his breath goeth forth, *all* his thoughts perish." Man finds in it an end to every hope, every project, to all his thoughts and plans. The spring of them all is broken. The being in which he moved is gone: he can count upon nothing more. The busy scene in which his whole life has been, knows him no more. He himself fails and is extinct. None have to do with him any more as belonging to it. His nature has given way, powerless to

resist this master to which it belongs, and who now asserts his dreadful rights. But this is far from being all. Man indeed, as man alive in this world, sinks down into nothing. But why? *Sin* has come in; with sin, conscience; with sin, Satan's power: still more; with sin, God's judgment. Death is the expression and witness of all this. It is the wages of sin, terror to the conscience, Satan's power over us, for he has the power of death. Can God help here? Alas, it is his own judgment on sin. Death seems but as the proof that sin does not pass unnoticed, and is the terror and plague of the conscience, as witness of God's judgment, the officer of justice to the criminal, and the proof of his guilt in the presence of coming judgment. How can it but be terrible? It is the seal upon the fall and ruin and condemnation of the first Adam. And he has nothing but this old nature. He cannot subsist as a living man before God. Death is written on him, for he is a sinner, he cannot deliver himself.

sin, has been passed through. It has, as a cause of terror to the soul, in every sense, wholly lost its power for the believer. The physical fact *may* take place; for so wholly has Christ put away its power that that is not necessarily the case. We shall not all die though we shall all be changed. Desiring, says the apostle, not to "be unclothed, but be clothed upon, that mortality may be *swallowed up of life*." Such is the power of life in Christ.

But death has much more than passed away. Death is ours, says the apostle, as all things are. By the blessed Lord's entering into it for me, death and judgment too, is become my salvation. The sin, of which it was the wages, has been put away by death itself. The judgment has been borne for me there. Death is not terror to my soul; it is not the sign of anger, but the blesseddest and fullest proof of love, because Christ came into it. The very power of the law against me, I am freed from, for it has power over a man only as long as he lives; but in Christ

He is guilty withal and condemned. The judgment comes. But Christ has come in. He has come into death,—O wondrous truth, the Prince of life! What is death now for the believer?

Now mark, reader, the full force of this wonderful, unspeakable, intervention of God. We have seen death to be man's weakness, the break up of his being, Satan's power, God's judgment, the wages of sin. But all this is in connexion with the first Adam, whose portion, because of sin, death and judgment are. We have seen the double character of death; the failure of life, or living power, in man, and the witness and conductor into the judgment of God. Christ has been made sin for us; He has undergone death, passed through it as Satan's power and as God's judgment. Death, with its causes, has been met in its every character by Christ.

The judgment of God has been fully borne by Him before the day of judgment comes. Death, as the wages of

I am dead to the law already. *God has, by death, met sin and judgment already.* In a word, Christ, the sinless One, having come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, my whole condition, as in the first Adam, has been dealt with; dealt with so that all its consequences have been righteously undergone; and *by death*, the old man, Satan's power, sin, judgment, mortality itself, which are connected with the old, or sinful, man, are passed and done with for ever. I live before God now in the one who is risen, after enduring all that belonged to the old for me. God has dealt with the old man, and all its fruits and consequences for me, in the new, who has taken even the natural consequences attached to it, and gone through its power as in the hand of Satan. Death has freed me for ever from everything that belonged to, and awaited the old man, as alive. First, condemnation and judgment are entirely over, as a question of the soul's acceptance. The dreadful ordeal is passed; but by another—so that it

is my deliverance from it according to the righteousness of God.

The floods which destroyed the Egyptians were a wall to Israel on the right hand and on the left, the path of safety out of Egypt. The salvation of God was there. Egypt and its oppressive power were left behind them. Death is deliverance and salvation to us. Secondly, what is it become in practice? In the power of Christ's resurrection, I am quickened. He is become my life. I can dispense, if I may venture so to speak, with the life of the old man: I have that of the new. But He who, now risen, is my life, passed through death. I reckon myself dead. Hence it is never said that we are *to die* to sin. The old man does not and would not; the new man has no sin to die to. We are said *to be dead*, and commanded to reckon ourselves dead. Rom. vi, 11,—“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Col. iii, 3,—“For ye are dead, and

your life is hid with Christ in God;” and then we are directed to mortify our members which are on the earth, in the power of this new life, and of the Holy Ghost which dwells in us. I have the title, then, to reckon myself dead. What a gain is death to me in this respect, if really the desires of the new man are in me! yea, what deliverance and power! What is dead, for faith, is the old, hindering, harassing, sinful, man; in which, if responsible to God, I was lost, and unable to meet Him.” “*When*,” says the apostle, “we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” (Rom. vii, 5.) But Rom. viii, 9,—“Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” The flesh is not our place of standing before God. We have acknowledged ourselves lost and ruined in it. That was the standing of the first Adam, and we were in it. Law applied to it, death, judgment. But I am not in it now,

but in the second. So as regards ordinances, the apostle says, “If ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why as though living [or alive] in the world are ye subject to ordinances?” For faith, we are dead, not alive, in the world. Hence, also, everything that practically makes us realize this—trial, suffering, sorrow—is gain. It makes morally true, and real, in our souls, that we are dead, and thus delivers from the old man. “In all these things is the life of the Spirit.” It is disengaged and delivered from the obscuring and deadening influence of the old man. These sorrows and breaches in life are the details of death morally. But of the death of what? Of the old man. All is gain. Thirdly, if death comes in fact, the death of what? Of what is mortal, of the old man. Does the new risen life die? It has passed through death in Christ, and this has been realized in us. It cannot die. It is Christ. Hence, in dying, it simply leaves death behind. It quits what is mortal. We are ab-

sent from the body and present with the Lord. It was previously outwardly connected with what is mortal. It is no longer so. We are absent from the body, and present with the Lord. We depart and we are with Christ. It is true faith looks for a greater triumph—we shall be clothed upon—still this is God's power. The old man, thank God, never revives. God, because of His Spirit that dwells in us, will quicken even our mortal bodies. The life of Christ will be displayed in a glorious body. We shall be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. This is the fruit of divine power. But meanwhile death itself is always deliverance, because, having a new life, it is our being disencumbered from the old man which hindered and hemmed our way. It is our being with Christ. How sweet and refreshing is the thought! When once we have seized the difference of the old and new man, the reality of the new life we have received in Christ, the death of the old

will be known and felt to be true and real gain. No doubt, God's time is best, because He alone knows what is needed in the way of discipline and exercise to form our souls for Himself, and He may preserve us to know the power of this life in Christ, so that mortality should be swallowed up without our dying.

But if death is the ceasing of the old man, it is but the ceasing of sin, hindrance, trouble. We have done with the old man, in which we were guilty before God: righteously done with it, because Christ has died for us—for ever done with it, because we live in the power of the new. Such is death to the believer. "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." As judgment, Christ has taken it; as to the power of sin, it is the death of the very nature it lives in. As actual mortality, it is deliverance from it to be with Christ in the new man which enjoys Him. Who, as to the proper gain of it, would not die?

If we live to serve Christ, the sor-

row of this world is worth while; but it is not the less sorrow in itself, whatever blessing may cheer us through it. To us to live, is Christ; to die, gain. It is but the old man that dies; our misery first, our enemy afterwards. Of course this supposes divine life, and in practice the heart to be elsewhere than in the things the old man lives in.

DIVINE FELLOWSHIP.

1 John i.

It is a great mercy that God has not left us in the dark as to our state before Him. Now men, by nature, have a notion of judgment. Even the heathen have this; and much of the Christianity of the present day is little more. Men try to conduct themselves in such sort as to stand in judgment, tempered perhaps by mercy. They confound what is never confounded in the word of God—judgment and mercy.

Now Christ did not come to leave

men there; He did not die to leave men there. He came to put men in a totally different condition. If the Son of God came into the world and died, it must have been for some great purpose. He brought down into this world the whole light of grace and truth,—all that was needed to change the whole relation of a man to God:—He came with it.

In the third verse we get the object of writing this scripture, that we may have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It speaks of such an entire putting away of sin, and such a knowledge of God's thoughts about the Father and the Son as that we may have fellowship with them. What a wonderful thing! Not a mere natural thought of judgment, but companionship of heart with the Father and the Son. Does that leave any uncertainty as to our state at the great day? No. He is not to have fellowship and intimate friendship with us and then condemn us. No. There is such a cleansing as that all that could

hinder this fellowship is for ever put away.

Mark how far a man's thought is from that naturally. He says, I have not this fellowship, this joy. God is in heaven and I on the earth. Well, if it is so, you have not got the good of the gospel. If you have not fellowship with the Father, you are not thinking about Him at all, or else you are dreading Him. You have not fellowship, cannot have fellowship, if you feel criminal before Him. It is anything but fellowship. The will is not broken down when there is dread. But how is this? Why! is not your heart given to pleasure, to money? Are you not after the flesh, after things which are quite contrary to God, and contrary to fellowship with God? "The carnal mind is enmity to God." That is our state naturally, and what the word of God calls "darkness;"—not merely being in the dark, but darkness itself, just as God is light. It is in *you* that the evil is. There is the insensibility of a drunkard; but besides this, there

is the fact that he loves to gratify a vile lust. "Ye were sometime darkness."

And what is this darkness? Corruption of nature. Compare yourself with Christ. He is the pattern of what is good. Are not you just the very opposite? How came you to be so? All the objects for which you are living are just the opposite of that for which Christ was living. You are living for pleasure, for money, for fame, and for a thousand other things, while He was ever living unto God. I am not speaking of your outward life, but of your motives. All that is governing your life is the opposite of what governed Christ. Suppose a person brought up in filth from his youth; he does not know that it is filth. He has got accustomed to it! And why? Because his heart is as filthy as his clothes or his house. Now we are so accustomed to sin that we do not see it to be sin. What does that prove? Just that we love it. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into

manifests everything in you, how then can you have fellowship with Him?

Now this is a message of what God is, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He cannot give up His light, He cannot have fellowship with darkness; and it would not be a blessing if He did. But it is a message brought down here. It is not in heaven, but here that we have the message, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." If you call yourself a Christian, you are saying that you have fellowship with him; but if you are walking in darkness you are deceiving yourself. This is a fearful thing. God is so totally out of men's minds, that they have not the sense that they have got away from Him. God is light. There cannot be the slightest communion with darkness. God cannot undo Himself, and destroy His own holiness to have fellowship with darkness. You are deceiving yourself.

the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The rejection of Jesus is the proof of it. You may say that if you had lived then you would not have done as they did, you would not reject Him. Are you sure of that? What are you doing now? Do you see any beauty in *Him*? Do you see one bit of darkness in *yourself*? When He is brought in testimony before you, you do not see beauty in Him. *That* is darkness. We love our lusts, and we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ. That is our state. Christ is not the thing that governs and possesses our hearts day by day. If so, how can we have fellowship? "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." But you are darkness, and how can you have fellowship with Him? You are darkness in your conduct, in your will, and in your judgment; for your judgment is governed by your will, your motives, desires, &c. He is holiness itself, "light," which is pure and which manifests everything. But if He

Now there is another thing; "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." God will not leave you away from Himself. If He makes you happy, it is in Himself. Now this is what natural conscience dreads—to be in God's presence. God, as He is, without modifying one bit of His holiness, puts us there in the light. Then I am in the light as God is in the light. This was in Christ. What do we see in Christ? Holiness in every thought. Israel undertook to obey God under terror, Christ in love. Men undertake this as Israel did, under terror of judgment. Men do undertake to do God's will in view of judgment. Now Christ said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." That is what Israel undertook, and we know how they failed. That is what men are doing—undertaking to have to do with God in prospect of judgment. God dealt with Israel so to prove that they could not do it.

But that is what Christ did in grace. So when He came on earth He was all obedience and love. Christ comes, and what do we find in all His ways? Separation from evil. He kept evil outside of Him in passing through it. He touched the leper and was undefiled. He was love; never did anything but love. He was the living expression of the holiness and love of God in the midst of sin. When that is brought into the conscience, when I see that I have slighted this Christ, and preferred idle vanities to Him, how it shows me what I am. When I see the love of Christ, does not that come and say, 'O you are a wretch to prefer a bit of dress to Christ, to take anything when Christ is disliked for it!' And when thus brought into the light, in the presence of God, we judge ourselves. I judge rightly what I am, and what I have been doing all the while I have been in darkness. I must, of course, see the light; therefore it is by faith. Not that I may realize all, but yet I judge all in God's presence and hate myself.

will make us happy in it. Instead of allowing it, He cleanses it away.

If walking in the light as He is in the light, how do I get there? Not in Christ's life merely, for I get His death. There the light was more shown than in His life. There God is shown to be intolerant of all sin. God Himself has marked there, in the cross, that He cannot tolerate sin. And if Christ was holiness Himself, it shows more clearly the fearfulness of sin put upon Him. If God and Christ are to settle the question of sin between them, they must do it according to the perfection of their own knowledge of it. There light and sin met. Light is turned into judgment against sin. Light did meet the sin, and in judgment. Where are we? To get the fruit of this. Now take love. There He was giving Himself up, all that He was for us. There never was a time in which light and love came out so as on the cross—the perfection of light, because of obedience; of love, because of giving up of self. Never was there

And it is just when we begin to think that God does not hate us that we begin to hate ourselves. When the spirituality of the law comes, we hate sin, but dread the consequences; but when the light of Christ comes, we hate sin through and through, and there is humbleness. I hate sin, and abhor myself. *Now*, there is a real moral change. I am brought into the true light. O what a difference when a man is brought to God; not in terror which makes him run away, nor in full peace, but yet to a God who, in love, has brought me into His presence to show me what I am. Then, I repeat, it is getting into the light. There is distress at first, but so much the better, for the heart is set right.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is something more than hating sin. We are in the light. God will not enfeeble that light so as to allow one shade of darkness. He loves us so much as not to dim one ray of His glory, but He is doing that which

such obedience as when Christ was made sin. All is brought to the same focus, that I may see light and love in Christ. Why all this? That the blood of Jesus Christ His Son may cleanse us from all sin.

Now that I am brought into the light, what do I see? Sin on me? No, I see it was laid on Christ. I see light dealing with sin on Him. When I learn the extent of sin, then I learn the extent of love. When brought into the light as God is,—in the cross—I see that Christ has put my sins away; and my being in the light it is that enables me to see it. When I come to see sin in its fulness, I see that it is on Christ. And now there is not merely the cleansing of my conscience, but peace with God. It is in the light. I am in the light, as God is in the light; and the very thing that brings me to see sin, brings me to see sin put away. I know too that God is love, and here I have peace. Then we get truth in the inward parts. If I confess sin,—own

all sin as such—that is truth in the inward parts. (See Ps. xxxii.) So we are brought in the consciousness of forgiveness into the presence of God; and there I know I am cleansed according to God's mind. Then I learn God's love. In Isaiah the 43rd, God says, "Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." What then? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake."

Now this is the message that "God is light." He cannot change, you must. The place where this takes place is the cross. The message is God's perfect love. God, in love to your souls, has not waited till judgment to tell you what sin is, but has told it out in Christ as in His sight, and He has done so in putting it away. Hence the fearful guilt of despising such grace.

from among them,) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. . . . saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness." He cannot give them up; He cannot allow sin; and therefore He brings in priestly grace to meet the difficulty. To take away their murmurings, He does not use the rod of Moses, but that of Aaron. The rod of Moses could only judge them for their sin, and thus take away their murmurings by *judgment*. But Aaron's does it by priestly grace.

God makes it very manifest by whom He will act. Aaron's rod is chosen out of the twelve, and the remarkable sign of its blossoming and yielding fruit, showed that priesthood was connected with life-giving power, as well as with intercession. Both are needed to uphold them and to raise them when failing. "The second Adam was made a quickening spirit." This is the care and authority by which we are led

Read Numbers xvii and xx.

Putting these two chapters together, we see the grace of God in priestly government, to bring His redeemed through the wilderness, and also the contrast between law and priestly grace.

This grace is drawn out by Israel's sin; but grace does not, of course, allow sin. Law could not bring the people into the land. Law must have kept the whole nation out, except Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully. We see its actings in chap. xvi, in the judgment that fell on Korah and his company. If when redeemed we were put under the law, we should be no better off than before. Still, God cannot allow sin. Neither could He give the people up; for had He not redeemed them? as Moses pleaded with Him, (Numb. xiv, 13—16,) "And Moses said unto the Lord, then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might

through the wilderness. God will allow no other, and no other would do. The priesthood of Christ alone can carry us through. It is the rod of authority too; for "Christ is a son over his own house." But we see that unbelief cannot avail itself of this. (xvii, 12, 13.) "And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord, shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?" God had shown them that there was this grace, and they ought to have trusted in it, especially as they had seen the power in Aaron's remaining in among the congregation and staying the plague. They had ground for full assurance; but unbelief prevailed. They were insensible to the value of the priesthood, and their conscience was still under law. For they did not know God, though at the very moment He was acting for them in priestly grace. The circumstances of chap. xx, put them to the test: the outward

power, too, that had brought them out of Egypt was passing away from their minds. Miriam, the expression of it, had died. When apparent power decays, faith is put to the test. Afterwards, Moses passed away too. Unbelief does not get the refreshment that faith does. There is no water. They were in a terrible state of mind—wishing they had shared the judgment that had fallen on their brethren; for there was no confidence in the Lord. Yet they called themselves the congregation of the Lord. They had the pride, but not the comfort of it. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. There seemed no remedy. But the Lord appeared. He was the only remedy. And He makes Aaron's rod the means of the application of that remedy. It had already been appointed before the occasion for its exercise occurred. There was real need, and God never denies this. He never says it is not real need; but He will have us go to Christ to meet the need. It was not to be Moses's rod; for then it

really have been more glory to Moses if he had *spoken* instead of smiting; but he did not see this. God called Aaron's rod "*the* rod." The other was set aside. They were never under that rod again. It is Christ for us, or nothing. Any other principle must have dealt with them as with Korah. It is only a *word* now, and every blessing flows. To smite the rock again would be the same as saying, because we fail, Christ must die again. It is denying grace to say that anything is needed now except intercession. To "sanctify him" would be to give Him credit for all that He is, as He has revealed Himself. To "sanctify him in our hearts" is to attach to Him all that He is. But Moses did not do this. He did not count upon God's grace, which was all that was needed. But does God stop His grace because of this? Does He stop the outflowing of the water to quench their thirst? No, He does not. If Moses failed to sanctify Him before the people, He will only the

must be judgment. Nor was the rock to be *smitten* again. That water could be had now, without smiting the rock, was the result of its having been smitten before by the rod of judgment. Everything comes to us through Christ's *having been* on the cross; and we do not need the cross again, but the priestly work. It was now "*Speak* ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water." Speak the word only, and the water shall flow. All things are ours; we draw nigh now not for acceptance, but to have our need supplied. In verses 9, 10, we see that Moses was vexed and speaks unadvisedly. He could not rise to the height of God's grace; and that was why he could not enter the land. He was in a better mind the first time Israel murmured. Then he said, "it is not against *us* ye murmur, but against the Lord;" now he says, "must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" setting up Aaron and himself, and using the Lord's authority to do it. He *smites* the rock too. There would

more sanctify *Himself* before them. He comes in Himself when the one who should act fails. Just as when the disciples who ought to have been able to cast the evil spirit out of the child failed in doing so, Jesus, coming down from the mount of transfiguration, said, "bring him to me." It was wrong that they could not cast him out, but His own personal interference was gained through it. He gives the people the water they need in spite of Moses's unbelief and their murmuring. *He* will act according to the rod of His appointing, if *Moses* does not. Christ never fails in carrying on that which as Priest He has undertaken. Israel should have walked under the power and comfort of that rod. They saw the blossoms and the fruit, and should have counted on it. If there is anything we want, and we doubt of getting it, because we say we do not deserve it, that is putting ourselves under the law. It is forgetting that there is "the rod;" and that it is "speak the word only." God takes away the murmur-

ings by grace. He deals with all our evil, as His children, in grace. Look at Peter's case. Was it because he repented that Jesus prayed for him that his faith should not fail? We know it was not. And was it because Peter wept that the Lord turned and looked upon him? It was afterwards that he wept. When we do wrong, priestly grace acts for us, and obtains for us grace, to see, and confess, and put it away. Christ probes the heart of Peter, but does not leave him in the evil. This is the privilege of His children. Grace gives the gospel to the world. Grace gives priesthood to the Church. It all originates in God. If I sin, it is not I who go to the Priest, but He goes to God for me. It is not said, "if a man *repents*, but if he *sins*, we have an advocate with the Father." When, through the action of priestly grace, a sense of my sin is given me, I go to God for strength against it. It is He who obtains that for me which brings me back to God. All this is the fruit of

His unsolicited grace. It was God who appointed the rod. He is the God of grace in spite of all our evil; and when we see it we are confounded. Carrying us through the wilderness is as much grace as redemption and forgiveness. Even when Israel strove with God, He was "sanctified in them." It is very sad to have "Meribah" (chiding, or strife) written on any part of our history—sad as to us—but He makes it an opportunity for His grace. *They* get just what they want, though Moses is shut out from Canaan. He would make them know the extent of His grace. Another time, grace might act in a different way—in chastening, perhaps, if needed; but this taught them what the character and extent of the grace was. Just the same grace that spoke in Isaiah xliii, 22. "Thou hast been weary of me." I have not wearied thee, but "thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." What language for God to use! yet He goes on: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy trans-

gressions for my own sake." Nothing can make us more ashamed of our unbelief than this astonishing grace. And all because of Christ. Nothing makes us hate sin like this.

GOOD WORKS.

Do not let even the enjoyment of your social meeting, pleasant and profitable as it is, trench upon your actual service among those without, specially the poor. As it is harder and less grateful; so, when done in the Spirit, the Lord especially meets and blesses it. Be much amongst the poor. The Lord always owns it. It was His way; and it has its peculiar importance in more ways than men suppose. It is His order and plan of the Church; for results are not always from apparent causes. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

CHRIST IN THE VESSEL.

"And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"—Matt. viii, 23—27.

It is evident that our Lord can never at any time or in any way fail in His dealings towards us. He can never for a moment forget, nor can He fail in power. It is impossible that there can be any failure in His ways or dealings towards us. Hence the smallest degree of fear or distrust is always sin—is always unbelief. Yet we must all be conscious that it does often arise in our hearts. There may indeed be various shades of it; there may be anxiety about ourselves, about our families, about our circumstances; still, we never can be in a position in

which this distrust can be allowed. Sorrow may be very right and very wholesome to our souls—we may be cast down—but the Lord always remains the same. It is well to be cast down sometimes, and to have to say as in the Psalm, “My soul is cast down within me;” but we ought never to be cast down without proving the effect of it to be to cast us upon God for help.

But faith has to be exercised in respect to the character of God’s dealings with us in the path in which He is leading us. I could not, for example, now expect like the Jews, that God would be with me to give me the victory in some violent conflict with a foe, because it is our privilege to suffer quietly. Still I shall learn, that in whatever way I count upon God, He is faithful. People have sometimes quoted the 91st Psalm as a proof we are not to die of pestilence, but this is a mistake. It does not apply to our case—though God may preserve his people amidst every cala-

mity—and we ought to be intelligently walking in His ways. In the path of obedience, in doing the will of the Lord, we may count indeed upon the fulfilment of His promise, “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” But we must not forget how Satan quoted this promise. He wanted the Lord to do something which God had not bidden Him to do, and used this promise as his warrant to expect the exercise of divine power. But we are only to look for the exercise of God’s power, when we are simply in our proper path as Christians.

When the Lord told His disciples to take nothing for their journey—no purse, nor scrip, nor two coats—it was because He Himself was there, as Emmanuel, in the midst of His people. But when He asked them afterward, “lacked ye anything,” and they replied, “nothing,” He added, “But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy

one.” When rejected by Israel’s unbelief, He was no longer acting as Emmanuel upon earth, and consequently the position of His disciples was entirely changed, they must now take what they may meet with. For what He was showing in His miracles and acts was, that Emmanuel had come in amongst His people, and that all Satan’s power and all man’s misery would disappear at once, if man were morally capable of receiving Him in this character. Hence the lepers were cleansed, the hungry were fed, and all that were diseased came to Him and were cured. If they had had faith, the LORD was there on earth; there to bind the strong man, to remove all evil, and to make man happy on earth; but man had not the capacity to receive Him in that character in which He came. The disciples ought plainly to have counted on this power. They ought to have healed the sick and raised the dead and cast out devils. It was when they were proved incapable of using this power, and were com-

plained of for not exercising it by the father of him who had the dumb spirit, and who brought him to Jesus, that He answered, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?” They afterwards came to Him apart and asked, “Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, because of *your unbelief*.” They had not faith to use the power. So again, when the multitude were an hungered, and the disciples asked Him, “shall we go and buy bread for them?” and He answered, “*give ye them to eat.*”

They were expected to use the power, and they ought to have used it according to the revelation God had made of Himself. And here is where our faith is to be exercised in walking in subjection to God’s word, and to what His word points out, and in this path, counting on the power of Him to sustain us who has set us in it. It is there, most surely, we shall be put to the test. If Israel is to go through the wilderness, they will need faith.

And if Israel is to fight in Canaan, they will need faith. And if Israel has not faith for the wilderness, Israel will fail in Canaan. So here, the disciples ought to have counted on Emmanuel's power. If He is in the boat with them, they are not going to perish in the storm. But their unbelief is shown in their distrust. They *awoke Jesus*, and said, "Lord, save us, we perish." And if this showed their earnestness, it showed too their unbelief—and is too accurate a picture of ourselves.

We are in the same boat with Jesus, and in whatever shape the trouble comes, we are called to have faith in Him. The trial of our faith comes in the path we are in, and not in some other. Christ has perfect love to the Church,—He loves it and cherishes it—and we are to count on Him for a constant supply of grace to our souls, that we may overcome every trial. He calls us to live as saints on the earth, to walk as He walked, and to continue to the end; and, just as the

disciples in the boat, we ought to count on His power and help to overcome every evil, let what storm there may arise.

I have said that the Lord is not exercising His power in the way of temporal deliverances now—that is not what characterizes the present exercise of His power. If therefore I am looking for temporal deliverance, I may be looking for that which He never meant to give. The Church is to be in a state of weakness in the eyes of the world, and to be sustained in that weakness by an unseen power. "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Col. i, 2.) The more we get to be companions with Jesus, the more will He defend us against everything evil, and keep our souls in a quiet, lowly, and humble place. Let us be once in that place of quiet and obedient service, and then we may always reckon on the Lord for help. There is a ground in the relationship in which we are set to God,

which secures to us all that His almighty presence can give. "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." I have been struck with the embodiment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the New, with regard to the way in which God manifested Himself in former dispensations; as the Almighty to Abraham, as Jehovah to Israel, and the like, and the way in which it is all brought to bear on us in the endearing name of "*Father*." Now in this relationship of "Father," you may count on all things—not indeed simply as "the Almighty" and "Jehovah"—but that as "*Father*" He will use all His power as Almighty, and Jehovah too, in your behalf. I, who *was* the Almighty, and *am* Almighty, am your Father. Therefore it is not our place to come to Him with fear, but to count, as walking with Him, as a Father, on all

that He is. "Holy Father," said the Lord Jesus, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." We are "holy brethren," as having a holy Father. "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." May we desire to be in the place where God has set us, and being once there, to count on all the tender grace and love we want in the way, and to reckon on His faithful goodness.

THE FIRMNESS OF LOVE IN DISCIPLINE.

Numbers xxvii, 12—23.

There is a firmness in real, perfect love which an easy, amiable nature is able neither to appreciate nor exercise. We see it in the Lord Jesus. He maintained His discipline or education of His disciples, (of Peter for instance,) and did not relax, as one who sacrificed

their *blessing* to *present gratification*. And we see this firmness of love in the Lord of Moses at the opening of this scene.

The Lord has Moses under discipline, and He will not abate the discipline. Moses had forfeited the land, and the Lord will not let him enter the land. In this He is peremptory. We see it further in Deut. iii, 24—29. "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

when he had been humbled and rebuked, and nature might have behaved itself sullenly, or at least been silent and reserved, Moses is all anxiety about the sheep of Israel. For Moses, as I may say, was no hireling, "whose own the sheep are not." He loved them as his own. He had an individual, personal interest in the flock. He loved them and their blessing, and could not bear the thought of their being left in the wilderness without a shepherd. Let another take his office. In meekness he will bear that, and rejoice in it—only let the flock be led and fed. Like himself on an earlier occasion, (see chap. xi,) His honour may be put on the Seventy, but Moses could say, "would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." Let him be displaced, so that Israel be fed. "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in

behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan." If saints incur chastening, they must go through chastening, Jacob is a wanderer at Bethel, and the Lord does not send him home again, but lets discipline take its course, so that Jacob shall wander still further. It is not the way of divine love, which is perfect love, to slacken the hand in such cases. The style of the Lord here is peremptory. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin." (ver. 12—14.)

Moses then spake, and the excellent character of his words seems to be in this, that in a moment like the present,

before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." (ver. 15—17.)

This is very lovely workmanship of the Spirit in the servant of the Lord. This earnest care for the people, and this meek forgetfulness of himself, may rebuke our hearts. Moses does not resent the disadvantage into which he was put by the hand of the Lord; he is quiet under that, so that others be blest. "For we are glad, when we are weak; and ye are strong," said another like him.

The Lord then replies:—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before

Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation;" and perhaps more excellent than all are these words of the Lord.

He puts the matter at once into the hand of His servant. He commissions Moses to ordain his own successor, to lay his hand on Joshua. And He will have this done in a way to honour Moses—it shall be before the priest and in the sight of the congregation. And then, Moses shall instruct Joshua, give him a charge before the people, and constitute him (though not fully yet in measure) the head of Israel, as he had been, that Israel might be obedient.

This is very blessed. While the Lord, as we saw, will not relax the discipline under which Moses had brought himself, or alter the word which had gone out of His lips merely to gratify His servant, yet He will let all the people know, and Moses himself know,

when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke xxii.) Was not that putting new honour upon a chastened, humbled Peter? As before, in the time of Matt. xvi, xvii, it was a *rebuked* Peter that was taken up to *the mount of glory*.

What a tale of divine, perfect love all these things tell us! Rebuked Peter is taken up the hill; humbled, chastened Peter is commissioned to strengthen his brethren; Moses, who had lost Canaan, is to ordain, endow, instruct, and dignify his successor—to strengthen, more than strengthen, his brother!

This is the way of perfect, divine love. It is *firm*, but it is *unchanging* in its favour and its objects—a mere easy, amiable nature, again I say, can neither appreciate or imitate it. Moses does as the Lord commands; (ver. 22, 23;) but that of course. It was his own joy and praise to do so.

This scripture gives us a beautiful sample of communion between the Lord and one of His servants.

how He loved His disciplined servant, what a chosen vessel He esteemed him, and what an honoured man he would make him. Moses shall have the honour of ordaining Joshua, of endowing Joshua, of instructing Joshua, and of putting some of his own honour upon Joshua. But still more. He *answers his wishes* to the full, as well as *honours* him. Moses had desired a shepherd for the sheep, one that would lead them out and bring them in; and the Lord now undertakes that Joshua shall be all this and do all this in the presence and in the behalf of Israel.

All this is very lovely in the faithful, unchanging love of God. The Lord would not slacken the hand or the word that was chastening His servant, but His heart is as near His servant as ever, and His purpose both to honour him and to make him happy, just as perfect and fresh as ever. It reminds me of Jesus and Peter. "I have prayed for thee," says the Lord Jesus to Peter, "that thy faith fail not, and

THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST FOR FULNESS OF JOY.

1 John i.

In Christ we have that which is perfect from God's own hand and heart; and what can we need more? and this is now in us by the Holy Ghost.

The poor thief on the cross, when taught of God, knew all about Christ as if he had witnessed Christ's whole life. It was what his heart needed, and what God revealed.

In the first verse of this chapter, we see the closest intimacy, but not leading to familiarity; for it shows us Christ's glory, and that produces adoration. The Holy Ghost is always ready to teach us about Christ; but it is astonishing what barrenness we bring into our hearts by admitting things which are not of God, and so grieving the Spirit, and hindering His teaching, and therefore our own joy, by having Christ manifested to us. They may not be sinful things that we admit into our hearts, but things all around us; things which are not our proper occupation,

The proper occupations of life are no hindrances to our joy, nor any bar to our devotedness. Was not Christ a carpenter? Did not the apostle Paul show his devotedness in labouring night and day at his tent-making? Christ is for our joy in communion, as He is also our manna for daily strength; and we should learn in the common things of life His power and care, as Israel, by going through the wilderness, learnt that God cared for their *raiment*, and their feet not *swelling*. But we should seek to walk unspotted, so that when there is a moment for joy alone with Him, we may be ready at once, and not have to retrace our steps and regain lost ground.

Fellowship is first presented, that our joy may be full. Then the nature of Him with whom we have fellowship. Relationship first, and then the nature made known. There may be attraction to Christ, but there can be no fellowship until full forgiveness is known—known on the ground of Christ's having done such a work that God

cannot impute sin to a believer. In Heb. ix. 27, we see the common lot of all that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." But death and judgment are over in Christ for me. If one spot of sin is left on me, there can be no communion. If I think, on going into His presence, the first thing He will see is a spot—and if there is a spot, the perfect light must show it—I shall be afraid to go in. No spot *can* be allowed now; for God is not now behind a vail, which was the reason why Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, could allow what cannot be allowed now.

Three things are true of our condition: we are in His presence without a vail; we have fellowship, and we are clean, or there could be no communion. Where God has seen the blood He can never see sin, unless the blood could lose its value. But if I sin I am darkness, (for I am what my thoughts are,) and there can be no communion until my heart sees the sin where God sees it—on the cross.

If for one moment I do not watch the flesh, it will get into mischief, for Satan watches his opportunity. I have always an enemy to watch, but I need not get a bad conscience, for God is always able to keep me from falling. Having the Spirit of God to dwell in me, it is *worth while* not to grieve Him. Worldly thoughts show the state of the soul, that it is not filled with the Spirit, or there would be no room for them. We may be occupied with our daily work, and do our very best in it, in communion. If Christ were here, and you had to black his shoes, your heart would be full of Him while doing it; and I need not say that you would do your very best to give them a polish. Do everything for the saints in this spirit, as doing it for Him; for communion, whether with Him or with each other, can only be in the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore there is no communion when you grieve Him.

"Fellowship one with another," in verse 7, is the communion of saints. To say that "we have *no sin*," in our

nature (verse 8) would prove us to be no Christians at all, as much as if we said "we have *not sinned*." But we ought not to sin. It is inexcusable failure, for He has promised that we shall not be tempted above our power; and this is true of the weakest as well as the strongest. So that there is no excuse for any, even if ever so weak; for He always provides a way of escape.

People plead sudden temptation—and it may be true that the temptation is sudden—but the unmortified heart, that causes the temptation to have power, is not sudden.

We must look to the cause. Rain may come in at the roof of the house, but show itself lower down, and we must look to how it came in. Christ dealt with the *root* of Peter's sin. He did not reproach him with his denial, but with his boasting self-confidence. The constitution of the ashes of the "red heifer" (in Numbers xix) shows God's holy jealousy about sin. The man who touched but a dead *bone* could not be restored to communion till he

(in type) had a sense of the heinousness of that sin, in the judgment poured upon Christ for it. Christ has been consumed by the wrath of God for my sin, even if that sin were but the result of carelessness. Still the very "*ashes*" prove that the sin is put away—that it is all burnt up—that it no longer exists. The sin was put upon the victim, "made sin for us," so that even the ashes made him that touched them unclean.

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF FAITH.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Heb. xii, 1, 2.

There is nothing that our hearts need more to be brought up to, than

the practical exercise of faith. It is essential to enable the saint to take his proper path and course through the world; and nothing in the way of light or instruction can ever supply its lack.

The measure of my faith will determine the measure of my devotedness and the acceptance of my service, whatever may be my path, as to outward circumstances through the world. "Without *faith* it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The dispensations of God may change, and the light of divine revelation may vary as to degrees of clearness, but faith is the essential characteristic of those who are owned of God in every age.

All those witnesses that are spoken of in the eleventh chapter of this epistle, are presented to us as examples of the practical power of faith, and are spoken of for our encouragement in the same path; and the Lord Jesus is also introduced to us in the beginning

of the twelfth chapter for the same end. For the particular aspect in which faith is presented to us here is, that it allies with God in a knowledge of His ways, and in obedience to His will; and that in a world of evil, which has its course in separation from God and in opposition to His ways.

But there is a difference between Jesus and these witnesses, and therefore the apostle singles Him out from them all, and says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*." I may see Abraham, who by faith left his home and kindred, and sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country: or Isaac, who by faith blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come: or the wrestler Jacob, who would not let the angel go until he had blessed him: or Moses, who by faith turned away from Pharaoh's court and all its ease and honours, to share in the reproach of the people of God: these all, and more than can be enumerated, have run their race before, and they are set

for our encouragement; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. They, in particular instances and in trying circumstances, are shown in the exercise of that faith which sets the will of God above the love of ease, or the world, or life itself. But in the Lord Jesus, we have a witness, that in the midst of the rejection of every claim to that which was His right, and in the face of Satan's malice and seductive power, and the unmitigated hatred of the world, pursued His course even to the end without one faltering step.

But there is more than this in this blessed witness. In Him there is the needed grace to sustain us in our race; and in "*looking unto Jesus*," we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Him the love which led Him to take this place for us—"who when He putteth forth his own sheep goeth before them." For if a race is to be run, we need a fore-runner in the course; and in Jesus we have one who did run before us, and has become "the author and finisher of

our faith," so that in looking to Him we draw fresh and unfailing strength into our souls. But while Abraham and all the rest filled up their little measure in their several places, Jesus has filled up the whole course of faith; so that there is no position I can possibly be in, no trial that I can be called to endure, but Christ has passed through it all before me and overcome." Thus I have got one who presents Himself to my soul in such a character as to know what grace I constantly need, and who will as certainly supply it. For having Himself overcome, He says to me, "be of good cheer, I have overcome." He does not say, "you shall overcome," but "I have overcome." Hence, we learn that however rough the storm may be, it only throws us the more thoroughly upon Christ; and so that which would have been only a sore trial to the flesh, serves but to chase us nearer to Christ.

Whatever, therefore, attracts our eye off Christ is but a "*weight*" and a hindrance to our running with patience

round him. Every bystander would tell him his cloak would hinder him, and make him lose the race.

Here it is that the effect of the Lord Jesus being thus presented to us is so encouraging. For whatever encouragement we may find in the history of the witnesses of the 11th chapter, it is only in the Lord Jesus that we find a source of *strength*. Hence our eye must be turned off from every other witness, and be alone fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful witness; and it is beyond all price to be able thus, at all times, to look to Him; it is above all price to know that there is not a trial nor a difficulty that I can pass through, that He has not passed through before me, and found the grace of the Father sufficient; and that He will, in looking to Him, not fail to supply all needed grace to my heart and conscience.

There were two ruling features that marked Christ's life down here: the exercise of constant dependence on the Father; and the undividedness of his

the race that is set before us. When Christ has become the one object of our souls, we shall feel that whatever averts the eye but for a moment from Him is a weight and a hindrance in our Christian course, and must be got rid of. If we were to find a home in this world, instead of being strangers and pilgrims in it, nothing would be more proper than to gather around us the things of nature, in order to make ourselves a *comfortable* home. But if we are to be *the followers* of Christ, and to be running a race, the whole aspect of things will be changed. If I am running a race, for example, a cloak will not do; I must get rid of it. It is all very well at proper times, but now it is simply a weight, and I must get rid of it. It will hinder me in running, and entangle my feet, and that is just what I do not want; I must therefore throw it aside. It would seem strange in other circumstances to see a man throw away a comfortable cloak; but if he is running a race, it would be as strange to see him wrap it

affections. "I live (says Christ) by the Father;" and "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do." The new man is always the dependent man; and the moment we get out of the spirit of dependence, we get into the flesh. When Christ was down here, He was the object of heaven; and hence the voice which said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and thus the divine person of the Lord is always being witnessed to, that He may become the object of our hearts. Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame;" and this in dependence on the Father: and it is a comfort in running the race to know that we have all that He has accomplished, and all that he is as our resource.

We must not put the Holy Spirit in the place of Scripture; but we must remember that it is the Spirit, through the scripture, that gives us the knowledge of God's mind.

It is God's faithfulness that gives His mind where two or three are gathered together; or if it be individual, it is, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

It matters not in what form I get the mind of the Lord; I am not to ask as to the form: "we have the mind of Christ." But there is need of a lowly state of soul.

I do not admit the principle that there is commandment in anything, as merely ordained, in the New Testament. Everything is binding upon me that is there; but then it is on the principle that the Holy Ghost bows my will to the mind of God.

I do not look at the Lord's table as

a matter of command: it is a blessed privilege thus to remember Christ, and love makes me obedient to His will. I do not pray because I am commanded, though there may be a command. If people pray only because they are commanded, it is poor work.

It is an important thing to remember that when God's glory is concerned, one must act without a command. Moses did so when he took the tabernacle outside the camp, because Israel had set up the calf within. But one may have gathered the mind of God from His word.

THE SAVIOUR-GOD.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii, 8.

Awake, my soul, to praise,
Thou hast a rapturous theme!
A subject, glorious and divine;
'Tis Christ—sing thou of him.
Come, and before his face,
Low bow, with foot unshod;
And with a thankful, happy heart,
Adore thy Saviour-God.

352 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Down to this earth he came,
And loved, and wept, and died;
"Glory to God, goodwill to man!"
His advent angels cried.
Divine, yet clothed in flesh,
His own-made earth he trod.
He came to do the Father's will—
To be the Saviour-God.

That will accomplish'd, now
He sits in heaven above,
The Church's representative,—
Dear object of his love.
He bears the glory *there*,
As *here* he bore the rod;
He died—yet lives for evermore,
Victorious Saviour-God!

And soon He'll come again,
To take His church to heaven;
That church, redeemed by precious blood,—
By grace alone forgiven.
How loud her song will be!
How sweetly will she laud,
Through one eternal, blissful day,—
Jesus, her Saviour-God.

A. M.

ROMANS X, XI.

In the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of this epistle, the Spirit of God, through the apostle, is reconciling the faithfulness of God, in respect of the promises to the Jews, with the general truth of the epistle, viz., that the grace of God was without respect of persons, all being sinners equally by nature; and so there being one, single, blessed righteousness suited for all. But, in doing this, there was a difficulty which had to be met. To Israel, as such, the promises were made. To Abraham, promises—unconditional promises—not merely conditional ones—had been given. How was God to reconcile the absolute promises to the Jews, with making nothing of the Jews, but treating them as sinners of the Gentiles? This difficulty is solved by seeing how the apostle, in the 9th chapter, forced up the Jews to acknowledge that if they took the promises on the ground of descent, they must let in *Ishmael*, who was as much the son of Abraham

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as Isaac was; and the *Edomites* also, who were the descendents of Jacob's *eldest* son, but were the abhorrence of the Jews; (ver. 6—13;) and secondly, if they took them on the ground of obedience, they had most clearly forfeited all at Sinai, when the golden calf was set up, and God had to retreat into His sovereignty, in order to be able to spare them. (Ver. 14—18.) So that if they do not accept these promises on the ground of sovereign grace they are lost. And if it is by grace, God will show Himself sovereign, by letting the Gentiles in. (Ver. 19—26.) Then he shows, thirdly, that they had stumbled at the stumbling stone. (Ver. 27—33.)

Now, in chapters x and xi, he goes on to show that God has not forgotten His promises; but that He will fulfil them in the latter days, by bringing Israel in, in the complete acknowledgment of entire dependence on Him, just as Gentiles, when they have no right by promise, or anything else.

Chapter x. In the first verse, the

apostle expresses his affection for Israel. Then he says all he can for them. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." The thing he had been setting forth throughout the epistle was the righteousness of faith. As regards righteousness, they had not only failed in establishing their own, but had gone on persevering in making a righteousness of what they had failed in; and when God sent *His* righteousness in the person of His Son, Him they rejected; thus seeking to establish their own righteousness, while refusing God's. In the 5th verse the apostle goes on to say, that the righteousness of the law had not accomplished what man desired; and then in the sixth verse, the righteousness of faith comes in, and it "speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring

Christ down from above :) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here in resurrection, we get the great principle of righteousness by faith, which they had rejected. Israel, as a nation, had utterly failed, as regards their own righteousness; for they had broken the very highest and nearest link between themselves and God, when they had made the molten calf, and worshipped it. From that very moment nothing was left for them in the way of blessing, but this righteousness by faith, of which Moses had spoken to them, as we see in Deut. xxx.

In the 27th chapter of Deut. we see that Moses, in God's name, had been laying down the great principle of legal righteousness to the Jews, as the

keepers of the law; and which if they continued not in, cursing must be the result. And mark here that the curses were pronounced on mount Ebal, the mount of cursing. The blessings were never pronounced, nor indeed could they be, for God Himself stood in the way; because those who were under the law had not kept it, and were necessarily under its curse. The real effect of being under law is curse. Where is the blessing? Nowhere to be found. Now this, that the curse is on Ebal, is our security; for Christ has borne it, having been made a curse for us; and we are beyond it. So it can never reach us, for "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. In the 28th chapter, we get the government of God in the midst of Israel, which put them dependent on present conduct. "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all

nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." (Ver. 1, 2.) "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." Then in the 30th chapter he supposes all this to have had its result. They had been brought under the government of the law in the land, and all had failed. They had fallen under the law's curse. In the twenty-eighth verse of the 29th chapter, they are rooted out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, the effect of their failure; and in the 29th verse we get the summing up of the whole, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children, that we may do all the words of this law."

The things that were revealed were

those that they were to act upon. They had been put into the land on the ground of obedience, to *do* "all the words of this law." This ended in utter rejection, in their being rooted out of their land. There is your rule to act on.

But behind all this, there was another thing—a secret thing in the heart of God—and that was grace. "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee." (Deut. xxx, 1.) Here I get quite another thing. All the effect of God's government had had its accomplishment. The things which were revealed for them to act on are no longer owned, and another class of blessings are now brought out. All that had depended on their conduct, was lost; but behind it all there was this secret thing,—God's thoughts of grace. Therefore in the 30th chapter, we have

the righteousness by faith brought out. For if, when out of their own land, they shall turn to the Lord their God, He will have compassion on them, and turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither He had scattered them. Thus every question of legal righteousness is utterly at an end. If there is any hope for a Jew, it is on another principle—even through the righteousness of faith. Now the moment you bring in the righteousness of faith, Christ is the end of it. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Legal righteousness is done with, and Israel has suffered its curse; and now Paul shows that they are here thrown on this new way of having to do with God—on the righteousness of Christ.

"The word is nigh thee." You have not to go to Jerusalem to get it, or over the sea, for "the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,

and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Chap. x, 9.) The moment you take the law in that spiritual sense, you get Christ. He confirms it by that other scripture, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." And the moment God brings in the Jew on this ground, He brings in the Gentile also. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Chap. x, 12, 13.) Well, then, if it is "whosoever," there can be no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile.

Mark here the lovely, beautiful, connexion with the beginning of this epistle. In the beginning of the epistle he had reduced man to one common level—even to utter equality in sin: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now he brings all up to the higher level of God's saving grace, which can take up and bless a

Gentile. And there being now no difference between Jew and Gentile, neither is there any difference in God; "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This "whosoever" again! Wonderful is the power of God in saying these words, letting out as they do the fulness of blessing in His heart to poor sinners!

But "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Now he takes another ground, in which, in exceeding grace, he seeks to provoke them to jealousy. That which shut up the Jews was not merely the rejection of Christ, but the rejection of the Gentiles as His body, refusing grace to the Gentiles. And in the parable of the king who took account of His servants, Matt. xviii, 23—35, do we not see just this—the Jew refusing mercy to the Gentile? "O

thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" As Paul says in 1 Thess. ii, 16, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved to fill up their sins away." Christ came carrying all the promises, and they rejected Him. Not merely had they failed in the question of righteousness—that they had done before—now they reject the Messiah. Well, now, Christ on the cross prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That prayer of Christ's was heard as regards God: and so Peter said: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," but repent and He will come back again. But before he could finish that sermon the priests came upon him and stopped him: and thus they not only rejected Jesus Christ Himself, but the testimony of the Holy Ghost as to His second coming. And this is what Stephen charged

them with: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye;" and then instead of Christ coming back to them on the earth, Stephen goes up to Christ in heaven.

If you take Christ on earth as man—though "God, blessed for ever"—the moment He takes His place as man among men, the Holy Ghost comes and seals Him. The Holy Ghost comes and testifies of that which is on the earth. When He is speaking to Nathanael it is another thing: "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Here it is the Son of man, and angels His servants. In the former case, heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost came down to seal Jesus as the Son of God. In this case, heaven opened and the Son of man is seen here on the earth as the object of all the angels' service. But in the case of Stephen, heaven opened, and the Son of man is seen there. It is not heaven opening to put its seal and stamp on the Son

of man here, but to show us the Son of man there. It is not now the heaven opened to look on what is here, but the heaven opened for the Church to look up at what is there. This is the Church's position now; full of the Holy Ghost to be gazing up into heaven, and having communion with Christ at God's right hand.

This testimony of the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Stephen, the Jews stopped, casting Stephen out of the city and stoning him, thus bringing final rejection on themselves. Their rejection of grace to the Gentiles we see constantly manifested all through the Acts of the Apostles: see especially chap. xxii, 21, 22. There Paul is giving an account of his conversion; and when he came to this part of it, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles," we read, "They gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." Thus Paul was the minister of

grace, but they would not hear of grace, "filling up their sin alway, for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

This same spirit was manifested in Saul of Tarsus; for where do we first find him? Holding the garments of the men who stoned Stephen, when heaven was opened, showing Christ to the Church and closing grace to the Jew. Then he was stopped on his way to Damascus, and the glory of the Lord was revealed to him. And what did he then see? The unity of the Church. Not merely the Son of man in glory; but in the glory he saw the Lord putting all the saints in union with Himself. Thus the great thing revealed to Paul was this, that the very saints whom he was persecuting were one with this Lord in glory. He was converted by knowing that the saints and the Lord were one. For the Lord owned the persecuted saints as Himself; therefore in persecuting them he was persecuting Him.

Full of this gospel, Paul sets about

building the Church. He goes about telling this glorious truth, that believers are one spirit with Jesus; the Church one body in Him, their glorified Head in heaven. This blessed testimony of the union of the saints with the Lord in glory, against which there has ever been war, was thus brought out by Paul. Now, also, the testimony which Isaiah, seven centuries before, had pronounced, found Israel, in Acts, with hearts fat until there was no remedy.

In this 10th of Romans, Paul shows that the gospel did go out unto the ends of the earth, and that Israel ought to have received it. But he touches the subject very gently, saying, "They have not all obeyed the gospel." For their own prophet Isaiah said, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." It is no use getting on legal ground here; legal righteousness is not *believing a report*. Isaiah says they have not believed what they did hear. "But have they not

heard? Yes, verily; their sound went into all the earth." Thus creation itself was showing that God's eye was on the Gentiles. God did think of the Gentiles. "First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you." But you will not allow the Gentiles to be brought in. Well, that is the way your own prophets foretold it. But Esaias is very bold and saith, "I was found of them that sought me not." But to Israel he saith, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Thus he deals exceedingly gently with them, saying in effect, "I was made manifest to those that asked not after me," and he says it in the words of Isaiah; but he adds, here is your character—"a disobedient and gainsaying people."

Chap. xi. "I say then, Hath God cast away His people?" Am I really saying that they are all cast off and done with? "God forbid, for I also am an Israelite." How could I say

so, when I am one of you? He brings back their hearts by throwing Himself in amongst them."

You will find in this chapter these three proofs that God has not cast away His people. First, that there was then a remnant according to the election of grace. Second, that if God was provoking them to jealousy, it was not to cast them off, but to bring them in. Third, the ultimate promise of God to bring them back as a people through Christ: "And so all Israel shall be saved."

We must remember that he is here speaking of "Israel" as a people, not as the elect remnant; for he uses that only to prove that God had not cast off His people. It is, moreover, clear—as we shall see—that it cannot mean the Church of God; for how can we speak of casting off that which is one with Christ in heaven.

God had from the beginning an elect remnant which He would not cut off. "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what

the scripture saith of Elias?" He takes the case of Elias. A remarkable case, for Elias comes with judgment to bring back Israel; but he says it is useless, and "he makes intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." I do not say Elias was right, for he did not understand God's grace. "But what saith the answer of God unto him?" You do not know my grace; for "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Elijah had not faith to see these seven thousand. The inward life of Elijah's soul was not at that moment up to his outward testimony. He was full of himself—"I, even I;"—and therefore could not look at Israel as God viewed them. Now look at Elijah. The altar of the Lord had been built up; and just after he says, "Lord, they have digged down thine altars." The prophets of Baal had all been slain, and just after he says, "They have slain

thy prophets." The personal measure of his faith was not equal to his outward testimony.

And here I would add that in no case should our outward testimony outstrip the measure of our communion with God. The effect of public testimony is sure to bring us into great danger if the inward life is not equal to it. Sometimes the outward testimony is allowed to go on long after the inward life has ceased to act. So it was in the case of Elijah. His inward life was not keeping pace with his testimony at the moment that he called down fire from heaven—though it was by the power of God, as we know—and slew the prophets of Baal. For just after all this manifested power of God, a woman threatens him, and he breaks down. Ah! he says, it is all useless; and away he flies for his life. Blessed man he was, but here weak.

Now God is above all Elijah's thoughts. For if Elijah has not spiritual discernment to discover God's elect, God has. If such a man as

Elijah fails and pleads *against* Israel, God, in His grace, will plead *for* them. Therefore this is a proof of His not giving them up.

From the 7th to the 10th verses Paul notes these terrible sentences from their own prophets: "God hath given them the spirit of slumber," &c.; and "Let their table be made a trap," &c. Then in the 11th verse he asks, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." So in the 14th verse: "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh." This cannot be the Church; for who would talk of provoking to emulation the flesh of the Church? The Church is not "in the flesh," but "in the Spirit." Still the flesh is in the believer, and through carelessness may be allowed. Verse 15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" This, again, cannot

apply to the Church; for how can you talk of the casting away and receiving again of those who are perfected for ever in Christ Jesus. It is of Israel, after the flesh, he is speaking; and the reception of Israel hereafter will be the new birth of the world.

In what follows we must keep in mind the difference between God's dealings with a series of promises in the earth, and the election of the Church. He is looking at the way God works in accomplishing His promises down here, and not at the unity of the Church up yonder. Verse 17, "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree," &c. This olive tree shows the Jewish nation, and cannot mean, in any sense, the Church of God: and the Spirit, in using the figure of a tree has proved that it is for the earth, and not for heaven. And then as to some of the branches being broken off, that could not be if it were a question of the Church and salvation. But it cannot mean the Church, for how could it

be said of the Church, "which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ," that it could have its branches broken off? Verse 19, "Thou wilt say, then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." This is not the Church of God; for we are not grafted in among the Jews, but "one new man," as we see in Eph. ii. Those who are grafted in are the Gentiles, put in the place of testimony.

There are three things connected with Abraham: first, election; second, the call of God; and third, the promise of God. Noah had governmental power in the earth given to him. Idolatry comes in, as we see from Joshua xxiv, 2; and then all the power that acted on their fears or awakened their gratitude, was attributed to Satan,— "They sacrificed unto devils, and not to God." Every idea of God was either one of terror, or something to gratify their passions. On that God calls out one to be a witness for Him in the earth. Abraham was called out to be separate from this surrounding idolatry.

grafted in again" to their own stock of promise, for God is able to graft them in again. He would never speak of "grafting in again," as to personal salvation. Now all these, God's dealings with this root of promise, are quite a different thing from this new and blessed thing that believers are now members of the body of Christ in heaven. There is no breaking off there; no grafting in again there. The natural branches are the Jews. He is taking the dispensations of God, and looked at as a dispensation, Gentiles are put under the same responsibility as the Jews were. Now the Gentile system is the order of the promises. A Jew must now enter into the circumstances of Gentiles. And what he says to the Gentiles is, you will be treated exactly as the Jews were, if you fail. It is not a question of individual salvation; it is not a question of the union of the Church with Christ—that should be no question. What he says is this, that the testimony that is ordered of God on the earth will be

"The Lord had said to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." And again, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, of old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and they served other gods, and I took Abraham your father," &c. Well, then, as we see, when this state of things came in, God calls Abraham out in separation from it all, and gives him promises, and thus planted the olive tree in the earth. Well, because of unbelief some of the branches were broken off; but mark, he does not root out the tree; He only breaks some of the branches off. "And thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;" that is, the Gentiles were grafted in upon the stock of promise. The Gentiles in their time will be broken off, if they continue not in His goodness. And the Jews, the natural branches, "if they abide not in unbelief, shall be

set aside if there is failure. And in verse 24 he adds, "how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree." Now, it is perfect nonsense, as well as ignorance, to say that the Church, whose "life is hid with Christ in God," can be grafted into "their own olive tree." It is not a question of the soul at all, but of the ordering of things on the earth. When I get the dealings of God with a people on the earth, then it is "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so all Israel shall be saved,"—that is, when the Church of God is completed and removed,—then all Israel—not individually, but as a whole—will be saved. Not brought into the Church, for that will have been removed, but saved as a nation on the earth. Now a Jew comes in as a Gentile, and takes his place "where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus."

"For I would not that you should be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer," &c. I do not doubt that the professing Church has become so. The apostle is writing thirty years *after* the death of Christ, and yet he is saying, "there *shall* come out of Zion the Deliverer," and he is marking the way of it. The very object of all this is to provoke them to jealousy. He shows the responsibility of Gentiles of continuing in the fatness of the olive tree; and then that the real secret of what God is doing is, that blindness in part has happened unto Israel, until God's Church is brought in. And then "all Israel shall be saved." "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." If this is a spiritual Israel, it is non-

sense. They are "beloved for the fathers' sakes." Who? Gentiles? Never; but Israel; for God is the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." "Enemies for your sakes." Is the spiritual Israel that? Never. Nor can believing Jews be said to be so either. "But as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not say that the gifts and calling of God are sovereign. We had that in the ninth chapter. But now he is shewing God's faithfulness. God did call them to be his people, and he will never repent of it.

The very same principle which secures our salvation, is bound up with the fulfilment to Israel of the promises made to the fathers.

I would now say a word on the 30th and 31st verses. The 31st verse is more correctly read thus: "So these, also, have now not believed in your mercy, in order that they, also, may be objects of mercy." In times past you

did not believe; and now they do not believe in your mercy: that is, they will not believe in your gospel. But what is the end of God in that? That they may come in without claim as lost Gentiles. When Jesus came, a Jew might have said, I have a right to this Christ; and therefore Christ said, Do not tell I am the Christ, for I must suffer and be rejected. Till Israel had rejected Christ, they had, through grace, a title to the promises. But now they have lost all title to everything, and thus they will come in under mercy. And that is what makes the apostle cry out, not at the greatness of the mercy, but at the *wisdom* of God, which brings in all under mercy, without claim even to promise. Of course God will fulfil the promises, but fulfil them by bringing them to acknowledge that they had no title to anything.

It is wonderful the way in which the apostle gets through all these things back to God Himself, and so sets the soul adoring His wondrous grace. Be it Jew or be it Gentile, I

look at God. It is not what the saint is who has received the grace, but what the God is who has given it. I can look at God's acts; but I can get beyond the thing given, and look at the God who confers the grace—who elects the sinner. It is not elect Jew or elect Gentile that has any title now; but it is the *sinner* who comes in on the ground of sovereign grace alone. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever; Amen."

What a comfort it is, that, while the heart ranges over all his dealings, it can get back to happy fellowship with Himself; and from the centre it can see all round; and when it gets to God, it sees everything in its place. The Lord keep us only there. And when the heart is thus kept in every-day life, through "the truth as it is in Jesus," "putting off the old man and putting on the new," there is a divine capacity to understand God's ways.

In closing, it is of great importance to distinguish between the order of

God's dealings on the earth in maintaining this stock of promise in the earth, first Jewish, then Gentile, and by and by to be Jewish again, (for the natural branches are to be again grafted into their own olive tree,) and the definite union of the Church with Christ in heaven—His bride and His body. I repeat, it is important to distinguish between God's government of the earth, the olive tree of promise, and our own union with the Head in heaven, with whom we get all things, for all things centre in Him.

THE SAMARITAN LEPER.

Luke xvii.

The poor leper in Mat. viii, had that faith which *discovered* Christ. For it is the duty of faith to do this—to make discoveries of the Lord Jesus, veiled as He was under the thick covering of His needed and assumed humiliation.

As he came to Jesus, we are told, "he worshipped Him," and called

Him "Lord." And he appealed to Him as the God of Israel, the one who could heal leprosy—all this telling that this poor leper had faith which discovered the glory of the Son of God.

But it is the business of faith to *use* Jesus as well as to *discover* Him. But in this second duty of faith, this poor man failed. He did not use the glory which he had discovered—at least, not in all that ease and confidence that was worthy of it. "If thou *wilt* thou canst," he says.

And this is a very common condition of the soul. The passage from the discovery to the use of Him, is commonly made with some difficulty. The reserve natural to the conscience of a sinner—the wrong conclusions which the heart of man forms respecting God—the influence of mere human religious thoughts—and the advantages which Satan gains over the soul—account for this. This poor soul was doubtful in using the *grace* of Him whose *glory* his faith had apprehended. "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The

if was attached only to the will or grace of Jesus.

But the Lord sets himself to verify this discovery of Him which faith had already made, and also to encourage that use or enjoyment of Him, which as yet faith was slow to make. He *touched* the leper. This was not needed. His word would have been all-sufficient. But He touched the leper; because (son of man as he was, very man as very God) he had God's own distance from all defilement. And then He dealt with him as the Jehovah of Israel, saying, "I will, be thou clean"—thus, not only healing the poor man, but encouraging him, letting him learn, in the simple effectual grace that was visiting him, how in a moment He would put from his heart all the spirit of doubt and of fear that was lingering there.

This case, after this manner, has its own instruction and comfort for us. The other case of the ten lepers, in Luke xvii, is very differently marked.

The appeal of these poor sufferers was little more than the instinctive cry

of misery. As the Lord passed by, they cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They had doubtless heard of Him, and of His doings for poor sufferers like themselves. But they did not know Him by any divinely-wrought apprehension. They called Him only, "Master," and appealed merely to His "mercy." They did not acknowledge His person or His power, like the leper we have already looked at in Matt. viii. Their cry for mercy was only that challenge of felt and conscious misery which appeals to any that pass by. But in answer even to such a call as this, Jesus stands and speaks; as, of old, the Lord God would hear the cry of nature in Hagar. "Go, shew yourselves to the priest," says the Lord, in answer to this cry; and then, as we further read, "as they went, they were healed." He took the place, and did the work, of the Lord God of Israel.

The Samaritan that was among them then becomes distinguished. We read of him thus, "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,

and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan."

This was quickening. This was salvation. This was more than healed leprosy. "Arise," says Jesus, "go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee." (σέσωκε σε.)

These are our materials in this little significant narrative. Short and simple as they well could be; but they speak of divine secrets to the soul. For we have in this case two beautiful outshinings—an outshining of the *personal glory of Christ*, and an outshining of the *hidden light and power of the Holy Ghost*. This may be seen very clearly and surely.

It was both a *doctrine* and an *accepted fact*, in Israel, that none could heal a leper but Jehovah—as indeed I have hinted already, and as is well known. No washings of the temple could serve in such a case, no sacrifices could reach it, no priestly interference was even allowed. The healing of a leper must

be accomplished, if at all, while the leper was separated from every one. It was a divine work. The ordinance in Lev. xiii, xiv, which intimates this, tells us, therefore, as I said, that it was a *doctrine* in Israel, that none could heal a leper but Jehovah. And the case of Naaman the Syrian, in 2 Kings v, and the king's surprise and indignation that he had been appealed to, to cleanse a man of his leprosy, shows us that this was likewise an *accepted fact* in Israel.

But here Jesus enters into the separated place. He meets the leper outside the camp, just as, and where, the Lord God of Israel had oftentimes met many a leper. He puts Himself between the leper and the priest, between the defilement and the cleansing—the very place which belonged to Jehovah and to Him only—and in that place He does the work which was Jehovah's and His only. He healed the leper. Ere he and his companions reached the place, their leprosy was gone. And this sealed the title of

Jesus to fill God's place in the midst of His Israel.

Here, then, the *personal glory of Christ* shines out. This was the witness of a light in Jesus which, in its fulness, no man can approach unto. He answers the cry of misery as from the throne of God.

Then, the *hidden work of the Spirit* in the soul of this Samaritan shines out, in its way, just as brightly and fully. He had already been healed. He might have gone on with his companions, to the priest, and done the work, with them, which Moses had commanded. But now he is given faith as well as healing, the faith of God's elect. The hidden power of the Holy Ghost had not, till now, linked his soul with the Christ of God. The word of God, as we have seen, had testified in Israel that healing of a leper was a divine work, that none but God Himself could recover a man of his leprosy. This testimony this poor stranger was now given faith to receive. His soul, by the Spirit, was bound to

the truth, and Jesus, having been his healer, shines before his instructed soul in the glory of the God of Israel. He falls before Him. He is on his face at the feet of Jesus. The mercy he had received was more than human compassion or the help of a fellow-creature. "I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour," sounded in his ears. Jehovah-raphi, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," was before his awakened soul.

And this, as we said, was salvation. This was more than healing. A revelation of Christ had been made to him by the Spirit through the word and through the mercy he had received, and he was a new creature now, as he had been a healed leper before.

This was a fine outshining of the hidden work and light of the Spirit. And the boldness of his faith only brightens this the more. He had been commanded by the Lord to go forward to the priest, and all his companions continue on that road. But he, alone and without further orders, or further delay, turns backward to Jesus.

This was a fine, bold, vigorous action. The Spirit reveals Jesus and presses Him home upon the undivided acceptance of the soul, though law and ordinances may seem to have their claims and stand in the way. And this action of our Samaritan reflects this way of the Spirit. He knows nothing but Jesus. The priest and the temple are behind him. All is gone, now that Jesus is come. In his thoughts, as in the mind of the Spirit, there was One standing there, "greater than the temple." He glorified Jesus as God, and was thankful.

Jesus Himself magnified the law, and served the old temple and priesthood, and therefore He would say to a leper, "Go show thyself to the priest and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." But as He magnified the law, the Spirit magnifies Him, and so does the faith of the elect.

And boldness of faith like this of the Samaritan, which reached Him through any or every partition-wall,

tle is worthy of special notice; for it is in His human nature that He is here taken up, (for He was human as well as divine,) and this wreath of glory, composed of so many testimonies to the worth and excellency of His person, is bound upon His brows, as a lowly man. It is not the purpose of the Spirit in this chapter to speak of Him in His godhead—other scriptures abundantly do that—but that which is brought out here is, that all these passages speak about Him as a man down here, while, at the same moment, they show us the wonderful person *behind the man*.

Every Scripture has its appropriate subject; and our advancement in divine wisdom hangs on our discernment, by the Holy Spirit, of its distinct and various import. This portion, then, was not written to tell us about God, or that "the word was God," but to tell us that Jesus is God; and that He, who once walked up and down on our earth, and breathed our air, and conversed with men, eating and drink-

was ever welcome to Him. If it pressed through a crowd, or broke up the roof of a house, if it waited not for introduction, or refused ceremony, if it acted without ordinances or even, as here, contrary to command, it was only the more welcome. It was His joy to be addressed by a full, unquestioning faith. In the language of the Canticles, we may say, it was then, on such occasions, like the faith of the centurion, or of Bartimeus, or of the friends of the palsied man, or of the Syrophenician, or of the Samaritan sinner at the well, or of the Samaritan leper here, that His soul was set as in a chariot, the chariots of his willing people. (See Cant. vi, 12.)

THE FIRST-BORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN.

Hebrews i.

The way in which the Lord Jesus is spoken of in the opening of this epis-

ing with them, and sympathizing with them in all their sorrows, and who wept at the grave of Lazarus and over the city of Jerusalem, was the very same *glorious One*.

Now there is an immense difference between the knowledge of this truth and a mere orthodox reception of the doctrine of the Trinity. Men may have this, and boast in it, and yet have no right apprehension of Jesus *as God*; and may even be seeking for other means than His precious blood to bring them to God, and for other mediators than Christ between their souls and God. Being at a distance from God, they naturally and necessarily are looking for something that is nearer to God than themselves. Hence it is that a mere doctrinal knowledge of the Trinity never draws out the affections of the soul; for it is that which most *adapts itself to us that we most love*. The person that my heart will be most knit to is the one to whom I can go in all my sufferings, and all my sorrows, and who can get from God all I want.

But where shall I find this object of my affections—this supplier of my need—but in the Lord Jesus Christ? And it is thus the knowledge of Him sanctifies both in life and spirit. But while I get the one that can and does sympathize with me in every want and in every need, if that one were less than divine, less than God, it would not do.

Still that which is brought out in this chapter is not abstractly that He is God. The first chapter of John's Gospel does that; but this first chapter of Hebrews, though bringing out His divine nature, takes it up at the other end. And here it may be observed that the knowledge of the person of Christ is absolutely essential to the understanding of the Scriptures. For example, the Jews were looking for a king, for an heir of David's throne, and they knew that Messiah was to be David's son: but Christ puzzles them by asking them how it was, if He was David's son, He could also be David's Lord? But this epistle

brings out in these two chapters the very person they were expecting. For they take up not merely the divine nature, but also the divine nature in humiliation.

In the first chapter, he speaks of the divine excellency that was in Him,—“the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person;” and in the second chapter, how He was tempted in His manhood, like as we are, yet without sin. It was not merely the divinity of a person known in humiliation that they had before their eyes and their minds, but the carpenter's son, one “who was in all things made like unto His brethren,” and that man was God.

This changes every thought and feeling as to relationship with God. It changes not only my thoughts about God, but about myself. For I learn what God is to me, when I look at Him in these two chapters. I learn that He clothed Himself in human nature, and so came near to me before I was aware of it; and thus it is not merely

an abstract truth that my soul receives, but “God manifest in the flesh.” Christ was to be the manifestation of God to man, and the manifestation of man to God: and that, mark, with all the responsibility of our sins.

He introduces Christ in this chapter not only as the Son, but he also unfolds who this person is, that is now speaking among men. God was in communication with man in testimony from the beginning, and “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, but hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” This person, this Christ, is the appointed heir of all things; by whom also He made the worlds; so that He is the Creator as well as the heir, as in Colossians. He brings out what He was in coming out from God, and in returning again to God, “who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by

the word of His power.” (Compare Isa. vi with John vi and xii.)

When the Lord spoke from Sinai, His voice shook the earth, but now He speaks by His Son from heaven. Then comes in the blessed character of redemption—for He is the provider of redemption, as well as the upholder of creation. And here it is shown that redemption is a part of the divine glory. “When he had *by himself* purged our sins.” He does not say, when He had by His blood purged our sins, (although it was by blood,) but it is *by himself*; and when it is *himself*, it necessarily brings in His glory; for redemption must be the display of divine glory.

Redemption is a divine act by a divine person, and yet by one who was truly a man like ourselves. He was a man who felt what the weight of sin was, when God laid it upon Him, and yet without sin Himself. None but God could have done this, else it would have been surpassing Him in excellence. It must be by Himself that

our sins are purged. And then He sat down at the right hand of God; for He had a right to take His seat above. He had left it and come down in divine love, and now He has a right to return to it again, and sit down. But now He takes a definite and distinct place on the right hand of the majesty on high. How blessedly this comes to us; for now we can consider who this Christ is—this wonderful person who came down so low, and though now so high, yet is near enough to us to come home to our hearts continually. All this is not merely an abstract truth, but a *man* we know who has a divine nature.

In the second Psalm we have His sonship in the world brought out, "Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee,"—a thing in connection with *time*—"this *day* have I begotten thee." And again in Luke, first chapter, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." So also in John, Jesus says, "I came forth from the Father,

and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." So in Colossians, the Spirit testifying of Jesus says, "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." The very same one by whom He made the worlds, in His essential divine nature—"for by him were all things created,"—is the one who by Himself has purged our sins. But we still have this Christ; and it must be very evident how different a thing it is to the soul if I can think of Him and consider Him as one that I can eat and drink with, and talk with, to what it would be if I only knew Him as the heir of God, "seated at the right hand of the majesty on high." He was humbled to the very dust of death for us; for "now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth!"

And "being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance a more excellent name than they." He had a title to the superiority over angels, by virtue of His name,—for

here is one exalted who had a title to it by inheritance, being a Son then and heir. Consider the glory of this wonderful, this excellent man, who hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than the angels, and therefore put in a place above the angels, for His having humbled Himself.

And "when God bringeth again the first-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." The Father is now looking at One who was His daily companion. "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." Here God is giving to this Son of David, one born into the world, the condition and title of a son. "He shall be to me a Son." And we are associated in this, "I will be to him a Father," and Jesus says, "my Father and *your* Father;" thus bringing this relationship with God into the companionship of our daily lives. Jesus could take the place of first-begotten into the world; "this day have I begotten thee," which expresses that He was in the world as

one truly born of God. He was the *only-begotten*, as the Son, but the *first-born* of many brethren. It was the recognition of the Son of David as the Son of God, by the Spirit, when he says, "When he bringeth the first-begotten again into the world He saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." But He has a higher glory than this, for we worship Him; and I could not talk of Him in His full blessedness if I did not see Him in a glory beyond all this. Because as the first-born of many brethren there is that which none other of the brethren can ever have; for behind it all there is the Lord that has saved: the blessedness of His eternal glory behind His humiliation. And this it was that the Jews could not bear; for as soon as Jesus had said, "Before Abraham was, I am," they immediately took up stones to stone Him. This eternal glory which was in the man Christ Jesus, had no glory in man's eye, because it was in man's nature. They had received the law by the disposition of angels. They

would receive any display of power which would keep God at a distance from them. When it was merely the creature, they could sustain the natural glory of God, so to speak, because they could not in any way modify the nature of God to their understandings.

Here it is that He that ascended is the very same that first descended; for it was divine love that put Him in the low place, making exaltation possible.

"Unto the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." "But to the Son he says (still looking at Him as the Son) Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And then mark how He lets us back again into His companionship with us. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." He calls us His fellows. He takes us up, and associates us with Him; because if He is addressed as God, the man who is

up there is associated with His fellows. He was anointed *above His fellows*, for it will not do to be merely as His fellows. But it is doubly blessed to know that He is anointed above His fellows. On this ground he says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." That is what He was as the object of the Father's delight before the foundation of the world.

Now let us look at our blessed Lord when sitting down weary at the well. When the woman came to draw water, Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink, and the woman replied, How is it that thou askest drink of me? When Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that is dependant for a drink of water on such a wicked woman as you are, you would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. If you had understood that God had come so near to you, descended so low as to be dependant on you for a cup of cold

water;—had you known God to have been in the lowly One that you met in the place of dependance, you would have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. And now that He is exalted He calls us His fellows. When He is in the highest point of His exaltation, believers are His fellows, and when He is at the lowest point of His humiliation then Jehovah owns Him as His fellow. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts."

"And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth." Now He goes; so to express it, into His aboriginal godhead. "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." This is a quotation from the 102nd Psalm. Speaking of His lowest humiliation, "Lord, cut me not off in the midst of my days," the answer to it is this, "Thou in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth." "Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." For as a man Jesus was lifted

up into the glorious place as Messiah, and then cast down into the dust of death. "He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days." "Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth." "Thou art the same and thy years shall not fail." Thus we find Him in the lowest point of His humiliation, shining forth as the Lord who laid the foundation of the earth. Thus it is we are made to see the eternal God in the dying man.

He who upholds all things by the word of His power, having by Himself purged our sins, returns and sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Thus the soul is given a resting-place in the official glory given to Christ. For the apostle says, "See how God has set this man on His own right hand!" "Sit thou on my right hand;" although in another sense He sat Himself down there. He brings Him into the place in which the Church may view Him as sat down there, because He has accomplished the work; has perfected them

for ever by His one offering, and so sat down. All is finished by one offering. And in another place it is said, He hath "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ," as the testimony of the efficacy of the work of the Son. In the following chapter he speaks of the blessedness of His being tempted like as we are, yet without sin, so that He can sympathize with us in all the trials of our new nature and the difficulties through which we are passing. It is by thus seeing Him that we know the glory of His person.

If an angel leaves its first estate, it is a fallen angel. Any one leaving its first estate, except God, is a fallen creature. If man leaves his first estate, it is to exalt himself. "Ye shall be as gods." But if God leaves his first estate, it is in humiliation. We are now to know Him thoroughly, and so near to us yet exalted above us, and not ashamed to call us brethren.

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." (Phil. iv, 8.)

The mind *habitually* thinking on that which is good, will, in result, find "*the God of peace*" will be with it; as the heart that is careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making known its requests to God, will be kept by "*the peace of God* which passeth all understanding." This is beautifully exemplified in the apostle's walk, generally, and especially in the scene before us.

The rulers are against the preaching of Christ; but the mind of the apostles, dwelling on the blessedness of Christ, and possessed and filled with the things which they had seen and heard, have peace *within*, and power *without*, so that their enemies are obliged to ascribe the effect, not to a natural source, but to companionship with Christ. "They took knowledge

THE OCCUPATION OF THE HEART WITH GOOD.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—Acts iv, 8—12.

Our boldness for Christ before 'the world, and the calmness of our spirits in the presence of opposition will always hang on the measure in which our *hearts* are occupied with the good we have found in Christ. In truth the proper occupation of the heart of a saint is with good, and nothing but good. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things

of them that they had been with Jesus." (Verse 13.) This power resulted from their hearts being occupied with *good*. They did not occupy their minds in alleging the evil, much less with the wrong done to themselves; they simply said, "We know Jesus whom ye have crucified." Having known the value of Jesus, and being possessed with a deep sense of the power of the good, they discern at once what was the great sin of those before whom they are arraigned—"whom ye crucified." The apostle was occupied with the love of souls, and hence he did not for a moment trouble himself with the chief priest; but speaking of the good, he condemned the evil. If he says, "this is the stone which was set at nought of you builders," it is because his heart was possessed with the truth, "neither is there salvation in any other."

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is of the last importance, therefore, to attend to the injunction, "if there be any virtue, if

there be any PRAISE, think on these things." We cannot feed our own souls nor the souls of the saints when speaking of evil. It is only when speaking of *good* that we get *refreshed* and God gets any *praise*. We are to be "simple concerning evil, and *wise* concerning *good*." When the soul delights in the good it is because it is regenerate and has tasted the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tell such an one that he was regenerated by baptism or any other figment, and he will know better. The soul having tasted the good becomes master of the evil. A deep sense of the knowledge of the *good* will keep even the weakest saint from the *deception of the evil*. It is the knowledge of the good that gives the power. But this is not obtained by elaborate teaching, but the teaching of the Holy Ghost in what is good. If a man tell me I must not talk of the salvation which is in Jesus—must not speak to souls—all he could say would never prevent me. My answer would be as the apostle's—"I cannot

but speak that which I have seen and heard."

No praise can arise out of a soul dwelling on evil. The blessedness of being *possessed* with *good* is seen in Malachi ii, 6, 7: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The character of a soul filled with the spirit of Jesus is, that it must ever *crave* the *good*. All we want for every possible *exigency* is to be found in Jesus. If I want *power*, I look up to *Christ risen* and *get it*, in what *he is there*, "far above all principality and power." (Eph. i, 21.) If I want love and sympathy, I get it in Jesus *down here*. I see God (in Jesus) on earth; I find divine glory developed in the lowest place on earth; for when Jesus was brought lowest, then we see God most; and in some

circumstances nothing but God in Jesus could do what Jesus did when on earth. If I want the comfort of love, I must carry my heart there, and get my spirit imbued with what Jesus was on earth. For I get holy sympathy in Jesus down here—*power* in what Christ is at God's right hand.

THE WAY OF GOD'S BLESSING.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."—2 Cor. vi, 17, 18.

Wherever there is blessing it draws to God and to one another. Our natural state is separation from God and from one another. The spirit of selfishness—the effect of sin—is always separation. If God calls unto unity, He must separate us from evil. Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is not a union

only in sentiment, but a vital union—a separation from evil, for God cannot bear evil. The great God cannot be where there is unrighteousness. It is unity in God and separation from all evil,—God drawing us into communion with Himself through the Lord Jesus. It is no matter where it is, but there must be separation from evil in cleaving to that which is good.

In verse 18 we get the way in which God reveals Himself to us when separate from evil: "I will be a Father unto you;" and then the position into which we are brought: "Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

What I would press is the essential character of the position into which we are brought. We find ourselves associated as children in His family. In our everlasting character, in the life we have received, we are sons. We are not servants, but sons, being of this family. We cannot be children of two families. We are children of one family. Being thus children of

God, we have no association with anything else. In this way the Christian must be a separate person.

Note the speciality of the character in which He is a Father to us: "saith the Lord Almighty." In looking to Him as our Father, we look at Him as Almighty. Our blessing flows from our experience of God. All the exercises of the Christian bring out to him the trustworthiness of God, the certainty of His interference in all things. As regards all the details of life, we ought to bring in the faithfulness and Almightyness of God; in every circumstance to recognize the Lord (Jehovah) Almighty.

CHRIST, THE CHIEFEST AMONG TEN THOUSAND.

Song v, 10.

O Jesus! the glory, the wonder, and love,
Of angels and perfected spirits above,
And saints who behold Thee not, yet dearly love,
Rejoicing in hope of thy glory:
Thou only, and wholly, art lovely and fair,
Who robb'st not JEHOVAH, with Him to compare.

416 HYMN.

Thy blood all divine, from the grave back again
Brought thee, King of glory, thou Lamb who
wast slain!
First-born from the dead, crowned with honour
supreme,
Thy name is exalted in glory.
O hasten thy coming that in glory adored,
We may see thee, our Saviour, our God, and our
Lord,
And joy in thy joy over all things restored,
And eternity blaze with thy glory.
Worth divine, &c.

From a Scotch Hymn Book—slightly altered.

SOCIETIES AND PRAYER.

There is too much bustle made by various societies. Six praying men would be of more use than ten such societies. A hypocrite may be very exact in all outward appearances—may actively support all our societies—but a hypocrite cannot pray. It is God alone who sustains prayer.

JEHOVAH's own image glows in thee,—shines there
In visible bodily glory.
Worth divine dwells in thee;
Excellent dignity;
Beauty and Majesty;
Glory environs thee;
Power, honour, dominion, and life rest on thee,
O thou chiefest among the ten thousands!

Wherever we view thee, new glories arise;
The Man who's God's fellow, who rides on the skies;
Made flesh, dwelt among us; brought God to our
eyes;
In grace and truth showing His glory.
Thou spak'st to existence the heavens and their
hosts,
The earth and its fulness, the seas and their coasts;
Time hangs on thy Word, and eternity boasts
To crown and adorn thee with glory.
Worth divine, &c.

But how lovely and fair dost thou look in our eyes
When we view thee incarnate in childhood's
disguise!
Thy loves, past all knowledge, with rapture
surprise
And ravish our hearts with thy glory.
Thou in thine own body, accurs'd on the tree,
Did'st bear all our sins, while thy God frowned
on thee,
Expiring in blood in our stead;—and now we
Exult in thy merit and glory.
Worth divine, &c.

THE DISPENSATIONS OF GOD FROM THE FIRST ADAM TO THE REVELATION OF THE SECOND.

Read Hebrews ix.

In a preceding paper on the 10th and 11th of Romans, there was presented the reconciliation of free *grace* to the whole race of man—be it Jew or Gentile: man under law, or man without law—all being brought in on the *level of sin*—all being received on the ground of free sovereign grace—with the special and unconditional promises which God had made to the Jews.

My thought now is to enter a little more in detail into the Lord's dealings in the dispensation in which we live. But first I would take a more general view of God's dealings with man from the beginning; and for this purpose I now read the 9th of Hebrews, as the 26th verse of the chapter is the great centre truth on which it all hangs. "Now once, *in the end of the world*, (that is morally,) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

All that God had done up to *that point* was the bringing out of sin in the *first man*; but there followed immediately the

the putting away of that sin in the *second man*. Then, passing over the present interval, he speaks of this second man appearing again a second time. Here, then, is the turning point of all God's ways—the death of Christ and its consequences, His coming again to take possession of all that His first coming had given Him a title to. They were His before, "For by him were all things created," &c.; but in His second coming He takes possession of all that which His blood had bought back again to Himself; "For he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The end of man is to die, or rather, we may say, he there begins for eternity; and it is terrible to think of beginning in judgment. But God in Christ has introduced another thing; for as the end of man, either Jew or Gentile, is death and judgment, so unto us that "look for him shall he appear a second time *without sin unto salvation*." The first time He came it was about *sin*, in the sense of bearing it, being occupied about it. He

was made *sin*—*Himself the sinless one*—but having put away the sin, He comes the second time without sin unto salvation. In His second coming there is no question about sin whatever, but the full bringing out of God's purpose of blessing in consequence of the putting away of sin. Man's portion is death and judgment, as contrasted with the salvation Christ brings. But mark another thing, in the meanwhile; *priesthood* comes in. He is hidden from the world, as He said, "the world seeth me no more;" but He "appears in the presence of God for us." The word *appears* is a legal term, indicating Him as the One who represents His people. So He, as our high priest, is representing us in the presence of God. He has taken His place and *sat down* at God's right hand, having by Himself purged our sins. And we need such a high priest in our daily walk. But then, as regards His bodily presence, He is gone; therefore we have to walk as pilgrims and strangers in a seducing world, though not of it, with "our life hid with Christ in God."

Then comes out another thing, the veil being rent, He has sent down the Holy Ghost to be in us, and to associate us in heart and life with Him in heaven, thus

giving us the proper exclusive heavenly character, of a heavenly people, now on the earth. For Christ being in the presence of God for us, our portion is in heaven. We are in the position of Stephen, who being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up into heaven through the rent veil, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. The heavens were opened to his spiritual gaze, which is now always true to us; and all we are now waiting for is, that Christ may come and take us up bodily there. The crucifixion of Christ was the utter rejection of the second Adam by the first Adam. This was man's turning point; for man had been tried in every possible way, but all in vain. God says, "What shall I do?" I will send my beloved Son, it may be they will reverence my Son. But when they saw Him they said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." All the dealings of God with man, *as man*, ended here; therefore it is called "this present *evil world*." The rending of the veil, which closed all the previous dealings of God with man, opened the way to heaven, and while it condemned the sinner, it saved the believer. It condemned the world, but brought out full salvation to all that believe, associating

them with heavenly things. For through the rent veil, (that is, Christ's flesh,) we have access into the holiest of all.

Then comes the question how far *such saved ones* (for I speak now of real Christians) have been faithful in maintaining, as a heavenly witness, their testimony to the world's condemnation, and of their own association, as a heavenly people on the earth, and their head in heaven. But instead of entering on this question now, we will go a little through God's dealings with the *first Adam* from the beginning up to the introduction of the *second Adam*. We will trace all the different changes in God's dealings with the first man, till we come to this new starting point, "created anew in Christ Jesus." God has taken away the *first* that He may establish the second.

All God's actual dealings with man, till he came to the point of crucifying His Son, show how the patient goodness of God had tried man in every way, until obliged to pronounce man, on experimental evidence, to be *utterly bad*. Of course, God knew what man was all the while.

First, then, we will trace God's dealings with man *as man*. Secondly, with the Jews. Thirdly with this new man in Christ—for

in whatever position man has been placed, it has only been to start aside like a broken bow, and to turn from God. This is a solemn truth, and one that Christians ought to know *well*; for never was there a time when man's thoughts of *man* were so exalted; when so many efforts were being made; so many theories maintained as at the present, that man as man may be turned to some profit. The great cardinal truth is, that there is *no good in man*. And it is most important that the soul should thoroughly understand this, as it gives both simplicity and stability. For the simple knowledge that man is thoroughly bad cuts at the root of ten thousand theories all based upon the notion that good is to be found in man. But all these deep-laid theories will drop off by thousands, like leaves in autumn, if it only be believed by the soul that in man *good is not to be found*. The death of Christ is the great and infallible contradiction to all assumptions of the contrary. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Thus on the cross was proved to the whole world that God could find no good in man. It is also given doctrinally in Romans, and historically in the Old Testament.

sabbath in its polluted state, but to work in grace. And through communion in life with the second Adam, (God's rest,) believers get all the fulness of the blessings of that rest.

But now we will look a little into this working from the *beginning*. And for this, let us go back to the garden of Eden; for there we shall find man first put to the test in a state of innocence. And what do we find? A total and complete failure; for nothing could possibly exceed man's insensibility to God's *authority*, to His *goodness*, and to His *truth*! Man abandoned God to gratify his lust in eating the forbidden fruit. Nor was this all, for Adam sets up Satan as the one to be trusted instead of God. God had surrounded Adam with every blessing, and Satan comes and says, "Ye shall not surely die." God is jealous of your prerogative, for He has not spoken truth when He said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And on this liar's and murderer's word man treats God as a grudging God. For Satan says, God has kept back from you that which is good. Thus man believes Satan and makes God a liar. I am not here speaking of the rejection of grace, but of the entire casting off of the

The next point is, that it is God's work to bring man back. And mark the blessed way in which God works to bring man back. For after sin entered there was no rest for God or man, but in that rest which God hath prepared. So the only rest the poor sinner can find is in "God's rest." God works and then enters into His rest. Man rests in God, and then works for the glory of God—for there is no rest now but that into which Christ entered; and we which have believed do enter into rest. The Sabbath rest was in connexion with Jews as a sign of the covenant between them and God, which supposes that after the work of the week is done, then rest comes; and, doubtless, in connexion with creation, it is a blessing to all. When Christ was on the earth the question of the sabbath was constantly raised; and when healing a man on the sabbath-day, they charged Him with breaking the sabbath. And how does He meet this charge? By saying, "My Father worketh *hitherto*, and I work." A good and holy God could not find rest, or a sabbath, amidst the wickedness of man. There must be in such a state of things either judgment or working in grace. God's Son, therefore, came down to the earth, not to keep a

authority of God and His truth, and of the open manifestation of sin. Thus there was an end, without a possibility of return, of man's *innocence*. It was gone, and gone for ever. There could, therefore, be no return to innocence—no going back to man's Paradisaical happiness; and that he might not live on in his misery for ever, God turns him out of the garden and sets the cherubim with a flaming sword to keep him from the tree of life. But what does God do in despite of this failure? He sets aside the first Adam and brings in the second Adam. In Genesis iii, 15, "The *seed* of the *woman* shall bruise the serpent's head." Mark, here, the *seed* of the *woman* is the second Adam. There was *no* promise to the first Adam, for he was in *no sense* the *seed* of the woman, though we may trust he was a partaker of the blessing. There was grace, but not in connexion with the first Adam. Sin had come in by the woman; therefore Christ, the putter away of sin, came in by the woman also. All God's ways and purposes tend to the second Adam, "Who shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The turning point is the rejection or acceptance of Christ. Whenever the least morsel of Christ is apprehended by a soul and used,

the Holy Ghost can come in and give power to the testimony, though in the midst of many mistakes. But when Christ is not received and there is dependance on the *first* Adam and his resources, though there may be the *appearance* of *fruit* for a season, perishing must be the *final result*. I see no signs of idolatry before the flood; but men being the children of the *wicked one*, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, corruption and violence filled the earth; and these two principles continue up to the end: as you get *corruption* in the mystical Babylon, and *violence* in the persecutions carried on by the beast in the latter day. Then in the garden of Eden we get the two *trees*—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. The first of these trees shows *man's responsibility*. The second tree is connected with God's gift of life. And in these two trees are set forth the two great principles that have given rise to all the controversies that have agitated the mind of man from the beginning. The simple truth is this, if man is put under responsibility—say the law for instance—he fails; but Christ comes in and glorifies God by fulfilling man's responsibilities, and then God can

shed." Well, failure comes in again; for after awhile, Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk with the fruit thereof, and Ham dishonours his father. Before the flood there was the prophecy of *Enoch*, (see Jude 14,) which was a mark of what God was going to do; and after his testimony, Enoch goes up to heaven. This is the Church's testimony now, to warn of the coming judgment which will take place when she is removed. Noah's testimony was quite another thing. "He, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house;" for Noah passed through all the judgment and begins the world again. He is the type of Israel in the latter day. But Enoch warned others and then went up to heaven before the judgment came.

Then we have another most terrible thing. After the flood idolatry comes in.

There were two great results of the breaking down in righteousness of those in the place Noah was set in. *First*, the association of man to get himself a *name*—"let us make us a name"—and in doing this they were associating themselves against God. For, speaking of intrinsic title, God is the only one who has any *right* to a *name*; and the only name God will allow to be set up on the earth is that of the *man Christ*

freely give *life*. Thus, in the work and person of Christ, we get the perfect and eternal solution of every abstract principle. For the very weakest saint knows that Christ bears the whole responsibility, and that He gives life; and he wonders that men should find such difficulty, when to him all is simple. For the soul that has Christ within knows that it is not merely an abstract principle to be *reasoned about*. For how can the *Christian* reason about Christ's having borne the curse for Him, while he himself is in possession of life in Christ? The saint owns his responsibilities, but having failed, Christ has come in, and life is given in grace. But now we will return to the double character of *corruption* and *violence* which became so insupportable that God was obliged to come in with the flood. Then we get Noah saved out of it, and with Noah God begins the world over again. *Man* is again put under trial, for God brings in a new thing. Government is added. Thus man is strengthened against the violence which had prevailed before the flood, and which man, not being altered, will still continue. That which is technically called 'the power of the sword' is given into man's hand. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be

Jesus. Thus, in man's effort to make himself a name, we see the principle of *pride* brought out, and the very judgment they were seeking to prevent, by getting themselves a name, was the very judgment with which God visited them. "For the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth." Then in one man, Nimrod, who began to be a mighty one in the earth—"a mighty hunter before the Lord"—we have the individual development of *will* and *tyranny* in government, instead of righteous government. Then in Babel, in the association for a name, the principle of *pride*. Thus we get the two great acts of corruption.

Then *devil worship* comes in; for when men were scattered abroad on the face of earth, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, they began to offer to devils and not to God. (1 Cor. x, 20.) They became conscious of dependance in spite of themselves; and therefore it is said in Joshua xxiv, 2, "Your fathers served other gods." The scripture never speaks a word in vain, and now we can understand the meaning of the call of Abraham, and what he was called out from. God appeared to Abraham and called him out from serving *other gods*, to serve the living

and true God. The world was sinking fast into idolatry, and there was not only man's *pride*, in getting a *name* and greatness on the earth, and tyranny and *self-will* in government, but, alas! the coming in of *Satan's power* in demon worship: for it is in idolatry that Satan's great power comes in. And here it is important to mark that Satan's *power* must not be confounded with *man's wickedness*. Satan's power is altogether another thing, and quite apart from man's wickedness, though often most mischievously confounded with it. Now God is calling a *people* out; before it was only *individuals* whose hearts were successively touched with grace. But now God is distinctly separating a people to Himself. Thus Abraham is called the father of the faithful; and God has a *special stock on earth* called out of the surrounding idolatry, to be a depository of the promises of God, called the *olive tree* in Romans xi. In Abraham we find three great principles—election, calling, and promise. Abraham did not get into the land until Terah his father was dead. He came into the land of Canaan, but God gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on, yet He promised that He would give it to him for a pos-

new condition and principle. Man now puts himself under covenant with God, in which man is to perform his part and God His. Thus Israel put themselves under the Law, to obtain by their own obedience that which God had promised unconditionally. But before they get what God had spoken, the ten commandments, they had made themselves *another god*; for they had lost sight of the *man Moses* and made them a *golden calf* and said, "These be thy *gods*, O Israel"—the very thing out of which Abraham had been called! *Idolatry* they had turned back to, the "serving other gods," and cast off the true God altogether. Thus all was gone. Then we have another change, another principle in action. *The Mediator* is brought in, and it is then in connexion with a mediator between themselves and God. And the mediator Moses, in pleading with God, pleads His promises and comes in as mediator between God and man, to maintain man in the blessings in which he could not maintain himself. Moses was but a *shadow* of Christ, and not the *very image*. Aaron is the next, established to be priest in the temple and to offer sacrifices; but just as his consecration is ended, strange fire is offered by his two sons Nadab and Abihu.

session. Therefore "by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

After this we get another thing. A people were to be redeemed. Redemption was, in a figure, brought in when God visited Egypt in judgment and with a mighty arm brought out a people to Himself. The blood of the pascal Lamb was the sign of their shelter from judgment, also of their separation to God Himself. Here we see the distinctiveness of His love in that it was to *Himself* that they were brought. As it is said, "How I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to *myself*." Then the Red Sea passed brings out the song of salvation. Then from the Red Sea to Sinai it was all grace; God dealt with them in grace. They murmured again and again, but they got the quails and the water as they wanted *without any reproach*. It was perfect unmingled grace. At *Sinai* another change takes place, another principle comes in. The promises which were given to Abraham without any condition are taken by the people on *condition of obedience*. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This was entirely a

This is as we have ever seen the case with man. Though vengeance is taken, man goes on sinning, and the Lord goes on raising up saviours and deliverers, until the time of Eli, when not only his wicked sons were destroyed, but God's strength, the *ark*, was delivered into the enemies' hands.

Mediatorship and priesthood having both failed, and the ark, the very place of God's presence being delivered into the hands of the Philistines, where there was *faith* in Israel in the little remnant of that day, it could only say, "*Ichabod*," "The glory has departed."

But before taking up David, we will return to Abraham again, and take up promises made to Abraham, to show their distinctiveness from the Church. First, the way in which Abraham is the father of many nations, as in Gen. xii. The reasoning of Paul in Galatians is founded on Gen. xii. They were Jewish promises. All the earth had fallen into idolatry and Abraham was called out of this idolatry, that God might make him the *stock of promise*—the olive tree. (as in Rom. xi.) The 2nd and 3rd verses run thus:—"I will make of thee a great *nation*, and I will bless thee and make thy name great. And *in thee* shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abraham is the vessel, so to speak, in which the promises are deposited. (I drop the great nation, that being Jewish.) Then in the 22nd of Genesis, this promise is confirmed to *the seed*. Abraham offers up Isaac and receives him back in a figure; Isaac thus representing Christ in resurrection. Then God says, "By myself have I sworn that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. This multitudinous seed are the Jews. "And *thy seed* (*Christ*) shall possess the gate of his enemies." "And *in thy seed* (that is Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "In *thy seed*," that is the *one seed*, *Christ*. The promises that were given to Abraham were confirmed to him in (the *one seed*) Christ, for there can be no mixing up the two. For Isaac, being raised from the dead, though but in a figure, we know must keep the promises distinct. Therefore the apostle argues in Galatians iii, 20, "If ye be *Christ's*, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Thus those who believe in Jesus are "heirs according to the promise," made not to the multitudinous seed, but to the *one seed* which is *Christ*. There are two sets of promises—

theirs. God says, Let me alone and I will consume them in a moment; and Moses says, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot against *thy* people, which *thou* hast brought up. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants," &c.; then goes on pleading the unconditional promises figurative of Christ, and says it is *thy people*. And God turns from His wrath and goes up with the mediator. "My presence shall go with *thee*"—not with the people. God calls the people the mediator's people. What beauty and grace there is in this. First, God says, I will consume them in a moment, they are so stiff-necked. But their ornaments are put off, and Moses pleads their very stiff-neckedness as a reason why God must go up with them. Thus was their stiff-neckedness counter-balanced by the grace. For the moment grace is brought in by the exercise of mediation, the very stiff-neckedness which prevented God's going up with them lest He should consume them, was the very thing pleaded by the mediator why God must go up with them. Then God acts on a different principle. Mediation is the grace which maintains people in the blessing brought by redemption; and this principle brings in *priesthood*. Here mark,

those to Abraham's seed, as the stars of heaven for multitude, in connexion with the *land*; then Isaac being offered up in a figure, confirming the other promises in which all the families of the earth will be blessed in the person of *Christ* the *one seed*. Mark that both of these sets of promises are *unconditional*. For thus Abraham was made the depository of the promises given to him unconditionally, both with reference to Israel and the nations. But in Exodus xix, where God says, "Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself," we have an entire record of simple grace, without any condition whatever, from the *Red Sea* to *Sinai*. But at *Sinai* the question of condition comes in. "If ye be obedient, ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." And Israel said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." And how long did it last? It was gone directly. Whatever depends on man's stability is gone before he gets it. And so before the *ten words* reached Israel they had worshipped the golden calf, thus casting off God entirely. And thus Israel had lost their immediate connexion with God, for it was then ordained in the hands of a mediator, having broken down in

for it is important to see, that redemption brings in priesthood, and not priesthood redemption. Priesthood maintains the people in the presence of Him who redeemed them; for if I am to walk with a *holy God*, I must have that intercourse maintained. If God has redeemed us to walk in the light as He is in the light, we need the priesthood to maintain us in the light. But if you confound redemption and priesthood, you will never find settled peace, for you will be looking for acceptance from something to be done or interceded for. But priesthood maintains our communion with a holy God.

I now turn to the subject of man's failure—Israel failing under the law—*mediation* comes in; and priesthood failing under Eli—the ark is gone—then there is another, redemption by power. And now the link between Israel and God is *royalty*, sustained in the person of David the king. This was the last link between Israel and God; His patience still forbearing. And now we get royalty sustaining Israel under the condition of obedience. The temple was newly set up and filled with God's glory. But royalty fails in David, Solomon, and Rehoboam. The obtaining and enjoyment of promised blessings must

not always be taken as a mark of God's approval. Jacob told a lie in order to obtain the promised blessing. Solomon had asked of God wisdom, and God added riches and honour, but then he obtains the promised riches and honour, by disobedience; for he multiplied to himself horses and chariots which God had forbidden. We require faith for the means, as well as the end. That is, we must wait patiently for God Himself to make good to us the very blessings He promised. Then again, Solomon loved many strange wives, and they turned away his heart from the Lord. In the very three things God had forbidden to a *king* Solomon failed. Let us ever remember that our one business is to walk with God, in the humble and lowly details of every day life, waiting on God to arrange everything for us; for God's ways towards us show out His character and His faithfulness, in making good to us what He has promised. For if we obtain the promised blessings through our own contrivance, they will be accompanied by sorrow and chastening; nay, the very blessings themselves may become the source of sorrow, because we always have idolatry in the heart. But God meets this failure in royalty by another

and fresh promise, in Shear Jashub, "*a remnant shall return.*" Isa. vii, 3. (See margin.) *The nation* was at that time cut off. "Make the heart of this people fat," &c. Now God promises another thing; a seed is promised to David. Before it was the seed of the woman, but now a seed is promised to David, to sit upon his throne for ever. After this, God says, in Ezek. xxi. 25, "Thou profaned wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more until *he* come whose *right it is*; and I will give it him." After this God entrusts power in Gentile hands. The first was Nebuchadnezzar—power in one man—for man's vain thought is, if I could do all that I wish, I should make the world a paradise. Well, God tries him, and what is the result? The golden image is set up, and God's own people are cast into the fire, for refusing to fall down and worship it. Secondly, the impiety of Belshazzar follows, in prostituting the vessels of the temple to the honour of his *false gods*. And thirdly,

Darius sets himself up to be the *true God*. Here are brought out three principles of evil, which will be fully developed in the latter day. *Cyrus* then comes in as the restorer, setting it all aside—typical of Christ. Then prophecy comes in to sustain the remnant until the Messiah came. Then in the rejection of Christ, it was not merely the manifestation of man's sin, but the utter hatred of man's heart against God. "They have *hated* both me and my Father." Thus the tree was proved to be utterly bad, and the more it was digged about and dunged, the more bad fruit it produced." "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Then Pontius Pilate being the governor of Judea was the representative of the authority which God had put into man's hand, and which the Lord owned when Pilate said to Him "Knowest thou not that *I* have power to crucify thee, and power to *release* thee? to which the Lord replied, "Thou couldst have *no power* at all against me, except it were *given* thee from *above*; thus teaching Pilate that having received the power from God, he was responsible to God for the exercise of it. And how did he use it? In *condemning God's Son*. Thus the very one who should have wrought *justice* in

the earth delivers up Christ to be crucified, at the same time knowing Him to be innocent; as he said, "Take ye him and crucify him, for I *find no fault* with him." Thus was fulfilled that word, "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness that iniquity was there." What comes then? The solemn sentence is passed. The world is condemned. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." "The world seeth me no more." The death of Christ closed the scene. Then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The very thing that brought out the judgment revealed a heavenly salvation, which was before hidden by the veil. The death of Christ is the end of the world *morally*. Man has been tried in every way, and failed, and sin in every shape and form has been brought up to a head, and met in this one act of rending the veil. For "*once in the end of the world (morally)* hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." When the sin is proved, it is put away. "They have seen and hated both me and my father." The very act that proved their hatred of God,

put away their sin. "If I had not come, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin, but they have seen and hated both me and my Father." That very crowning act of the utter enmity and wilfulness of man, brought the sinner to God, *without the sin*. For the Lamb, without spot, *by one act*, divine in power (by Himself,) put away the sin "by the sacrifice of himself." The veil being rent, we, with *unveiled face*, behold the glory of the Lord. As to our bodies, we know they are still on the earth, but our position, *morally*, is in heaven, Christ being there. The high priest under the law *stood*, but this man, after He had *once* offered *sat down for ever*. The whole work being accomplished, thus connects us with heaven. We are only waiting for the redemption of the body—we are accepted in the beloved. He is my life and my righteousness, and I want nothing more. All belongs to me now, by virtue of life in this heavenly man, now in heaven itself for me. We are only waiting His return, but our conversation is connected with Him up there now, for we are always confident while *waiting*, which may be in order to our ripening. There are three things connected with this position. First, my life is hid with Christ; second, if

I die before He comes, my spirit goes up to Him immediately—"Absent from the body, present with the Lord;" thirdly, if He come and take me up before I die, then I shall return with Him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*, then shall we *appear* with him in glory." But while He is up on high, we are members of His body down here, and cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." And consequent on our position, we ought to be as pilgrims and strangers on this earth, for we stand between the *once offered* and *appearing* Jesus. We have neither the *world* nor the *glory* yet; but we are identified with the rejected one. Christ's portion is our portion: we get it along with Himself, and we are to be conformed to Him now. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—*His bride*; and when that is made ready, He will come and take her up to glory.

The Lord give us to know the wonderful grace of Christ, who, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might be rich"—"Who loved us and gave Himself for us," according to His perfect work, which has set us in the presence of His father in love.

FRAGMENT.

There is nothing to be more cordially abhorred than the pretence of love and unity being used to dishonour Him who is the centre, life, and sole object and title of it. There is no devil so bad as the devil who clothes himself with charity. It is the spirit of the day—latitudinarianism. "Charity is the bond of perfectness," but Christ is the test of this, as of all else, and He makes it so. "The poor ye have always with you, and me ye have not always." Thus we must judge—judge, I mean, our own conduct. Local unity, founded on abandonment or indifference to the truth, is a miserable hostility (in sparing oneself) to gathering with Christ, the only true and universal unity. I do not know what is meant by unity, if the foundations of all unity that is worth anything are denied.

END OF VOL. II.

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."—Eph. vi.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1858.

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THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

SKETCHES OF SCRIPTURE
CHARACTERS.*

UNDER this title it is intended to present, in a continued series, some brief remarks on the various individuals noticed in scripture as having intercourse with God, and under the gracious dealings of His hand.

It is not intended, however, to notice these individuals so much in any typical character, or in relation to any offices they may have sustained, as to trace

* A more elaborate and recondite series, the Editor believes, will be presented in the "Present Testimony;" but these sketches, he trusts, may be profitable to plainer readers.

VOL. III.

A

them in the individuality of their exercises and experience, and the moulding of their characters as the result of their intercourse with God. This, if rightly pursued, may become the means of the deepest instruction and profit to our souls, while, at the same time, it opens a pathway of profoundest interest in connexion with the perfect and living ways of the Lord.

In human biography, or the recorded experience of holy men, there is always this defect, that the estimate of the character of divine intercourse, and of its effects upon the soul, is necessarily imperfect. Intercourse with the Lord may indeed have been true and real, and the effects of His dealings with the soul marked and manifest; still there are a thousand mists and prejudices, in the judging and recording mind, which may operate to hinder their faithful transcription for the contemplation and benefit of others. But here all is unerringly marked. And if the records are brief, there is nothing aside from the purpose; nothing either

happiness for a moment, followed by the continued sadness of one who kept not his first estate. Fallen from the place of authority and honour, and become the drudge of toil in exile from an unlaborious paradise, his altered external circumstances presented a daily protest against his sin, and told him in daily reiterated language that none "can harden himself against God and prosper;" and "There is a way which seemeth *right unto a man*, but the end thereof are the ways of death!"

Alas! that man's biography should almost immediately begin with the history of his rebellion against the hand that had formed him in His image; and that, instead of the record of his gratitude and praise, we should read only of his distrust, with its bitter fruits, of the God whose goodness was poured around him on every hand. His happiness and honour are his own, but they spring from a bounty and goodness in which he neither acts nor counsels. In the scene of enjoyment in which he is set he is but a quiescent receiver. His

in excess or defect when viewed in the light in which they were dictated by the Holy Spirit and left for our instruction.

There may be a danger, it is true, of giving to even these records the poor colouring of human thoughts, and the only preservation from this is the sense of the Lord's presence in the soul and the remembrance that they are *His* recorded ways that we seek to investigate, though they are unfolded in His dealings with men of like passions with ourselves. The result of this will be the wholesome determination that where divine light ceases the imagination shall be refused the rein.

ADAM.

From whatever point the history of Adam is viewed it seems calculated to leave only an oppressive weight upon the mind. From his history the cloud in which his sin enveloped him never seems to pass away.

In him we see the height of creature

fortunes, his glory, his high estate, own nothing in the way of self-achievement. They are the spontaneous gifts of that God who gave him life, and blessed him, and called him to intercourse with Himself and set him over the works of His hands. He is created—blessed—set in authority—the tests of responsibility and life put before him—and what is the result? He is tempted—sins—and forfeits all!

Brief and passing is the bright picture of Adam's happiness, as the head of creation, in innocence and intercourse with God; though every feeling of his heart and nature then was that which God had directly implanted or which was awakened in his bosom by the knowledge of His goodness. Soon in the prosecution of his history far other scenes arise, and other objects and other thoughts arrest the mind.

In Adam and Cain *sin* is presented in its perfected forms: in Adam, *sin against God*; in Cain, *sin against man* in the image of God. Sin in Adam

bore the stamp of distrust of God's goodness. Cain's sin is hatred of grace and of him who is the object of that grace. Both are seen in full character in man's hatred and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ: "They have seen and hated both me and my Father." In Abel and in Enoch, on the other hand, blessed be God, are presented the full and perfect redemption from sin by the power of divine grace. Abel is the first exemplar of *righteousness* by faith, now sin had destroyed man's *innocence*; Enoch presents the perfect triumph over death, as the consequence of sin; thus bringing into full relief "the hope of righteousness by faith."

But hope does not spring from any change wrought by grace in Adam, in his condition or his estate. *In the ways of God* "light arises in darkness;" but it is seen only as the eye is turned away from Adam to rest upon the mystic promise of "*the woman's seed*."

In the history of the first man, as

plicable on any ground but that which revelation here unfolds.

The chief elements of Adam's moral discipline, as it appears, are to be found in the history of God's dealing with his sin, which the third chapter of Genesis presents; and it is in this scene alone that we find any direct intimations of his intercourse with God after the fall.

There was, doubtless, restored intercourse, but it is unnoticed in the word, because another lesson is impressed on his history, by the wisdom of God, than that which Abel's, or Enoch's, or Noah's presents. It marks the *omissions* of scripture to be as striking as its *declarations*, that, whatever may be inferred, nothing is stated concerning Adam's salvation and restoration to God. Nothing is said about the reality of his faith; neither is it anywhere stated, as of Enoch and others, that "he walked with God." There is no attestation, as in the case of Abel, that "he was righteous," on the only ground of righteousness, for man, now sin had

the head of disobedience, whatever his personal sense of restoring mercy, we read in the broadest characters this solemn truth—which is yet the test of all true obedience and the basis of all real blessing—"Let *God* be true, but every man a liar!" For, be it observed, that the hope of redemption through "the seed of the woman" comes not to us through any promise made to Adam, as is sometimes wrongly assumed; nor does it present to us the unfolding of Adam's restoration, who never regains his first estate. It is rather his utter setting aside as the keeper of others' fortunes, or the depository of others' blessings, who had so signally ruined his own. In him we see sin dealt with directly by the Lord, and consequences attached to it, in the government of the world, of which every age affords its attestations, while it leaves the solution of the enigma, of an almost universal scene of corruption, and misery, and death, in a world which a God of goodness made and rules, for the history before us to supply—inex-

come in; but he takes his place in scripture after the fall only as the progenitor of a race involved in the ruin of his sin, and as the head of disobedience in contrast with Christ, the obedient one. He carries with him through the world the consciousness that he had sinned away everything and that recovery was utterly beyond his power. He is never seen in any sense as one who was trusted anew. He begets sons and daughters, and at length dies; but the effects of God's dealings on his soul can be little gathered from any direct statements of the divine word.

The reason of this is plain, and not a little instructive to us.

The distinctive principle of God's dealings with Adam appears to have been to impress upon him a deep and lasting conviction of the truth and certainty of all that he had distrusted, the absence of which had been the occasion of his fall. Hence his exile from paradise, his preclusion from the tree of life, the sterility of the earth

and his consequent incessant toil, the throes of childbirth which he is obliged to witness, as the race is increased, and finally, his familiarity with *death* before he himself is absolutely its victim, are all arrayed in evidence of the truth of the character of that God whom he had distrusted and disobeyed; while in Cain he sees sin suddenly ripening and assuming another shape, and telling his terror-stricken soul that the heart once uplifted in rebellion against God, but prepares for the murderous uplifting of the arm against all that bears the stamp of His image and favour in man. What pregnancy does this thought give to the simple statement of a later revelation—"This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also!" It is the law of the divine nature, in opposition to the corrupted nature of man. It is not, however, in Adam's history, but in the unfolding of grace in the promise of the woman's seed, that the traducings of the enemy are met, and the God who was maligned as grudging

"Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked." As to *guilt*, also, he learns from his own hasty retreat to a hiding-place, amongst the trees of the garden, that man under its power instinctively flees from the presence of God, even before divine justice expels him thence; while the echo of that terrible question, "Where art thou?" continually reminds him that there is no darkness nor secret place where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves that the Lord will not see them. And further, the reason he gives for his fear—"I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself"—is his own acknowledgment of the worthlessness of his fig-leaf coverings, when once the presence of the Lord is reached, whatever their estimation may have been in his own eyes or the eyes of others apart from that presence. And lastly, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" makes him sadly aware of an inward voice unheard before, and reveals to him the birth-time and birth-place of *conscience*, henceforward, to be

to man the easy gifts of His creative bounty, is seen to have so loved as to give His only-begotten Son.

But we have said that the elements of Adam's future discipline were lodged in his soul, while God was dealing with his primeval sin. And first as to temptation, or the source and spring of evil in man; he was practically taught that truth which is given to us in the way of precept, but which received its embodiment and illustration in Adam's living experience, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Then how effectually does he learn the folly of his aspirations after knowledge apart from God, in order to raise his condition or gratify his pride, when he sees that their only issue, as to himself, is a discovery of his own nakedness!

his companion and the inward witness of his sin.

But there is the other side of the question to be considered in his experience, and the effects of discipline on his soul. In his history we may note his entire submission to God, whether in the judgment of his sin, or in its terrible consequences, and the altered condition to which, by it, he is reduced. From this subjection—which is the first mark of grace—nothing in his subsequent history leads us to believe he swerved. As a sinner, he submits himself to the judgment of God. He consents to be set aside himself, and to look to the woman as the divinely appointed channel of life. He himself "calls his wife's name Eve, because she is the mother of all living." He refuses not the coats of skins which divine goodness provides as a covering for them, instead of the aprons of fig-leaves, the work of their own hands. He rebels not against his expulsion from paradise, but submits to the toil which his sin had brought in, nor seeks to turn

aside the edge of the curse. In his after-history we do not find him, like Cain, building cities, or engaging in any worldly enterprises, but submissively pursuing his toilsome path, until his earthly course is done. That he participated in the disappointed hopes of Eve, in the birth and after-history of Cain and Abel, there seems but little room to question; but the divine appointment of Seth in Abel's place is noticed as meeting the full recognition of his heart; and then his history is closed with the brief statement that "The days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years and he died."

Nothing is more calculated profoundly to impress the mind with the eternal truth of God and of His word than the thoughtful contemplation of Adam's history. If we look no farther than to the government of this world, as exhibiting the consequences of his sin, how do the records of six thousand years bear witness that not one word of all that God has spoken, as

groundless supposition that responsibility and uncertainty, as to the result, necessarily go together; partly from a confusion between the responsibility of man, sinful man, and the saint's responsibility; and partly from the supposition that responsibility and power *must* necessarily go together. All these suppositions are founded on human reasonings, and are all alike groundless. When a Roman cut off his thumb, so that he could not hold a spear, his responsibility to the state to be a soldier had not ceased, although he had not the power to fulfil his responsibility. The responsibility flowed from another source, namely, his being a Roman subject or citizen. If I command my child to come, and it *will* not, alleged incapacity to come, if true, is not an excuse, if it *willed* not to come. Had the will been there, the incapacity might have been removed. Again, the elect angels are bound to do God's will, but there is no uncertainty. God sustains them in will and deed; they delight to do His will and there is no

to these consequences, has fallen to the ground! And who, with this record in his mind, can fail to be impressed with its attestations, as they start up in his daily pathway, in the labour, and toil, and misery, and death, which abound and increase on every hand? And who, without this history, could have conceived or predicted that such consequences, and so lasting, could by possibility have hung upon a single step in departure from subjection to that word?

WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SAINTS?

It is an unhappy circumstance that many Christians have an idea that responsibility and grace are incompatible, (and by grace I mean full saving grace,) and if strongly impressed with the necessary truth of the one, they reject the other. This arises partly from the

question at all about the result. Such a question cannot be raised. Their delight to do God's will is a part of their existence, in which they are sustained by infinite power, and thus they do it by the strength given to them. Even Christ Himself was responsible to do His Father's will when He had undertaken it; but there could be no question for a moment as to failure. His moral being was perfectness, was never anything else, nor could be. But every created being is responsible; that is, he ought always to do God's will, not his own. It flows from the necessary and immutable relation of the creature to the Creator. The creature ought to be, in all its thoughts and ways, what suits the relationship in which it subsists. All relationships, as such, have duties, including in these thoughts and feelings which correspond to and express the relationship. Husband and wife, father and child, master and servant, brother and sister, by virtue of the relationship in which they are, ought to be what the word expresses,

and all that is implied in it. The husband is bound to be a husband; that is, he is bound to be what the word means; and so the wife; and so on. The relationship is not the duty; but the duty is inseparable from the thought of it.

It will be found that this is not the idea that men have of their responsibility to God, and in part they are right; but that they are so is the consequence of the fall, and in practical result they are wholly wrong.

The idea men generally have of responsibility is, that they must live in a certain way to escape judgment, and to gain eternal life. Now, there is a fundamental truth in this, as in every testimony of conscience. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." They who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, will have indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. As a general principle, we have the know-

ledge of good and evil, (which in itself is a divine perfection, though we have acquired it through the fall,) and we know that God approves good and hates evil. So far as the fact of a natural conscience, thus judging, goes, men are right. But they do not really believe, till taught of God, that we are in this state *as fallen*. Yet all their life betrays it. I do not merely mean betrays the fact that they are sinners, but the thought that they must *gain* eternal life, *find* God's favour, and, as they hope, in the end come to God and be happy. They have *not yet found Him then*, nor know His thoughts concerning them. They are in no relationship with God, from which duties flow, save that in which they have already failed; but while they look at God as a Judge, they hope to win a place of safety in a happy relationship, by doing their best, and with God's help, and the like.

This may have a more or less religious colouring, but the general idea remains the same; that man has to

win the happy relationship to God by his conduct; that he is responsible to please God in his conduct, and by this means inherit (really at bottom, merit, whatever make-weight they may throw in) eternal life and happiness. God's goodness, Christ's merits, religious duties and ceremonies, come in to help out the account, and make up for failures; but *account it is*, to be decided by the day of judgment, and uncertain till then. There is no present subsisting relationship with God. There is no real consciousness of being either saved or lost. Man, perhaps, is admitted to have been lost; but in some vague way Christianity, it is thought, has put an end to this, (without, after all, saving him,) at least provided men behave themselves properly. The result is, a man's responsibility is to maintain a conduct required in order to inherit eternal life, and a real, present relationship to God is unknown. It is to be acquired. Some, indeed, pretend by ceremonies to place you in a perfect relationship with God; but it is lost

before it is found, or known, so that it has nothing moral in it, and the result is, man has to make it out, after all, by his own conduct.

Now, though there is an abstract principle of truth in the ground-work of this idea, the real truth of man's condition and christianity is wholly set aside by it.

God does love good and hate evil. There must be a life in true purpose of what is good, to be with Him in bliss; and natural conscience gives a true, if not an adequate sense of good and evil, and of its result. But these general principles say nothing of my actual state, be I in or out of Christ. They are true, but they say nothing of me, nor do they tell me what my responsibility is, nor what my actual relationship to God is, if I am in one. Responsibility there is. The maintenance of responsibility is the maintenance of the *rights of God*,—of his authority over us. Where it is objected to, there lies always at the bottom of the objection either the notion that

man must have power of his own to be responsible, or that the result is uncertain, which is only another form of the same idea. But if God creates any being, He creates it in and for the position it is in, whatever be His ultimate purpose, and cannot mean it to abide in inconsistency with the position He has placed it in. It would be a kind of blasphemy against Him and deny judgment. No, the angels that kept not their first estate are reserved in chains of darkness. Man, who kept not his first estate, is passed under death, and excluded from paradise, awaiting also the judgment of God, except as delivered and saved in Christ. "So he drove out the man."

But then the notion man has of responsibility—that of conduct by which eternal life may be won—is a mere consequence of our fallen state, of our alienation from God. It is a labouring, working, to win what we have not, and to gain by our conduct a position in which we are not. Yet, though this is consequent on the fall, on our dis-

tance from God, that distance is not really known. What man is, as fallen, is not really acknowledged: for if such be our position, we are already *lost*. We need to be *saved*.

But responsibility to pursue a course of conduct by which we gain a position or a reward, is not the only character of responsibility: nay, it is an unnatural one—one which flows from disordered relationships. True, genuine responsibility is the walking according to a position in which we are, and which carries its obligations with it. The impossibility of losing the position does not alter the responsibility. It makes it perpetual. A child is always a child to its parent, be he a good child or a disobedient one. We must get the thought well fixed in our minds, that responsibility connected with labour for the yet uncertain attainment of a relationship in which we are not yet, is an extraordinary, and, so to speak, an unnatural kind of responsibility.

When we come to the real fact of

what a creature is, we shall find that uncertainty does not characterize responsibility so much as we suppose. If not sustained of God by divine strength, we shall fail: if sustained, we shall not. Our sense of this dependence is our daily safety. "Without me ye can do nothing." The angels that fell, and Adam, are witnesses of the path of a creature left to his responsibility, untempted or tempted. The elect angels and renewed men are examples of beings sustained of God in responsibility. But man is not of this mind. He is, he says, *in a state of probation*: he thinks that, though fallen, he may (doubtless, he will say, with God's help) make out the leading a life which will adequately satisfy his responsibility. Many, of course, will add the goodness of God (as they will feel their path imperfect) and the merits of Christ, to make up what fails.

It is not my purpose to dwell on this point; but the truth is, what is here called goodness is merely a hope that

God will think as lightly of our sins as we do, and as we, for safety's sake, should like Him to do, which is a sure proof of not being converted. As to the merits of Christ, they are not meant to make sin excusable, but righteousness perfect before God. His blood cleanses from sin, because God will have none before Him. He is our righteousness, and it is a divine and perfect one: but he is not to make up ours, so that our failures are forgotten.

But, for man, out of God's presence, with the thought of having to do with God, this question must arise—how to have his favour, how to have life. And God has met it. Man is responsible to live before God according to the position he is in as man. He has got wholly out of this. Morally he is a sinner. But the character of the responsibility depends on the relationship between man and God, and man and man. He has to act according to the relationship in which he is as man toward each. That is abstractedly what he ought to be. He pretends to be or to

will it, and takes his position on this ground to seek God's favour and life. God takes him up on this ground. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself. Or, if man will, He presents to him the duties even of the second table, as it is called—this do, and thou shalt live. This is written in the law, and sanctioned by the Lord as the answer to the question, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Let man, away from God, do that, and he shall live.

Promises had been given unconditionally, which centre all in Christ, the seed of the woman, and of Abraham, and of David. Here no question of righteousness was raised: none of responsibility. It was the free gift of God, His promise. If we dare to say so, He was responsible alone; His accomplishment of the promise therefore sure. But, with a creature knowing good and evil, and with a God who judges it, the question of righteousness

must come. God could not be indifferent to evil. The question of responsibility and righteousness was raised in the law. There the promises were taken on condition of obedience, and, "this do and live," became the rule for man. Responsibility took partially the character of a position to be acquired by conduct, not the fulfilment of the duties of a position in which man already was. I speak, of course, as between him and God. In that conduct relative duties are contained, but the accomplishment of them was to be the means of possessing life. The real result was the discovery that the righteousness was not to be had, that the condition which had made it necessary, made it impossible. Man was a sinner away from God. Therefore he had to seek life; but therefore he had not the righteousness needed to acquire it. As the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, the disease of which he had to be cured disabled him from doing that by which he was to acquire health.

The law was given, as Scripture expressly declares, that this state of things might be made plain to the conscience of man. It entered that the offence might abound. By it was the knowledge of sin. Sin, by it, became exceeding sinful; and it proved not only that sin was there, but a harder lesson, namely, that we were slaves to it—"without strength"—that the law was weak through the flesh, and that flesh could not be subject to it. As many as were of the works of the law were under the curse. The responsibility was undertaken, not fulfilled; and what was ordained for life was found to be for death. This is not all that man has done, but I confine myself to my subject, namely, what was done as to inheriting eternal life, by meeting our responsibility as men. IT IS CLOSED. We have lost our created position in innocence—we cannot gain another by our conduct. We are, as men, *lost*! The responsibility was there in paradise, and man failed. He places himself

under it when really already ruined, under the law, and makes his ruin evident. Such is the only result, as to our relationship with God, of our being on the ground of responsibility as men. What is needed for us is the distinct discovery of it. We are under sin, death, and condemnation already, looked at as in ourselves.

But *God's salvation* is another thing. That is not our responsibility. Christ comes into the state, in grace and love, in which we were by sin; Himself sinless, and the object of divine favour in doing it; but He came and died and drank the cup of wrath. He has closed for all who believe on Him, and in the Father's love in Him, the whole question relative to the first Adam and our sinful life. We own that we were enmity against God, condemned, guilty; this He has taken upon Himself as bearing it before God; that is, the whole consequence of our responsibility as men, and IT IS CLOSED. He has died as bearing it; He has died to sin once, and he that is dead is freed

from sin. Thus, in our representative, all whose work is available to us, the whole question of our responsibility as men has closed in judgment and death *for me*, as I had discovered it had as to myself: the life has passed away in which I lived and was responsible to God. I exist no more, as living, as a child of the first Adam. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why *as though living* in the world?" says Paul. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I," &c. "Reckon yourselves therefore to be dead indeed unto sin." Christ has perfectly glorified God's righteousness in respect of all the evil; but all has passed away in His death judicially as to which God had to be glorified. The nature, being, sins, guilt, existence in which he was responsible and subsisted before Him, are, as regards the believer, gone before God. "When we *were* in the flesh," says Paul, "the motions of sin which were by the law."

righteousness in which we stand before God, which is Christ. Not I, but Christ lives in me. It is a real, living, certain position before God, in which I, through grace, and Christ are one, though all flows from, and, thank God, is dependent on Him. God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life: but then it is perfect righteousness already before God.

More than this, I am a child, a son. Such is my relationship with God. I have eternal life. I am in a known, blessed, fixed relationship with God, where grace has placed me through the working of the same power in which Christ was raised from the dead, and set at God's right hand. I am not only in it, but it is my relationship with God, and there is none but that. The old one is passed; the new one, founded on divine righteousness, flows from my being really born of God, made partaker of the divine nature. I cannot be in any other. It is my

"But ye are *not* in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you." The whole question of our responsibility, as living in the life of man before God, is settled by Christ's judicially bearing the consequences before God, and by the death of the life in which we stood as sinners. But then Christ is now a new life. He is risen, and we *are* alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me. I am quickened together with Christ, and raised up together. God has quickened us together with Him, *having* forgiven us all trespasses. They are buried in His grace, and I am alive anew and without them.

But more than this. There is a divine righteousness in which Christ stands before God, as risen: that is, in which I stand in the power of a new life as risen with Him. I am made the righteousness of God in Him. As He is, so am I in this world. This is in the reality of a life in which we live, which is Christ; and of a divine

being, my existence, before God; the life and relationship in which He has placed me, and in which I live from Him. The old one is gone in Christ's grave.

What is now my responsibility? To make all efforts to obtain eternal life by my conduct? I have it. To make out righteousness? I am the righteousness of God in Christ: He is my righteousness. To seek to win God's favour? He has loved me so as to give His Son for me, and accepted me in the beloved. To win a position with God? He has made me His child and son. "Now are we the sons of God." What can I seek other, or more, than to say, "as He is, so am I *in this world*?" Here my soul is at peace—a precious thing! At peace with my God and Father, in known relationship with Him. Christ is gone to His Father and my Father, His God and my God. Blessed thought! What a place of peace and love, according to the very nature of God, and the revelation of Him by the Son, it sets me in!

Here, then, I enter into the true kind of responsibility, in contrast with the hopeless and sin-convincing one into which I got by the fall; a responsibility which was really according to a lost position, that I might find out my ruin and condemnation. My responsibility now is a responsibility flowing from the position in which I am; which belongs in peace to it; not one by which it is to be attained: a responsibility such as all our responsibilities are according to God, that of walking according to the position in which I am already. He that says he abides in Christ, ought to walk as He walked. A child of God, and such for ever, ought to walk as a child of God, "as dear children." My responsibility is that of a Christian. I am to walk as one, because I am one; not that I may be one. The fact that I am a child for ever, is not a reason for not walking like one. It is only the baseness of a morally ruined being, that he could suppose that he was not to be consistent with the relationship he was in

in obeying Him. It finds its delight in Him, but therefore in obeying Him, and also in *what* He wills. The nature I have received is that divine nature which expresses itself in the commands given to me; only there is also authority in them. But the commands are morally the expression of the nature which I have, and which delights in them, and finds the comfort of perfect light and guidance in them. And here is the immense and total difference of the commands of the law and Christ's commands. The law says "do this and live." Christ's commands are the expression of the life which he had, and the guide of that which I have. The life was the light of men. The perfect expression of the will and nature of God in man, which His words and commands expressed; and now we can say, "Which thing is true in Him and in you," because He is our life in the power of the Holy Ghost. Christ was the real expression of divine life in man; that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us.

because it was an unchangeable one. As we are in our Christian position in virtue of a new life, such a thought cannot at bottom be that of a Christian. This is the reasoning of the apostle in Rom. vi.—not that I *ought not*, but that I *cannot*, if dead, live to what I am dead to.

My responsibility, then, is not as a man in the first Adam, but as a Christian in the second. On the first ground I am wholly lost already: it is vain to talk of responsibility, unless to convince of sin. On the second, because I am saved, and a child of God in the family, I am become responsible for walking as such, like the example of the firstborn among many brethren. It is not connected with the possibility of losing my position more than of my gaining one. It flows from the position I am in. I am to walk like a child of God since I am one. It is a responsibility of peace and joy; what James calls "the perfect law of liberty," because my new nature finds its delight in what God wills and commands, and

Hence it was the light of men. It was in the place, condition, and state of men, and hence obedient, also dependant. Thus was it brought out in His temptation. This life is ours, since His exaltation on high, when He had presented a perfect righteousness to the Father. In that I have a perfect peace and perfect favour, and now the only thing I have to do is to glorify Him, "that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body." I can say, "I abide in Him"—placed with the Father in His perfectness before Him—a place of joy and peace, and witness of eternal love. I *ought* then so to walk as He walked. Christian responsibility is the responsibility of being a Christian; that is, of walking because we are in Christ, as Christ walked, through Christ dwelling in us.

Our place before God is Christ—our part to exhibit Christ before men. This, while the flesh is still in us, and the world around us, needs the daily cross. "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that

the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body." Our responsibility is not to attain unto life, but to manifest it, in spite of hindrance; yea, through hindrances, and in the midst of the world. Two things have to be noticed here. First, the manifestation of the divine life, in which, through the Holy Ghost, we are united to Christ, has to be carried on in the midst of temptation, and in spite of the existence of the old nature, the flesh, in us, by which all that is in the world can become a temptation to us. Communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of the divine life, can only have place so far as the flesh is practically held—as we have the title to hold it—for dead. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body. Here is the daily *exercise* of the life we have got, in which we learn what we are practically; and the faithfulness, graciousness, and tenderness of God is

God Himself has created and owned, that the close application of the word in the power of the Spirit is needed to distinguish. Yet morally they are most different and opposed, because God is not in the one, but human will, and is in the other, as affections, for example, which become idolatrous (though legitimate and in themselves right) or passions. In these, and in all cases, the word, sharper than any two-edged sword, that true sword of the Spirit, the truth, the bringing home of the living word, who has sanctified Himself for us, is the means by which God first of all judges in us all that would tend to make us fall in the desert. Then for all weakness, and even failure, comes the priesthood; for it is to the course of this exercise, in which above all our entire dependance on God is brought to light, and the heart is practically purified, that the priesthood of Christ also applies. It is not exercised to obtain justice for us, nor to bring us to God. It is founded on perfect righteousness, and

daily experienced, and to be felt by us. In which we have our senses exercised to discern good and evil, the contrast between God and the flesh is deeply learned, what is mere nature discerned through what is spiritual, while the effect of all is, that one is emptied of self, and Christ acquires, in a certain sense, an exclusive place, and becomes all in all. The soul is satisfied with Him, and hence in lowliness and singleness of eye can discern what is flesh, and either avoid it, or content itself without the false support its efforts or objects give to the natural heart, which leans on them.

Two means are employed of God to carry the redeemed through the desert, the word of God, and priestly intercession. They may be found in Heb. iv. 11—15. The word is the weapon of God to discern between that which is of the Spirit, and everything in which the will of the flesh works. All that is mere nature, which is ever a snare, and positive sin where the will is at work, gets often so closely allied to what

the propitiation made for our sins, and is exercised to maintain or restore the communion of the saint, while walking in weakness, with the perfect light into which he is brought, through the rent veil, by that righteousness and propitiation. Nor do we go to Christ in repentance, that He may intercede for us: that would be distrust of the perfect love of the Father, into whose presence He has brought us as children, nor would any one do so really; but He intercedes for us that we may repent. Our souls are thus restored through grace to communion, or maintained in it. Intercession is for the saints. For *will*, the word is used; for weakness and for failure, the grace of priesthood.

The other point to which I allude is, our encouragement in the course we have to run. This is afforded us in promises and rewards, to which is annexed the careful and faithful government of the Father, who chastens where needed. God is sovereign in the revelation of His goodness to the heart, and knows when to grant it; but He

has revealed principles of government. "If a man love me, he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." It is evident that God cannot have communion even with an idle thought. Christ does not say, as to salvation, "If a man love me, God will love him." We love Him because He first loved us. The very characteristic of God's love is, that He loved us when we were sinners. But though God can visit and restore in grace, His communion is in holiness, and with the obedient; while we are dependant on His grace for both.

Here comes, too, the scripture doctrine of rewards. As regards righteousness and salvation, reward can have no possible place. These privileges are in Christ, and perfect. They are the reward, so to speak, of His labours and work. So, if one takes reward as the motive for work,

but in overabounding grace, to sit on Christ's right hand and on His left is given to them for whom it is prepared of His Father. But as to righteousness and salvation, all are alike. We shall be conformed to the image of God's Son. But, though sovereign as to the place God gives us, in connexion with *the Holy Ghost's* work in and by us, (for it is in connexion with this that reward is: it has nothing to do with our righteousness, which is Christ Himself,) this sovereignty is exercised in giving the reward according to the labour in gift and calling; so that God's government and the saint's responsibility may be displayed; yet so as that the saint is brought more clearly to say, "Not I, but the grace of God which was in me." It is exactly he who has the deepest sense of his responsibility, who will the most deeply feel his entire dependance upon grace. If these questions are mixed up with that of salvation, all is legal and false; but when clear on this, the exercise of the heart in them is most useful, as leading

he is wholly on false ground. Love and obedience are the only true motives, as they were in Christ Himself. "That the world may know," He says, "that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." And, again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." But rewards are presented as encouragements in the difficulties which are on the road into which love and obedience bring us. Thus it could be said of Christ, "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." So Moses, by the Holy Ghost, is approved, saying, "He had respect to the recompence of the reward." And of all, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." The Thessalonians are a crown, a glory, to Paul, as they are not to us. Yet the word keeps steadily before us, that it is of grace, and that, in rewarding His labourers, God does what He will with His own;

to the sense of dependance, confiding in Him who is able to bless, and delights to do it; the sense that there is a living God, that we can do nothing of ourselves, nothing without Christ. It humbles and leads to daily confiding dependance upon God.

The principle I have alluded to above, will be found to be universal, namely, that reward is, in scripture, never the motive of action, always the encouragement of him who is active from other motives. Thus, we well know, it was love, eternal, divine love, and thence obedience to His Father, which led Christ in the path of sorrow. In that path, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured. Moses visited his brethren because God put it into his heart to prefer suffering with the people of God, to a life of ungodly ease in a court. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible, for he had respect to the recompence of the reward. "In due time we shall reap," says the apostle, "if we faint not." The love of Christ constrained him too,

the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; but he knew that a crown of righteousness was laid up for him, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give to him in that day. Where reward is the motive, all is wrong; but the gracious Lord encourages us in our labour with His approbation, and His promise of reward at the end. We believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

Thus our relationship with God is founded on a perfect and divine righteousness, so that it is divine, and His perfect love enjoyed in a known relationship, and in a divine way. Hence holy affections are free, and God is glorified. All is from Him, and according to Him. No question of righteousness can be raised outside Christ. Blessed be God, such a relationship is ineffably sweet, and sure as divine perfection can make it. At the same time the active, moral energies of a life which pursues its object under the hand of God are maintained. One

the special glory in which each faithful servant will be set, is part of the purpose and operation of God. But all our responsible, moral exercises, once we are free, are connected with it. The lively energies of hope, the watchfulness and keeping under of the body,—we fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life.

What has secured us, as salvation, has set before us, as this salvation, a hope of glory which sets in play the whole energy of the new man through the Holy Ghost. Paul saw Christ glorified. There was an end of legal righteousness, and the certainty of divine. There was the glory to be attained. All was dross and dung that he might win Christ; and if it cost him his life, good, on the road to a resurrection from among the dead. It was not a responsibility in which he laboured alone, so to speak, as obliged under law to fulfil his tasks or fail. It was closely allied with the attachment of his heart to Christ,—that he might win Christ. Christ had laid hold of

thing I do, says the apostle: I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God. "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." The whole epistle to the Philippians goes on this ground, and hence speaks of attaining, working out salvation, turning to salvation, and the like. The moral development which is connected with personal responsibility, under grace takes place, and under the eye of a gracious and holy Father and holy God. We are set in the path in which Christ walked, to follow His steps. Sweet to be allowed to do it, and that His servant, walking in this path, shall be where his master is. The word, "Well done, good and faithful servant," sounds sweet in the ears, and most so in his who knows that by His grace alone can we be one or the other. If we were not His, we could not serve; His, by a new life; His, by the purchase of His blood; and in the service, all hangs upon His daily grace; and the place he has given to us, and

him for it; but he longed to lay hold therefore of the blessed prize.

This is carried on as under the moral government of God. The flesh cannot serve Christ,—it can only hinder. To be vessels made to honour, we must be clean. Hence the apostle kept his body under. Hence Peter tells us, "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judges every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." The Father judges no man as regards final, definitive judgment; as the apostle says, "the time of your sojourning *here* in fear." Is it fear of not having part in redemption? On the contrary, it is founded on the solemn greatness and excellency of it, the moral depth of God's judgment of good and evil. "Forasmuch," he continues, "as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, but with the precious blood of Christ." Thus the bright energies of hope, the joy of communion, the sweetness of dependence, the holy watchfulness of fear,

as engaged in this great conflict with evil and on God's side, all unite to bring out through known grace, and as founded in grace, every moral development of which a human being, as quickened of God, is capable, so as to connect him with the perfection of God, in communion with whom it is all wrought; and to make him like Christ, who is the perfect model of it, as His communion with His Father was perfect:—to grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

For the need in which this service and path sets us inwardly and outwardly, the path in which Christ walked, sets us in communion with God, in all that is in Him, to meet it in grace to our souls. It is not only help for the circumstances, but what God is for the soul, in all that is discovered in it by its passing through the circumstances. The wilderness makes the heart of man known; but it makes God known to the heart too. The full joy of it will be hereafter. In

the type, as in the reality, it was founded on a perfect redemption; and as Israel at the Red Sea chanted the salvation which had brought them to God, so, at the close, Balaam must testify, that no divination was of any avail. God had not seen perverseness in Israel, nor iniquity in Jacob. He would treat him for his faults in wisdom Himself, as His; but no accusations were of avail. It is beautiful to see God thus answering for Israel on high, while poor foolish Israel was ignorantly murmuring and disobeying below.

Finally, grace is such, that, what God gives as the ground of destruction in judgment, "I will consume, for it is a stiff-necked people," once grace is known, Moses can give as a reason for God's going with them. "If I have found grace in thy sight, let my Lord go with us, for it is a stiff-necked people."

NICODEMUS.

How the steps of the grace of God to sinners ascend continually from one point to another. All must, however, come from God, and all that is from Him will return to Him; so that if His goodness prevents a soul, that soul enquires diligently (perhaps for its own satisfaction and because of its own needs) of the thoughts of God towards it; but will surely end in apprehending to its joy and perfect sense of security, that God's glory was engaged in saving them that believe.

This, with the head doctrines of our faith, is beautifully set forth in the history of Nicodemus. The first introduction to his knowledge of the divine dealing in grace is in the well-known history of the third chapter of John's gospel. He came to Jesus by night. He yet feared to be seen consulting the Saviour. The same knowledge that Nicodemus had, brought none of the rest of the rulers to Jesus. They knew, with him, that He must be come from

God, but their part was taken to do without God and follow their own ambitious thoughts.

How safely the soul follows when God leads as He led Nicodemus! His conscience had become aware of the defects of that with which he was daily conversant amidst his fellow-rulers, and Christ presented Himself to his soul as having a true claim on him from God, as a teacher at least.

We find mention of him twice afterwards. The first time pleading for common Jewish rights to the sent one of God; and he is reprovèd as being His client. This was a great step, though not out of the circle of that which was to be soon "the dry tree" of Judaism. It was feeling towards the Lord that prompted it, and so the council knew; and any right given to Jesus, under these circumstances, would have been to have received Him. So will any right given to the world by the saint be an acknowledgment of it. How gracious is the revealing the steps of Nicodemus's convictions. It is most

interesting to consider that the Lord did not dismiss him without discovering to him the key of all blessing in the words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." It easily suggests itself that John the Baptist and the Lord having preached the kingdom, that Nicodemus would readily have transferred his allegiance to Jesus, but was met by Him, as we read in John iii. with the words, "Thou must be born again." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit; marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." Out of the flesh nothing of the Spirit could come.

The flesh was sin; Christ became sin for us in the flesh, though without sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and a new creature manifested. Jesus was not an angel, but such as I am, (but without sin,) that He might be the Saviour

of such as I am. All are so to be saved. "And we are to be saved even as they," (that is, as the Gentiles) says Peter, i.e. by faith. For SUCH WAS CHRIST, that faith in Him, the given one of God, was the begetting (by the word of truth) unto a new existence in the new and second Adam—the old existence and all its trespasses, and the manner of their having been counted, being put away for ever in Christ.

The sweet current of life, the source of action, the words that proceed therefrom, and such a difference in everything, is established in passing over to Jesus, that the *world* could not recognize the source, and the aims, and ends, of the thoughts of the believer become the disciple of Jesus, born of the Spirit. No: man in the spirit and ordinary path of the world knows not whence such an one cometh, nor whither he goeth—how should he? Blessed whither! and blessed point of starting where all the springs of a divine call and life are in God. This was all needful for the earthly obedience to

Christ, how much more to an apprehension of "heavenly things," and its communion and obedience according as it is given. One door indeed is to both in the lifting up of the serpent.

The convictions of Nicodemus, as to the person of the Messiah, had been steadily increasing, and the word thus given in divine wisdom prevented the crucifixion being the grave of his hopes, as it was to so many; and we find him now bold in circumstances of shame, and giving his service at the burial of Jesus, and bringing an hundred weight of myrrh and aloes to embalm the body of Jesus. What a blessed education he had been undergoing, how ready now to be introduced to the "*heavenly*" things, which things were before withheld because he could not apprehend what was needful even to earthly blessing, under God, which are in a renewed heart, in faith and the Holy Ghost. He that came down from heaven alone could reveal the heavenly things. The Lord expressed to Nicodemus the expectation that through the Scriptures he

would have known what was needful to what he sought, and his conscience being dissatisfied with the unrighteous dealing of Jewish rule and piety, he came to hear from Jesus of the kingdom He preached; but no conformity to the establishment of an outward and visible order of things would secure that accordance with the thoughts of God that belonged to it. He had to learn that the death and the resurrection of a Saviour, (and that Saviour the Son of God) must come in as a new source of life to give entrance to it.

FRAGMENT.

The word at the opening of John is, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And it struck me yesterday, how very blessedly all the cases in that gospel illustrate this, and show us, that all who were called to Jesus, received from Him *a spirit of liberty and*

strength; not the spirit of bondage or of fear, but such a spirit as became those who had the power or the privilege to become the sons of God.

I trace this throughout, and will shew you what I mean, that you may judge it in the exercise of your own spiritual senses, or the mind of Christ in you.

Andrew spends the remnant of a day in the unknown, solitary dwelling of Christ, but he leaves it in *a spirit of full liberty*, for he finds his brother *Simon*, and at once, as out of the abundance of his heart, bears witness of his new-found joy.

Philip, in *like* spirit comes forth after he had been called by Jesus, and tells *Nathanael* of Jesus, as *Andrew* had told *Simon*.

These may be minute features or traces of the mind that was in these earliest disciples, but they tell the secret of the heart very clearly. We find the spirit of liberty, such as became sons and not servants, to be in them.

catching the joy, in their turn, like *Nathanael*, have their mouths, by the abundance of their hearts, opened to speak of Jesus, and of Jesus and His glories only.

All is *of a piece* in these cases, and how precious to you and me, that we may take our place in so happy a group; and if we taste not an overflowing cup, it is because we are straightened in our own bowels. But further.

Peter, in his turn, witnesses the same. The multitude had receded from the Son of God. (A sample of His condition in this divine gospel, for *Israel* had refused Him, and the world. He made had disowned Him.) But all alone as He was, He appealed to the twelve. He turned to them, as much as to say, I am left a solitary one on the earth—will you also give me up? *Peter*, in depth of affection, (affection inwrought in His spirit by grateful recollection of all he owed the Lord,) answers that He was more to Him than the whole creation of God, his eternal life, and that he knew Him to be so.

Nathanael appears next to *Philip*. He had been under the fig-tree, I surely judge, under such convictions and visitations of soul as had *separated* him, [as conviction always does (*Zech. xii.*)—] but being brought to Jesus, and addressed by Jesus, his soul rises from the place of conviction to that of admiration and worship—he is full of Christ, and not as before, of himself, and out of the abundance of his heart speaks of His glories.

The Samaritan is seen issuing forth from the simple homestead, so to speak, or the scene of the duties and occupations of every-day domestic life. She does not come, like *Nathanael*, from the place that had witnessed religious exercise of conscience, she is simply a careless child of nature, or a citizen of the world, a dweller in this defiled earth of ours. But she meets the One whom *Nathanael* had met, and she leaves Him, in the bright sunny freedom of a delivered heart, to tell all her neighbours, like *Andrew* and *Philip*, of her new-found joy; and her neighbours

No questionable or challenged blessing, no fear or suspicion, as if he knew not the air he was breathing or the place he was filling, but his spirit owns eternal life, and eternal life for himself, in the blessed Son of God. (chap. vi.)

The convicted adulteress, then, continues the same tale of the wonders wrought out for the soul by the receiving of the Son of God. She is seen under the fiery hill. She is not merely as a child of nature, just come forth from the scene of domestic duties like the Samaritan, or even from the place of conviction or the labourings of a troubled conscience like *Nathanael*, but, detected, convicted, exposed, she is dragged under the very thunders and fire of the righteous burning mount, and there she lies ready for judgment. She can say nothing, and she does not attempt it. Jesus, the Lord of the hill, whose hand alone could hold and guide its thunders, pleads her cause, and so pleads it, as to divert the lightning from her head to the head of her accusers, and they

are forced from the ground. But *how* is she? Is she any longer at the foot of the fiery hill? When Jesus and she are alone and together, what is the frame of her spirit? What fills her? The spirit of bondage, or the glory that is full of grace and truth? She can stand His presence though in her scarlet sin, and she is dismissed in the fulness of forgiveness. *The "light of life" sent her away in peace.*

The blind beggar comes after her, and a suited witness of like grace he is, and in due season follows the convicted sinner. He is found in the place where the thunders of *the Church* had put him, a terrible place to nature; none more so. The adulteress was under mount Sinai when Jesus met her, but this poor Israelite is outside the camp. The one was condemned by the law, the other was cast out by that which called itself the Church. And I may say, nature, or flesh and blood, the heart of ignorant, religious man will as deeply quail before the last as before the first. It is a place terrible to

do not instance Nicodemus of chap. iii. because he does not illustrate one who had *received* the Son of God. He did at the end, I am sure, but not in chap. iii.

APHORISMS.

Faith in the body uses the power that is in the Head. It is the province of faith to recognize what is in Him, and to act upon it.

If our hearts are not constantly reckoning on the present love and power of Jesus to be exercised towards us, *the memory* of the past will never help us; for memory is not faith.

Faith is a present dependence on God.

Whatever faith looks to Christ for, faith will get.

We use the goodness of God to day: to-morrow comes, and we throw ourselves back on our own resources through unbelief.

the natural mind. But again, I ask, what does that place become to this poor outcast? Is it to him any longer the place of an outcast? Was the presence of Christ a place of condemnation to the sinner of chap. viii? Is that same presence a place of separation, the place of a heathen man and a publican to this poor Jew? Receiving the Son of God, *he worships*. His spirit is in a sanctuary. *It is at liberty*. It is in heaven. It has entered the temple with thank-offerings, and peace-offerings, and sacrifices of praise. He is not on *praying* ground surely, but at an eucharistic feast. He worships as those only can who know the presence of the Son of God in its redeeming, healing, peaceful virtue.

What secrets—what tales of the heart are told in these simple narratives—what pulses of the hidden spirit are felt here! Every case exhibits, in those who had received Jesus, *a spirit not of fear, but of liberty*. But I only, as it were, suggest, having, however, tasted that this is a goodly theme. I

SKETCHES OF SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS.

ABEL.

Abel's history cannot be taken up altogether apart, since it is designedly presented to us in scripture in opposition to Cain's in its principles, and fruits, and final results. In the two there is a contrasted exhibition of righteousness and iniquity, and their correspondent fates in the world, now under the power of sin. This is the more striking as it occurs in the first two individuals of the human race which were born after the fall. But, as to the springs of life and action, it may be said that Abel's history and Cain's stretch on to the end, and characterize the two families which divide the world. They present also the irreversible opposition of righteousness and sin, and lay open the sources of the one and of the other in faith and unbelief.

Faith is the recorded characteristic

of Abel's history, which, after sin had come in, was the only possible link of connexion with God, the only possible ground of acceptance and pathway of restoration to His favour. For what does the fall present, according to the truth of God's character and word, in regard to man's original position in innocence and on the grounds of nature? Is it not this—expulsion from Eden—sin which God will not associate himself with—and death? And who that believes this but must either sink in hopeless despair when looking at himself, or find his hope and confidence in looking upward to the restoring power and grace of God?

But fallen man is a proud being—proud under any circumstances—and likes not to surrender the position that once was his, but which sin has forfeited. The fall that cast him down from his innocence has not quenched his ambition; and he would seek to maintain his place before God on grounds that involve the entire setting aside of His judgment of sin, and the

to His favour is only based upon the vain hope that God will falsify His word and that He will recede from the solemn judgment He has declared. For if I own that my *life* is forfeited under the just judgment of God for sin, it is plain that all hope in myself is for ever gone, and I am cast in faith on the death of Christ, by which sin's penalty has in grace been met.

But what in truth does Cain seek in coming with his bloodless offering before the Lord? Does he seek, and long, for restored intercourse with God because His favour is delighted in? Not in the least. He is satisfied with his position in a world of sin, and if he may but be allowed to enjoy the fruits of his toil, all that he seeks in intercourse with God is that he may obtain the divine sanction to his thoughts of himself, and thus silence the accusations of conscience and dissipate his fears.

And what does man's religion always seek? Not communion with God; not subjection to His word and will; not

utter subversion of His moral character as judge.

Cain's ground of approach to God is an example of this. For, with all that had so recently taken place in Eden, and with the consequences of the fall daily before his eyes, he nevertheless rushes into God's presence, and there seeks to be accepted, as if there had been no fall, no sin, no penalty of death as God's judgment of sin! He comes without faith, without confession, without bloodshedding, without a sacrifice to mark his subjection to death, without a single recognition of God's judgment of sin or a thought that "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" and yet he hopes to be accepted! But every man who seeks to have to do with God on any ground but that of the sacrifice of Christ, of which Abel's was a type, but copies the example of Cain, only under the aggravating circumstances of increased light and testimony from God. When death is not owned as God's judgment of sin, any expectation of restoration

the sense of His light and favour to cheer the soul in a world of evil while looking onward, beyond the world and death, to an eternal dwelling in His presence! No: but it would pursue its own course in the world, without a thought in common with God, as to the world's condition, or man's estate before Him, and then by some sacrifices, or services, or fruits of nature, would bind Him over to an approval of the worshipper's condition, and character, and aims. It would make self and not God its end, and then blindly seek to attach to its self-deceivings the sanction of God's approval and name!

Abel; on the contrary, by faith reads in the light of God's thoughts the sad history of the fall. He forgets neither his sin nor its penalty; but in his offering he puts death between himself and God, as the just judgment of sin. But death thus owned feeds his hopes, and the divine acceptance of his person and gifts takes the place of every earthly tie and every spring of earthly blessing. For Abel is not here pre-

sented to us as a sinner seeking for pardon, but as a believer in intercourse with God, and his offering is the embodiment of his faith, as Cain's is of his unbelief. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to His offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Each brought his character as well as his offering before the Lord; and Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous," which was the formal reception of man back again into the place of divine favour. "God testified of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh." It was this revelation to his soul that formed his character as a witness for righteousness in the presence of the evil and hostility of the world, which is provoked by it: for Cain's spirit is the spirit of the world.

The *ground* of righteousness before God, which Abel's faith lays hold of, is plain; but there is, further, *the life* of practical righteousness, which results from the faith that allies with God and brings into happy subjection to His will.

It was the blood of "*righteous Abel*"

Abel is, in this respect, a type of Christ, as suffering for righteousness, as Cain is a type of the world in crucifying Christ. But "the blood of sprinkling," through God's love in the gift of Christ, "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's earthly occupation and pursuits were also in accordance with his heavenly character and hopes; for we may speak of his heavenly character in contrast with Cain's, who had his home and interests on earth. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Both were lawful occupations; and the culture of the ground had now become, in a sense, necessary to man, who had no longer his home in paradise. But the eye of faith in Abel, looks upon the earth as the scene of the curse; and no results which labour may win by the cultivation of the reluctant soil, can take from his mind the thought that the very necessity for toil came in with the incoming of sin. In Eden and in a state of innocence, labour and the

that Cain shed; and not merely of *accepted Abel*. For God in his person had raised a living testimony to righteousness in the world, where sin has its course, in the harmony of Abel's spirit with His own character, who is "the righteous Lord that loveth righteousness." And it was this, we are told, that provoked Cain's hatred of his brother and his murder. For the scripture says, "Cain was of that wicked one who slew his brother. And *wherefore* slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." Faith wrought in Abel separation from nature's path, or the world's course (in principle) in the power of divine approval; and this awakens the hostility of the world, so that he meets death not as the consequence of sin, but as a witness for righteousness. His death becomes a sacrifice to righteousness, as his life was a life of faith, a life of hope in God as the God of resurrection, as well as the vindicator of righteousness which now had no place on earth.

sweat of the brow had no place. Abel wanders with his flock, and his earthly necessities are met by that which is nourished by the dews and rain from heaven, and not by his laborious toil. He goes from place to place, as the pasturage of his flock demands—a wanderer in the world, having no immovable property to encumber him, or laborious improvements to attach him to an embellished home on earth. Cain tills the ground, as a settler in the world; and his toil, when rewarded with increase, brings no token to his mind of the presence of sin. The sweat of his brow to him is but the effect of honourable toil, and the fruits which his industry raises, are in his estimation, a token of the divine favour and blessing. This may seem a fatuity in Cain, almost beyond the power of conception; but it must be remembered that though the penalty of *death* had been pronounced upon Adam's sin, Adam still lived. And unbelief, which would credit the declaration, "thou shalt not surely die," might easily

persuade itself that while the sinner lived there was no proof that the penalty incurred would ever be exacted. And we know who has said, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

But restored intercourse with God is Abel's power to judge of things around him, as it meets also the longing desires of his renewed spirit. For communion with God produces a double effect upon the character; it conforms to God in the love of holiness, and separates from the world which is in contrariety to Him, and governed by principles altogether at variance with those which He approves. Faith no more surely connects the soul with God, and gives discernment of His mind, than it forces into a path in direct opposition to the world.

Abel the righteous is cut off from the earth, and leaves neither name nor posterity there; for his record is on high. But to Cain is given a history

This is the wonder. To do this is God's own exclusive glory. (Isa. xlv. 21, "a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me,") for none but God could do this. No sacrifice, no victim for the altar, other than Himself would be sufficient for this end, that God should be just, while a justifier. The Epistle to the Hebrews establishes this, the Romans announces it.

It is, therefore, on something more excellent than the law of liberty that the Lord acts in the gospel. That may be the highest rule for the moral actings of man; but God acts after a manner quite beyond and above it. He does not allow mercy to glory or triumph over judgment, but causes them both to rejoice together; righteousness and peace to kiss each other. Glory to Himself in the highest is declared, as well as peace on earth to man. This was prefigured of old, and realized in the cross.

There was a ram caught by the horns for a sacrifice, when *Isaac was freed*. There was blood upon the lintel when

of worldly exploits, and a distinguished posterity—for unbelief and unrighteousness have their natural descent; but faith and righteousness are not found apart from their object and their source. Evil sustains and propagates itself, and has dominion in the earth; but righteousness is only found as sustained by Him who is its spring, while its home is above, and its hope in the "glory that fadeth not away."

THE WIDOW OF TEKOAH.

2 Sam. xiv.

In the gospel it is not that God lets mercy rejoice against judgment, according to the law of liberty, which is the highest moral rule prescribed to us, (James ii. 12, 13,) but He secures the honour of judgment, while giving place to the full exercise or gratification of mercy. He is just, though a justifier.

Israel was freed. There was an altar to be set up in Ornan's threshing-floor when *Jerusalem was freed*.

And so at the cross. The victim had been offered, and then the vail was rent, and then the graves were opened—that is, the sacrifice was accomplished on the altar—it was then accepted of God in heaven—and then it went forth to free the captives of sin and death. Just according to the type of Lev. xvi. The blood was shed, then put upon the mercy-seat, for *acceptance*, and then upon everything else for *reconciliation*.

All this tells us not of mercy rejoicing against judgment, but of mercy and judgment rejoicing together—judgment rejoices in the victim or altar; mercy in the reconciliation or atonement.

In the case of Ornan's threshing-floor, already alluded to, the sword of the angel was *stayed*, that David might have some hope and occasion for exercise of spirit. But the sword of the angel was not *sheathed* till the altar

was raised. It was the altar that sheathed the sword, as it was the blood that rent the vail, and then broke up the graves.*

Now this, as I said, is God's exclusive glory. "There is no god else beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me. (Isa. xlv. 21.) And therefore God Himself immediately upon this says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ is this Saviour-God.

Now David was man, and not God; and this glory of which we speak was just that which did *not* belong to David. He could not find out a way whereby to bring his banished home to him. If he please, he may act on the law of liberty, forgiving his own private wrongs seventy times seven a day.

* The blood upon the mercy-seat has this voice in it—the throne of God (delighting in mercy, for God is love) guards the rights of judgment or righteousness—but it accepts the blood or offering of Christ as that which is all-sufficient to answer those claims or rights. He that sits there is therefore *just* as well as *gracious*.

TRADITION OF THE ELDERS.

Matt. xv.

In the commencement of this chapter, we have the self-satisfaction of poor blind opposers of blessing, seeing no source of blessing higher than "the elders," and no need deeper than external washing. They knew not that the source is in God, and the need in our hearts, and that worship must spring from hearts where blessing has been received. If the commandments of the elders are set up, then the commandments of God will be made vain; and if cleansing is in externals, then the heart is left filthy, and is far from God. Here, in religious zeal itself, the character of the ungodly is manifested; "God is not in all their thoughts." It is not, 'Why do you transgress the commandment of God?' but 'Why do you transgress the tradition of the elders?' These very traditions make void the commands of God; but because they are *their own*, His commands are set aside for them.

He may, in all such cases, let mercy rejoice against judgment. But this is the utmost he can do. He is unable to be *just* and yet a *justifier*. He cannot justify the wrong doer and be righteous himself. Seated on the throne, and yet Absalom's father, he is not equal to the task of maintaining the integrity of that throne, and at the same time of gratifying the heart of that father. He attempted it, but he failed. Absalom was never really brought home. His was not the return of the prodigal in Luke xv. He returned, but it was to be a plague and dishonour to David, and only to expose him a thousand times more than ever. His heart spoke in answer to the widow of Tekoa. His *heart* was gratified, but his *throne* was cast down. But God, through the sacrifice of the Son, is never more righteous than when justifying the believing sinner.

"You have made void the commandment of God through your own tradition." What is obedience to the tradition of the elders, will be transgression of the commandments of God.

Once let in the principle of the maintenance of that which is our own, and it will be the maintenance of that which is opposed to that which is of God.

If the eye looks to the elders, the commands of God will not be seen. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light, but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The principle of hypocrisy is in this; for while they appear to worship God, it is not so indeed, it is in vain; for *men's* commandments are taught. But the worship of God and the commandments of God must be found in company with each other. If the *heart* is with the tradition of the elders, it is with the *mouth* only He will be approached, and with the lips only He will be honoured. The purpose of our hearts must be to

maintain the glory of the Lord, not of the elders—"Them that honour me I will honour."

(Ver. 10.) We now see the compassion of the Lord toward the poor deluded ignorant multitude. The scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus to tempt Him: (ver. 1;) but He now turns to the multitude to teach them that the root of defilement lay within in an unclean heart. When God searches, He searches the heart, but when Satan deceives, he blinds by thoughts of evil in the outside, to which man looks, and then man, and not God, is trusted in.

(Ver. 12.) If we are in the way of the Lord, what comes from Him to us will not stumble us, but help us on our way, because it is His way, made plain and easy to us, in that which comes from Himself. But the Pharisees were stumbled by the saying of our Lord, because they were not plants of His heavenly Father's planting: and so this will ever be. The Church and the world cannot at all go on together: the

one will stumble the other. He who is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious, is a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to them that stumble at the word; but a sure foundation to them that believe. Thus, while all the builders of the great Babel shall be put to confusion, he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded. The ways of the Lord come in at once to deny the ways of man; and he who tries to hold man's ways will find those of the Lord confounding him. "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The wise man of this world knows the things of this world. But "we have an unction from the *Holy One* and we know all things." The truth is "the truth that is after godliness;" and he who walks after his own lusts is willingly ignorant.

(Ver. 10, 11.) The Lord pitied the poor ignorant multitude whom their

teachers were blinding to the real power of sin, as occupied with thoughts of external contact, and not a root of evil within. But the seat of defilement is in a corrupt heart; and the evil of the heart was allowed, if the traditions of the elders were observed, and real defilement passed over unobserved and unremedied. Defilement comes from an evil spring known unto God, though men may see it not. But this was not the teaching of the Pharisees, nor their own experience; for all their works they did to be seen of men: and this teaching they could not stand.

(Ver. 12.) Accordingly the disciples come to Him and say, Master, "knowest thou that the Pharisees were *offended* after they heard this saying?" The words of the Lord will not stumble those who are in His ways. But he who walks in a path that is not the Lord's, will get no help from him to proceed in that path. Christ stumbled the Pharisees. These Pharisees had not become as little children to enter into the kingdom of heaven. If they had, the words of Christ would build

them up, and nourish their hearts before God, putting nothing away from them, but that which would hinder them in the kingdom. But Christ's words stumbled the Pharisees—and why? Because they were not plants of his heavenly Father's planting, and he could not cultivate them. They must be rooted up. Precious is it to be in that way which Christ's words will help us in; and woe be to the man who would stumble a little one who belongs to Him! A wise master builder in God's building would stumble a builder of Babel: but woe be to the Babel builder who stumbles God's labourers; and here the Church and world cannot go together. The voice from heaven said, "Come out of her, my people." The voices of the earth said, "Stay in her. They are of the world, and they speak of the world, and the world heareth them; but the voice from *heaven* said, "Come out of her, my people," because the city of our God is the heavenly Jerusalem, composed of those first brought up to heaven, from earth, and then coming

down out of heaven. The stone set at nought of the builders here, is there become the head of the corner. Coming to Him as a living stone, the lively stones are built up; and in this are the saints separated from the world: and here is their faith and their patience.

(Ver. 21.) Here we see the Lord in another scene. In the estimation of man, of much less value, but not so to Him who seeth not as man seeth. Many boast in their place and their people: God would make us ashamed of both; but value His grace which puts the shame away.

When the Apostle Paul was called out, the Lord led him into *Arabia*, (not to Jerusalem,) and amongst the *heathen*. (Gal. i.) Little of interest in either the place or the people: they were the worthless objects of the grace of God; but in this of all interest to Him and to those that are His, for His sake.

Men might boast in Jerusalem, in contrast with Tyre and Sidon, and speak well of scribes and Pharisees, as contrasted with a poor woman of Canaan, with her house under manifested judg-

her, but it came not with surprise. This she knew before; but mercy was in the Son of David, and nothing could lower her soul's estimate of this. Jesus might be silent and not answer her a word; the disciples might say, "Send her away, for she crieth after us; nothing that could be said could check her. Help was in Him, and she wanted help. If she could not take the place of a child to get the children's bread, she was satisfied to be a dog to get the crumbs of that bread. But now her trial is over. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." How many does this poor woman of Canaan put to shame, because of their poor thoughts of the riches of Christ's grace.

THE SAINT IN TRIAL.

Psalm xxxix.

We have in this Psalm the spirit in which the saint should meet trial in the sense of his own evil, and receive it as a chastisement on his own faults. No

ment, because her daughter was possessed of a devil. But all this was the more occasion to draw out the sympathies of Jesus. She could not be worse than the chief of sinners, and such He came to save. And if her daughter was possessed of a devil, for this cause was He, the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. But there was that in her which He could estimate—the understanding of her heart of the grace that was in Him, that if her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, this was a case for the mercy of the Son of David. Poor to her was "the washing of cups and pots;" little to her was "the washing of hands." Her trouble lay too deep. Nothing but the mercy of the Son of David could meet her case, because it was the grievous vexation of her daughter, possessed by a devil. This was very precious in the sight of the Lord. She had faith in Him; and that it was *great* faith He proves by trial; for nothing could lessen the power of it in her soul. She had herself no character to lose. Anything might be said to

doubt the Psalm puts before us in a peculiar manner the Jewish people in the latter day, when they will be in very great trouble, and their own fault will have brought them into it—for the people at whose hands they suffer are only the rod which God will use to correct them for their faults. Now, if I am in trouble, and finding it is my own fault that has brought me into it, what can I say? But "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," &c., (verse 1,) or, "Deliver me from all my transgressions; make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." (Ver. 8, 9.)

"I would add here that there is a government which God exercises in the world—in providence I mean—not visibly and ostensibly of course, but really nevertheless, and the principle of which He exercises also in respect of the saint. "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." That is the relationship of children brings under the

exercise of discipline, instead of emptying from it. The Father judges them—not as to final judgment, for in this respect “the Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” But it is not a question of judgment hereafter, but of the Father judging His children. And it is very important for a saint to know that this government is going on every day. It is a great principle in the government of God; and if a saint meets trial in the world in a right spirit, it is with the consciousness of its being the consequence of his own failure. “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” Because the natural tendency of the heart is to “fret itself because of evil doers,” therefore one has to watch.” “I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good.” “My heart was hot within me, and while I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue.” Now what effect had this upon him? Did it lead him to ask to have the evils removed or

trial, that the heart may be brought to a consciousness of its own relation to God, and condition before God, and then there is perfect quiet. There must be perfect confidence when we get there. It is but saying we are perfect vanity and nothingness; and then He lifts us up, and we can say, “but my hope is in thee.”

AN EAR TO HEAR.

I would note what a great thing it is to have an ear to hear. It was the grand mark of distinction between the corrupt mass of Israel and the true followers of Jesus. And Rev. ii. and iii. show us that it is still the distinguishing feature between the dead and the living.

Surely it is the gift of God. “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” But, like every other gift, we must prize it if we would enjoy it. “To you that hear shall more be given.” Now the subtlety of Satan is seen in this, that he seeks in every way possible to steal the ear from God. He

turned away? No, but it turns him to self-judgment. “Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.” It is the nothingness of all that is around and all that he is that he would learn. “Surely every man walketh in a vain show—they are disquieted in vain, and now Lord what wait I for? my hope is in thee.” He occupies himself with God. “Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish.” It is to the Lord he says this. His hope is in God, though he is full of transgressions. When he had got so far as to see that man is altogether vanity, he is dumb. “I opened not my mouth because *thou didst it*.” And because God loves us, he will not leave us without chastisement. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, so thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (Ps. xxxii. 5.) He does not mean in reference to the final judgment, but to daily forgiveness. We have need of constant exercise and

well knows that if he can but get our ear, he has access to the heart; that if we but *enter* into temptation we have no power to resist it. Moreover, we are no match for his wiles. Eve listened, and she was undone. Now it is not merely positive error that is seductive: everything that is not Christ, everything that is not linked with Christ, everything into which I enter without Christ, tends to draw away from Him. If I listen, without Him, I have no power to judge or to exclude the lying vanity which would draw away from Him. If I open my ear to what is not of God, His word will lose its place and power, and I shall judge by the sight of my eyes and the hearing of my ears. “When the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food,” &c., the word of God lost its hold over her heart, and she became a prey to the deceitfulness of sin.

O the divine wisdom of shutting the ear to the ten thousand vanities which would steal the ear from Christ, and divert us from walking as partakers of the heavenly calling! And everything that is of man—science, politics,

literature, amusement—will thus divert. Everything that occupies the heart without Christ is an abomination which maketh a lie. It corrupts the affections from Him. What is of the world keeps in the world. If called to a thing by Christ, He will be with me and keep me in it; but whatever I am connected with else will drag me down into death. Hence the great blessing of having an honest calling in which we can serve the Lord Christ; and the danger of those who have “fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness,” and who strengthen not the hands of the poor and the needy. The house may be swept and garnished, but it is empty; and if Christ is not in, there is no power to keep Satan out.

Hence the unspeakable preciousness of the word of God. Coming from God, it leads to God. By it He gave us life at the first, and by it He nourishes the life He has given. Nothing else can feed the new man. It is by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God that *man lives*. If it abides in us, we shall abide in the Father and in the

living affections towards the Lord Jesus which we so much need. And it is by the revelation of His towards us in the word that they are begotten, and when there, satisfied. Then precious to our souls are the words of His lips,—more precious than gold and silver, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Here comes in the great importance of an ear to hear. “For doth not Wisdom cry, and Understanding put forth her voice?” But where is the opened ear? The Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” And He has said, in that same 8th of Proverbs, “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For he that findeth me findeth *life*, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” (Comp. John xx. 31.)

God grant to us, as the earth *drinketh* in the rain which cometh oft upon it from heaven, so to thirst for His precious word, that we may know Him, and grow up into Him in all things.

Son. It will maintain the soul in known communion in the midst of seduction all around and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. For there we find Jesus the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. It is the mirror in which His glory is reflected: and beholding in this glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image. Thus is Christ formed in us in truth and power.

Now nothing will compensate for this personal fellowship with Jesus in the word. However profitable the gleanings of others may be when led by the Spirit, nothing can make up for individual conscious communion with Christ Himself through the word. Alas! that our hearts could live a day without it. How lovely is this in the song! The Bride cannot do without her Beloved. He is everything to her. It is true she is slothful at one time, and at another secure; but *she has no other Beloved*. And when she has for a moment lost Him or grieved Him away, there is no rest until she finds Him again—“Him whom her soul loveth.” It is these

THE MIDDLE WALL BROKEN DOWN.

John iv.

“He that *ascended* is the same that *descended*, that he might fill all things.” (Eph. iv.) A *Lamb* was seen in the midst of the *throne*; (Rev. v. ;) a Lamb, too, as it had been slain. It is He who *purged our sins* here, that is on high set down on the *right hand of the majesty*. (Heb. i.) The one who was in the *form of God* became *obedient unto death*. (Phil. ii.)

Such passages tell of elevation and of lowliness together; full, ineffable nearness to God, and yet perfect nearness to us. It is as God and man in one Christ. The *history* of the blessed One is, thus, like His *Person*.

Mystery of mysteries! and yet the needed fact on which all depends, all of God’s glory in us, and of our blessing in Him for ever.

The first chapter of John combines with these thoughts. Christ is there

traced from the Godhead to the altar; and in touching these extreme points, He is seen to occupy all the interval. He is the Creator of all things—the life and the light. The world was made by Him, and Israel were His own people. Made flesh, He dwelt among us, the declarer of God, full of grace and truth. He is the Son in the bosom of the Father. He is the One that was before John; and yet, with all this, He was baptized by John. And to bring Him fully down to the extremest point of lowliness, He is the Lamb slain for the sin of the world.

In such titles and characters, we trace the Lord along this chapter. Extremes meet in Him. He is *God*, and yet the *Lamb on the altar*. Thus is He seen in His *Person*.

We then trace Him in His *ministry*, very much after the same manner, (in the next chapters, ii—iv.) from the highest elevation of ministerial *power and glory*, till He reaches the most marvellous condescendings of ministerial *grace*. As Lord of creation, He

turns water into wine, not merely supplying but creating provisions for a feast. He is then, as Lord of life and death, saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then, as the One who knows the thoughts long before, like God searching the heart, we read of Him, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Then coming, as it were, out from the *glory* into the *grace* of ministry, He waits upon a poor, slow-hearted, timid soul, that sought Him by night, because, Gideon-like, he was afraid to seek Him by day. And at last, He seeks a poor outcast, and that, too, in the sweetest, richest condescension. He will be her debtor for the meanest of all gifts, a cup of cold water, that He may win her confidence. He will have all the secrets of her conscience out, that He may get Himself and His healing in. Wondrous! The One who began this course of ministry, as God turning the water into wine, here at the end of it appears as One who

needed for Himself a cup of cold water at the hand of a stranger.

What a path is this!

But it is not merely the perfection of ministerial grace that is seen in this last action, the fulness of divine strength and glory is also in it. This asking for a cup of cold water was just what none could have done but God Himself.

Does this surprise us? It may at first, as the burning bush surprised Moses. But by listening and worshipping, we may find God in this action, as surely as Moses found Him in that bush.

God Himself, at the very beginning had raised a partition wall between Himself and His revolted creature. The cherubim at the gate of the garden, with his flaming sword, keeping every way the way of the tree of life, was as a partition wall. The difference between clean and unclean, set up and instituted in the earliest patriarchal times, was the same. (See Gen. viii. 20.) And the same middle wall was

but strengthened by a thousand hands, under the direction of the lawgiver afterwards, God's holiness demanding this testimony to itself in a polluted, departed world. God could not own such a dead and defiled thing. But God's grace found out a way whereby to bring His banished home to Him. That is, He has found out a way whereby He might be just while the justifier of a sinner. This is His glory, His *own* glory. "There is no God else beside me, a *just God and a Saviour*, there is none beside me." He who raised the middle wall *alone* can break it down. But this He has done. This He did by the cross, by the blood of His own Lamb. As soon as that was shed, as soon as the life, the eternal life, was yielded up, in sacrifice and for reconciliation, God Himself broke down all partition walls. The vail of the temple was rent from top to bottom, the rocks were rent also, and the graves of the saints were broken open. This great vista was thrown wide open, from the high heavens to the place of the

power of death. Both the vail and the grave gave way, when Jesus gave up the ghost. The brightness of the highest heavens beamed upon the eye of the captives of death.

This virtue of the cross is, accordingly, now, in this gospel age, declared. "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity." And again, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." This is the great fact published by the gospel, in order that sinners, believing that God Himself has done this, has, in grace, crossed the boundary which separated us from Him, might, by faith, cross it after Him, and meet Him in the place of reconciliation.

Now, this is the very thing that the Lord Jesus is doing at the well of Sychar. A partition-wall was there. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Rightly so. The Lord Him-

self had said to the twelve, "into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." God had raised all partition-walls, whether by the ordinances of the law, among the circumcised patriarchs, or by the sword of the cherubim at the gate of Eden. And no hand of man or angel could, by his own authority, or in his own strength, touch a stone of such a building. David attempted it, and he failed. (2 Sam. xiv.) But God would not have one stone of it upon another; and here, at the well of Sychar, Jesus anticipates that. He crosses the boundary. He asks drink of one who was a woman of Samaria. This was breaking down middle walls with a strong hand, and crossing boundary lines with a firm step. But He who had raised them in righteousness can break them down in grace through righteousness. And that is what Jesus actually does in the cross, and what He anticipates here.

All this was enough to amaze her who was on the opposite side—and it did so. She sees the ruin of the wall,

and she marvels. But the Lord did not build again that which He had destroyed, but encourages her to do as He had done. In divine grace He had crossed the line from God's side of it, and he would fain draw her from that side of it where sinners lay in their separation from God. And He accomplishes this.

But it is always the *conscience* that must do this. It is conscience that has put us on the other side. Conscience put Adam within the trees of the garden, and it is that which keeps us all "short of the glory of God," or of the divine presence in peace.

It is, therefore, the conscience that must cross the boundary, and it is that which Jesus brings across it on this occasion. He exposes her to herself, He convicts her, He lets her know all things that ever she did; but it is *in that very character* that she reaches Him. (See ver. 29.)

Have we crossed it, as she did? with all the recollections of conscience, without keeping back a secret, have we

reached Him? If His glory were to break full in the twinkling of an eye, are we conscious, this moment, that we should not "come short" of it? As in spirit we sometimes sing:—

"The day of glory bearing
Its brightness far and near,
The day of Christ's appearing
We now no longer fear."

This is, indeed, with this sinner of Samaria, to be on the right side of the boundary line, to be treading, with firm foot, on the ruin of all partition-walls, in His *peaceful* presence now, and looking to be in His *glorious* presence for ever.

SKETCHES OF SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS.

ENOCH.

Abel, the example of righteousness and of its fate in this world, we have seen cut off by the hand of violence,

while Cain the murderer, "who was of that wicked one and slew his brother," lived on and became the progenitor of a race distinguished by all the characteristics and aims of the men of this world. They *were* "the men of the world, who have their portion in this life;" the "men of progress" of their day. And accordingly they are celebrated for their energy in the building of cities, and the arts and embellishments of life have their birth-place amongst them. But faith looks to the future and unseen world, and expects the triumph of righteousness here only as the result of the judgment of the wicked who have corrupted the earth. Hence the posterity of Seth are marked only by the principle of their separation from the apostacy of Cain and his family. ("Then began men to call on the name of the Lord," or to call themselves by the name of the Lord.) And besides this testimony, their history is only a record that they lived their days on earth, and died, leaving no monuments of their fame or traces

God took him to dwell with himself in heaven. Blessed and triumphant issue of a life of faith and of a separated walk with God!

One effect of Enoch's walk with God is seen in his being made the depository of His counsels, as Abraham also was in a later day. "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" But Lot, who was indeed delivered from the judgment of Sodom, which was revealed to Abraham and awakened in him the spirit of intercession, was not near enough to the Lord to receive his communications—those blessed pledges of His *confidence* as well as tokens of His condescension and grace. Enoch testified of the coming of the Lord, and of the judgment it would bring upon the wickedness by which he was surrounded, and from which, in spirit and conduct, he was separated by the power of faith that associated him in his walk with Him, concerning whose coming and judgment he witnessed. Though, doubtless, the flood was the immediate and proximate

of their greatness on the earth. Their "record was on high."

Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," was of this family, and is distinguished by his separation unto God, and by his testimony of the coming of the Lord to judge the wicked of the earth, and by the victory over death which closed his walk with God on earth and was the crowning triumph of his faith. "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Adam, as the result of his sin, was driven out from the presence of the Lord; Cain in his worldly-mindedness *voluntarily* left that presence; but Enoch's record is, that he walked with God—not in a paradise as Adam, but in the midst of the increasing evil of the world and in the common everyday circumstances of ordinary life. He walked with God on earth, and

judgment on which his testimony bore, the Spirit of the Lord shows it reached beyond this to the Lord's coming with His saints to judge that evil and apostacy at the close of the present dispensation, of which the epistle of Jude so solemnly speaks. Unlike Noah, whose faith carried him through the judgment of the old world, Enoch's faith rested in the hope of translation from the scene of evil on which the judgment was about to fall. He sees the judgment coming, and warns of its approach, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment," &c.; but the rest of his own heart is found in a daily walk with God, in moral separation from all that was bringing on the judgment, and in the certain hope of being with God when it was executed.

So conversant are we with corruption and decay, and all the consequences of sin, that there is something wonderful in the thought of being taken, without the intervention of death, in our own persons, and living, from the scenes of

this world, into the presence of God in that world where He manifests Himself apart from all evil in the goodness of His own eternal nature. But this is the very hope—and form of its accomplishment—which is set before us in the reception of the gospel. We are converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. "We shall not all sleep." "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Perfect is that victory which Christ the Lord of life has gained over death, so that He can say, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Still, to be effective in the soul, Enoch's hope must be coupled with Enoch's walk. Who can question that the practical effect of those words, "so shall we ever be with the Lord," is neutralized too often in the heart, by the lack of those affections toward the Lord, and of that confidence in Him

which are alone awakened by an habitual walk with Him? How can the heart long for the presence of God in heaven that is not at home in His presence habitually through grace on earth?

But there are two things which are essential to a walk with God; (for I am supposing that the heart is established with grace:) a knowledge of His character and will as revealed to faith, and an apprehension according to the judgment of God of the moral character of the scene around. If I am to "walk with God," I must have a heart at rest in His presence through grace, and also affections and desires which can find their satisfaction in the known and apprehended character of God—a heart that can delight in the contemplation of His goodness, and that can take pleasure in intercourse with Him as the eternal portion of the soul. Then also there is the reflective influence of this walk with God in the soul's moral judgment of things. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk

in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Consequently a walk with God necessitates a separation in heart and spirit from the course of this world. The action of divine grace which puts the soul in relationship with God at first, is characterized as a deliverance from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father; (Gal. i. 4;) or, in the words of Christ, "I have chosen you out of the world," (John xv. 19,) and never can the subsequent walk with God, in the scene from which grace has delivered us, be in contradiction to this fundamental principle. And surely nothing can be more interesting than to see a man surrounded by evil and corruption, and in the midst of the trials and difficulties of common every-day life, with his heart so raised above everything around him, as to show that his resources are in God Himself, and his whole spirit, and conduct, and ways, moulded and

regulated by his walk with God, and by a reference to His will. For we must remember that in this testimony concerning Enoch and his faith, it was not that his person and worship were accepted, as in the case of Abel, but that *his walk* was sanctified and moulded according to the perfect will of God. "For before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God." His faith was not exercised merely with regard to the exigencies and circumstances of this life—in which lower walk of faith, alas! so many fail—but in raising his soul above these circumstances so as to be able to walk in harmony of spirit with God. And yet, on the other hand, there is the simple record of his earthly associations, in his having had sons and daughters, that we might not fail to see the one side and the other of our walk in this world with God. And it is observable that the declaration in Hebrews xi. 5, that Enoch, "before his translation, had this testimony that he pleased God," gives occasion to the statement, "But without faith

it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Or, in other words, the faith which leads to a walk with God is not conversant with abstract truths, but with God Himself; and it leaves not the soul at a distance from God, but brings into living, habitual contact with His infinite goodness, so that His being, and character, and moral dealings, are living and eternal realities.

GOD VISITING HIS PEOPLE.

Luke iv. 14, to v. 11.

In this part of the gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus enters on His work and the character in which he presented Himself before men. His ministry was, of course, in Israel, still in the wide sense it was before men. It is not here the work which He did, His service and preaching, as the *proof* of

His mission; nor is it the doctrine of His divine nature, as presented in the gospel of John; but it is what He was revealed as man, filled with the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. It is the Lord Jesus presenting Himself to man as God visiting His people; and this not only in the glory of His person, but being filled with the Holy Ghost as man. Man, in his deep misery, needed Him, and the Lord Jesus came, as the vessel of divine power, revealing God in grace in the midst of the scene of Satan's power. He had been owned as God's Son, and filled with the Holy Ghost; and now, after having overcome Satan in all his temptations in the wilderness, (for "the devil, having ended all his temptations, departed from him for a season,") he returned in the power of the Spirit, and taking his place with the remnant in Israel, we see Him going about in the perfect power of the Holy Ghost, and as man overcoming evil (free Himself), thus manifesting the power of God in man.

Now this is not promise, neither is it doctrine; though both are most right and precious in their place; but it is the accomplishment of promise in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It is the Lord Himself coming into the evil, and manifesting *perfect grace* and *perfect power*. This He ever does for us, although there is a change in the working of it out, since He has gone up for us into the glory. It is a very different thing to have promises, and to have *Him* in whom the promises are accomplished.

It is indeed a great thing to have promises: they are most precious as blowing up the fire of our faith; but they are not the object round which our affections can gather. But round the person of Christ they can. That blessed centre gathers round itself from the evil of this world, and awakens by the revelation of all His grace, hopes, desires, and affections, which find no rest but in Himself: delivering us from this present evil world by His divine power.

He came to Nazareth, where He was known, and read in the synagogue out of the prophet Isaiah, where it is written, "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," and so on; and then "He closed the book and sat down, and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began to say unto them *this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" "The promise was in scripture, but this day it is fulfilled in myself. Here it is, *it is I myself*. And if promise has awakened any hopes and desires in your souls, in *my* person alone will be the fulfilment of them; for the fulfilment of the promise is in ME." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME; he hath anointed ME," &c. &c. Here was perfect, unmingled grace.

In Isaiah there had been various pleadings and calls for repentance, (see chap. lix. 1—16,) and in the midst of all this comes forth this PERSON. "The

Spirit of the Lord God is upon ME." (chap. lxi.) It is a *person*, not a promise, and therefore deliverance and unmingled blessing. The person of the Lord Jesus having come in, who is the link of blessing, and perfect, unmingled grace, we hear no more of judgment, except to clear away the oppression of the enemy. God's love having been made manifest in the appearing of Jesus, it was "the acceptable year of the Lord," because the person of Jesus was there. Therefore in this 4th of Luke He says nothing about "the day of vengeance of our God," because that was not yet come, the Church having to be gathered first. Christ is always true in Himself, in His person; but no doctrine, nor promise can give us Christ Himself as present with us. The Lord may have to chastize us, but whenever He presents Himself to our souls, His person gives perfect peace. It is this perfect grace and perfect blessing that subdues and gives us lowliness of heart, gentleness of spirit, and quietness in the midst of

trouble. Suppose the world is going on badly, Christ is not going on badly; if the Church has failed, Christ has not failed; so then my heart is in perfect peace. Christ says, "Here am I;" and if He is here, everything is at His charge. Let "the day of vengeance," or what will come, if I possess Himself, all is perfect peace, for in the person of Christ we get everlasting life. It will be *thus* in the millennium, and it is this that gives the blessedness of the 145th Psalm—Christ being the blessedness in *Himself*. But now Christ is here for the sorrowful, the poor, the lame, the blind, the halt; for their souls find in their very wants the key to unbounded blessing and unmingled grace. The moment their eyes gazed on His blessed Person they got what they wanted. He came in the midst of sinners to bring in perfect grace.

But now He goes on to show the way in which grace will be received by nature. There was no perception of it after all that they had witnessed; for they say "Is not this Joseph's son?"

The Father had said of Him, "This is my beloved Son," "and all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth." Then was the Son of man sowing the word and it touched them, for it was adapted to their need, and there is nothing so intelligent as a *want*. You will never satisfy a hungry man by explaining to him what *bread is*; he *wants* the bread itself. But not apprehending the one who can alone meet the want, the heart does not find its rest. Not laying hold on Christ, through the unbelief of their hearts, they wonder at His words and say, "Is not this Joseph's son?" "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician heal thyself. Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in *thy country*." As he says in another scripture, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Thus the Lord, in effect, says, If I come

as a *man*, I cannot do any mighty works, because of the *unbelieving heart of man*, who will only account me as a *man*, because he looks only on the outside. "Is not this Joseph's son?"

But there was a sense in which the power of God would work, and show that sovereign grace would outstrip and over-step these bounds of mere nature, and go where sin and misery needed Him, even to the widow of Sarepta. But when this grace of His heart is intimated, they were filled with wrath, and would have cast the Lord down the hill—hating the grace that would act in sovereign goodness. For if man cannot have God in his own way, and on his own terms, his pride is wounded, and he will not have God at all. Because the natural heart, not looking beyond the surface, cannot bear God to go beyond, in His grace, the limits of their narrow thoughts. Nevertheless, all this does not hinder the Lord from showing that grace has power in itself, and adapts itself to bring in all the deliverance needed by

poor, guilty, lost man. And in the 34th verse, we see the very demons knew *who* the Lord was, and what He was about; for these demons knew full well that He was *not* "*Joseph's son*" to them. "Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, *the Holy One of God*. It is man only who is dull and stupid; for these demons knew who and what He was, when man, to whom all this grace is adapted, was ignorant of Him.

But grace does not stop because of man's malice. Satan was holding man captive, and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and he came out of the man, and hurt him not. And it is blessed to see that but one single word of this blessed One will drive Satan away; a proof of His grace and power towards man, and of a power not to be resisted acting on these demons. He is God, I need not say; but here it is power in the vessel, man. This was not a doctrine nor a promise merely; He Himself was there in living power as man. As man, and Son of God, too, He came

the activity of love, doing good, and all diseases vanished, and demons disappeared before Him; but still He was the servant, for when they sought to stay Him amongst them, He could not remain, for He was not come seeking *self*, but the good of men. He was the servant, the *sent one*. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John iii. 8.) Now "promises" are most encouraging to our faith, and "exceeding precious;" (2 Pet. i.) but we never read of promises destroying devils. Promises are not "the powers of the world to come." Miracles (for it is the same word,) are these "powers of the world to come," because effected by the perfect power of Christ, whose shall be all the power in the world to come; and when Satan will be bound, so that he can do no further mischief. The reason why in Hebrews it is called "the powers of the world to come" is that it is part and parcel of this very same power of Jesus, which up to the moment of the

amongst us in all our misery and ruin. This is, indeed, "goodwill to men." What a deliverance! We may not have yet fully known it, it may be, still *there it is* for faith to rest upon; *all His power is for me*. It is not simply *in God*, but He comes and interests Himself in man, as man; and we have *always* the love and the power which interests itself *for us and in us*. This is unchangeably true, although it now works in a different and more glorious manner.

The next scene is in Simon's house. There we find sickness nigh unto death, and who can resist this but He who came to take our infirmities and sicknesses upon Himself? "Jesus of Nazareth, the man whom God anointed 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*,"—as Peter says in Acts x. 38. What a thing it is, what a glorious fact, for poor lost man to find man so used as to be a vessel of this mighty power! Christ went about in

world to come, comes in, in grace and power, to deliver man.

But the Lord came in the grace which entitled Him to gather souls round Himself, and to communicate this power to others. This is quite a different thing from working miracles, and giving the power to others to work them. But a power has come in which has touched the springs of my heart, and convinced me of sin, thus making me a vessel of this grace, so that I may convey the same grace to others; being made the channel of it, because I am living in the present enjoyment of it in my own soul, thus making us, as He did Peter, to be catchers of men. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Simon Peter had followed Christ, when John the Baptist spoke of Him, but he had returned to his ordinary occupation of fishing, when the Lord came and entered Simon's ship and taught the people. And when He had done speaking to the people, He said to Simon, "Let down your nets for a draught. And Simon said

unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, *at thy word* I will let down the net." Here we see Simon is obedient to the *Lord's word*, and the Lord meets him at this point. For so great was the draught of fishes, that their nets brake, and they filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. The power was thus seen, but with it the consciousness of having no strength to receive this power. The *nets brake*, and the ships began to sink. But we find this power working in Peter's soul, and revealing the utter incompatibility of God to man, which makes him say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The person of Jesus being revealed to the soul, the utter unfitness to be with Him is felt in the conscience; and the effect of this is, that the soul takes Christ's part against itself. It takes the Lord's side to maintain His glory; for righteousness is planted in the conscience. I am a judged man in my conscience, and then I can only say,

self, but what is it for a poor sinner to be used in making known this grace to others! This is the power which detaches from everything around; for they left all and followed Him. It was not now Judaism or ordinances, but gathering grace that was at work. And it is now a divine manifestation drawing out and gathering the soul into the revelation of Christ, and then it is able to say, "I am a new creature in Christ Jesus." When the Lord was upon the earth He was drawing poor souls to Himself; but the chief priests and Pharisees could not bear this divine manifestation of grace.

There can be no mending of man except by giving him an object directly the opposite of that which is in himself, and which will necessarily make him exactly the opposite to all that he ever was before. There must be the gathering up of the soul into the thought of the Lord Jesus.

'You ought not to stay with such a sinful man as I am; you ought not to stay in such company'—"depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Peter's conscience having been reached, and having judged himself as God judged him—as a *sinful man*—immediately the Lord steps in, and, in the mighty power of His grace, says, "*Fear not.*" The Lord came into the ship to teach Peter this grace, for He knew full well the state of his soul; and He brought him into this position that He might come in upon the sin-stricken soul in the power of His grace, saying, *Fear not.* But not only did the Lord deal with Peter in grace, but, having emptied him of self and filled him with grace, He says I am now going to use you as a "vessel meet for the master's use." For *now you know what man is*, having learnt your *own heart*; and you know what *God is*, having tasted *His grace*: "from *henceforth* thou shalt catch men." It would be enough to praise God for throughout eternity that I was gathered my-

THE SAINTS' PRAISE, AS TAUGHT AND LED BY CHRIST.

There is much more method in the Psalms than is generally supposed; but I cannot enter at present into so large a subject. I would draw the reader's attention only to four of them, and in particular to some points in the character of the last of the four, a psalm with which every reader of scripture is familiar—the 22nd.

In the 19th Psalm we have two great witnesses of the power and thoughts of God. First, from verse 1 to 6, the witness creation affords, and especially the heavens: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork." From the 6th verse to the end, the perfection of the law is spoken of—the question of man's keeping it is not here introduced, it is the perfectness of the law itself which is insisted on, and its value for the soul of man, wherever it brings its light, and the moral power of its instruc-

tions. These witnesses have their own unchangeable character. Man has been able to corrupt and change the face of the earth, and judgment and destruction have come upon it, death and misery. What is reached by man is, alas! corrupted by man. But the heavens, and the sun in its course, proclaim with bright and unvarying witness, blessed be God, beyond the reach of man's corrupting hand, the glory of Him that made them, and,

"Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

* * * * *

For ever singing, as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine.'

Man may have, indeed, perverted these witnesses of power to idolatry, but where man does not reach, all creation still proclaims the glory of God its Creator. So with the law: flesh under it is dis-

midst of corruption; man, perfect in love to God and to his neighbour; in a word, the witness of divine love and human perfectness in the midst of corruption; passing through it, meeting it in grace, to show that the love of God could, and did, reach to these corrupt ones; passing through it in perfect holiness and righteousness, to show that it was God's love which did thus visit them, as, indeed, it alone had a title to do so. But this Blessed One came in a peculiar manner. He came according to prophecies and promises, in the midst of a people whom God had prepared for this purpose; a people to whom the promises had been given according to the flesh, amongst whom, after their redemption out of Egypt, all the prophets had appeared; who had the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the public worship, and the revelation of Jehovah, the one true God, whose law it was, and by whom the prophets were sent.

How was the promised Messiah, the Christ, received? We all know He was

obedient and perverse; the law itself, of course, changes not. It bears witness to the mind of God about man, though man under it may not keep it; and it gives no life that he may, and so obtain righteousness by it. But another witness, of deeper and fuller character, one who was a witness to the nature, as well as to the power of God; one who manifested the righteousness which the law claimed and taught; and, besides that, revealed and displayed God's love in the midst of the sin and corruption in which man was, appeared amongst those who were guilty of the sin, and under the bondage of the corruption. Christ was amongst men. It was not merely creative glory displayed in the heavens, the work of God's hands, the moon and the stars which He had ordained, shining above, and unreachd by man's corruption; nor the law, the rule of right in man, which he could not corrupt, but which condemned him because he was disobedient to it. It was love itself: God, who is love, manifested as man in the

despised and rejected of men, a scorn of men and an outcast of the people. They saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The perfection of the witness He bore caused His rejection, and for His love He found hatred. The Christ found a day of trouble; scorned and rejected by the people to whom He came in love, and according to promise and prophecy. It is in this state that He is seen in Psalm xx. and prophetically addressed as by the little remnant whose hearts were under the influence of the Spirit of God. It is, of course, in Jewish terms and thoughts, but the comparison with Psalm xxi. shows clearly to whom it applies. Indeed, in the 6th verse, the person who is the subject of the Psalm is said to be Jehovah's anointed, that is, His Christ. The little residue of those who favoured His righteous cause, seeing Him rejected of men, desire, in the prophetic

testimony of the Psalms, earnestly His acceptance of God, help and deliverance from the sanctuary. They see the perfectness of the desire of His heart, and their own would fain behold the fulfilment of His counsels. Helpless themselves, and not here reaching to the height of God's counsels in redemption, these witnesses of Christ's sufferings, (as Peter calls himself,) as observers of His trouble, and penetrated with love to Himself, look to one who is their only resource, to look on the righteous One, and hear and grant the deliverance a Jew expected from the sanctuary in Zion. In Psalm xxi. we get the inspired answer to this godly desire, already anticipated in verses 3 and 6 of Psalm xx. In Psalm xxi. they celebrate, prophetically, the triumph of the Christ. He has been heard. (Compare xx. 4, and xxi. 2.)

But now we have His desires explained, His earthly sorrows opened out. Death was before Him. (Comp. here Heb. v. 7.) He asked life of Jehovah, and He is heard. But how,

after all? In length of days, (as man,) for ever and ever. "His glory," they say to Jehovah, "is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty thou hast laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." (Comp. Psalm xvi. 10, 11.) He was prevented with the blessings of goodness, a crown of pure gold set on His head. In a word, the rejected Messiah is exalted by the right hand of God, and set in glory and majesty above. In these two Psalms, therefore, we have the rejected Messiah exalted by God, honour and majesty put upon Him, and length of days given Him for ever and ever. He had suffered *from men*, been despised and rejected by them, and God has glorified Him as man. Mark the result. His hand finds out all his enemies, His right hand those that hate Him. He makes them as a fiery oven in the day of His anger. For they intended mischief against Him, which they were not able to perform. As He said by parable Himself: "Those

mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." In the day of His anger the glorified Christ will execute judgment on His enemies. Man had despised and rejected Him, imagined mischief against Him, and judgment will be the consequence for men.

But the sufferings of Christ had a far deeper character. He suffered from the hand of God. He suffered for sin. From man He had suffered for righteousness' sake, and had hatred for His love. From God He suffers for sin, being made sin for us. Here He is alone, none to sympathise, none to stand by, and with true though feeble interest, at least in spirit, take an interest in His sorrow. In the 20th Psalm we have seen this. In the Gospels we may find Mary anointing Him for His burial, those whom the Lord owns having continued with Him in His temptations, who, in spirit, would take up the words of the psalm, if trouble came on Him: "Jehovah hear thee in the day of

trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." But when He comes to suffer from God for sin, to pass through death its wages, who could go with Him there? Who could pass these waters of Jordan when they overflowed all their banks? "As I said to the Jews, so now say I to you," declares the Lord to His disciples, "whither I go you cannot follow me now." This was true of the power of death itself as the path to glory. But more than this, in atonement what place could the sinner have? Christ drank that cup that we might never drink it. Hence, while in the 20th Psalm the saints in spirit are looking at Christ suffering with deep interest and affection, whilst they can look on, and observe Him, and love Him, in the midst of rejecting scornors; in the 22nd Christ speaks Himself and alone. None could observe with sympathy, or fathom, or express, what the suffering He there underwent was. The words are in the mouth of the sufferer who was alone, and alone could express them. He was there, no

doubt, suffering from man and as man. Dogs and bulls of Bashan had closed Him round, but His cry was to Jehovah, that He, at least, would not be far from Him. But no, the fathers had trusted and were delivered, but this Blessed One must drink the cup to the dregs. Perfect and sinless, He could say, "*why* hast thou forsaken me?" We have learnt and say why. It was for us. He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Here then the Lord was suffering from God, the forsaking of God, that dreadful cup for the Holy One, in His soul. He was suffering for sin, not as He did from man, for righteousness. And now mark the blessed result. Is it judgment? He was bearing it for us. Was sin to be brought on any? It was Jehovah Himself who was bruising Him, and who put Him to grief. Sin was put away for us there. What is the result then? Unmingled, unhindered grace. The bar to the full outflowing of love

glorified in Christ, that the cup should not be drank, that Christ should not undergo, not merely the fact of death, but the forsaking of God.

Now, though we see the Lord giving up His spirit to His Father in perfect peace, yet the resurrection was the great answer of God to His demand of life. That was the power of God entering into the place and seat of death, and taking the man of His delights out from among the dead in the power of an endless life, declaring Him His Son with power, and giving Him His place according to the counsels of God. It was man set up by the power and according to the counsels of God, and by the love and glory of the Father, where, as regards Christ, He deserved to be, and the Father's delight was to place Him. He was placed before God and the Father as the One whom He delighted in, and as His Son in blessedness (sin being put away). This was the relationship in which Christ stood as man before God and His Father. This was the name of God towards

was taken away in the putting away of sin. Till Jesus was baptized with that baptism, how was He straitened. Not surely in His own bowels of love; but God, consistently with His glory, could not exercise His love and make light of unrighteousness. Surely this was no making light of it. God could now give the fullest scope to the highest and divinest exercise of love shown in, and indeed, in its results, founded on, the redemption that was there accomplished. God was glorified there, and the glory of God was the result for Him that had accomplished it, and that glory is now to us the hope of righteousness by faith. God could not endure sin, but He could put it away perfectly in grace as that which He could not endure, instead of putting the sinner away in his sins from before His face, because He could not endure them. But there is more than this: Christ was heard because he feared. His appeal was not unlistened to, though it was impossible, if we were to be saved, and God fully glorified, and man fully

Him. A Deliverer from death and all the consequences of sin which He had borne, and a placing Him in righteous glory and infinite delight in His presence as Son. This is the name which, as heard from the horns of the unicorns, He declares to His brethren. Such was His first thought. How sweet is it to see this! The moment He has entered into the enjoyment of this name, of this relationship with God, He must bring His brethren into the same relationship and the same joy. Previously, indeed, unless in the very vague expression, "my brother, and sister, and mother," He had never called them brethren. The corn of wheat abode alone. Now redemption was wrought out, and He could bring them into the same place of blessing as Himself: His precious love does it at once. "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And such we find to be historically the case. Speaking to Mary Magdalene, to whom He first appeared, He says, "Go tell

my brethren that I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He declares to them the name in which He rejoiced with His Father and God, saluting them as His brethren. God is our Father as well as His, our God as well as His. This is most blessed. If, indeed, taught by the Spirit, we enter into this love. But the place the Lord then takes shows how thoroughly He sets us in this place of perfect blessing, where He is Himself. "In the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto thee." How sweet to see the Lord leading the praises of the congregation, the poor remnant whom He has gathered by His death and quickened unto joy by His resurrection. Alone, when it was suffering and death for sin, He gathers them all to Himself for the joy He has wrought by it. And mark the result as to the true character of our praise. Christ, as thus risen into blessedness, having declared to His brethren the name of His God and Father, *His* praise must be the perfect

His God and our God, or it is out of tune with Him, who leads so blessedly these praises. We must praise with Him on the ground of that blessedness in which He praises, or it is discord. Oh for a heart to know and, in some measure, to rise to that place and praise, which such touching and infinite grace gives us. Nothing can give a deeper, more subduing idea of the grace, the perfect grace, into which we are brought, and of the grace of Him who brought us there; of the complete deliverance and sure relationship which we enjoy, than Christ Himself leading our praises, as heard and entering into this place. What must His be? But it is in the midst of the congregation He praises. Oh that indeed by the Spirit our voices may be attuned to follow that praise, that leading, inspiring voice of Him, who has loved and not been ashamed to call us brethren; and is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. The degree of realization of joy, the sweetness and loudness of our joining note, depends,

answer and reflex of this blessing, of this blessed relationship as *He* enjoys it as man. And after toil and pain, after death and anguish, after wrath and the righteous forsaking of God, oh, what to Him must have been His entering, as risen from the dead, into the ineffable light and joy of God's countenance, in the perfect place into which He had come by that path of life. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand pleasures for evermore." Into this He now brings His brethren. He leads the chorus of praise. Thus our praise must be according to the fulness with which Christ knows and enjoys the blessedness of the fruit of His work, and the relationship into which He is entered as man in virtue of it. It must answer to the name He declares to us as heard from the horns of the unicorns and risen, that we may join Him in praising His Father and our Father,

of course, on our spiritual state; but no note that is not founded on the perfect peace and joy of redemption is at all in tune there.

But we have seen that Christ's sufferings from man for righteousness brought judgment on man. His hand will find out all His enemies. But His sufferings from the hand of God for sin bring only blessing, the out-flowing of grace alone. This is remarkably shown in this 22nd Psalm. We have seen its character in the remnant of Israel, gathered by His grace, and who formed the nucleus of the Church, be they Jew or Gentile. Next, as it will be accomplished in the latter days, He turns to all Israel, that His praise may be in the great congregation. (Verses 23—26.) Next, the word goes forth to all the ends of the world, to bring them in to this blessed circle of praise. Are they fat of the earth, they eat and worship. Are they, be they who they may, those on whom death lies, who go down to the dust, (and no man can keep alive his own soul,) they must

be witnesses of this mighty deliverance by the dying and risen Saviour—that is when the *kingdom* is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations. The seed that shall then have been spared shall serve him, and then it shall flow down to other generations. "They shall come, and shall declare unto a people that shall be born," this great and wondrous work of redemption, that that blessed, lowly, afflicted One "has done this." All is the fruit of redemption and victory. Judgment has stilled its voice. That great deed of atonement, of love and righteousness upon the cross, has left it silent and gone, to make room for the voice of unmingled praise. It is not promise merely now. It is not that they *shall* be filled who hunger after righteousness; that the meek *shall* inherit. "They that fear the Lord are to *praise* Him, the meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that fear him, their hearts will live for ever." Such is the blessed fruit of the perfect atonement for sin which that blessed One, forsaken of

Jehovah—awful thought!—has accomplished for us; never so acceptable to Jehovah, never so perfect in obedience, as when, as to His soul, He suffered for us the forsaking of His wrath. Now the fruit, in unclouded light, is unmingled and unhindered praise, which He who had tasted and drank that dreadful cup of ours, first teaches us in the name of Father and God, in which He delights in righteousness and love, and then leads in the blessed chorus of praise, in which we shall adore for ever and ever, His Father and our Father, His God and our God, in, and through, and with Him.

Now, it is for our hearts, through *faith*; hereafter Israel's, and the world's, and the people to be born, the universal witnesses of the power of that work to reconcile and bless, when the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations. For us, though now in suffering, in a better and heavenly way, but to His just praise then in all the earth.

FRIENDSHIP.

The Lord Jesus speaks of this privilege as belonging, through divine riches of grace, to His saints, when He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." (John xv. 15.)

This friendship, this communication of secrets, gives a wondrous sense of gracious and confiding intimacy. When we pray, we feel that we *need* something, when we serve, or when we worship, we judge that we *owe* something—at least that *He* is worthy—but when we are receiving communications—not commands as from a master, but communications as from a friend—we listen, without any necessary reflection upon our own condition, freed of all sense of either need or obligation. Our proper attitude then is *sitting*—neither standing, like Martha, as to serve, nor

kneeling, like Mary, to worship; but like Lazarus, sitting. (John xii.)

The inspirations of a prophet are not equal to the communications which a friend receives; they do not intimate the same nearness or dignity. A prophet receives an inspiration as a vessel or oracle, and he may understand it or not; a friend *learns* secrets on the ground of *personal confidence*.

All the elect are, I grant, according to the grace and calling of God, endowed with this privilege; but among them, I believe, *Abraham, Moses, David, and John* had it very conspicuously. They illustrate it.

Abraham was told what the Lord was about to do with Sodom. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do," says the Lord; and then tells him of the business which was then taking him down to Sodom. (Gen. xviii.)

What a moment that was! The Lord had come to Abraham's tent at Mamre, and there sat at his table and his feast. The *Judge* of Sodom was

communicating with the *conqueror* of Sodom; the divine Judge of that vile, reprobate place, with him who had already through faith and the victory of faith, refused all its offers. Again, I say, what a moment! and in the confidence which all this inspired, Abraham drew near and stood before the Lord, while the attendant angels withdrew and went on their way.

Full of blessing, indeed, this is. And so Moses in his day; for we read, "And the Lord spake with Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Exod. xxxiii. 11.)

Wonderful! The Lord dealt with Moses as a man will deal with his friend. He talked with him. (See v. 9.) We are not told what He said, because it is the business of the passage, rather to exhibit this grace of intimacy, or divine friendship, than to convey information to us. But we do learn the use which Moses makes of this gracious friendship, the very same use which Abraham of old had made of it. He speaks to the Lord

up Mount Olivet with dust on his head in the day of Absalom. He was a *worshipper*, too, singing and dancing, as he bore the ark of the Lord to Zion. But David was a *friend*, as Abraham and Moses had been. He received communications from the Lord through Nathan; and then, as one whom the Lord, in the ways of His grace, had thus endowed and privileged, "he went in," as we read, and "sat before the Lord." Beautiful and wonderful, but withal right. To have stood or to have knelt then would not have been obedient or holy—for holiness is consistency with God—and if He "mourn" we are to "lament;" if He "pipe" we are to "dance;" if He convict and reprove us, we may be in sackcloth before Him; but if He deal with us face to face, as a man speaketh to a friend, we may and should sit before Him.

But again, John was the nearest to Jesus at the last supper. He lay on His bosom. And thus it was he who reached the secrets of that bosom. Peter in the distance *used* John's near-

about others, just as Abraham had done. He pleads for Israel as the patriarch had pleaded for Sodom. The Lord had approached Moses as His friend; He was not receiving him as His suitor or His debtor; it was fitting, therefore, that Moses should occupy the place and the moment in a manner which showed freedom from himself.

And never, I may say, was Moses nearer to the Lord, not even when on Pisgah, He was showing the land to him in its length and breadth. Indeed, the two places were of like elevation, for the Lord was communicating to Moses in each of them. Here he "talked" with him, there He "showed" him. In spirit they were the same place, and that the highest; such as he and Elijah afterwards filled on the holy mount—for there, as we again read, they "talked with Jesus." (Luke ix. 30.)

And so David, as we see in 1 Chron. xvii. David was a *penitent*, wearing sackcloth in the day of the plague, and going

ness, and the Lord *admitted its title*, and gave him the privilege of it. John pressed that bosom afresh, in the confidence of an Abraham or a Moses, that the secret which was there would make itself his. (John xiii. 25.)

Surely all this tells us of the peculiar grace of this wondrous thing, this state and relationship of "friends" into which the Lord has called His saints. And we see the glorified saints in the full use and joy of this privilege; for on the holy hill (and to which I have already, in a passing way, alluded) Moses and Elias "talked" with Jesus. Sharing the glory, they knew the *privileges* of it, while Peter, beholding it, felt the *power* of it, saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

It is not to present something strange or striking that I notice all this, but rather to aid the soul in assuring itself of that love wherewith the elect are loved—a love which gives us a place where, forgetting both our need and our obligation, neither kneeling to supplicate nor standing to serve, we may sit

to listen and receive communications, as a man is talked with by his friend. And when we see this to be a way of His grace, we may be still conscious of slowness of heart in ourselves; but we cannot but know that we are in possession of a love on God's part which passes knowledge.

And here, let me add, that this privilege or grace of friendship, of which we speak, is *eminently* ours. It is illustrated in the apostleship of Paul. Paul was let into the secret which had been "hid in God" before the world was, the good pleasure which God had taken in Himself. (Eph. i. iii.) And this was not inspiration as of a prophet merely; it was divine communication as to a friend. For Paul *knew* the secret and knew it for himself. This was more than a prophet. It was this ancient privilege of the elect, at which we have now been looking, but rising into its church-form, or fulness. In our apostle, and so in us, this privilege takes us into strange and excellent intimacy. "Having made known unto us the mys-

on the person of Jesus. Mere nature could be careful and troubled about many things; but nature will never sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His words. It can trouble the house with the importance of its service, but will never fill it with the odour of the ointment.

Note, too, how affection to the person of Christ guides to the right sort of service, even when there is not positive intelligence as to it. The fact is, it is this affection to Christ's person that keeps people right.

Mark xv. 15.

"And so Pilate, willing to content the people." There we get the spring of his conduct. Its fearful enormity does not at first sight appear. It would seem that he could not help it. The people were bent on their purpose. Very possibly,—but if *they* are bent on crucifying, why should I lend myself to aid them? I might not be able to prevent it, but at any rate I could keep

tery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." And accordingly we "sit," as David of old did, or as Lazarus of Bethany did, but it is in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 6.)

This excelleth. Friendship, as we have seen, is no new form of grace. It has been among the privileges of the elect from the beginning. But with us it has peculiar elevation, as everything else has that belongs to the Church.

FRAGMENTS.

Mark xiv. 3—9.

Is there not something analogous going on now?—a readiness to object to service done to the person of Christ, as if the energies thus employed were wasted, and should have been spent on the poor—a talk of philanthropy which would hinder from breaking the box on Jesus. It is much easier to give to the poor than to spend our affections

myself from being a party to it. O! there is need in this day of individual attachment to the person of the Son, need of *weighing the worth* of Jesus, and deciding to have Him or the world.

"HOW MANY LOAVES HAVE YE?"

Mark vi. 38.

The Lord uses what the disciples had. It was but little—nothing for such a multitude; but when blessed and broken by Jesus, it goes a great way. The God who gave life could sustain it, independent of means, or multiply the means to make them adequate to the need. So now, it is what "we have" that Christ uses. Use what we have in faith, and He will make it meet the need of all present. It is the power of God giving efficacy to His word, that makes much or little a blessing, and without that, plenty is in vain. In ministry of the word, the grand end is getting the soul, through the presentation of Christ, brought into living

connexion with God. True ministry does this for the poor; the rich go empty away.

THE WORD PRECIOUS ABOVE EVERY-
THING, OR AN OFFENCE.

Mark iv. 16, 17.

Note, how vital *root* is—secret life. If the word has given life, only the word can satisfy it. The rain which cometh oft upon it will be relished. And needed, too; for as there is no power of life in the heart, so there is no source of nourishment if life exists.

But if I have got divine life through the word, it will be everything to me. If I have found my joy in God's word, persecution or affliction, because of it, will make me cling to it the closer. Persecution, in such a case, would merely come to rob me of my treasure. But if the word has never separated me from myself, by the gift of a new eternal life in Christ, then if trouble comes for the word, I shall give it up to keep myself—*my* life.

wrong, or, if right and appointed, have been deprived of their use, and turned to man's self-exaltation: witness all ecclesiastical things, sacraments, (so called,) &c.; and anything that does not minister Christ, and to Christ, in us, the hope of glory, is aside God's purpose. The rule of a family, the needful works of life, child-bearing, all are places and circumstances of exercise of the grace of eternal life. Confession of the kingdom, as well as the rejoicing in the grace, is needful; and I am sure those who fail in these will suffer loss in that day. The use of the assembly is not answered, if this end is not understood. Worship is, on its own ground, as heavenly, but the assembly for these things is on the earth, and its obligations one to another are on this ground, with confession and prayer. "To what were ye baptized?" is a proper question to ask on this behalf.

"SAW YE HIM WHOM MY SOUL LOVETH?"

Canticles v.

Note that when the bride, through her slothfulness, or rather security, has caused her beloved to depart, she does not try to hide this and to seem to beholders as if she were in His love. No, there is thorough honesty. For He was her all, and if He was gone, it was a real grief and loss. Beholders were nothing to her—it was Himself she sought. Her fellowship was a real thing, and the loss real too. To find Him again was her great concern.

"TO WHAT WERE YE BAPTIZED?"

It is very true there are individual and common shortcomings, but to have God's end before us is most needful from first to last. It is last in execution, but that is always the thing first in intention. Moreover, it guides all intermediate steps and means, which, if not convergent to *the end*, are either

MANOAH'S WIFE.

Judges xiii.

It may sound a little strange and harsh at first, but I believe, on a little meditation, it will be found that while reading the epistles of the New Testament, we might seasonably, and profitably, and to the great comfort of our souls, keep in mind the words of Manoa's wife to her husband in Judges xiii.

Manoah himself, at the time, was in fear, for he had seen God, and, as he said, he thought he should die. But his wife said to him, "If God were pleased to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering at our hand, neither would he have shown us all these things, nor as at this time have told us such things as these."

A very simple, beautiful, and convincing piece of reasoning. Faith is *always* the best reasoner, because it *uses* the arguments which God Himself suggests, as in this case. The

simplicity of this woman is apparent all through the narrative. Her husband was rather a devout and good man, who walked more in a *praying* than in a *believing* mind; but she was more simple and confiding; inapt, I can suppose, to reason at all, save when the Lord, as here, supplied her with arguments.

Now, *this* has struck me, that this very same *believing reasoning*, as I may call it, may well, and suitably, and comfortingly, be our's, when we read the Epistles. For in them we find (as Manoah's wife found in the words which the Lord had spoken to her) such wonderful secrets communicated to us, and such wondrous grace shown to us, that we can do nothing less than rest, as she did, in the blessed certainty of this, that our God has no purpose against us. In the epistles we find ourselves brought into such near relationship to God, made acquainted with such deep secrets of His bosom, so encouraged to bring ourselves, our burnt-offerings, and our meat-offerings, to Him in a

sanctuary of peace; that His purpose to pardon and save us finds no room to be questioned. The Lord would not, He could not, after the manner of the epistles, have set us in the place of children, and friends, and worshippers, and heirs, had He not set us in the place of safety and peace. The less is surely included in the better, as this simple-hearted woman reasoned for the encouragement of her husband.

And according to this, I may say, God Himself, in the epistles, treats pardon and acceptance very much in that way. It is rather *assumed* than *taught*. If the Spirit of God in the apostle Paul be recalled to the subject, it is because the heart of man is so disposed to return to the law, and to the elements and rudiments of the world, the religiousness of ordinances.

The question of pardon and justification suits the presence of God, as a *Judge*. It is before God in that character that such a question is to be argued and disposed of. But in the epistles, God speaks to us, His saints, ra-

ther as a *Father*; or, as from a sanctuary where He proposes to meet us as *worshippers*; or face to face, as a man would speak to his *friend*; or as the One who has set us *with Himself in heavenly places*. Surely He would not thus deal with us, if He purposed to "kill us," or to put us under law, and in the fear of judgment.

Indeed, the reasoning of the apostle at the close of Rom. viii. has exactly this character in it. Like Manoah's wife, the apostle reasons on what God has supplied, and he concludes (of course, I know under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost) that the less is included in the greater. He challenges the inferior thing in the name, and in the certainty, and in the authority, of the superior: and this is what that simple-hearted woman did. She said, God will not kill us, because He has accepted our worship, and spoken to us. The apostle says, He who spared not his own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things. Who can lay

anything to our charge, since God has justified us?

This is quite of the character of the word in Judges xiii. And our place and privileges, as we read them in other epistles, entitle us to be bold after the same manner. Thus:

In Galatians, *relationship* is the leading thought. Divine righteousness is vindicated and asserted, it is true, but this is done as leading us to the great and blessed mystery of relationship, or that condition of children, the seed of the free-woman, in which we stand through grace.

In Ephesians, our *personal, heavenly dignities* in Christ are unfolded to us, forgiveness of sins, or redemption through blood being rather assumed or taken up by the way.

In Thessalonians, we are exhorted and encouraged on the ground of *the Lord's coming and glory*. But our interest in that glory is treated as a thing sure and settled.

In Hebrews, our place as *worshippers* is opened to us. We are taught to

know ourselves within the vail, and that our proper service there is to be occupied with the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

Thus we are, in these epistles, treated as either children, or heirs, or friends, or worshippers. We are looked at as in divine righteousness, or as in the adoption of sons, or as in heaven in Christ, or as in the sanctuary of peace and praise, or as expectants of glory. And surely each of these may well entitle us to ask ourselves, for the great comfort and establishment of our souls, would God have thus and thus spoken to us, would He have thus and thus brought us into relationship to Himself, would He have thus accepted offerings at our hands, had He purposed to "kill us?" Nay, had He purposed to put us under the threatenings of law, and the fear of judgment?

Yes, and even further. The very precepts we are called to listen to, and in dutifulness to observe, address themselves to us, in all the epistles, as *saints*. We are assured by them to be the elect

of God. Responsibilities attach to us, as such; they intimate, as another has lately said, a state of *relationship*, and not a state of *uncertainty*. We are not to listen to the precepts which we find in the epistles, as if we were standing under the fiery hill, or listening to the thunders there, as has, before now, been said also by another.

What of this, I ask, can be gainsayed? Had Manoah any answer for his wife? To accept the rebuke at her hand was both his wisdom and his consolation; and it is ours. The weaker vessel is again, in this case, doing good service in the house of God. If Deborah strengthened the arm of Barak for the fight; if Abigail, by godly counsel, turned the erring purpose of the soul of David aside; if Priscilla helped to teach Apollos the way of God more perfectly; we may rejoice and be thankful to accept from the Lord, at the hand of this obscure unnamed woman, of the distant tribe of Dan, this fitting and happy encouragement of our souls. She says, in her

way, as the great apostle of the Gentiles, under the Holy Ghost says, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

THE GLORY A MORAL TEST.

Isaiah vi.

It is amazing how little the minds of Christians entertain any thoughts about what the present judgment of the Lord may be as to their individual or collective estate. Generally speaking, all questions are merged in the one of final, individual salvation; as if to believe, so as to get to heaven, answered all the ends of God's glory and Christ's redemption. As to any practical acquaintance with the judgments of the Lord, in their moral bearing, everything is left in a vague and undefined way, to what another world and the final awards of eternity may disclose. "But the grace of God, that

bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the *glorious appearing* of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 11—13.) That is, the believer being set between the manifestation of God's infinite grace, in the appearing of Christ, for the accomplishment of redemption, and His coming again in glory, is called to have his whole moral being in this world in conformity with these termini (or limits) of his course. Every motive and desire should bear the stamp either of the cross or the glory. For if God's end in grace, as it has been said, "is to gather companions for Jesus in the glory," His object with them, as to this world is, that their character, and aims, and position, should be a witness of this, before the glory is revealed. As it was said of Israel, "ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

Now, nothing appears to be more

simple than the application of the light of scripture to the moral condition of individual, or collective associations of believers, to determine whether it is in accordance with God's thoughts or not.

In this vision of the glory of the Lord, the practical application to Israel's moral condition is simple and direct; and it affords, also, a principle of universal application,—namely, that the moral condition of the heirs of the glory ought to answer, in this world, to the glory to which they are destined; and to be thus the reflex of the character of the God of glory. But this point is not left to the application of a general principle. In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, there is a similar vision to the one we are considering, of Christ's glory, in its bearing on the moral condition of the Church, as set to be Christ's witness on the earth. In this vision Christ appears to John, not as the accomplisher of redemption, nor as the High Priest of our profession in His office of un-

failing intercession, (not that these have practically ceased,) but in the glory which belongs to Him as "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Or, in other words, it is Christ as He is about to appear in the display and vindication (and application, too, in judgment on the earth) of that glory of which the Church ought to have been the witness. In application, therefore, the addresses to the Churches are, in effect, the sentence of apostacy, as in Isaiah, beginning with the charge to Ephesus of having forsaken its first love, and ending in utter rejection in Laodicea, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." But it is not intended now to pursue this farther than as it is an illustration, in reference to the responsibility of the Church, of the principle of the vision before us in Isaiah; for it is manifest that the condition of the churches is judged of by their accordance, or otherwise, with the glory of Him who was seen by John in vision.

In our chapter the glory of Jehovah is manifested to the prophet as the glory of Him with whom Israel was associated (in name at least), and through whom it was to be manifested in all the earth. Consequently, it at once becomes the test of the moral condition of the people; for God's glory has ever its own moral character of holiness attached to it. Hence the prophet 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 when grace comes in personally to the prophet, as symbolized by the touching of his lips with the live coal from off the altar, it is only to make him the herald of Israel's apostate condition. He said, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat; and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears

and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." But this is not an arbitrary and unconnected message, any more than the glory is a mere majestic breaking in, of God on the prophet's mind, to inspire him with awe. For the display of this glory was necessary to afford (if I may so speak) the standard of admeasurement of Israel's apostacy, or departure from the Lord. He might, indeed, have said, as in Jeremiah, with regard to their forgetful unbelief of their signal redemption from Egypt, to which they owed their existence as a nation, "neither said they, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt," &c., but He here gauges their departure from another point,—their unfitness to be the witnesses of His glory. Their departure from the Lord in both respects was manifest, for they had failed to maintain their position in the redemption which had been already accomplished, and they were unfit to be the vessel of the display of the glory with which they were nomi-

nally associated. For how is it that Israel saw not this glory? It was but Jehovah judging from His sanctuary. And if the bright radiance of His throne was not always, as now, manifest, still He was ever the "Holy, holy, holy Jehovah of Hosts;" and His glory could never be associated with that which was inconsistent with its moral character of holiness. But the sentence of the prophet, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not," &c., is but the moral reflex of the glory, as it throws its detecting beams upon the condition of the people that are professedly in connexion with it. They neither see nor hear, nor can they be the medium of its display; but judgment must waste the nation until it leaves only a small remnant, or "the holy seed as the substance thereof." "The kingdom of God must be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Then, "he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called Holy, even every one that is written among the living in

not the day of their merciful visitation when He, of whose glory Isaiah spoke, the Christ, the Jehovah of Israel, was manifested in grace among them; and now their "house is left unto them desolate." And in the case of the professing body now, the failure which began in apostolic days, will end in a total rejection, by the Lord, of the Church, viewed in its character of earthly witness, as utterly distant from accordance with the glory of Him by which everything that bears His name must be tried. As to individuals (as in the case of the prophet) there is the personal application of grace, and with it, if viewed aright, the sense of general departure, relieved only by the hope and expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus to take His heavenly Church to Himself ere He is manifested in glory; when there will be the execution of judgment upon that especially which falsely bears His name. But the habit, even of Christians, of estimating the importance or otherwise of all truth by its bearing on individual sal-

Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by *the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.*" (Isa. iv. 3, 4.)

But in truth everything is, and everything *must* be, estimated by its accordance or otherwise with this glory. If it be the question of sin, it is "all have sinned and come short of the *glory of God.*" If of divine mercy, it is "vessels of mercy, whom God hath afore *prepared unto glory.*" If of heavenly hope, it is "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall *appear with him in glory.*" If of final earthly purpose, it is "As I live, saith the Lord, the whole earth shall be filled with my *glory.*"

In the case of Israel, the subsequent dealings of the Lord have confirmed the sentence of apostacy, on the nation, which came forth from the glory, as well as brought on them the judgments threatened in the neglected warnings of the prophets. For alas! they knew

vation, neutralizes almost every moral consideration drawn from the glory of God. But surely it must lead to wrong conclusions, if I make my own safety or well-being the centre of all my thoughts, when the centre of all God's counsels is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He it was who "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted *him*, and given him a name which is above every name: that at *the name of Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

But can there be a stronger proof of unfitness in the body that bears Christ's name to witness for His glory, or to enter into that glory, than the way in which the hope of His coming is lost sight of? To the mass His coming has only the aspect of judgment instead of joy and hope: so entirely has every-

thing changed since it was said of believers that they were "looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," and "waiting for God's Son from heaven!"

REDEMPTION.

Exodus xv.

It can be well understood after so trying a scene as that in which Israel had been, the sea before them shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing them behind, that "they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord, and they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" But although they had "cried unto the Lord," they had not in their hearts, as we see, calculated on His delivering them. Therefore it must have been a most wondrous thing to them when God

between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people." But *here* we read, (that is, *before* they get under law,) the Lord gave them "in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full." (Exodus xvi. 8.) And when they came to Rephidim, where there was no water, the rock was smitten for them, and they get water. All this was *continued grace*, that Israel might know how entirely God was bent on doing them good, *bad* as they might be.

It may be well to distinguish, for our soul's profit, the difference between the passover in chapter xii. and the redemption through the Red Sea in chapter xiv. For a person may hear the gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections going out after him; still, if all this is not founded on redemption—on his having come through the *Red Sea*, DRYSHOD—when temptation comes, down he tumbles, and away goes all his

was so publicly manifested to be on their side. So is it with us, when we are thus tested: with trial on every side, shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances instead of calculating upon the God, who is above them, to deliver us from them.

Israel, it will be seen, was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. But afterwards, through their folly in getting themselves under *law*, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In Exodus xvi. we see that when they murmured for *flesh*, God gave them quails, *without any reproach*, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on the ground of *perfect grace*. But afterwards, when under law, (as in Numbers xi. 33,) when they again murmur for flesh, we read, "while the flesh was yet

joy. Now the joy of this 15th chapter is, that God has absolutely redeemed Israel from Egypt and the Red Sea, and has brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. *This* is, as we shall find, a very different thing from getting joy merely from our being screened from judgment at the pass-over in Egypt.

The distinction between the passover and the Red Sea is this, that in the passover God had made Himself known to them as a *God of judgment*; therefore the blood on the door-post was necessary to screen them from judgment. It kept God out, and He *passed over*; for had He come in to their house, as a God of judgment, He must have destroyed them as well as the Egyptians; for they deserved it quite as much; nay *more*, for they knew better. But at the Red Sea it is quite another thing. There it was God coming in strength, as a man of war—as their salvation. The passover delivered Israel from God's judgment; the Red Sea delivered Israel from their enemies. The moment

they become in danger from Pharaoh and his host, God comes in, and in the "greatness of His excellency" overthrows them in the sea. The very sea which they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes, under the power of God, the means of their salvation. It was "through death that He delivered from death." Like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan; went down under the power of death, and by rising again from the dead delivered us who through fear of death, were all our life-time subject to bondage. Thus there was an end of their ever seeing an Egyptian again. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt, and God Himself is become their salvation. He, whom they had feared (and justly) as a Judge, is now their salvation. They *are* redeemed; no longer now hoping for mercy. So it is with a soul: on having entered into the blessed effect by faith of Christ's death, it is not only that the blood screens from judgment, but the God that was feared is his

I must have a complete and *known redemption*. Israel were not only happy in escaping their pursuers; but it was a complete redemption known, and therefore they could count on God's power for everything else. They can now say, "the people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." (ver. 14, 15.) This was Rahab's experience, as she says to the spies: "As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." (Joshua ii. 11.) Israel's joy does not arise from having *no* enemies, but from God having taken them up and put them in His own presence. But farther, (ver. 17,) it is said, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the

Saviour. Now Israel can rejoice that judgment is passed, and sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation, to God Himself, in the light, as He is in the light. He had brought them up from among the dead into the light of His presence. And here observe, that they are brought into God's presence, into the light, as God is in the light, before they have taken one step in the wilderness. For there can be no conflict, till redemption is known. Israel did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh. The only question with them was how to get away from him. They had groaned under his yoke; but they did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first. They must be made God's host, before they can fight God's enemies or their own. So is it with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan, while I am his slave, for there can be no conflict in slavery. I may groan under his yoke, and desire to be delivered from him; but before my arm can be raised in fight against Satan,

place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." This was yet to be done. Israel was already with God in His holy habitation; so we are in God's presence, but not yet in the place His hands have made; "in the mountain of *thine* inheritance." It is not Israel's but *God's inheritance*. So in Ephesians the apostle prays, that they "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." It was God's land that Israel was to dwell in; and the Father's house is our dwelling-place, and He will bring us in, so that there is no fear of the enemies by the way: to faith they are all powerless. Full and entire confidence belongs to redemption. "Well, then," as men would say, "it is all plain sailing now!" No, not at all. If I **have** redeemed you, I am going to bring you to Canaan, and therefore you must **pass** through trial. And in chapter xvii. we see that it was "according to

the commandment of the Lord," they "pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink." It was a dreadful thing to be three days in the wilderness without water. It was almost insupportable. Does not this make redemption uncertain? No, not at all. Yet it was a dreadful thing to have no water. It was certain death in that country. And when at length they came to water it was bitter. Now this is trying work. But it was for this very thing that God brought them into the wilderness, to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The "bitter herbs" did not show what was in God's heart; redemption had shown that; but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. What can this all mean? Israel had been redeemed for ever, and then to bring them into a place where they had not a drop of water to drink! To be sure; this is the very effect of redemption; and so it is with us. Being redeemed for ever, there are a quantity of things in us that have to be

putting His finger on everything, be it love of the world, setting up of self, my own will, or whatever else it may be, that hinders my soul's enjoyment of Himself. As I said, He will put in it that which sweetens; but, "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." For as surely as you are redeemed, so surely will God break down your own mind and will. Yes, God will make you drink the very thing that has redeemed you. Now, Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them; He gave them statutes, &c., but He did not do this before He had redeemed them.

Israel had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God. Israel now learns God in a new character, as "the Lord that healeth," which is a different thing from His promise that if obedient, He would put none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They had been exercised by

brought out and corrected. When they get the water, as we have seen, it was so bitter that they could not drink it. But all this is because they must drink into the power of death, and then God makes the waters sweet. So we must all *practically* learn death; for being redeemed we have got life. This cannot be learned in Egypt. Israel had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, and one's own will. Now all this is deeply trying; and that is just what God would have it to be. A person might say, all this trial is come upon me, because I am not brought into redemption. But no. It is because you *are* redeemed.

We may seek to avoid these bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them, because He must break down all that is of the old man in us. It is true that in His own good time He will put in that which sweetens. But because God has redeemed me, and brought me to Himself, He is now

God that they might know God as the "Healer." And it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before a God of grace, that it may know God as a "Healer." We cannot escape it, for God will so arrange circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes, indeed, we are humbled before men, and this is very trying; *this is, indeed, a very bitter water!* But, then, what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify oneself.

As soon as "the tree" (i.e. the cross) is in the waters, then they refresh the soul. First, it is joy in redemption, then joy in tribulation, and now joy in healing. First, God makes us sing in the knowledge of redemption; then, secondly, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption, which is the enjoyment of God in our souls; (the flesh that is in us can never do that;) our own will, worldliness; and a host of things in us, will be hindering it until God has dealt with them, and broken them down, and then we learn God as a "Healer." "But," say you, "what

do you mean by my knowing God as a 'Healer,' if I am redeemed for ever?" Well, it is this, when you have a complete and known redemption, then God suffers these trials to come upon you, and, indeed, brings them about to teach you what is in your heart, as he says, "that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." God Himself knew what was in thy heart, but He will also prove it to thee, and then thou wilt know Him as a "Healer."

After this, "they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters." Now, Israel experiences the natural consequences of being with God, the full stream of refreshment, as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of this dependence on God for everything; for Israel would not have had the conflict which produces dependence, and dependence communion. Flesh, with all its train, would have

unto them which are exercised thereby." Flesh is not faith; and what is more, we cannot walk in the path of faith without faith. Therefore we must be put to the test. If I lose my trust in God for one moment, that very moment flesh comes in under some form or other. The very moment I feel perplexed, or at a loss what to do, my eye is not single. It shows that I am out of communion, or I should know what to do. If my eye were single, my whole body would be full of light. Then there must be something yet to be detected in me, something I have not yet found out in my heart. It may not be wilful sin, but still it is something which God will exercise my heart about, and about which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah-Rophi. Thus as it is in Romans, we first have joy in tribulation, and then joy in God. It is not merely that we are redeemed, but refreshed in the wilderness by the God that has redeemed us. Let us therefore not think some strange thing has happened to us, because of the trial we may have to pass through.

been unbroken. It is only for this that He delays, for God delights in blessing His people. The numbers twelve and seventy are different figures of perfection; perfect shelter and shade: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night;" and perfect streams of refreshment from God Himself; and all this in the wilderness, and they rest there. But Israel must be exercised at Marah, that they may fully enjoy God at Elim. Redemption had brought them to God, but now it is joy in God. So it is with us; although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. Whatever trial we may be in, however great the trouble, even if drinking the very death that has redeemed us, if we can only see God's hand in it, only discern the cross of Christ in it, then we get that which sweetens it, in the understanding of God's mind and purpose in it. Not that "chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness

RELATIONSHIP.

The elect of God are not only justified, but adopted. They are made children.

This divine purpose touching us began to disclose itself in earliest days. Under *the patriarchs*, or in the times of the book of Genesis, there were many notices of it. The barren wife becoming a mother, and keeping house; the free-woman's child casting out the bond-woman's; the servant set aside, and one out of the patriarch's loins made heir; the feast over the weaning of the child of promise; and Jacob, by a solemn ordinance, adopting the sons of Joseph into the family of Abraham: all these things bespeak this mystery. They let it be heard, (though faintly, as with an infant's voice,) that God would be a *Father* to His elect, that He would have *children*, and not merely servants, in His house.

Thus was it under the Patriarchs, or in the times of Genesis. The purpose of God to have us in the adoption of

children was thus signified—not distinctly or doctrinally taught, but intimated in ways which suited these early infant days.

Under *the law*, this mystery, I may say, is lost sight of. The elect are no longer at home, as in the Father's house, but they are at school, under tutors and governors, differing nothing from servants. The spirit of bondage is received by them through Moses, the covenant, of which he was the mediator, gendering to bondage. But God in His proper blessedness in Himself, as I may say, was not there. His demands in righteousness, as Lawgiver, addressed themselves to man through Moses; but this was not a revelation of God. Man, in self-confidence, led the Lord thus to deal with him. By the law God, if I may speak in such a way, had to take up man as his object, instead of making Himself man's object. For law was not a revelation of God. It did not discover God in His full proper glory to the soul.

Law was a new thing; and it was a

great change; and among other results it operated after this manner, to hide away this mystery of adoption, or relationship, which had, as we saw, begun to tell itself out in Genesis-days, among the fathers. And thus was it under the law. The law put man in an independent attitude, instead of setting him in personal family relationship to God.

Under *the ministry of Christ* a change again takes place. This relationship, of which we now speak, begins to be testified afresh; in its measure to be dispensed. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become *the sons of God*." In John's gospel, this is written, and throughout that gospel the Lord is manifesting the Father. This may be perceived by the soul that is attentive. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," is again the Lord's word in that gospel. His works and His words were the Father's, expressions in Him or through Him of what the Father was. "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the

works," says Jesus, of all that He Himself was doing and saying. And at the end, surveying His accomplished ministry, He again says, speaking to the Father, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." (Chap. xvii.)

This great divine purpose, the manifestation of the Father, leading the elect into family relationship, is thus found very specially in John. In the course of that gospel, the Lord is constantly hiding Himself that the Father may be seen. He calls Himself advisedly, again and again, "the Son of man;" and keeps Himself before us under titles that bespeak subordination, such as the "sent" one, the "given" one, the "sealed" one, the "sanctified" one, in order that *the Father* may be apprehended. He is careful ever to bear witness to the Father, to bring the Father before the thoughts and affections of His disciples. He would have us learn this happy secret, that the Father seeks to be known by us, and that His business, the business of

the Son, is to fulfil this pleasure of the Father, by bringing us into that knowledge.

And thus was it, I may say, under the Lord's personal ministry, very specially however marked in John's gospel. Now, in this present time, under *the Holy Ghost*, relationship, or the sense of the Father, is made good to the soul, fully, perfectly given, in abiding life and certainty, to the heart of the elect. For the Spirit given to us is a Spirit of adoption. Not only are we sons, but we are made to know that we are so. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." We are delivered from the *bondage* of the law, as well as from the *curse* of it. All St. Paul's epistles assume this, I may say; but that to the Galatians clearly and fully teaches it. It is no longer, as it was in patriarchal days, by indistinct notices, or as with an infant's voice, that the mystery of adoption, or relationship to God as a Father, is told, but the power of it is inlaid in the heart, where the Spirit of the Son cries,

Abba, Father. The early pledges of this great mystery, which we noticed in the Book of Genesis, are all made good. Nay, they are exceeded. We are now taught that we were *predestinated* to the adoption of children; and that our adoption is of the highest order, "accepted in the beloved," made one with the Son. The barren woman made a joyful mother may be said to be now realized in this, that we have received power to become the sons of God, being born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Abraham's zeal to have children, and Sarah's joy over her child, are alike surpassed now; for the Father makes a feast to celebrate His own joy, and the joy of heaven with him, over His regained child. And Ephraim and Manasseh set, during patriarchal days, in the rights of the first-born, is now out-done, through exceeding riches of grace, in the elect being made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

It is therefore relationship which is

of the Son, the indwelling witness of the Spirit, all unite in constituting us sons, or establishing our souls in the joy of relationship. (Eph. i. 5; John i. 12; Gal. iv. 6.)

We are *on* the work, but we are also *in* the person of the Son, and this relationship is both the title and the secret of "fulness of joy." (1 John i. 4.)

There is no *personal* condition beyond this. The only thing that can be added to it is the outward or circumstantial state of glory. And the two regions lie near each other. "If children, then heirs." The kingdom of the dear Son is next door, may I say, to the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. i. 12, 13.)

What a grief it is to see this grace of adoption, in which we are set, either clouded or deserted! The Galatians had been beguiled, bewitched. They were observing days, and months, and times, and years. This was contrary to their condition as children of the free-woman; for subjection to ordinances generates bondage, and keeps

dispensed in this present time, for the Spirit given is a Spirit of adoption. It is not pledged merely, or published, or sought for, but in the power of the given Spirit it is dispensed, established in the soul. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

And John in his epistle would have us know that the establishing of the elect, in the joy of relationship, was the great end of the grace of God in this present age. The manifestation of the eternal life of Him who was with the Father, has been made, that we might have fellowship with the Father and the Son. The conclusion is, "now are we *the sons* of God." That is settled. The elect are set in this relationship of children, and they wait only for full likeness, conformity *in glory*. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The purpose of the Father, the work

us *as servants* in the house, and as *Levites outside the veil*. Therefore the apostle had to travail in birth again with them till Christ was formed in them, till the Spirit of the *Son* filled them to the exclusion of the spirit of bondage—as Isaac, in due time, was brought forth to fill the house of Abraham all alone.

Thus have we rapidly glanced at this precious mystery, as it is seen in scripture, from beginning to end; under *the patriarchs*, under *the law*, under the ministry of *Christ*, and now in this time of *the Holy Ghost*.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S DEALINGS IN GOVERNMENT AND HIS GRACE IN SALVATION.

Exodus xxxiv. 1—9.

It is evident that this time at Mount Sinai was of immense importance as to the revelation of the grounds on which God can be in relationship with men.

Of course these are imperfectly unfolded here; for only in Christ have they been fully manifested. Still, as to the ways and dealings of God, we get principles of immense importance. In 1 Cor. x. we read, "these things happened unto them for ensamples;" that is, as marks and sign-posts to us; only (as in Hebrews) we must let in the light which has been given subsequently.

It is of all importance for our souls clearly to apprehend the difference between the grace found here and the foundation ground on which our souls rest. It is of importance that we may know God; for we know Him in His daily dealings, and we know Him in salvation. We must never forget this broad truth, ("otherwise grace is no more grace,") viz., that the ground on which God was dealing with the people was *law*, though grace had come in. This is of amazing importance.

Moses attempted to put the people on the ground of grace, but he failed. He went up, hoping to make atonement. So he said, "If thou wilt forgive their

sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." But this would not do with God. He said unto Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned, him will I blot out of my book." Whosoever sinned was to be blotted out, although grace had come in. The people never stood on *mere law*; for they had broken the covenant as soon as it was given, and then grace had come in; for at the intercession of Moses they are spared. (xxxii. 14.) Now here we get a mixture of grace and law, a thing which, alas! we find in so many souls. God spares them, but puts them under law, after He had spared them.

In speaking a little from this scripture, I wish to bring out the distinction between God's dealings in government and His grace in salvation—between His *dealings* with a soul in respect of its relationship with Him and the *ground* of that relationship.

As to Israel, the ground on which God set them as a nation as to acceptance was obedience—their obedience.

Now that ground was tried and it utterly failed. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" God has pronounced upon this probation—"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

But now, as to righteousness, a totally different thing is brought in—now we get a principle entirely new. For "now the righteousness of God, *without the law*, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." God in grace has come in; and now it is not my obedience in order to acceptance, but the obedience of another for my acceptance. Now the acceptance is singly Christ's and nothing else; and "therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Faith does not rest on anything in me. Faith rests on something out of me, that is, on Christ. As re-

gards acceptance, the soul rests, first, on the precious blood of Christ, in which it had no part except in shedding it, and then in Christ's acceptance for righteousness. "We are made the righteousness of God in Him." "*By the obedience of one* shall many be made righteous." (This is, of course, connected with life, but of this I do not speak now.) The law rested righteousness on personal obedience. "Whosoever sinneth I will blot out." Grace rests righteousness on the obedience of another; and so now it is not the sinner who is blotted out, but his sins, let them have been never so vile. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

Now we must never confound the dealings of God with the ground of acceptance. How often is a quickened soul desiring the love of God above all things, and filled with fears because not finding an answer to this love! which plainly shows that he has never found rest in the righteousness of another. As regards this revelation of the

goodness of God to Moses—"I will make all my goodness pass before thee," &c.—it is not the righteousness of another that is revealed as the ground of acceptance. Here He proclaims the name of His relationship with Israel, "Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious." Now this is not the name by which He has revealed Himself to us. "To us there is one God, *the Father*." This is the name which Jesus has declared to us. "I have declared to them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Now that is not the character of the revelation here. It is the name of God as in connexion with Israel. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, . . . forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." That is not atonement. But the very thing God is now doing

In Moses personally we get the ground of acceptance, but in the people we do not. Whenever Moses came to the people they could not stand before the glory of his countenance: he had to hide it. If I see the glory of God in the face of *Moses* I dare not look at it—it confounds me—I cannot answer to it; but the moment I see the glory in the face of *Jesus*, I see that it is in one who put my sin away. I come now to God because my sin is put away. I cannot stand in the presence of God at all unless my sin is entirely put away. Who, knowing what God is, and what sin is, could dare to go into His presence if sin is not fully gone? So if now we can go there at all, it is because sin is put away. Then all the affections get into play. Having got to God and learnt His perfect love, all the exercises of the soul are according to the holiness of the house to which I have been brought. I get chastening if it is needful, and if it is needful, help.

Now suppose I find in myself stiff-

is clearing the guilty. Here I get God gracious, and merciful, and patient; (if Ahab humbled himself, God would not touch him;) that is, this revelation of His goodness is as to His manners and ways with them. As to His ways with them, He forgives them. He retreats into His sovereignty, and so He is able to spare them. This is a blessed revelation of the character of God as to His dealings with His people in relation to *their walk*, for here there is no question of *acceptance*. I must be perfect to have acceptance—I must be righteous to have acceptance. And this we get in Christ. "Who of God is made unto us . . . righteousness." Once fully settled on the ground of grace, we get here a blessed pattern of the gracious ways of God in His dealings with us. All these dealings are founded on acceptance. If I am not clear on acceptance I shall confound the judgment of particular failures, and God's disapprobation of these, with the ground of acceptance in the blessed person and work of the Lord Jesus.

neckedness, what am I to do with it? God in government may strike, as He did the rock by the hand of Moses; but that will not get me through the wilderness. The earth may open, as in the case of Korah and his company; but neither will that do. Here it is that priesthood comes in. Priesthood is to maintain my soul in righteousness before God in the place to which I have been brought. Thus we are enabled at all times and in all circumstances to be constantly reckoning on grace as to the daily government of God.

God had said, "Put off your ornaments" (humble yourselves) that I may know what to do with you. Then he said, I'll not cut off, but I'll not go with you: I'll send an angel. I know you will be rebellious, and if I were to go with you, I must cut you off. But Moses pleaded with God on the ground of grace; (for he was in the place of grace;) and the moment he did so perfect grace came in. (See chap. xxxiii. 12—14.) Thus we get three things: 1st, God says, "I have seen this people,

and behold it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone that I may consume them;" 2nd, "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way;" and 3rd, Moses says, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people." Thus we see that Moses, on the ground of the revelation of the grace of God to himself, gives, as a reason for God's going up, the very reason which God had given why he could not go up. And so, as soon as I have learnt grace, the very evil I find in myself—my stiffneckedness (and it is awful; for who has every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?) is a reason for pleading with God to be with me, because I am stiffnecked. Have you got over your stiffneckedness? No, you have not. Will you ever get over it? No. Well then, you must have God. What a sense of grace is in this that Moses (who entered into the grace) says, Be

necked? If, when I have sinned, I say, Perhaps He will blot me out, it is standing on law; but the moment I understand that Christ died for me, and that He is my righteousness, the ground is altogether altered, and I find God occupied with me constantly, and I say, Go with me, for I am a poor, stiffnecked, rebellious creature. What a God we have! No wonder if God be with me when I am walking with Him; but to know that he is occupying Himself with my failings! Well may we say, "We joy in God!"

Thus we have seen the entire difference between the ground of acceptance with God, and the government of God with His saints. And the one must be known in order to the blessedness and profit of the other. For the full connexion with God as to His holiness, I must have the full sense of perfect acceptance. You may see one person occupied with the government of God, with exercises of heart, &c., but all in the dark as to acceptance; whilst another is free as to acceptance, but

with the people, for they are bad. Have your hearts entered into this, to be calling on God because you are bad? If not, you do not know grace.

Are you thinking of mending before you go to God? Can you *mend*? If you fail, you may think I cannot go to God, but I'll go to Christ as a mediator. That is wronging God. It is not said, If any man repent, but "If any man sin, we have an advocate." That is, I have failed, but Christ has not failed. He is still before God. The intercession of Christ is the activity of God's own grace to break down, to humble, and to bring us back to Himself. For now that we are in Christ, He will allow of nothing inconsistent with Christ. It is this that brings out the knowledge of God. There is blessedness—there is joy. Is it not? He does not say, I'll pray the Father, but calls on our hearts to trust His love. What marvellous love! It is patience beyond all thought. Have our hearts this kind of confidence in God to say, Go with me, for I am stiff-

careless as to God's daily dealings. We cannot neglect either without loss, for we have *less of God*.

RESPONSIBILITY IN HEARING THE TRUTH.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Mark iv. 14—29.

As this gospel of Mark gives us the character of the Lord Jesus, as the obedient servant, so likewise do we find this service of Christ coming out in a most remarkable way. In every act, the divine glory of Christ is standing out in virtue of His service, and is manifested by it, and not merely by miracles; although that also is true in its place. But if Jesus takes the form of a servant, there must be the divine power for the accomplishment of the service. If it be the mere healing of the body, (if Jairus's daughter is to be raised,) divine power must be there to do it. He had to make good the word

of God spoken in Exodus xv. 26, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," and that could not be done but by divine power. He is content to be as the servant, but if He is God's servant, there must be this divine power, although with the entire abnegation of self, as He said, "I do always those things that please him." But no act of His service could be accomplished without this divine power. For if sins are to be forgiven, "who can forgive sins but God only?" And He forgave their sins; "thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And thus all through His service we clearly see the divine glory brought out.

But then another thing comes out, which is, that when He ascended up on high He transferred the same Spirit and power of service to His disciples, and so to us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

When the Lord was down here, He took the place of *sower* in connexion with others. For He is not now seeking fruit, but producing fruit. He had

As if He had said, 'I am looking for whatever you have received to come out again;' and according to the kind of reception the truth has met with in our souls, will there be the fruit produced, "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold."

Then, secondly, between the time of His sowing and His coming again to reap, while the seed is springing and growing up, "he knoweth not how," the Lord is apparently inattentive to the whole thing. During all the toil and exercise of heart accompanying the service, the Lord is apparently unconscious and unmindful. Tares spring up among the wheat, without His taking any notice, or interfering at all, leaving it all to the exercise of faith in the labourers, while He, in one sense, is doing nothing.

Thus, when they were crossing the sea, they get into trouble by reason of a storm that came against them, and while they were *toiling* against it, He was fast asleep on a pillow, in the hinder part of the ship. They had also

come seeking fruit in the Jewish vineyard, and finding none, He had set that aside for the present, as "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," and had now come to sow that seed which had not before been brought to the earth. He came to produce fruit where there was none. He is not yet come to reap, that will be when He comes again, as the parable expresses it. "As if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up, he knoweth not how." "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

There are three things in this chapter: first, the full responsibility of the effect of *what we hear*. "Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you." Thus showing that the result of our hearing puts us in the place of testimony. Therefore the word is, "take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you."

trial in another way, that He could suffer them to be *in danger*, and apparently taking no notice, so "they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?" They were in the same ship with Christ, therefore nothing could be more safe; but they had lost sight of the glory of Christ's person, and thought they were going to perish, thus connecting the danger with themselves, and not with God. But with Christ in the ship, they were as safe in the storm as the calm. They thought it strange that He did not awake. And there it is, as we have just seen.

In the next chapter, where the man who had the legion cast out of him, prayed Jesus that he might be with Him, "Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." He desired to be at rest with Jesus, but the Lord said, No, you must go back to be a witness of grace in a world that turned Jesus out.

Then, thirdly, now that we have the apparent absence of the person of Jesus, (but not as to grace—that is always and everywhere present,) we have to walk by faith and not by sight. The Word of God now takes the place of Christ's personal presence, as it is the Word of God that can alone give us the mind of God. Of course the Spirit is needed to apply it; but this it is that makes us responsible for the truth we hear, though of course we can do nothing without grace. A light is not put under a bushel but in a candlestick, that it may give light around. Christ, in saying "Ye are the light of the world" puts us as lights that we may give out the light. Why has He kindled up the light in us, but that we may give out the light? "God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And as there is nothing hid that shall not be manifested, God is now looking for the outshining of that out of our hearts which He hath shined in. This is the way

that God works: He first puts a word in our hearts, that we may bring it out again. If God has lighted up a light in my soul, it is that it may shine out to all around. And if not, why does it not? It is because there is some hindrance *within*—some *hidden lust in the heart* that dims the light, and if I do not search it out at once, and judge it before the Lord that He may put it away, I shall sooner or later fall into some open sin, and then discipline will bring it out. God is saying, "If the light I have lighted up in you is not shining out, I will bring out that which hinders it." "Judge yourselves that ye be not judged." "For there is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested, neither anything kept secret but it should come abroad." But here it is meant in reference to the truth, no doubt.

Supposing the Church has failed, the things by which it has failed will be brought out to light. All God's counsels of glory He has entrusted to the Church. We are not straitened in

God, although we may be straitened in our own bowels through unfaithfulness. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again:" if you only mete out a scanty measure, a scanty measure will be meted to you in return. For what you have received you are to give out, that you may get more, "For he that hath to him shall be given," &c. &c. When Christ comes again, He comes to reap the harvest of everything He has sown.

Then during this interval between the Lord's sowing and reaping, while "the seed is springing up he knoweth not how," that is to say, while He is apparently absent from us, not interfering in all our trials and conflicts, we have this on which to stay our souls, that we are in the same vessel with Himself; and however much the ship may be tossed about by the storms and waves of the devil's raising, while we have Him in the vessel, we are as safe in the storm as in the calm.

Then again, we have two things brought out here: the grace of God

and the light of life. And whether it be ten, two, or one talent, we may have received by way of gift, the reception of the grace of God into our souls will make us *out-tellers* of the truth as it is in Jesus. And as Jesus, when down here, was the light of the world, so, having lighted up this light of life in our souls, He is looking for us to be light-bearers in the midst of this dark world, where He has left us (like the poor man out of whom the legion was cast) to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Then how great is the responsibility as to our *hearing*. "Take heed what ye hear." "He that hath, to him shall be given." That in hearing of God's grace, we may possess it in the knowledge of what God is; and when hearing of Christ, our souls should realize all of Christ we hear, seize hold of it in all its power and bearing, and *have it* and *be it*, even the light as it is in Christ, and that will make manifest every thing that is contrary to it. For

we only want the light of Christ to make manifest all that is contrary to it in the world and its course.

"Take heed how ye hear." As far as our flesh is not mortified, we shall not possess the truth; and only so far as our flesh is mortified can we use the truth. To the same extent that the flesh is continually judged and kept down, will our "loins be girt about with truth;" because the flesh cannot receive the truth. But when we really possess it in our souls, it judges ourselves, and all that it finds within first, and then shines out. The result is, that all we have heard, and are hearing, of Christ, should thus be manifested by us to the praise of His glory.

"THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW."

As long as I am under law in any sense or measure, I am under the power of sin. And the most insidious way

not Christ, and looking *for* these to cover, and not at Him who has covered us all of His grace.

The soul has not come to the end of itself: it has not come to know that it is as powerless for good as it was alive for evil, and that Christ is my covering, my robe, *now*, just as I am, *and that all my fruits will never add one ray to His glory as my robe*—that I am perfect through His comeliness put upon me, as much as, if in Him, as when displayed in glory. O the heavenly joy and peace there is found in knowing Christ as thus made of God to us righteousness; not merely having forgiveness in Him, but this perfect righteousness, in which I am not only spotless, but comely in the eyes of God! Now in all these legal experiences Christ is not known thus. Hence the experiences.

in which one is under law is for holiness, and not for pardon—although in truth there is not peace, for holiness is sought for in order to it. There is a feeling that God is not pleased with us because we are not good enough, or because we are not so good as we ought to be. That is thorough legality. It is entire forgetfulness of Christ. It is seeking for fruits in us, in order to commend us to God. And it shows itself in the want of rest in the soul *because of what we are*; that is, the soul is not simply on Christ. Christ may be known as a Saviour from wrath and condemnation, and the soul be seeking, now that it is saved, *to clothe itself before God with the fruits of the life* that He has given. And inasmuch as these are never an adequate covering before Him, there is a feeling of fear and a consciousness of not having that which can commend us to Him; and so the soul gets *off Christ entirely*, and into bondage, thus looking at the fruits of the Spirit as our covering, and

THE ETERNAL LIFE.

1 John ii.

In a former paper (vol. ii. p. 1.) I took up the priesthood of Christ; I now take up again the subject in this chapter, that is, the communication of divine life from the Father Himself in the Person of the Son, who comes down on earth, and by Him it is communicated to us. *There*, that is, in the Person of the Son, is the manifestation of all we ought to be, and a test by which we may prove what is of Christ, and detect that which is not. The greater part of the New Testament Scripture, the Epistles, owes its origin to the mischief Satan did in the Church. The mischief was only permitted that the folly of those things which corrupt might be made manifest, that the full glory of the truth might be brought out. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." The things here written of are what some pretenders held. They were persons of the highest pretensions who

would seduce them. Not the Gospels, of course, but the great body of the Epistles, of which those to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Galatians are examples, were occasioned by the mischief the adversary brought in. In Corinthians he attacked the resurrection; in Thessalonians the coming of the Lord; in Galatians justification by faith. Philippians is an exception, because there Paul was comforted by their love. It is the same in regard to the mischief he has done from the beginning. The fall itself is the occasion of God's introducing greater blessing than before. Whatever Satan seeks to do must ultimately tend to the divine glory, as it has done from the beginning, and to the comfort and blessing of our souls who seek to serve God. Of course man gets humbled in it, but God overrules it for greater good. If we turn to Christ's rejection by the Jews, it brings out the Church. Though he wept over Jerusalem, the energy of Satan being there exhibited against the Lord Himself, so He said,

be to the end, until Satan is cast into the burning lake of fire and brimstone. It will be then to bring in heavenly blessing.

The power of divine life first manifested in Christ is then manifested in us. We shall see the instructions He gave, guiding us by His precepts according to His life. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." It is not said so *to be*, because we have sin, and He had none; but so *to walk*. "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Here we get a very important principle of the divine life, what is our life, and whence its source.

There are two parts of the manifestation of the divine life—what He was in His own person down here, and now that He is exalted, what He manifests through and in us of the divine life.

First, Christ is the source of it for

"Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour." "For I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He looked with sorrow at the evil, but it was the occasion of infinite blessing. Thus by his rejection was the greatest blessing brought out, for if Jesus had not died, we had not been saved; and though Satan thought he had triumphed over him by the cross, God raised Him from the dead. So, whatever Satan does, it always results in the bringing out, on God's part, of greater blessing. And so it is in our day; we find man spoiling that which had been committed to him, and God bringing in something much better. And what do we find in the chapter before us? Antichrist was going on, and it led to the bringing out of the workings of divine life; it is the occasion in God's hands of bringing into greater blessing them that trust Him. The history from the beginning is just that; and so it will

us, "The Word was made flesh," &c.; second, the manifestation through and in us. We can correct every estimate we form of our lives, because we have the perfect and wonderful model of it in Christ Himself, who is the power of it. He is the very eternal life that was with the Father, and He has given us that eternal life. I am speaking of Him before He was the Creator, as shown in John's Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him," &c. He was eternally with God before He created. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and it is added, "of his fulness have we all received." Two things are here, first, "the Word was made flesh, &c. and we beheld his glory." As also in Hebrews, "The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" "the image of the invisible God," as in Colossians; the perfect representation of what God was. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,

Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We get in His Person the life itself that was with the Father from the beginning. He was the life; it was in Him. Now, it is never said, eternal life is *in us*; it is in Him; but it is given to us. That is a different thing. He Himself is our life, He has life in Himself. "God has given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son;" but the Son has life in Himself. My hand is alive, but my life is not in my hand. My hand lives by virtue of its union with my body. Take it off, and I shall live still. So the Church, or an individual soul, lives by virtue of its union to Christ, the Head.

Secondly, when Christ was down here, all his instructions were the expressions of this life. It was not like a commandment given by the law, because the law exacted from man what was becoming and what man ought to be in relation to God. It took the responsibility that attached to man's character, as man, and did not go be-

John the Baptist, who was next to Christ and immediately preceded Him, of whom the Lord testified, "of them that are born of women, there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist," came in a way of righteousness, and therefore went away from men altogether—was in the desert, kept no company with any, was a herald before Christ to announce Him, had nothing to say to any, ate locusts and wild honey. But God, being the person that was offended, could come in grace near to them, and speak to them in the spirit of grace, which rises above and overrides the evil, and expresses what God is; and they said, "Never man spake like this man." Then it is said, "He went about doing good." In Him was found the activity of good, the suffering for righteousness' sake, the exercise of love.

There is another thing which specially characterizes the divine life of Christ, the discernment of it in those who possess this life, the power of discerning the spirit of life in another.

yond it. But we get in Christ the manifestation of what God was to man; love acting in the midst of evil. It was no part of the law to love sinners, but it was a part of the Lord. He came down to love. Again in all His thoughts and tones of feeling for us, He went far beyond the mere letter of the law. The law could not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that must arise from an estimate of God. The law could not say, "Blessed are the peacemakers;" Christ Himself was the Prince of peace, showing there was peace to be made. So the duties. There was a spirituality in the law beyond what we see, but there was a power of good in Christ that went beyond the evil. The law never manifested power over evil in the shape of love. There was manifested in Christ the power of good over evil; and that was Christ's life. We get in all His actions the character and expression of what God was in man when on earth, and it is that that is so lovely. He was the eternal life with the Father.

It has been said, there requires *much grace in oneself* to discern *little grace in another*. There is an attractive power in grace which recognizes the Spirit of Christ in another. He could say, "Forasmuch as this man also is a child of Abraham." There was that which attracted in Christ. The moment a Christian recognizes divine life in another, in spite of difference, education, rank, and many other things, he will be drawn towards him. It is characteristic; he cannot help it. The moment a man discerns the Spirit of Christ in another, there is a necessary attraction to it. At once they are united together in love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The instant the spirit and character of Christ is manifested, there is necessarily an attraction where the Spirit of Christ is. "He went about doing good." Then there is a blessed discernment of the traits of it; it is discerning Christ. "Love your enemies," that was manifest in Christ as a man.

"If ye love those that love you, what thank have you." You must be above your enemies, and love those that are good for nothing. In Christ, we see God coming down and manifesting this life in a man on the earth, so as to attract towards Him, and bring into His presence in rest. "As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another." "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." He overcometh evil with good. You must do as God does, love your enemies. It was that which proved Him to be God in that He could love that in which there was nothing loveable. In God, the spring of love is from Himself; but we need something to attract us. I am referring to the primary revelation, that which was from the beginning. And however much we may go on, we must come back after all to it. It is always perfect, because it is God Himself who is manifested. You never can bring me to anything where God was manifested, but to the living word of Christ, or the written

word of Scripture. We have only to ask, is it that which you have had from the beginning? If not, it is "evil seducers." If it is "that which we have had from the beginning," that is God, that must test everything, and that is the character of the word. Bring a sinner opposite to the word, and you learn what he is, as in the case of the poor Samaritan woman. The written word is the manifestation of Christ, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. A man cannot judge God's word without judging himself. If he judges it wrong he is judged himself. "He that believeth not is condemned already." He is incapable of seeing that Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and the word judges himself. You may talk about colours or light to a blind man, but if a man is blind he will not understand you. It is his non-perception of light and colours that proves he is blind. It must be so where God is manifested. If I am incapable of discerning what manifests Christ, and the word does

not reach my soul, it is that which judges me. "The word which I speak, the same shall judge him in the last day." All God's ways now are presenting His moral manifestation. It will next be His judicial manifestation, if the moral manifestation is not received. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." The Lord did not accompany the word with judgment when it was spoken, but the word will judge him at the last day, and he will be condemned. Man still is proved by the word, and that is the profit of preaching. It brings out the sentence in that day of all the precepts He is displaying now. Antichrist will only bring out by God's judicial action towards him what He has taught all the way through. Antichrist will be brought out in full display, and God has to show *what He is*, and to act towards him in that *character*. The first way God taught them was in the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom ye with wicked hands have taken and slain." Being rejected, and having ascended up

on high, and become the expression of what we should be, the Church should be the manifestation of what Christ is. Then comes the communication of the life from Him in heaven. This was a new thing. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." It was not a new commandment, it was an old commandment, and yet new, because it was now given in the power of it, being not merely commanded in His word, but communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost to reproduce in us the life of Christ, and that is a new thing, and we are to manifest it. The Church of God is to be the vessel for the manifestation of Christ down here, according to the power of its Head in heaven.

God acted in government towards Israel when He dwelt in thick darkness. He acted in government according to a known law, but He was hid behind a veil; He set bounds about the mount. But now when Christ died, the darkness was passed in the cross, and there was a full display of the ho-

liness of God. At the same moment His wrath burst forth, which fully manifested His character. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." The veil is rent, and we can now enter into the presence of God Himself, into the holiest, which is opened to us. "Walk in the light, as God is in the light." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "If ye walk in the light, as God is in the light." Nothing is to be allowed that cannot bear the light. My fellowship is with light. Men perish for lack of knowledge. They are alienated from the life of God, which is the spirit of sin. "The true light now shineth," by Christ's death. He ascended up on high; the veil is rent; God is fully manifested in truth and love. If He had been just only, we should have perished: if He had been love only, there would have been no justice: but there was justice and holiness with love, and God has been glorified about our sins in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The light is

with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will sometimes see a saint, and there is joy, and by and by his peace is gone. That is where the soul is not settled. There ought to be both. The blood gives peace, but it is my acquaintance with and knowledge of Christ that gives me joy.

"He that says he is in Christ and *hateth* his brother." The apostle always speaks of the abstract principle. "He that loveth his brother." "He that is born of God cannot commit sin." "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." If he stumble at Christ it is his own fault. We ought never to be a stumbling-block through not being like Christ. There is no greater snare than the fear of offending, and no greater sin than the fear of offending. If Christ is the offence, if it is Christ that offends, the offence of the cross has not ceased. You will never please the world with the cross of Christ. If I am walking in perfect love, my love

now shining. Christ, the source of that light, is to be manifested in us, "which thing is true in him and in you." It is an old commandment which was from the beginning, Christ Himself. You cannot have a better than that. And now the manifestation of it is learned in us; and if we want it as a test, it must not be the imperfect light that is in us, but in Christ Himself. While it is given to us as the means of detecting these errors, it is also to build us up in what Christ is. In looking at these traits, we discover more and more that it is thoroughly divine. I learn in Christ such and such a trait of perfectness, and I say that is God manifest in the flesh, and thus I learn all I shall know in heaven. You have seen the Father. We learn the beauty in Jesus, and learn it is divine; and learning what God is, we are happy and peaceful. And if you have seen a saint dying, if he has apprehended the blood of Christ, he will have peace; but if you look for joy, it must spring from the affections being acquainted

will flow out to others. If I have the affection in myself, I shall love my brother, and shall not stumble. If I am not walking in love of the brethren, I am going all crooked myself. I may rebuke, Christ did that; but if the desire to do them good is not in me, I am going crooked myself, I have not the spirit of Christ.

(Ver. 12.) "I write unto you children," not little children, but all saints, "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." That was a settled thing. You are not Christians at all if your sins are not forgiven you. The poor jailer wanted salvation, and that is what he got. He cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" That is what he wanted. If I come to hear the testimony of God, what I want is *to be saved*, to get life. Nicodemus came by night, with his questions. The Lord said, "You must be born again." "He that is in Christ is a new creature." The jailer did not know what being in Christ meant, but he believed. What is the consequence? He was

saved, saved by a work that was accomplished before he ever asked to be saved. Believing in Christ, he was saved, he got eternal life. That is what he got. If the light gets into the souls of sinners, they cannot be happy until they have peace with God. This is the difficulty now as to Christians having peace. Before Christianity became a profession in the world, a Christian was counted and understood to be saved; but now all pretend to be Christians, and they who really are so want to know if they are true Christians, whereby the simple fact of redemption is very much lost sight of. "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." God's judgment is passed already on your sins in Christ. If I look to Christ to be saved, as bearing my sins, His judgment is, you have eternal life. That is just as much the judgment of God, as if Christ had pronounced it on the great white throne. He knows the value of the work of His Son; He is judge, and not you.

to get at this, "known him that is from the beginning."

The young Christian is full of the joy, and is thus taken up with himself; whereas the old Christian speaks less about the joy, but says, it is Christ Himself possessed makes me happy. His heart trusts in the Lord; the things of the world, even the things of the Church, do not disturb him. He counts on the love ever watchful and certain in its eye, and is not afraid at any evil tidings. He knows, though heaven and earth were to dissolve and crumble into pieces, and the Church itself, which is impossible, His throne remains. There is a steadiness in the man's soul, because he knows Him that is from the beginning; knows a manifested Christ: one whom he hath looked upon with his eyes, and his hands have handled. He was speaking of a Christ he had known, and seen, and handled, and which was from the beginning, and says, there is the Father's character, and he has nothing to add. How far have your souls found

"I write unto you, little children." He can add a great deal to the little children, but to the fathers he has only one thing to say, "you have known him that is from the beginning." Whatever else it might be, it ends all in this, "known him that is from the beginning," that is Christ. If anything is brought to me that is not Christ, I reject it. If I know a person, it is *himself* that I know. I am to know that my sins are forgiven me for His name's sake, but I am to know him that was from the beginning also. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." What is the object of all this knowledge of Christ? All the promises are in Christ. He is the object of the Father's delight. The apostle distinguishes growth. The fathers have known Christ from the beginning, the true Christ. That guards the soul, knowing Him perfectly. There is no ambiguity, no uncertainty, and all the exercises and experiences of the Christian, which are often so much dwelt on, are but the scaffolding of the soul

steady rest in Christ? or how far are they satisfied with Christ? Forsaken of friends, are you still satisfied with Him? or how far are there things that you crave and have to resist? Have you done with the world? Not as tired of its vanities and wearied with its pleasures, but because your souls have found something in Christ that satisfies for all. Is He found such a manifestation of God to your souls that you rest in Him, having found such a richness in Christ that the soul is satisfied so as not to want other things? Then if you have, you can say, "none of these things move me."

The two points to young men and children are, first, that they have overcome the wicked one, the prince of this world; secondly, that they have known the Father, through believing in Christ, and have known the spirit of adoption, and no doubt of the Father's love. The young men overcoming the wicked one is connected with their having the word of God abiding in them, and overcoming the world. "Love not the world," &c.

Then the little children are warned against the seductions of false doctrines, &c. "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."

I would remark that which especially characterizes the young men is conflict with the world. And if we would be satisfied with the knowledge of Him that is from the beginning, there must be overcoming the world. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." If the soul is to grow up into Christ in all things, there must be the giving up of the world. "They are not of the world." May we see the excellency of Christ, and so know, in the ways of that lowly man, the full expression, unfolding, and manifestation of the character of God, that our hearts may be knit to Him, and then,

a man hide and cloak his sin, and seek to get away out of God's presence. Not but God can awaken by terror. Yet what opens the heart is that God has come to save us in grace. When we speak of being saved, we do not speak of mere deliverance from wrath, but of being brought to God. Now if you are to be brought to God, you must have hearts to enjoy God; for it is dreadful to be with one in whose presence we have no delight. Look at the case of a sinner. He dare not be in God's presence, and it is misery to be out of it. Therefore do men like annihilation. Can your souls reckon on divine favour? God visits us to give us the knowledge of His favour. We do not get this by speculating over our hearts. Christ did not come to set us speculating whether He would be love or not; He came to be it. Now when a man believes this, he has peace with God; though there must be conflict with the world and with our lusts; for God cannot receive a sinner loving sin.

when we shall see Him face to face, "we shall know even as we are known."

GOD VISITING THE WORLD IN GRACE.

John iii.

The great testimony of the gospel is that God has visited the world in grace. This was evidently something new; especially when we remember that Jesus died, and had to die. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish," &c. Why does He say, "should not perish"? Because they were perishing; and God is visiting a lost world all in grace. This is what opens anyone's mouth—God's working in love. He can tell of a remedy, for he is cured; and of the perfect love of God to poor sinners. Now, it is this grace that will open a man's heart. Other things will make

In the last three verses of chapter ii. we see Christ's judgment of men. There we read that "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." I will suppose that you have done what these persons did; you have read of Christ and believed in His name. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Here we get the faith that is in the world; sincere, I believe; but the Lord does not trust it. Why? Because they have acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah, but there is not one bit of their hearts changed. Is there one thing done on their hearts or on their consciences by such an acknowledgment of the Messiah? Have they said, What horrible sinners we must be when Christ came to die! Christ did not charge them with insincerity, yet their consciences were like millstones. That is what I call the basest form of depravity—acknowledging love unparalleled, and yet not feeling one spark of affection. Do you believe that Christ died for your sins, and do

you still go on in sin? That is why Christ did not commit Himself to them. He knew all men. Do you think He does not know you? Is it any wonder that God says, You must be born again? It will not do to say, You must mend. You want something *new*; you want God to give you a new heart, will, conscience. You do not want to *learn* about Christ, you want a nature that can be *affected* by what you have learnt. There must be a radical change in principle, otherwise what will you do when you come to God? When will you come to God? At the judgment? What will you do then? If you were the fairest character in the world, you know as a fact that you do not like to meet God. If it was to-day, you would put it off till to-morrow, and if you could for ever.

The conscience of Nicodemus was at work. The others continued as they were. There we see the horrible indifference of nominal Christianity. Nicodemus is rather ashamed of being seen with Jesus. Let a man's con-

You ought to have known from your own prophets that under the new covenant such a change was needed. (See Ezek. xxxvi.) If you do not believe earthly things, which the prophets declared, that you must be renewed and have a heart of flesh, &c., how shall you believe heavenly things? But who can tell you of heavenly things, if not He who came from heaven?

We have had the necessity of man's being renewed; now we get another thing—the goodness of God to us as we are unrenewed. It is the truth that I need regeneration, but that is not grace. Grace is what God is for me from heaven. When was it that Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? When the Israelites were bitten by the serpent, when the power of death had come in. So has it come to you. You are ruined, lost, stung; and where is your help? You have sin on you. Can you undo the sins you have done? Can you take guilt off your conscience? Never. Once sin, you can never become inno-

science be touched, and he is ashamed to be seen with Christians. Why? Because the very instant that conscience is touched and we get to Christ, there is an instinct to tell us that the world is against us. And of whom was Nicodemus ashamed? Of the Son of God. And this is what man is, and what the world is. Therefore Jesus, who knew the trial, said, "Whosoever shall confess me *before men*," &c.

Now we get the answer of God. He tells them that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" worthless, and worse than worthless. It is not the sins that prove it the most; it is what it shows itself to be when it has to do with Christ, the Son of God.

Christ says you must have a new nature. He says that you are so bad that you cannot be trusted, that you must be changed. "You must be born again."

"Nicodemus answered and said, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?"

cent. You are guilty, and you know it, though you do not feel it. You know you dare not meet God and talk of sin. No, you would be talking of mercy. When? At the day of judgment. Mercy? It is the day of righteousness; of glory to the saints, not mercy; and of destruction to the world. *Now* is the day of mercy. God treats you as a sinner. You must be treated as a sinner. He cannot agree to the lie you think of yourself. He says there is none righteous. He cannot say, I have made a mistake. The only question is, whether He will treat you as a sinner now or then. He came from heaven. Why? To make light of sin? To talk of sin? He could not do so. He knew that there could not be happiness where there was sin. He came to be lifted up. "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up," &c. He must take on Himself the consequences of sin to put it away from you. Jesus says, Well, I will take sin on me; if it rests

on them it will ruin them. In the 53rd of Isaiah God does not overlook the sins. He cannot. What does He do with them? He laid them on Jesus. As to those who do not believe in Jesus, either they or sin must be put away. In the case of the believer sin is put away, because Christ took it upon Him. God saw the sin and visited it on Christ. Why did Christ die? For sin. What has He done with the sin? Put it away. There we get peace, for we know that the Son of man has been lifted up, and that instead of perishing we have everlasting life. Christ says, "that whosoever believeth should not perish." If I believe then in Jesus, owning that I was perishing, He says, I have died that you should have eternal life. There is so much reasoning in our hearts, (and no wonder when we find ourselves in such a labyrinth!) therefore the Lord comes in in such perfect simplicity. Believe and have life. And why? Because it is believing in One who has put sin away.

and nothing to love. So now we have God to love, and all the affections become centred on Christ. That is sanctification. Our souls know what God is and what He has done for us, and our hearts go out to this God. How it knits the heart and God together! He has loved me—loved me so, and will love me for ever. O what bliss! We shall have trouble, but we have the certainty of the perfect love of Christ. No matter what the trouble may be, I now know that Christ having gone through all for me, neither death, nor life, nor any creature can separate me from His love.

Now that is the way that God makes Himself known. If you meet Christ in judgment, it is not merely that you have broken the law—that is bad enough; but the goodness of God is leading you to repentance. Therefore it is not judgment now, but God commending His love, and if you are untouched by that you are despising a dying Saviour! That is a terrible thing and you know it.

Sin could not be borne by us, and God is righteous; therefore Christ came to put away sin. That is however but half of the truth. For in the cross I not only see that this dreadful necessity was *met*, but that even when I was in my sins God loved me. If I see the cross doing that for me which I needed, that touches my conscience and gives me peace. But besides this, how came Christ to do this? Because "God so *loved* the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. When we were at enmity with God, He so loved us that He would have us understand that while the world hated Him He loved it all the while, and gave the thing nearest to His heart for its reconciliation. Hence, whilst conscience gets peace through the blood of the cross, the testimony of the perfect love of God—and of this the cross is the proof—sets the heart at rest. Now the sinner knows God. Not only has he got the new nature, but an object to love. It is miserable to have affections

FAITH'S ANSWER.

1 Kings xviii. 41—46.

The great blessing of faith is that it links our souls with God. It is a secret communication, establishing relations of confidence and repose between the heart and God. Faith exists unknown to any one but its possessor and God. It *shows* its vitality by works, but its vitality is its enjoyment, and not its power of demonstrating itself.

The history of its action is an interesting, instructive study. Dependence on God, or *faith*, is the first element of our new life, the great antagonistic principle of the old nature. "Whatever is not of faith is sin" is the abstract rule of life. My will, in nature, being errant, all my power, natural or acquired, acts so as to sustain what is wrong, that is, my natural will. Well! but now as quickened by the life of Christ into the sensibilities of His nature, I am constantly finding that difficulties occur to me, all the greater because my will runs counter

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to God's will. Nay more, I find that many new desires are awakened within me, which I have no power in nature to gratify. In both these cases I learn that I must lean on God; and as I lean—and I know what is His mind or intention towards me—so have I faith or confidence in Him about any given result.

It is evident we know too little of this blessed sentiment, and this arises from our great self-dependence. Whether it be as regards difficulties in our path unsurmounted, or good desires ungratified, we do not lean sufficiently on the Lord, and have not the sweet and invigorating consciousness of His direct assistance in supplying our need. We are constantly helped by His mercy and providence, and though we may then recognize His hand and thank Him, yet this is not walking in faith. Faith, I repeat, is the great principle of life. I open my eyes, *confident* that I shall see; if I did not it would be a great marvel to me: and every demand that my natural mind makes on me assumes

that my life and strength are equal to that demand, and will accord it. So likewise with *living* faith. My difficulties and desires are before the Lord. I *know* they are, and I know that He is the true source of help; and as I make demand on Him, I *know* the amount which he will render to me according to my sense of *His* ability as *engaged for me*. A man who rightly knows his own powers would never tax them beyond their ability, wisely ordered, but so far as he feels their ability, he can tax them to the utmost; and this is faith. It is then a secret conviction, known only to myself, of God's grace towards me. I rest in it: my heart is strengthened and blessed by it. There is nothing so blessed as to understand that faith is an individual secret between our souls and God—that God who gave His Son for us. This is always the proof to us of what His heart is, for no other blessing could ever establish us before Him as this does.

Now then, seeing that faith is an in-

dividual secret, how comes it that so many desire that what is so close, personal, solemn, and divine, should be proved as having existed by evidences that will convince the crowd? Your secret exists, and you cannot explain it, and you ought not: it is too sacred, and yet you wish that the public should know that this sacred confidence has produced certain results in a very distinguished manner. That there *will* be results there can be *no question* perfect results, accurate according to the demand you made, and (as I have said) to your sense of God's ability as engaged for you; but that the results or answer should be to any one *outside* the range of the necessity, I cannot and must not expect. Suppose I entrust my difficulties or desires to a human friend, who I am sure will co-operate with me and relieve me; is it necessary that in doing so he must publish his assistance and service? By no means. If he has convinced *me* of it, no matter how he accorded it, he has assured the affection and confidence

which reckoned on him; and this we desire from a friend far more than that others should acknowledge what he has done. God in His love wants to reveal Himself to our souls, and if He answers our faith so as to make us feel that it is He alone that has done it, He cares not for the publication of it. Nay more, He will often make it of very insignificant appearance, in order that the soul may be kept in the blessing of the secret assurance of faith, which will progress, step by step, with the evidence, if the evidence is not too great to make faith no longer necessary. The moment we are in sight we are out of faith. God could never desire to put us outside faith *now*; hence, even in answering our faith, He so answers it that we want it in a moment again, even while enjoying the result. He cannot distinguish man *as man*, but He loves man and will make man depending on Him to *FEEL* it; consequently, in order to keep the soul in full blessing, the Lord must keep it in faith; and if He communicates to my own heart the

answer to my faith, He has done *all* I have required of Him. The apostle Paul knew God's love and power in the answer which he received to his faith in the salvation of the crew, (Acts xxvii.) though to human eye it was a sorry provision and a scrambling escape to save 276 souls, "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship."

But what matter how man judged, if the heart of the apostle had its secret confidence responded to? If he knew that the power of God had interposed for him, he was not careful that others should know more than the result. In the passage before us, 1 Kings xviii. 41—46, which is referred to in James vi. as an exposition of "effectual, fervent prayer," we find, first, the faith which can say to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a noise of abundance of rain." Faith cometh by hearing; the intimation had reached the prophet; he had heard the sound thereof; he had the secret consciousness in his soul that he was drawing on the abilities of God to meet the

case; and he could speak of what that power would accomplish, though as yet he had no more intimation of it than a "sound." No one understood this "sound" but himself, neither could he communicate it to another, although he could speak of the effect. This conviction the soul obtains in communion with God. It is but a *conviction*—a "sound;" but yet it is the warrant to the soul, knowing the strength and grace it rests on, to expect an amount of relief commensurate with its reliance on them. In a word, it is resting on the strength offered me by God, and my soul receives the conviction of what that power can and will do. Elijah can without hesitation propose to the king to "get up, eat and drink," in the assured hope of rain. But what is his own course? He retires to the top of Carmel, casts himself upon the earth, and puts his face between his knees. This teaches us the *condition* of a believing soul. It *has* the intimation of the coming blessing, *it can* speak of it. But this does not

lead to indifference or indolence; nay, rather, the soul, burdened by the wondrous reality of trusting God, is engrossed with the subject the more as it approaches fulfilment. According to the exhortation in Col. iv. 2, it "continues in prayer and *watches* in the same," &c., being quite awake to the manifestations of fulfilment. The prophet sends his servant to look toward the sea, but there is nothing to be seen at first. The word is, "Go again *seven* times:" prayer and watching must be perfect. "And it came to pass the seventh time, that he (the servant) said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Could there possibly be a smaller indication of coming rain? A cloud the size of a man's hand is hardly visible on the horizon. What patience to send seven times! What carefulness of observation to discern anything so insignificant, and after all to learn so little! But faith wanted no more; the soul rested in God, and only prayed and watched till demonstration was granted;

and at the smallest notice, the heart was entirely assured; and the prophet tells Ahab, "Prepare thy chariot; get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." Thus are we instructed in the nature of the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," i.e., one seeking to go rightly. No one can lean on God to be sustained in wrong; but to be sustained in, and strengthened for, what is right, is not only to be expected, but it is sin if we seek relief otherwise; because we must, in that case, be leaning on something besides God, and what we lean on we magnify.

In conclusion, we require, first, *Faith* (or the secret conviction of help from God) to invigorate the soul with a sense of the ability which is engaged for it.

Secondly, the praying, wakeful condition of soul which is conscious of the solemn-blessing vouchsafed to it until the moment of fulfilment comes.

Lastly, not to seek great or pompous evidences of the fulfilment, but with the true sensibility of affection to inter-

pret the smallest notification, because the more intimate any one is with another, the sooner and easier will they understand their simplest gestures and promptings.

The Lord give us grace to enter into the life of the *One* blessed man down here, ever leaning on God, ever sensible in Himself of the sweet consciousness that He could count on the abilities of God. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always:" and this is the Blessed One who lives for us, and whose life is ours with all its susceptibilities, "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

EARTH AND HEAVEN.

Psalm lxxiii.

What a difference there is between being on the earth and in heaven! In Luke xv. we get it for a *sinner*; it is the far country or the Father's house. Here we get it for a *saint*.

In the beginning of the Psalm, all

his judgments are astray, for his heart has got on the poor things of earth. "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . . They are not in trouble, as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

And herein is seen the deceitfulness of riches—they detain the thoughts and affections on earth. What are they in heaven? What is the estimate there of everything in which man, as man, can boast? God writes death on him and on them. (See Ps. xlix.) Being in heaven enables us to put the true estimate on earth and everything in it. The only true use of riches is to use them for God. Every other use will make a man carnal, but this will lead the affections heavenward, whilst being to God's glory. Matt. vi. 19—21: "Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also."

See how the light bursts in upon him when he gets into the sanctuary! Instead of judging God and His ways, (as in verse 13,) he now judges him-

self; and he abhors himself in His presence. "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." But immediately he adds, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee." In the joy of restoration he blesses the grace that was deeper than all his failure. Here we have no long process, as some prescribe, but the heart finds God in all the fulness of His grace, when it turns to Him in truth—when the will is broken, the soul finds rest. "A little faith goes further than a great many tears." But in truth, restoration is God's work. "He restoreth my soul." When his foot was slipping, it was His mercy that held him up.

Now, God gets His place, and there is light upon everything. The joy of relationship with Him liberates the soul, and everything else fades in His presence. "*There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*" His flesh and his heart fail, but God is the strength of his heart, and his one and eternal portion.

MEMORABILIA.

The love of Christ to His Church and to sinners is the very element in which spiritual joy lives and thrives. There may be knowledge and service, but if the love of Christ is not sensibly the moving spring, there will not be edification. "Knowledge puffeth up" him who has it, "but love edifieth" those to whom it ministers. I have always found rest, however troubled before, when in the fellowship of Christ's love to His people, however feebly enjoyed.

If I fall back into the life of nature, and live it and feed it, I shall also fall back into its responsibilities, and get troubled about past sins and present corruption—and rightly so—troubled so as to have a guilty conscience, and so as not to feel separated in spirit from the whole thing. Only "as alive from the dead" can I know or enjoy the freedom wherewith Christ makes free; and this is entered into by faith, and

maintained by fellowship with Jesus. "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. ii. 20.) But in order to this fellowship, obedience is essential. (See John xv.) "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love." Hence, devotedness to Christ, hearty hearing of His voice, and following Him, is the very element in which the new man enjoys the liberty of resurrection. It is liberty from sin unto God.

There is danger in putting the girdle off. While it is on, we are braced for service and happy, but when some service is over, there is often a feeling of weariness, it may be of the body; but the danger is in letting the mind too slip down into nature for rest. It is a great thing in *resting* to have Christ with us. The "rest" of the disciples after their mission was to be with Him

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has no power over it, and so cannot use it for his own end; nay, that such an one has power over him.

The great thing is to remember that we are nothing, *God* is all, and to consent to it. There is no trouble or anxiety then, for there is only God for it; and more, the heart seeking only His glory, can count upon Him to maintain it. His will is ours, and we do not want things to be otherwise; but inasmuch as He is active in His love in the scene *that is*, even so are we, through His grace, and then we find rest.

Christ did not come to be occupied with the ten thousand vanities filling the hearts and minds of poor sinners down here; but He came from His Father's bosom, to tell out all His Father's love, that He might occupy their hearts with the joys of the Father's presence. "If thou knewest" was ever on His lips. It is in this spirit alone that we can rightly pass

and one another. "Come and rest awhile." If I seek rest in reading the word, or prayer, or singing, or visiting the poor, or fellowship in person or by letter with the saints, it will but strengthen for God; but if in self-indulgence, it will open the door for Satan and the world. "Being let go, they went to their own company."

It is a great thing to minister what the soul is fed with by God. It may be but one thought, but then it is the channel between Christ and the soul. The Christ who feeds one can feed a thousand. Moreover it is in *breaking the bread* that it is multiplied, not before it is broken. It is not many thoughts that make a good meal for the soul, but Christ ministered; and a little in the spirit goes a great way—joy is ministered and strength.

Satan seeks either to give confidence apart from Christ, or to hinder from confidence in Christ. He well knows that if a soul is looking to Jesus, he

"THAT GOOD PART," ETC. 273

through the world; our own hearts pre-occupied with the sense of His loveliness and grace, and so unattracted by all that glitters here, longing to attract away from these things to Him who alone is lovely.

It was in this spirit that Paul went to Corinth. Jews required a sign, and Greeks sought wisdom, but he brought neither the one nor the other; he *preached* Christ crucified. He well knew that Christ crucified was to the Jews a scandal and to the Greeks foolishness; but he also knew that *to the called*, the same Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore he determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ, and Him (as) crucified.

"THAT GOOD PART WHICH SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY."

Luke x. 38—42.

In the closing part of this chapter, we see that the one great thing was to hear Christ's word. This we learn from

the approval given to Mary above Martha, who, in a certain sense, was doing a very good thing, for she received Him into her house, and served Him. But there is something better than this, and "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In a certain sense, there ought to be labouring to serve Christ, but it is a much better thing to be listening to Himself. The Lord would have His words enter, and have power in the heart.

The only thing that endures for ever is the word of the Lord. The wisdom of this world is against it; human reasoning is against it; but the word of God is the only thing worth waiting upon diligently. If a Christian is reasoning about circumstances, instead of appealing to the word—"Thus saith the Lord"—he is sure to be going down in his own soul. The principle insisted on in this closing narrative of the chapter is the same as that which the Lord taught when He said, "Rejoice that your names are written in

heaven," in contrast to demons being subject to them. We want the word in our hearts, and to be sitting at Christ's feet.

Religiousness is amiable enough for this world, but that will not enter heaven. We must have Christ in our hearts; for the world is fading away, and only he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

It was through sitting at the feet of Jesus that Mary so learned to anticipate His death, and the value of His person, as to cause her to take the ointment of spikenard, and, in the full affection of her heart, to expend it in anointing His feet. For Mary alone anointed His body for the burying; and we do not find her at the sepulchre, nor yet at the cross. She thought only of resurrection, because she knew that men's souls were ruined, and that He came to deliver them.

The thing pressed in these verses is not so much that Martha was cumbered in preparing a meal, but that Mary was hearing the word. For the

great thing the Lord delighted in was the hearing ear for His word. "Of his own will begat he us *by the word of truth*." God was now by His own word bringing in truth to people's souls. Of course, they might have their ears closed against it; but that is another thing. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Christ was the living word; and He says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The truth sets everything in its right place, or it is not truth. It sets all in the full light of God. Truth sets *man* in his place, or it is not truth. It sets *sin* in its place, or it is not truth. It sets *righteousness* in its place, or it is not truth. It sets *love* in its place, or it is not truth. And it sets *God* in His place, or it is not truth. In one sense, truth never came until Christ came; for I do not tell *the truth about God*, unless I tell that He is love; and that never came out till Christ came. The law said nothing about it; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Everything was

morally set right by Him. I do not say that men saw it. The law is put in contrast with what Christ came to declare. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ."

The written word is now the instrument of revealing truth. The law was holy, just, and good, because it was of God. The law convicted men of sin, but itself was not truth in this way. It told men what they ought to do; but while it told men that they ought to love God with all their heart, it told nothing in itself of what *man was*. But what man *ought* to be, it did tell. "This do and thou shalt live." It did not tell man he was a lost sinner, and could not do it; it did not tell man what was his condition; it told nothing of the truth in this way; it merely gave an abstract thought of what man ought to be. Neither did the law tell what God was; for the law in itself was merely the abstract hypothetical principle that "the man that doeth these things shall live by them." Of

course, I need not say that man could not do them, and therefore the law was not the truth—this came by Jesus Christ. Christ comes in as the light and says, you are all dead in sin, but I can give you life—that is truth. He says, God is love, and God has manifested His love to a poor, sinful, lost world, or wherefore am I here? That is truth. Christ's coming into the world showed how everything stood in the world, and put everything in its true place, both as to man and God. His coming showed that Jew, as well as Gentile, were alike slaves to sin and Satan, and that the truth was needed to make them free. Therefore Christ came, not only in grace and truth, but in love also, for He came to bring home to the heart and conscience of man his real state before God, and to show the remedy. Christ was the living word. He comes in testimony, and tells what God was—not now in redemption, but in *testimony*. Therefore of what value to Him was Martha's cumbered service, in comparison of a soul, whom He had

word of truth." Suppose we could set to work and do a miracle, it would not quicken one soul.

But the word of God also puts men under responsibility. "The word that I have spoken the same shall judge you in the last day." So also it is the "Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Thus we have seen that the quickening power of the word of God is put in contrast with miracles; so that a faith founded on miracles, as such, is less than nothing and vanity, having no life in it; for it is not in the power of any miracle to convert or quicken a soul.

There are three things constantly pressed in connexion with the power of the word of God. First, the word spoken will come against men another day. Secondly, though "perilous times" come, the word of God "is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." Thirdly, in a soul that is quickened by the word of God, the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient. "Sanctified to

come to save, listening to His word? It is just the same now with a Christian. When God's word comes, it has a title over man's heart to make him believe it. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." His word has its claim on the hearts of those who hear it, and when received it is life. It makes its way by its own authority to the soul. There is no living power in a miracle to put life into a man's soul, but there is living power in the word. And there is never a soul saved but by the word of God; for it is the word that tells of the blood shed in redemption. A person may believe because of miracles. Many did in that day, but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because it was merely a natural conviction on the mind, without any living power in the soul. It must be Christ in the heart; and it is by the word that any soul can get into heaven. By the word of God a soul is quickened; for we are begotten by the word, and if the word cannot do it, it will never be done. "Of his own will begat he us by the

obedience." Dependence is the characteristic of the new man. The old man would be independent, doing his own will; the new man counts upon God. The Lord's perfectness as a man was His entire dependence on God. He was God, of course; but being found in fashion as a man, He was dependent, and therefore we find Him, at the beginning of this chapter, as in other parts of Luke's gospel, "*praying*," which is the expression of dependence. And so also in Saul of Tarsus, when his own independent will was broken, we have the same expression of dependence. "Behold he prayeth." (Acts ix. 11.) When the haughtiness of his will was subdued, his language was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" From that moment God had His proper place in Paul's soul. Thus do we get the force of the declaration, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

THE LEPER AND THE PALSIED MAN.

Luke v. 12—26.

The first thing we get in these verses is the Leper, as typifying the uncleanness of sin, which none but Jehovah could remove. This poor leper was disheartened because no man could cleanse him; but he was now come into the presence of One who could deal in power with his loathsome condition. He comes to Jesus, therefore, and says, "Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." He had confidence in the Lord's power, because he had witnessed the outward manifestation of it in others; but he had not confidence in His perfect grace, because His own misery had made him ignorant of love, as it too often does. But Jesus put forth His hand and touched him and said, "*I will*, be thou clean." Now no one has any title to say "*I will*" but Jehovah; and not only did He say "*I will*," but He put forth His hand

and touched him, because it was impossible that He could be contaminated by the pollution. Man could not do this, but the Lord, as man, came near enough to us to touch us in our very sins, that He might put them away. In this was manifested divine power with perfect grace. "And he charged him to tell no man;" that is, He put nothing between God and the leper's soul as to the matter of his cleansing. But He says, "Go and show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded, *for a testimony unto them.*" Christ was perfectly subject to the law, "made of a woman, made under the law;" and this very subjection to the law in this healing must turn to the priest for a testimony of God; for they must know that *Jehovah* had been there. The priest must acknowledge that none but Jehovah could cure the leper.

But after putting forth this power of Jehovah, we have Him immediately as the One who walked through the world

as the dependent, praying man; "and he withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." How very carefully the Holy Ghost marks this, again and again. We can find nothing else like God displaying His power in a man, dwelling down here in dependence on God! How does the simple fact of the incarnation create our thoughts about itself!

The next thing we get is the man with the palsy, who was let down from the house-top. "And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." For not merely is there the deliverance from the power of Satan, as in chap. iv. 36, and the *cleansing* from the *defilement* of sin as in the leper; but there is also the pardon of the guilt of sin, as here, "thy sins be forgiven thee." For sin breaks our relationship with God in two ways. First, in its *defilement*; God being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and, secondly, in its *guilt*, being committed against God. But all the grace of God being now come down on the earth amongst men, in the Son of man,

who has power on earth to forgive sins, as He Himself says, "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, He said unto the sick of the palsy, *I say* unto thee, arise, and take up thy couch and go into thine house." Here, then, we get the simple, absolute, complete forgiveness of sins; for the man with the palsy was absolutely forgiven and delivered from sin, there and then. On the earth he was to know that his sins were gone; and he was then to know, in his relationship with God, that his guilt was gone. Thus likewise I am told in the word of God that there is now no guilt as regards the believer in the sight of God. Therefore I am entitled to assume that I am no longer on the ground of guilt at all, but on the ground of *grace*, which has put the guilt away. For Christ Himself has put my sin away, and I am not on the ground of a guilty being, but of one forgiven. Of course *I have been* guilty of the sin, or I should not need the forgiveness of it; but, as God cannot suffer the least de-

filement in His presence, He will have to chasten and discipline me as *His child*; though, at the same time, I am not on the ground of a guilty man at all, but of a pardoned one. In Ps. ciii. we see that it is Jehovah who heals all Israel's diseases, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." The Pharisees say, Who can forgive sins but Jehovah? He who can forgive can heal, and, therefore, Jesus says, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?"

The Son of man was making man's heart to feel that God is perfectly interested in man. "His delights are with the sons of men." Here is more than God looking down upon men in love and pity; for He came amongst them Himself as being one with them.

You doubt, perhaps, whether you can get this amazing boon, but I will show you that you can; for in this is the display of the Lord, as the Son of man, a divine, living, present person, acting in divine grace and power.

to knowledge; but such a course, and one so little according to the Lord's mind, gives the superior place to knowledge; and if knowledge do not subserve the end of advancement in grace, we have lost the cross, and it can serve but an earthly end, as it often is of an earthly character, intellectual and high-minded.

TO-MORROW.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. vi. 34.)

Does each day upon its wing,
Its allotted burden bring?
Load it not besides with sorrow
Which belongeth to the morrow.
Strength is promised, strength is given,
When the heart by God is riven;
But foredate the day of woe,
And alone thou bear'st the blow.
One thing only claims thy care;
Seek thou first by faith and prayer
That all-glorious world above,
Scene of righteousness and love;
And whate'er thou need'st below,
He thou trustest will bestow.

Jehovah (still man) is blessing in perfect grace. Well might they say, they had "seen strange things to-day." But I would here remark that when the need is felt, and this perfect power is to be found nowhere else, faith will not be put off by difficulties. (See ver. 19, 20.) If God forgives us, then power comes in; and this to man's eye is the proof of God's power having been put forth. "He rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house." The man who was the slave of sin is now seen walking in the power of God. *Faith* does not need to see itself walk, but it is a proof to others of its power.

FRAGMENT.

We may be assured of this, that the throwing of everything on *interpretation* is the token, that the power of conscience for the end of nearness to God and obedience to the will of the Father is in a sick and faint and weak state. The love of Christ is superior

"A MAN IN CHRIST."

2 Cor. xii.

There are some chapters in Scripture which contain so full and blessed a statement of some great truth of God that they acquire and retain a peculiar hold on the believer's mind. And though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and has the same authority, yet this exceptional effect of peculiar passages cannot be blamed, because it is always found to be produced by some chapter which contains a special revelation of God and His ways, or the love of Christ towards us. The chapter of which I would now speak can scarcely be said to have this character, but it contains so complete and remarkable a display of the extent and wondrous heights and deplorable depths to which saints *may* go; of the mighty principles for good or for evil which are at work in those natures in which they have part in the highest associations, on the one hand, and in the lowest degradation on the other; and

of the way in which grace acts to give predominancy to good in us; it presents such a view of the whole working of divine grace to give the perfect result in good and in blessing of the spiritual conflict now going on in us, through the knowledge of good and evil which we acquired in the fall, that I think it may be fruitful to your readers if I unfold it a little practically.

The way in which in this one chapter we find the highest state to which a Christian can be elevated, an exceptional one, no doubt, as an experience, and the lowest condition to which he can fall, and all the practical principles on which the divine work is carried on between these two extremes, is very striking. In the beginning of the chapter we find a saint in the third heaven, in Paradise, where flesh could have no part in apprehension or in communication. He knew not was he in the body or out of the body. There was no consciousness of human existence in flesh, so he could not tell, nor could he utter what he had heard

when he returned to the consciousness of flesh again. Such is the saint at the beginning of the chapter. At the end we find one, perhaps many, fallen into fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and unrepentant yet of their sins. What a contrast of the highest heavenly elevation and the lowest carnal degradation! And the Christian capable of both. What a lesson for every saint, though he may reach neither extreme, as a warning; and how suited to give the consciousness of what natures are at work and of the elements which are in conflict in him in his spiritual life down here. Another part of this chapter will show us where power alone is to be found to carry him along his path upon the earth in a way consistently with the heavenly good to which he is called.

Paul uses a remarkable expression as to himself when speaking of his elevation to the third heaven: "I knew a man in Christ." A few preliminary thoughts as to the law will facilitate our understanding this expression. The

law gave to man a perfect and divine rule for his conduct upon the earth. But it never took him up into heaven. Heavenly beings, indeed, such as the angels, act upon the abstract perfection of this divine rule as it is stated by the Lord Himself: they love God with all their heart and their neighbour as themselves. This is creature perfection. But that is their nature in which God has maintained them. To prescribe feelings and conduct by law is another thing. Christians often forget this. The contents of the law are perfect. It tells us what the right state of a creature is, and it forbids the wrong that flesh is inclined to. But why *prescribe* this? No doubt obedience is a part of perfection in a creature. Mere doing right would not suffice for a being subject to God to walk righteously, because God has absolute authority over him. Thus God can, and we know does, prescribe certain particular acts of service to angels and they obey. But when a state of soul is prescribed—why is that? Because

it is needed. It becomes necessary because of the state of the person to whom the command is addressed. He is otherwise inclined, in danger from other dispositions of doing otherwise. To command a person to do a thing supposes that he is not doing nor about to do it if without a command. If we add to this that nine of the ten commandments forbid positive sins and evil dispositions, because men are disposed to them, or there were no need to prohibit them, we shall find that the very nature and existence of a law which prescribes the good on God's authority supposes the evil in man's nature which is opposed to it. This is a deplorable truth, take either aspect of the case. You cannot command love, that is, produce it by commanding it, and you cannot put out lusts by forbidding them to a nature which has them as nature. Yet this is what the law does, and must do if God give one. It proves that what is forbidden is sin, and that it is in man to be forbidden; but it never takes it away. It pre-

cribes good in the creature but does not produce it. It shows what is right on earth in the creature, but how far is it from taking man into heavenly places! It can have no pretension to it. Man has now *by the fall* the knowledge of good and evil. The law acts on this amazing faculty, of which God could say, "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But how? Man is under the evil and it requires good in him which is not, and shows him all the evil which is in him. It presses the evil on him and its consequences in judgment, and as to the good it requires *in* him, it only gives the consciousness that it is not there.

Further, it shews no good to him as an object before his soul. I repeat, to make the distinction clear. It requires good in him, loving God and his neighbour for example. But it presents no good to him. There is no revealed object to produce good nor be man's good in him in living power. It works therefore wrath. Where no law is there is no transgression. Now,

it deals, lead us to carry on the conflict by the sense of the power and dreadfulness of evil to which we are subject, and its consequences, but by the possession of perfect and divine good through which we judge the evil as raised above it, by the possession of an object perfectly good, and which is our delight as well as our life, by the possession of Christ; being in Him and He in us. "I knew," says the apostle, "*a man in Christ.*" But this we must a little explain and open out. It is often very vague in many a Christian's heart. In paradise, without law, under the law, and through the presenting of Christ to him, man was responsible for his own conduct as a living man, for things done in the body. He was viewed as a child of Adam, or "in the flesh." He stood, that is, before God in that nature in which he had been created, responsible for his conduct in it, for what he was in the flesh. The result was, that in respect of every one of these conditions he had failed: failing in paradise, lawless when without law,

grace works quite otherwise; it does not require good where it is not, though it may *produce* it. It does not condemn the wicked, but forgives and puts away their sin; it presents to us an object, God Himself; but God come near to us in love. It does more, it communicates what is good. It is not a law. It does not require good where it is not; it produces it. It does not condemn the wicked, but it forgives and puts away their wickedness. It does not lead us to carry on the conflict between good and evil by pressing the evil on us, and making us feel it a burden not to be got rid of, and ourselves slaves to it, which the law does, making us feel "this body of death" as that *under whose power we are*, sold to sin, and, supposing we are regenerate, making us only feel more truly and deeply that even this does not make us meet its requirements, so that we should be righteous by it, however much "to will is present with us," but the contrary. In a word, grace does not, in the knowledge of good and evil with which

a transgressor when under law, and last, and worst of all, the closing ground of judgment, when Christ came, proved to be without a cloak for sin, the hater of Him and His Father. Man was lost. In a state of probation for four thousand years, the tree had been proved bad, and the more the care, the worse the fruit. All flesh was judged. The tree was to bear no fruit for ever. Not only had he been proved to be a sinner in every way, but he had rejected the remedy presented in grace, for Christ came into an already sinful world, and He was despised and rejected of men. It was not all, that man, fallen and guilty, was driven out of Paradise; but Christ come in grace was, as far as man's will was concerned, driven out of the world which was plunged in the misery to which sin had led, and which He had visited in goodness. Man's history was morally closed. "Now," says the Lord, when Greeks came up, "is the judgment of this world." Hence it is we have, "He appeared once in the

end of the world. But now comes God's work for the sinner. He who knew no sin, is made sin for us. He drinks graciously and willingly the cup given Him to drink. He lays down the life in which He bore the sin, gives it up; and all is gone with it. The very life our sin was borne in on the cross was given up, His blood shed. He has put away sin for every believer, by the sacrifice of Himself, has perfected them for ever. He that is dead is freed from sin. But Christ died, He then is freed from sin. But whose? Ours, who believe in Him. It is all gone, gone with the life to which it was attached, in which He bore it. The death of Christ has closed for faith the existence of the old man, the flesh, the first Adam-life in which we stood as responsible before God, and whose place Christ took for us in grace. What the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his only Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. In that he died, he died unto

alive, we are alive now on a new footing, before God, alive in Christ. The old things are passed away; there is a new creation; we are created again in Christ Jesus.

Our place, our standing before God, is no longer in flesh. It is in Christ. Christ, as man, has taken quite a new place that neither Adam innocent, nor Adam sinner, had *anything to say to*. The best robe formed no part of the prodigal's first inheritance at all; it was in the father's possession, quite a new thing. Christ has taken this place consequent on putting away our sins, on having glorified God as to them, and finishing the work. He has taken it in righteousness, and man in Him has got a new place in righteousness with God. When quickened, he is quickened with the life in which Christ lives, the second Adam, and submitting to *God's* righteousness, knowing that he is totally lost in the first and old man, and having bowed to this solemn truth, as shown and learned in the cross, he is sealed with the Holy

sin once, in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Faith anticipates the judgment, as regards the old man, the flesh, with all its ways. Upon the ground of its responsibility we are wholly lost. We may learn it experimentally by passing under the law becoming hopeless of pleasing God, as being *in the flesh*, or we may learn it by finding our opposition to and indifference to Christ. But the whole thing is done away with for the believer on the cross. He is crucified with Christ, nevertheless lives, but not he, but Christ lives in him. If the cross has proved that in flesh there is nothing but sin and hatred against God, it has put away the sin it has proved. All that is gone. The life is gone. If a guilty man die in prison, what can the law do more against him? The life in which he had sinned, and to which his guilt attached itself is gone. With us, too, it is gone; for Christ has died, willingly, no doubt, but by the judicial dealing of God with the sin which He bore for us. If we are

Ghost, livingly united to the Lord, one Spirit: he is a man in Christ. Not in the flesh or in the first Adam. All *that* is closed for him in the cross, where Christ made Himself responsible for him in respect of it and died unto sin *once*, and he is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He belongs to a new creation, having the life of the head of it as his life. Where he learnt the utter total condemnation of what he was, he learnt its total and eternal putting away. The cross is for him that impassable Red Sea, that Jordan which he has now gone through, and is his deliverance from Egypt for ever, and now he has realized it, his entrance into Canaan, in Christ. If Jordan and the power of death overflowed all its banks, for him the ark of the covenant passed in. It is just his way into Canaan. That which, if he had himself assayed to go through, as the Egyptians, would have been his destruction, has been a wall on the right hand and the left, and only destroyed all that was against him. He

was a man in the flesh, he is a man in Christ. Amazing and total change from the whole condition and standing of the first Adam, responsible for his own sins, into that of Christ, who having borne the whole consequence of that responsibility in his place, has given him, in the power of that, to us, new life, in which He rose from the dead, a place in and with Himself, as He now is as man before God. It is to this position the apostle refers, only that he was given in a very extraordinary manner to enjoy the full fruit and glory of it during the period of his existence here below. His language as to this truth is remarkably plain, and therefore powerful. "When we were in the flesh," he says. Thus it is we speak, when we refer to a clearly bygone state of things, in which we are no longer. When we were in the flesh, that is, we are no longer in that position at all. "But," he says, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you." We are now alive in Christ.

nite idea of what it can mean. Ask him what it is to be in Christ—all is equally vague. A regenerate man may be in the flesh, as to the condition and standing of his own soul, though he be not so in God's sight; nay, this is the very case supposed in Rom. vii., because he looks at himself as standing before God on the ground of his own responsibility, on which ground he never can, in virtue of being regenerate, meet the requirements of God, attain to His righteousness. Perhaps finding this out, he has recourse to the blood of Christ to quiet his uneasy conscience, and repeated recurrence to it as a Jew would to a sacrifice, a superstitious man to absolution. But he has no idea that he has been cleansed and perfected once for all, and that he is taken clean out of that standing to be placed in Christ before God. But if in Christ, the title and privilege of Christ is our title and privilege. Of the full and wondrous fruit of this, Paul for God's wise and blessed purposes was made to enjoy in an

"If ye be *dead*," says he elsewhere, "to the rudiments of the world, why as though living (i.e. alive) in the world are ye subject to ordinances?" "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

The reader will forgive me, if I have dwelt so long upon the first expression of our chapter. I have done so because of its vast importance. It is the very heart of all Paul's doctrine, the true and only way of full divine liberty and the power of holiness; and because many Christians have not seized the force of this truth, nor of the expressions of the apostle, they use Christ's death as a remedy for the old man, instead of learning that they have by it passed out of the old man as to their place before God, and into the new in the power of that life which is in Christ. Ask many a true-hearted saint what is the meaning of, "When we were in the flesh," and he could give no clear answer—he has no defi-

extraordinary and special manner. In that, flesh and mortal nature has no part, nor ever can, though *we* as alive in Christ have while in that nature, whatever be the degree of our realization of it. Paul was allowed to know it, so that while enjoying it in the highest degree in the new man in his life in Christ, "the life hid with Christ in God," the "not I but Christ living in him," he had no consciousness of that other mortal part which yet burdens by its very nature (as well as by sin if its will works) the new and heavenly man in us. He could not tell if he was in or out of the body: he knew on re-entering his ordinary state of conscious existence that he had this body; but he could not tell if he was in or out of it when in the third heaven: he was unconscious of it altogether. The reader will remark too how carefully the apostle distinguishes between the man in Christ and himself, as he had the practical experience of himself down here, having indeed the life of Christ and the Spirit which united him to the

head, but having also the flesh in him, though he was not in the flesh. Of this Paul, of which he was practically conscious down here, he would not glory, but he had been given to be in the enjoyment of his place as a man in Christ with entire abstraction, as to his consciousness of it, of anything else—of such an one he would glory. And so can we, though we may never have been in the third heaven to realize fully the glory and privileges of the position we are brought into, yet we are men in Christ, and we have known enough—the feeblest saint who knows his place in Christ has known enough—of that blessing to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He glories in the position of the man in Christ, which is his most surely and fully in Christ; and he may realize it too so that at the moment he may not sensibly feel the working of sin in him, though he well knows it is there. We may be filled with the Spirit, so that the Spirit is the only source of actual thought in us. Indeed this is our

speak, in the third heaven is not always our place and portion. It is a mistake to think it would puff us up. A creature is never puffed up in the presence of God and with Him before the mind. It is when the eye is off Him, when we *have been* in the third heaven, but are no longer there that the danger begins. We are in danger of being puffed up about having been there when we have lost the present sense of the excellency of what is there and in which we lose the sense of self. This is what we find in Paul's case. The man in Christ has Christ for his title and is entitled thus to all that Christ enjoys, to joys and glories which mortal apprehensions cannot receive and language formed by mortal thoughts and ways cannot express, that are not meet to be communicated in this scene of human capacities. They belong to another sphere of things.

But wonderful as that is into which we are brought, the question of good and evil, the knowledge of which we have by the fall and cannot get rid of, nor

proper christian state, not always with the same activity, it is true, of the Spirit giving the sensible apprehension of the glory and the things of Christ so as to elevate the soul to that which is above; but so that there is no consciousness of anything inconsistent with it in the mind.* There may be indeed even then when there is no conscious evil, the effect of obscure apprehension, an apprehension obscure perhaps even in a way which implies fault, negligence, want of singleness of eye, spiritual laziness, swerving from the path in which a single eye would lead us: (though there uneasiness naturally follows in the soul because the Spirit does dwell in us and is grieved :) still there may be no present disturbing element in the conscience.† The being, as men

* This is the state described in the Epistle to the Philippians—the true christian state.

† The fact, it is important to remark, of sin being in the flesh, does not make the conscience bad. When it becomes the source of thought or action, then the conscience is bad and communion by the Holy Ghost is interrupted. But our chapter leads us further into this.

is it desirable or meant we should, must be thoroughly and experimentally gone through by us. It has been as to acceptance. In respect of that it is finally and for ever settled before God by the death and resurrection of Christ. But we have to learn to judge the evil and to delight in the good. The law, as we have seen, makes us learn the evil as looking to be judged for it. In grace we are first put into the position of perfect blessing in Christ, and then we judge what is contrary to it. This is the difference of bondage and liberty. Still we have to judge it and grow in our apprehension of good. In the instruction of our chapter this, as in all God's ways with the apostle, who was to be both quickly and fully taught in order constantly and deeply to teach others, was done in the strongest and fullest contrast of the extremes. The third heaven, if it did not set aside the flesh in fact for ever, must show what a hopeless unchangeable thing it is. And so it did. Paul had entered into the third heaven

with no consciousness of the hindrance of the body, still less with any working of the flesh in any way. But he must return into the practical state of existence in which he had to serve Christ with the consciousness of what he was as Paul. And here the only working of the flesh, the only way it took cognizance of Paul's having been in the third heaven, would have been, if it had been allowed to do so, to have puffed him up at having such wondrous revelations. It was unchanged in evil. Paul must learn this practically, even by a visit to the third heavens, instead of this amazing privilege taking away or changing it. It was not allowed to act, but he must learn truly to judge it in himself. Note this difference. It is not necessary when we are in Christ that flesh should act in order that we should learn to judge it in ourselves. Alas, it is often in that way we do learn it, but it is not necessary that it should act even in thought. By God's ways, and through communion with Him, we

occasion which His humiliation afforded them, (a humiliation assumed for the salvation of sinners,) to cast reproach and indignity upon Him. "When He came," as another has said, "to reconcile, to display, the tenderness of His sympathetic love, then nothing would do but they must get rid of God. When He comes into the very midst of the sufferings and woes of a world lying in wickedness, they refuse to have Him. They used the opportunity of His humiliation, to heap indignity and scorn upon Him."

If this were so with the children of men, if this were what the Lord of life and glory had to find in the world, the faith which apprehended Him (workmanship of His own Spirit) was the more grateful to Him. And we have good reason to know that it was so—blessed be His name. *He not only relieved the need that was brought to him, but He took delight in the faith that brought it.*

That faith, however, distinguished itself differently. It worked by differ-

can learn to judge evil in the root in us without its bearing fruit. If we do not learn to judge it in communion with God, where there may be very real exercise about it, (and a very great conflict of will against God if it has acquired any head,) we learn it in its fruits through the giving way to the temptation of Satan. When it is not judged, we learn, no doubt, the evil—not yet indeed the root, but Christ is dishonoured, the Spirit grieved, and but for the coming in of grace, sin will in such case have acquired deceiving power in our hearts.

(To be continued.)

FAITH WORKING BY LOVE.

Gal. v. 6.

The world cast out the Son of God in the day of His tender, personal diligent love, waiting, as He was, on all the need and sorrow that were around Him. For His love they were His enemies. They took, also, the

ent passions of the soul. It worked at times, I may say, as by a spirit of *reverence*, at times as by a spirit of *liberty*. For it was not only that the Lord met instances of strong faith, or of weak faith; He met faith having very different characteristics in its approaches and appeals to Him.

For instance, it was *forward* in the company that brought their palsied friend to Him; it was *reserved* in the woman who touched Him in the crowd. In Bartimeus, it was marked by a strong, unquestioning apprehension of *grace*; in the centurion it worked by a worshipping apprehension of His *personal glory*. Bartimeus knew Him in the grace of the Son of David, who was to make the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and he would cry, and cry again, and make his sorrow to utter itself aloud in the ear of Jesus, in spite of the multitude. The centurion, on the other hand, judged himself unworthy to approach Him, and his house unworthy to receive Him; and would scarcely allow his sorrow to be heard

above the measure which necessity put upon it.

Here surely was a difference. The one was all forwardness, knowing the grace of Christ; the other all reverence and reserve, knowing His personal glory. And yet we cannot say which was the more acceptable to Him. Each of them, with like sureness and readiness, gets the blessing he needed; and evident it is, from the whole style of the narratives, that He was refreshed by the faith of each, though it made its approach and appeal in so different a spirit.

And we see this diversity among the saints now. The spirit of reverence, like the centurion's reserve, prevails in some, the spirit of liberty, like the boldness of Bartimeus, in others. We, through infirmity, may misunderstand one another, because of such differences; but happy is it to see that the Lord, after this manner, can and does appreciate each and all.

But if faith thus worked in the presence of Christ in His day, it had

the apostle speaks to us of love, as being the due power by which it *now* works. As he says, "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."

If faith, *at this day*, take up fear, it has taken up its wrong instrument. The Lord can comfort the feeble mind, and meet the tremblings and uncertainties of the heart; but let us confess them as unworthy of His grace in Christ Jesus. He would be sully the brightness of His own way, if He could admit that faith in Him could work by fear. God apprehended, as His glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, must inspire confidence and liberty; and that is faith working by love. The Epistle to the Galatians reads for us the title of faith to work in *this way*. The Son of God has borne the curse of the law that we might get the blessing of God. The Son of God was made under the law, that we might be brought from under it into the adoption and liberty of children. Confidence, liberty, the con-

worked by other passions of the soul before that day. "By faith, Noah, moved with *fear*, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The word to which Noah listened and which he received was such as naturally awakened fear. Faith in it worked by fear: it brought solemn tidings to his ear, and fear of God and of His word was the fruit of faith.

Rahab tells the spies of Joshua that what her nation had heard of the doings of the God of Israel for His people had caused a *panic*, and she, believing the tidings, received the spies. This was another instance of faith working *by fear*.*

All this is so. A spirit of reverence, a spirit of liberty, fear, and other passions may be the form of that power in the soul which faith works by. But

* The law worked in that way. *Fear* was the end of it, as Moses tells the people. "God is come to prove you," says he to them, "and that his fear may be before your faces." (Ex. xx.) Moses himself trembled, saying, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

science and heart at ease, love answering love, must be the fruit of faith in such facts as these. It is, therefore, but the conclusion of all this to say, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

But I must add a little on the fruit both in the soul and in the life of this fine principle, this "faith which worketh by love. And here I say, what a difference between *blessedness* and *religiousness*! The Galatians passed from the first to the second. Sad, dishonourable journey! In their first estate, they would have plucked out their eyes for Paul, the witness and minister of Christ among them, just because they were so happy in Christ. In their second estate, Paul stands in doubt of them, and fears they might, through biting and devouring, go on to consume one another. They had become much more *religious* than when he had known them before; but they had lost their *blessedness*. They were observing days and months

and times and years; but where were the eyes that were once ready to be plucked out for others?

What a difference! And so at this day. Souls we know who are in the sweet personal enjoyment of Christ, and by which they gain a state of strength and victory; while the whole scene around us bears witness of the easy natural combination of religiousness and worldliness; of the observance of ordinances, and yet of full subjection to the course of this present evil world.

Now, "faith that worketh by love" is the spring or parent of this state of "blessedness," of which we are speaking, and which the apostle describes in Gal. iv. 15, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of; for I bare you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."

The apostle himself, as the same epistle shows us, had experienced this same blessedness. When he first received the gospel, he went down to Arabia; for he needed not Jerusalem

in Acts viii. He went on his way rejoicing, able to lose Philip, because he had found Christ. Surely these knew the "blessedness" of the "faith that worketh by love." But time would fail us to tell of all such cases then in those days, and now in our days—blessed be God for it!

FRAGMENT.

We want to have the eye more set on the glory, beloved. It is necessarily hidden as yet, but it is real, waiting for its appointed hour to shine out. It tried, whether the earth were in a fit state to let it shine, but it found it otherwise. Indeed *all* the great things of God have assayed man and the earth, and got no suited answer. *Righteousness* addressed man's heart in the law. The voice that called man to *repentance* spoke in man's ear by the Baptist. *Grace* would fain have softened and drawn man in the ministry of the Son from the bosom. But nothing of God found its answer in man.

or apostles, or anything that all could do for him or give him; he had his treasure with him, the Son was revealed in him. So afterwards at Antioch, he did not fear Peter: the creature, however honoured or above him in some sense, did not command him; his happy spirit was feeding on the love of the Son of God." (See chaps. i. and ii.)

These are touches of the spirit of the apostle, indicating indeed that state of "blessedness" which waits on the "faith that worketh by love."

The Hebrew saints give us another sample of the same. In the day of their illumination or quickening, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and became the willing companions of them who suffered and were reproached for Christ's sake. The Church at Jerusalem in Acts ii. shows us the same. The saints there were together, and had all things common. No man called anything he had his own. They ate their bread with gladness, praising God. And so the eunuch

"A MAN IN CHRIST."

2 Cor. xii.

(Continued from page 311.)

In what has preceded we have found three important points brought before us in this chapter. First, the man in Christ; secondly, the gross evil of the flesh if our members be not mortified; thirdly, that this same flesh is not at all corrected in its tendencies even by a man's being in the third heaven, nor by anything else. Paul needed a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be puffed up. There is another collateral point indeed, which I would here briefly notice; the difference between our abstract position as men in Christ, (and we are entitled to consider ourselves as such; it is our true position as Christians according to grace,) and our actual condition with the consciousness of the existence of the flesh and all our bodily circumstances and infirmities down here. Into this actual condition we have now to follow Paul in our chapter and to

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learn where power is to be found to walk rightly in it. The flesh exists unchangeable in its nature, a pure hindrance.

First, we may remark that no extent of knowledge, even where given of God, is in itself spiritual power in our souls. We cannot doubt that such revelations as Paul received in the third heaven strengthened his own faith, made him understand that it was well worth sacrificing a miserable, life such as this world's is, for it, and gave him a consciousness of what he was contending for, a sense of the divine things he had to do with, which must have exercised an immense influence upon his career in this world. But it was not immediate power in conflict in the mixed state in which he found himself when he had to speak of "myself Paul." He had, and so have we, to walk by faith and not by sight. The wickedest man would not sin while his mind had the glory of God Himself before his eyes; but that would no way prove the state of his heart and affections when

Scripture. We are to rejoice in the Lord alway. This the flesh would seek to hinder, and Satan by the flesh. Here we find first the privilege of having a title to hold ourselves dead. We are *not debtors to the flesh*. It has no kind of title over us. We are not in the flesh. We may reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God, and sin shall not have dominion over us. It is all-important to hold this fast. The flesh is unchanged, but there is no necessity of walking in it; not more as to our thoughts than as to our outward conduct. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death; sin in the flesh is condemned by the death of Christ; the power it had over us when under law (if not lawless) it has no longer. *When we were* in the flesh the motions of sin which were by the law wrought in us all manner of concupiscence. But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. We are delivered from the law, having died in

it was removed. Like Balaam, he would turn to his vomit again. So in point of fact the Christian, however strengthened and refreshed by times on the road by what is almost like sight to him, and by communications of divine love to his soul, has to walk by faith and not always in these sensible apprehensions of divine results in glory. Not that he is to walk in the flesh or lose communion, but he is not always under the power of especial communications of the glory conferred on him and of divine love to his soul. Paul knew a man *fourteen years ago*—not every day in that state. He could rejoice *in the Lord always*. Some Christians are apt to confound these two things—special joy and abiding communion, and to suppose because the first is not always the case the discontinuance of the latter is to be taken for granted and acquiesced in. This is a great mistake. Special visitations of joy may be afforded. Constant fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus is the only right state, the only one recognized in

that in which we were held. Our whole condition is changed. What the law could not do just because it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin has condemned sin in the flesh. But if the flesh be not changed, how is this realized in practice? It is this which is taught us here. It is first the giving conscious nothingness and weakness in the flesh. This is not power, but it is the practical way to it. We are entitled, as to our standing before God, to reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in practice to hold ourselves, as in this condition, not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; and sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law but under grace. But our chapter goes further than this: it shows us power so to walk. The flesh is then practically put down. The measure, as stated by the apostle, is this, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of

Jesus may be manifested in our body." His object was not to gain this life. Alive in Christ we have it; but he held every movement, thought, and will of the flesh under the judgment of the cross, and so the life of Jesus was left free. Such is our path. Admitted into the very presence of God into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we judge in its roots in communion with Him according to His infinite grace everything that is not of Christ in us, and the grace we meet and are made partakers of in this communion carries us along our road in lowliness and grace. Our fleshly tendencies are thus only the occasion of receiving the grace which keeps us safe from their power. I may be humbler than ordinary men if I have dealt with God about my pride, and so of every danger. The present power of Christ keeps the evil out of our thoughts. We have brought God into our life in this respect. It is not merely the absence, comparatively speaking, of a particular character of evil. The flesh—evil—is judged accor-

tion) judged by the apostle. All that made Paul of undue importance to himself or to others, and so reflectively to himself, was rejected. It would have been confidence in self. Our part is to be in the presence of God, that all that is of self may be judged. But God, as I have said, helps us. Here God had, by the abundance of the revelations given to Paul, given an occasion which the flesh could use. In His mercy He meets the danger for Paul, which *he* might not, surely would not, have rightly met; for God does not afflict willingly. He lets loose this messenger of Satan at him, but to do His own work, as with Job. And Paul has some infirmity which tends to make him despicable in preaching. "My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not," says he to the Galatians; a natural counterpoise to the abundance of revelations. What can the flesh do with this then? Well, it would be spared what seemed a hindrance. To whom? Why, to Paul. Just right. Paul had to be kept down

ding to God, and I am lowly in spirit, and walk softly and safely. But where there are real dangers, God helps us in this. Not only do I bear about the dying, but we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. God works; some messenger of Satan is sent; not sin, far from it; God cannot send that; but some humbling process which *prevents* sin and pride working; unpleasant to the human heart, but needed for it. All self-activity of the flesh is sin; the body is dead because of sin if Christ be in me; that is, if alive, it is only sin; and if Christ is my life, "the Spirit is life." My body is not counted as alive, or to be so in its will. What is of me in will and nature—me as a conscious living man, a child of Adam in this world, is annulled, or is a hindrance; it has no connexion with God; a man in it cannot please God. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

We find in Philippians this confidence in the flesh (not lusts of corrup-

—terrible truth for us. Must we be made weak and inefficient in order to be blessed and used? Yes, if, wretched worms as we are, we are in danger of leaning as man on the flesh's efficiency and strength. The works that are done upon the earth, God doeth them Himself, and above all spiritual work. *He* gives the increase. If He puts the poor vessel in a certain sense in danger, and in many a case where it puts itself, He meets the danger by striking at its root in self. He makes nothing of self, renders the incapacity of nature to anything not only apparent, but apparent to *ourselves*, and this is what we want. That self should feel self nothing or a hindrance, is a most divine work. Though it be a shame to a man who has been in the third heaven, to think *himself* something in respect of it: but flesh is incorrigible. But as to the instrumentality used, a mean and miserable process, such as becomes making nothing of flesh. If death is our deliverance from all sin, we must *taste* it for our deliverance practically.

The bitter water of Marah must be tasted when the salt waters of the Red sea have delivered us from Egypt for ever and ever. Put the wood of the tree, the cross of Christ, into our cross, and all will be sweet. "Crucified" is terrible work—crucified with Christ, joy and deliverance; reproach is cruel, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. But there are cases where the will and natural reluctance of the flesh to suffer are in question; there are also those which are characterized by the danger of positive evil working, as pride or vanity in the case of Paul. As to all, death must be tasted. The nothingness and incompetency of all flesh must be felt where it would be disposed to think itself competent. It must find its pretensions arrested and set aside when it has, or would be disposed to have, such; it must find itself consciously weak where it might hope to be strong or capable of something. As to what self would lean on, it must find itself a hindering flesh

"to me to live is Christ." But the fact that the flesh is thus practically mortified is not in itself power, we must be positively dependent on another, glad to be so, if our heart is in Christ's service and that we find His help only can make us to serve Him. To have Him is joy in every way. This is what follows: "I will glory in my infirmities;" not sin, but what broke down the flesh in its will and hindered sin, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Here is positive power capable of everything, of rendering us capable of everything in the path of obedience, giving no power at all out of it, but of fulfilling in power all the energy of love in obedience. For the christian path is not mere legal obedience which submits to a will which arrests and stops our will, but an obedience which serves with delight in love and in which love is positively and energetically active in doing good. This path is regulated by the Lord's will and fulfilled by the Lord's power, but that power can have no adventitious aid. It must be

where it would pretend to be a helping one. It is really nothing in the work and path of God; but when it would be positively something it must be made to feel itself a positive hindrance. This is not the end, but it is the way. We must be humbled when we are not humble, or even in danger of not being so. This work may come in preventively. But the flesh must be nothing if we are to have blessing; and in order that the new man which is content that God should be all and knows its power is in Christ only, may be free and happy and God, as it desires, may be glorified. The power of Satan and the power of death concur in ministering to our usefulness in Christ, because Satan wields this power to kill practically the flesh, and we have another life which lives in Christ and lives for Him. This question is first settled as regards righteousness, as we have seen. We *are* dead and risen again but it has to be practically settled as regards life and power of walk also. So that we may say, whatever our little measure may be,

the strength in us of a dependent nature. In this is the right condition of the creature, obedience and conscious dependence, and both delighted in, on one who has title and alone has title to all the praise, who loves us and on whose love we lean.

In the path of service, the energy of Christ's love impels us, Christ's power sustains and enables us. Flesh, only a hindrance to that, must be put down, and practically annulled, that Christ may work freely in us according to the blessing of that love. We then say the love of Christ constrains us. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me, the only true abiding state of the Christian, be he babe or father in Christ; only the thing he may have to do may be different and his temptations too. God in all cases is faithful not to suffer him to be tempted above that he is able. When a man is in Christ then, redeemed, quickened, and united to the Head, accepted in the Beloved, the work of God in order to power is to break down and bring the flesh to

conscious nothingness wherever it is needed; not by mending, using, ameliorating, but if needed by its will to be something, breaking it down, yea, making it for man's capabilities of acting a sensible hindrance. That is all that God makes of man as to his flesh and competency, but there is a deep lesson of blessing in it besides being the path of power in source. We are emptied of self, and Christ, that is, purity, and love, and blessing—God known to us in grace becomes everything to us, the mere unhindered joy of the soul, made practically like Him.

But we become now sensibly dependent, and Christ our power, I do not say sensibly power; for though there may be a consciousness of His strength, the service and work is done indeed, but done without any conscious strength. It may be done with joy in communion with Christ, and thus with joy in the service itself. It may be done with fear and trembling, and hence with no joy, though with confidence. That depends much upon how

ness, so that divine strength, which will never be a supplement to flesh's strength, may come in; thus there is entire dependence, and the positive coming in of Christ's power to work by us. If Paul's bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible, and there was something which tended to make him despised, by whose power was it that such wondrous blessing for the whole world flowed forth on all sides, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum?

One or two remarks more, and I will close my imperfect suggestions on this chapter. First, remark, that the humbling process with Paul was no depriving of the abundance of the revelations, or weakening the consciousness that he was a man in Christ. This would have been positive loss. These were fully maintained and gloried in. The use the flesh would make of them when consciously down here in the body, in the world, was met by an accessory humbling process carried on in the flesh itself. Next remark that it

far we have to meet the sensible power of the enemy, always in weakness as to self, always in confidence as to Christ, that it is His work, and He the doer of it, though He may use us as instruments. And this operation is not merely an effect in us, though there be one, it is the positive power of Christ, a real acting and working of His power, for which the sensible putting down of flesh was only preparatory, that it might be evidently not the power of flesh, and that there might be no mixture of the two in our minds. Hence the flesh is turned into positive, sensible weakness. But the power of Christ rests upon us, so that it is joy to the soul because He uses us, connects Himself, so to speak, with us; deigns to make us the instruments and servants, willing and rejoicing servants of this power. It is His power, but it rests on us. This is not the man in Christ, but *Christ with the man*—His power resting on Him, emptied of self.

The path of strength, then, is the being made sensible of our own weak-

is not merely power which is gained by this process. The discernment of good and evil, in its more subtle characters, is greatly increased; the judgment and knowledge of flesh greatly strengthened and deepened. Hence the liberty of the new man with God, confidence in Him, the sense of the careful and gracious interest He takes in us, and intercourse founded on this confidence, are greatly increased. Further, remark, that dealing with self, our own spiritual condition is the secret of *power*, not the quantity of divine revelations we have to communicate, valuable as that may be in its place. For power Paul was dealt with in his own soul, its own dangers and state, and then Christ's power rested on him. Lastly, that our glorying in our position in Christ is all right. "Of such an one I will glory; yet of myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities." When I think of my place in Christ, of the "man in Christ," of such an one we ought to glory. This is no presumption. It cannot be otherwise,

whenever we know ourselves in Christ. Do you think I can do anything but glory in being in Christ, and like Christ in glory? Of such an one I will. Let no pretended humility deprive us of this. It is legalism. Of myself, of that of which I have the living consciousness as a man down here, I cannot glory, unless it be in those sufferings for Christ and infirmities, of whatever kind they may be, connected with them, which are used to put the flesh down, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I would add to these, one collateral observation. The Lord can unite discipline with positive suffering for Christ, though the two things are quite distinct. When Paul was subjected to contempt in his preaching it was for Christ's sake he suffered, yet the form of it was, we have seen, a discipline to prevent his being puffed up. This may be seen doctrinally stated in Heb. xii. 2—11. In 2—4, we suffer with Christ, striving against sin, even to martyrdom and death. In 5—11, the same process is the dis-

cipline of the Lord, that we may be partakers of His holiness. How wise and most gracious of the Lord's ways to turn our needed discipline into the privilege of suffering for Christ's sake, so that we can glory in our infirmities. There is chastening which has not this character, being for positive evil. In this, doubtless, we have to thank God, but it is another thing.

In fine, before God we have the "man in Christ," — blessed position, — and which is perfection where we want it; and as to our place before men, besides Christ in us as life, the power of Christ, where we practically want it, in weakness and imperfection down here, resting on the man for walk and service before men. The first is the basis of all our walk, but it does not suffice for power. This is had in daily dependence in which we walk, as humbled in ourselves, that Christ may be glorified, and the flesh practically annulled.

THE EXERCISE OF CONSCIENCE AND THE EXERCISE OF HEART; OR, THE WHALE AND THE GOURD.

The first great question between a man's soul and God is the question of sin. Man's natural conscience (without revelation) tells him that there is a distance between him and God on account of sin; nay, Adam spontaneously took the place of distance, his conscience having demanded it and coerced him to it. Until this sense of distance be removed, and the conscience be satisfied that the cause of it no longer exists, man cannot recognize any happy relationship between himself and God, whatever he may apprehend of the perfection and excellence of a Divine Being. Nay, the more he does apprehend of these attributes, the more consciously distant is he as to relationship, because the more does he feel the moral disparity. Hence the relieving of the

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conscience is the ground-work of all blessing; and whenever there is imperfection in it, the value of the relationship which God has established between Himself and us is depreciated; so that in fact knowledge of God (even true spiritual knowledge) is prejudicial to the soul, if the conscience be weakly or imperfectly relieved.

Few are perhaps aware how their failure and feebleness are attributable to an unsettled conscience. We cannot stand at a distance and really learn God in love. If God meets me in love, He must meet me where I feel I am — estranged from Him; i.e., in my sin. My conscience tells me this, and the first action of His love must be to assure me that the question of sin is settled, and that the sense of distance need not, should not, any longer exist; nay more, that I *now* glorify God by being *happy* in the relief and assurance which He offers me, as to the removal of my sin through atonement.

This is God's *first* great lesson to the soul; and the more truly I learn it, the

better do I understand the love that reaches me as I am ; and as I learn the virtues of that love in my necessity and distance, so am I the better able to analyze its fine and perfect lines of interest for me now no longer in distance but in nearness.

Again, the will is never broken till conscience is tranquillized in God's presence. Man has done with his own judgment, and with the will which seeks it, when he has found relief in the judgment of God, to which his own will would never have led him. The soul must pass through a great exercise sooner or later, ere it finds out that, condemned by all human judgment, with God alone there is no condemnation. It must be brought into acquaintance with the depth and horror of sin, either in practice or in the more secret but not less harrowing conviction of it within ; for not until the conscience is sensible of impending ruin, and at the same moment feels that in God alone there is succour, can man render himself heartily to God.

vances in the repose of the one and the activities of the other, the more deeply must it be educated in the need and value of God's relief.

Jonah, though a servant of God had, not yet passed through this great exercise of conscience : he had not learned to relinquish self and its judgment and to depend alone on God. He was pursuing the leadings of his own will ; but God arrests him in his course, and his dormant conscience is awakened when apparently about to perish. The trembling jailer draws his sword to kill himself ; Peter beseeches the Lord to depart from him, for he was a "sinful man," and so Jonah is consigned to the fate his conscience now approves, in the midst of the foaming waves. Then God provides the whale to rescue and to exercise him, the substance of which exercise we have in the second chapter of the book of Jonah. The sum of it is simply this, he learns in this last extreme of human exigence, that God alone is his resource. He cries, "I will look again to thy holy temple."

The soul must be brought to a sense of danger and despair ere it so appreciate the succour as to be wholly cast on Him. But this is what God so entirely desires ; for this is what evinces the completeness of our dependence and total reversion of that independence which estranged man from God. It was the one uniform expression of the life and ways of Christ on earth, and, as a crowning evidence of His success over all the adverse powers acting on humanity, the one justly condemned of man and of himself, the malefactor, on the cross, looked to Him for remembrance and provision in the kingdom. What could anything in creation do for him ? Within, without, on every side, in the present and the future, danger and anguish were before him. In such a juncture he finds God absolutely for him, and so much so, that to be absolutely for himself, he must be absolutely for God. That the conscience should learn this rest in God is the alone ground-work of peace and service ; consequently, the more a soul ad-

Doubtless, he had looked before, but now brought to a deeper sense of the fearful consequences of pursuing his own will, he looks again with an appreciation proportionate to the need to which that will had reduced him ; this was requisite to make him attentive and interested in the counsels of God. The more he abandons himself and clings to God, the more really he serves himself ; and as God is his blessing, so the *service* of God is now necessarily his interest. I repeat *necessarily*, because if my soul finds that all my blessing is *from* God, all my interests must be connected *with* God ; and to serve Him and be occupied with His interests must follow when all my interests are bound up in Him.

The same truth is taught in Ps. li. where David regards his sin only in the light of God ; and finding relief from his burdened conscience, he passes from the exercise into renewed occupation with the interests of God. His prayer, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," indicates that being relieved of per-

sonal trouble and self, he finds his thoughts and interests flowing in the channel of the counsels of God. God at one and the same time relieves the conscience, and forms a servant with a ready and obedient ear. Nor otherwise can such an one be produced; for thus alone can the will of man, which the conscience witnesses against, be set aside; and if not set aside, there is very little obedient service; and if not obedient, not according to God. "Fear not," from the lips of Christ, relieved Peter's conscience, and enabled him to forsake all, and follow the one who had pronounced it. Jonah's time in the whale is just this. When the burdened conscience can find relief in nothing but Christ, (the holy temple); and in so doing, dwells more on His exceeding excellence and grace than even on the condition that required it, (for the greater always occupies the mind, to the exclusion of the less,) and when the soul is full of magnifying the Lord, the frailty and weakness of the earthen vessel is lost sight of. Thus

and every advance in power or intelligence must rest on this ground-work. That this process of exercise often occurs, and always with renewed blessing, is very well known; but I believe that in addition to these constant and necessary reminders of how dependent we are on the grace of God; we are, according to the service required of us, made, at some time or other, to pass a season in "the whale," to learn that subjection to the Lord, with which the wisdom of His counsels had not hitherto impressed us. This is properly the exercise of *conscience* as known in the whale's belly.

But this is not all. After the conscience is relieved, and obedience is learnt by dependence on God, another trial is necessary, which is the exercise of the *heart*. The very fact of a relieved conscience affords a scope for the affections to enjoy the mercies given us by God. And again, the very sovereignty of God under which our wills have been subdued may warp our judgment and lead us to expect an unsparing

He can do all His will, and we are only clay in His hand.

To Jonah, now in the ease of a relieved conscience, can the Lord say, "Preach the preaching that *I bid thee*." The ear is opened, and Jonah arises in the strength and purpose of service, as did Paul, who, arrested in the recklessness of his course, cries out in the presence of Jesus and of glory, "What wilt thou have me to do?" How could I serve happily, or with interest, if I did not know the value of God's blessing to myself? The Lord Jesus enunciated this truth on the eve of His departure from this world, by His self-imposed service to His own whom He loved. Having washed their feet, and pronounced them clean, He says, "Ye should do as I have done to you." The verity and vigour of this service of Christ to ourselves prepares us for the service of others, so that deficiency in power to serve, or in guidance in serving, is traceable to a deficiency in our apprehension of this first and foremost act of Christ's love,

not from God, as if power in grace only characterized Him, and not love in its tenderest and most long-suffering emotions. Thus was it with Jonah. He is angry at the long-suffering love of God which spared the city and belied his prophetic preaching; he cannot understand it; and thus he has to learn the lesson of "the gourd;" and, by the blighting and disappointment of his own heart, to comprehend what are the tender sympathies of *God's* heart. Abraham learned a very different lesson in the surrender of Isaac, from what all the commotions about Ishmael and the consequences of his sojourn in Egypt entailed. In one sense, the latter had a sting in them which the former had not; his conscience, no doubt, whispered how deserved was the sorrow in the one case, but in the other it was the test whether his heart rested more in God or in the gift of God; and whether he could at the demand of God surrender every claim on his affections and find in God his entire resource. Jacob, in like manner, suf-

ferred very differently from the vexations in Laban's house (which his conscience must have regarded as retributive) from what he did in the bereavement and trial to his affections in the disappearance of Joseph. *Conscience* was not concerned with the latter, but his *heart* was most deeply. Thus also with David. The loss of Ziklag was essentially different from the loss of Jerusalem. In the former there was, no doubt, much to exercise his conscience. Ziklag, in the Philistine country, was his retreat in the hour of his unbelief, which God consequently broke up, in order (by making him feel on the brink of ruin as he was, then deserted by his oldest followers, and the purpose of stoning him debated among them) in order, I say, to cast him more *entirely* on God, and the trial of his conscience effects this end. He encourages himself in the Lord his God, which is a prelude to bolder, fuller, and more intelligent service, as we see in his subsequent history. But the surrender of Jerusalem was very different; there

and tenderness in which Christ served. But this is only learned when it is *needed*. If I have no bereavement or loss, I cannot understand properly what bereavement or loss is. Hence, the Lord, when He has us in His hand, when He is using us, brings the heart low by many an exercise; one object after another has to be relinquished; God thereby moulding us for Himself and for service, and teaching us to find in Him that real engagement for our hearts, which the fleeting objects here, *without* Him cannot accord. There was no sorrow which did not wrench the tender chords of Christ's heart, when on earth, and by exercising *our* hearts. He leads us into fellowship with Him, and feels that we can now be, as it were, on the same note with Him. If to the broken spirit, the exercised and relieved conscience He declares His will, to the broken and contrite heart does He reveal *Himself*, making known His own feelings, and mingling with our cup the sympathies of His own heart.

(To be continued.)

his *heart* was more immediately touched. Jerusalem was God's greatest gift to him, his most valued reward for all his difficulties and achievements, the pinnacle of his desire—godly desire: but he must surrender it before the fierce and deadly rebellion of his own son. The dearest ties of his heart are severed, and his only door of hope is the thought of God's delight in him. Doubtless, as Jerusalem and all its attractions sank behind this temporary cloud, God and His everlasting sympathies thronged the horizon of his soul. God *will* exercise both the heart and conscience; and we may find souls who have had their consciences very truly exercised, who from want of exercise of heart, know very little of the sympathies of Christ. The exercise of the conscience is the groundwork of service, but that of the heart is the great preparation for *suitable service*. A good soldier will implicitly obey orders, but the servant of the Lord must be something more. He is an ambassador for Christ, and must serve in the spirit

* All this is taught in the gourd! Jonah cannot understand or sympathize with the tenderness of God, and therefore he must learn, through suffering, his own *need* of that tenderness. A gourd is granted him, so suited to his need that his hasty nature subsides into contentment and enjoyment, and this being so, the gourd, the object that yielded him this satisfaction and enjoyment, is removed! Doubtless no agony in the whale's belly exceeded this! The gourd was God's own gift, *prepared* by Him, and therefore allowable to be enjoyed. The trial of its removal, however, was not, in one sense, accompanied with the sense of justice, with which the former exercise must have been. *That* was in order to break his will, by condemning him of wrong and exercising him about it; *this* was to reach his heart in order to teach him God's heart and prepare him for the revelations of God's feelings and sympathies. Jonah is now brought to silence—he has not a word to reply. There is no

* Continued from page 352.

opening the mouth under the overwhelming sense of, "Thou didst it," as the Psalmist expresses it. But however bitter these exercises may be, when God's object and purpose is wrought by them, they are blessed, for they leave us alone with God. The conscience has found in Him its full and true relief, and the heart having learnt His sympathies, is afraid to look abroad on earth for satisfaction. It may be brought to silence, but if nigh unto God, it will be listening unto Him.

LIBERTY IN CHRIST.

Romans vi.

The principle of the chapter has been on my mind a good deal latterly, and the Lord in it, I believe. I do not think, beloved brethren, that we always get thoroughly hold of the place of liberty in which Christ has set us, and *that* as being brought to God. It is said, Yield your members slaves to

is not a mere question of words; it is a question of being with God or without God. Because the principle of what I do then is His will. The life to God will be one of righteousness. Why? Because the spring is in God. This says a great deal for our condition. He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, not merely to righteousness. There is an immense difference in the effect. Instead of legality there will be lowliness of heart, and delightful and blessed affections.

The effect of being brought to God is that my home is in God's presence. I am born in the house and belong to the house. As a child of Adam I am in this world it is true, but this life is that eternal life that was manifested unto us. I am crucified with Christ, and now it is Christ who liveth in me. He did not get His life from this world. The first Adam belonged to this world, but Christ says, "I am not of this world," and "they are not of this world as I am not." The moment I have divine life and understand where

righteousness, yet that into which the apostle soon turns the expression is, slaves not to righteousness but to God. Because if I speak of walking righteously, I speak really of walking with God. What is said of Christ is this, "In that he liveth he liveth unto God." He had no other life. So with the Christian. I am alive to God. The life that I have got cannot be anything else. It is not living to righteousness, and looking to God as something to come to, after righteousness is attained. There is something legal in the spirit when that is the form of our thoughts. If I yield my members they are merely instruments: my life goes to God, and my members are instruments of righteousness to do whatever He pleases. There is no other righteousness than doing everything to God and as obedient to Him. If I did always what was in itself right, I should still never do that which was right, because it is not enough to do what is right. I must not only do what is right; I must be obedient; I must own God. This

it is—in Christ—I see it is not of this world. Christ did not get His life from this world. He was born in it as a man, but His life was not from it. So we are connected with Him, having the life from where He is. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. We belong to another place as our home, because we have got our life from it. We began with something else, it is true; "for that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but then there is the thing to lust against.

This sets us in perfect liberty before God, so that we can begin from God, and act for Him in the world. And what a difference there is between having to work my way to God, and being born of God. Being born of God, we go out into the world, and act in the world as belonging to His family. Our starting point is from Him. Our home, as Christians, is with God, and we are sent into the world. As natural men, we are not sent into the world, but as Christians we are sent

into it, even as Christ was sent into it. When Christ was sent into the world we all understand He belonged to another place, and came here to be a witness of it. Well, that is what a Christian is. He is sent into the world to bear the name and character of His family in the world and before it. The difficulty with us is, that we do not *begin* there. We begin with flesh, and the being born of God does not for our minds take us out of it in faith. There is the hitch, practically, with many. Because when I am simply born of God, (I speak of it now as a work distinct from the full knowledge of Christ,) when I am quickened, the thought is, I will arise and go to my Father. When the prodigal said that, he had no best robe yet. He could not talk of a home there. He did not know if he had one yet. He speaks of being a hired servant. There was no known and established relationship with God—no sense of belonging to the house at that time, and yet he was quickened, and set out on his journey. When quickened, the

tion with our responsibilities, (which are a real thing,) and cannot have peace; and so long as I am looking at them, the fact of being born again enables me to judge better of what is required, but really leaves me, as to righteousness for God, where I was. The soul that is in that condition is really under law. It is in the flesh. It is standing before God, and thinking of its responsibilities as a child of Adam, and how it can meet these before God. And the effect of being born again is to give a sense of being in flesh, and that is dreadful, whereas before there was no thought about it at all. Now I am looking with the eyes of the new man at my responsibilities in the old man. There is where Christians get distracted and perplexed. It is very useful to convict of sin, and make us feel our need.

What is not realized in this state is death. I have got the new life, but I have not got to death. I have not got to Christ's work for me, which is another thing than being born again. I

soul gets the sense of the holiness of God. It sees that God has some love so that hope is awakened in it. But it also sees that God is righteous, and that we must be righteous. He is holy, and we must be like Him to be with Him. These truths are brought home to the soul in virtue of being quickened. Well, but I have not got these things; I am not got into God's house in these rags, and yet I have nothing else. The rags are our sins, and sins do not suit God's house. That person does not yet know his Father's house as a home. God did, it is true, for him, but as regards his knowledge and real state, his soul has not got the condition in which he could enter the house as a hired servant, even though he had the nature that put him on the road. Though the nature belongs to the house, yet it leaves us under the sense that we are responsible—that we must be something—which is quite true: but we are not what we feel we must be. Until we know the fulness of the gospel, we compare our condi-

cannot say flesh is dead and gone. Where do I find this blessing? In connexion with Christ. Death in Christ? Yes. God visits the sinner in Christ in the place in which he is. The Shepherd goes out to seek the lost sheep, and the woman her lost money. It is grace. Love is manifested, the love of God in it, the heart cheered, and when it thinks of nothing else, perhaps joyful. But when conscience is awakened, we need more than that. When the soul is at peace, nothing indeed has such power on the heart as the graciousness of Christ. What unwearied love! Going through all the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Nothing so engages the affections of the believer as the life of Christ, but it does not heal his conscience. If he sees it before he has peace, he says, It is the very thing that makes me miserable. He says, My heart is not worthy of all that love; I find no answer in my heart to such perfect and gracious love. And he is right, for when Christ was in all that

love in the world, they killed Him. Even with these new affections and desires, you are perfectly right in so judging; for if you look at Christ, your heart does not answer to Him. In truth, the complaint of not loving Christ is the proof of loving Him. If I say I do not love my Father enough, it is a proof of my sense of the claim my Father's love has on me. But this does not heal the conscience.

The truth is as regards man, no goodness as to God found an answer from him. If grace had closed with Christ's coming into the world, it would have been the absolute condemnation of everybody. For His love He had hatred. "Wherefore when I came was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?" And again, "No man receiveth His testimony." There is the real condition of man. It is not merely that he is guilty by nature and guilty under law, but he has rejected the mercy that has come to him in his guilt. Looked at as under probation, it is a told tale. The whole tale

charge and responsibility of this sin, proving what man was, but going there Himself in grace and obedience, it is true, while it was sin that brought us there. It was by the grace of God that He tasted death for every man. Notwithstanding Christ's graciousness, He is alone until death comes. I cannot get a place with God until He is dead. And here, I remark, that it is this that answers the objection in the beginning of the chapter; that if it is grace abounding over sin, sin is no matter. Ah! but stop a minute. How does grace abound over sin? By abounding over the nature of sin and setting it aside. Christ charges Himself with the whole responsibilities of the condition that I am in as a natural man, and that I am so distressed about. You say, I cannot get rid of it, and have done with it altogether, and leave it out of the question, for I find its power in myself. No, for it is in the question, for you are in your soul in the flesh. But it is just for all this that Christ died, and He is risen, and it is in resur-

is told in Christ's rejection. Therefore Christ said, "Now is the judgment of this world." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." As much as to say, that any connexion with Christ as a man on the earth was impossible. The hour is come; I am going to have the heathen; but if so, I must die. It is the death of Christ that wrote the judgment of God on the condition of every human being. If any had received Him, something would have been found in man's heart. Therefore He says, "Now is the judgment of this world;" that is, the life of man in the flesh, the death of Christ has entirely condemned.

Death and judgment have passed upon it. But when we look at what grace was doing in it, I say that is the very thing I want. This flesh I am heartily glad to be rid of. It is entirely judged. The body is dead because of sin; that is, its only fruit is sin, but I now hold it for dead, because that is so. Then I find Christ coming into this death in which I am. He takes the

rejection that we know Him now. So Paul says, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." I know *Him* no more after the flesh.

I have come to know that flesh is an entirely, utterly condemned thing: but what I want to know besides this is, that God has dealt with the whole thing on the cross, or Christ is dead in vain. It is closed. I get my place as a sinner there. I meet Him there; that is, I am dead to sin, being in Christ, who, in that he died, died unto sin. "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" This is not a state of feeling, but our place before God; "we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death,

we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: 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." Our old man is crucified with Him. That is true of all Christians; "For he that is dead is freed from sin." It is not said, ought to be or must be dead, or crucified, but that *is dead*. The Apostle never speaks of Christ as alive in the world at all in this chapter. He is dead before we are in Him at all. It is that truth that I get hold of for freeing my soul from bondage, that the whole thing that I find out as being renewed in the spirit of my mind, is all put away before I found it out at all. That is the place we are brought into as being in Christ.

The Apostle will not own that Christians are in the flesh at all. Thousands are there, alas! in their minds. But the Apostle does not admit this to be the Christian condition. He says, "*When we were in the flesh.*" Where was he, then, when he says, "when we

were in the flesh?" Not in the flesh, of course, at all. Christ has died. I never knew Him at all till He was dead; and dying, He has put away everything that I was chargeable with before God. "He that is dead is free from sin," he is quite clear from it. He has not got the life that is chargeable to death. Christ takes a life—charges it with sin, (at least God does,) and lays it down for us, and it is all done with. He had to say to sin up to His death—He was tempted and tested in every way—but was sinless, and was then made sin. But the moment he was dead it was all done with. He was tempted, but the only effect was to bring out His love to His Father. But He died to sin once. He has settled once for all the question of sin and its responsibilities, and now He has no connexion with it at all. "In that He liveth, he liveth unto God." That is what faith gets hold of. There is no question of anything reaching Him. Now you reckon yourselves that you are dead, because Christ is

dead. He does not say "feel," but "reckon." I begin with Christ in death, and put myself there, sinner as I am. His death is what exactly meets my state in it vicariously. In my will and moral condition, I was the sin which He was bearing. That was I, but it is all gone. "In that he died, he died unto sin once," and where He went, I have gone in Him. Take a person in prison for a crime, and he dies in prison. What is to be done with him? All *is* done. The life in which he sinned is gone, and to which the punishment would have attached. You cannot find a dead Christ or a living Christ in this world. "In that he died, he died unto sin once." Now that is for us. "Reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin." Therefore, I say, "*when I was in the flesh,*" that is, your standing with God is not in the first Adam at all but in Christ, because He is dead for us. He does not speak of a man's serving God until he is already set free from sin. But the life I get from God ever goes

to God again, offered up to Him a living and joyful sacrifice. (See Eph. v.)

Let me add, as to that, that the conflict which we shall have in the world is now a different thing from conflict under law. You have got the knowledge of good and evil. The state of the sinner must be settled in respect of it, for we have the evil. I have a dread of the evil. I feel the difference of good and evil as desiring one and living under the power of the other. My thoughts of God only increase my distress, because I cannot come to Him. That is truth, but not the Christian's state. As redeemed and knowing Christ, *I have got the good*, the good, God and my soul, through grace, delights in, and from that point I judge the evil. I am the righteousness of God in Him. Well, in the possession of this good I judge the evil instead of being afraid that God will judge me on account of it. Having the living possession of the good, a life that loves the good, it is not now uncertainty before God, but I am not content with

anything that does not suit my position before Him. I am in an entirely new condition. When the prodigal was perishing afar off he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," do you think that he would say that in his father's house? The Christian's manner of judging the condition he was in is different because he is out of that condition. To be under the power of evil with a distressed conscience, though hating the evil that overcomes us, is different from abhorring evil when delivered from it and in the presence of God. This last is holiness, the other, though with a new nature, legal misery. It is never necessary to allow the flesh to act. When we have to do with flesh and are in communion with God about it, it has not any power. When we deal with God about it we have judged the sin in its root and it does not hinder. It does not work in me, for I have been spiritually exercised with God about it, and Christ's strength is made perfect in my weakness. In that sense we are never slaves to it. The place I am in

is not in flesh; we are in Christ and He who died to sin once is alive unto God. We meet a Christ who has done for the whole thing and we are alive unto God. Blessed enjoyment to possess and delight in Him; we have the joy of the very blessedness that God Himself delights in. Brought into the house in the acceptance of Christ, righteous in Him and that in a better way than any innocence. The best robe belonged to the treasures of the house which the prodigal never had a title to *by inheritance*. It formed no part of what fell to his share. Innocence is not the ground of our standing before God at all. The whole old man is put away in the death and we are alive again in the resurrection of Christ. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus has come in between our responsibility as of the first Adam and God. IF NOT, I AM LOST. We never get that clear in reality in our souls until we are brought into the presence of God and flesh is seen to be neither more nor less than a condemned thing. Once in

His presence, the result of all is this—"I have sinned."

No person ever got into this and got back. I do not believe that ever a soul got free in Christ and ever got back into bondage again. A soul may have had joy and yet be always slipping back, but it never had the heart emptied out before God. When that is the case, there is no danger of going back to law. When once we have been brought in the power of God to that kind of consciousness of flesh being a condemned thing in His presence, and the heart has come to know that its only standing is in Christ, all questioning is at an end. If I have got the best robe on me in the house, I shall not be thinking whether I am going fast or slow to get to the house. I do not believe a person that ever got out of law ever got in again. The Galatians were in a delusion of mind, so that the Apostle stood in doubt of them as to whether they were Christians at all, because they were adding law as a perfecting of the matter, when

they were free. That was not a case of souls getting into bondage through not knowing deliverance. When once this deliverance is known, the soul does not give it up. The shield of faith may be down, and the fiery darts of the enemy may reach the soul, leading it in all but despair to doubt if it ever received it. This may come in a way of judgment, as delivering to Satan, that the spirit may be saved, &c. But this is a rare case, and it is not the soul getting under law.

LUKE XII.

In this Gospel we constantly find the Lord going over the same ground, again and again, in different aspects; but *here* He is pressing the rejection of His own Person, not in connexion with the kingdom, but in connexion with men's souls. It is not the kingdom as being set aside by His rejection, nor yet the connexion of men's souls

and bodies with Him in future earthly glory,—such as blessing the basket and the store,—but the blessing of their souls for ever; therefore what is pressed here is the relationship of the soul with God. On this ground, He says a man is but a “fool,” that “layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” For “what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and *lose his own soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for *his soul*?” He thus takes them off all dispensational teaching, to put them on the broad moral ground of the soul’s relationship to God; and then shows them the consequence of discipleship with Himself.

His coming again also is not in its aspect toward the Church; but the consequence of His kingdom being set aside for the present is, that His disciples are to look for His coming again. And this also bears two aspects; the one for those in relationship with God, and the other towards the world. Both are taken up in this chapter.

But first He puts before the dis-

here in conflict with evil, but they are *not* to be afraid. “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” Think of your souls as being connected with God. The hairs of your head are all numbered. If men kill your body, do not be afraid; for they cannot touch your soul; and not one single hair of your head shall perish. You may be cut off by an ignominious death. What then? Why, “not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father.” “Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Nothing can possibly separate us from God’s love. However hot the persecution may be, *confidence in God* is all that is needed. As Paul said, “*I am persuaded* that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any

ciples some of the motives which should actuate them as His disciples. (ver. 12.) “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, for there is nothing *hid* that shall not be made known.” It will all come out before God; whatever is said or done, it will all come out before God. Having made this appeal to their consciences, the next thing is that, He being rejected, power will be on the side of evil. Power would be there, and it would be *against them*; still, not one single hair of their head was *un-numbered*. This was for their comfort; but as to the government on earth by Christ, that was now closed for the present, and Christ as Messiah being rejected, they must be rejected too, and bear the cross like their Master; being left down here in the midst of the power of evil *unsubdued*. So thoroughly indeed was *power* on the side of *evil*, that when the Lord was casting out a devil, the people said, “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.” The principle brought out in this is, that the saints are *now* down

other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In all human efforts to preserve oneself from suffering, there is shown a want of confidence in God. If I am delivered from suffering, I am thankful to God for it; but if it be permitted, I accept suffering as my portion, and *trust God in it*. Do not *seek* suffering; but in confessing Christ, you will be sure to get it; and then you should take the suffering and trust God in it. It is a privilege to suffer for the name of Christ. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” However severe the suffering, let your confidence be in God. Do nothing of yourself, leave everything to God alone; for God may make some man (a Gamaliel it may be) to stand up for you. *God* may use anything as

a means of preserving you which you could not use yourself, even the wickedness of man. So that it is never a question of *means*, but of *who* is to use them. It is God *Himself*, and *not* you. And mark that this would not be indifference, or haughty defiance; it is simply trusting in God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

If a man persecute me, I would not say a word; I must be quiet and passive, whatever they may do; referring everything to God. As in the case of Peter and John, when the chief priests "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the *name of Jesus*. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the *sight of God* to *hearken unto you* more than *unto God*, *judge ye*."

will have to encounter and cheers them by saying, "If you *confess me before men*, I will confess you before the angels of God." And mark how the Lord knows how to put *His finger* on the *very point of the difficulty*: "If you *confess me before men*." It is not whether they could think of Him in their closets: of course they could do that, if they cared for Him at all; but that is not it: do they "confess me *before men*?" Alas! how often we cannot find courage to confess Christ openly "*before men*," when we can do it in our closets. But this is just a simple test how far the fear of man has more power over our souls than God. Still He would not have us go thrusting ourselves upon people: that would be no good at all. "Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves." "Be simple concerning evil, and wise concerning good." As they said of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it in the law of his God." Daniel was simply obeying God, and in thus simply and steadily

Then again, in verse 8, "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before *men*, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." How thoroughly the Lord is supposing the hostility of man! He expects it, for in truth the Gospel sets out with it. "I send you forth as lambs among wolves." He did not say as *lambs among lambs*; but as *lambs among wolves*. Therefore, beloved, if you meet with this hostility, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though *some strange thing happened unto you*." For what Christ met with in His own person while down here, He fully anticipates for all His followers, and therefore "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." But then it is as lambs—not in rashness, but harmless as doves, though wise as serpents.

Be prudent in not giving occasion to hostility; but if confessing the name of Christ brings it out, take it patiently, trusting in God.

The Lord sees the difficulties they

doing God's will, he had to suffer for it; and so may we. But then let us take care that we are suffering for doing *God's will*, and not in doing our *own will*. Not as Moses in his rashness, going and slaying an Egyptian and then running away. There was no good in that. But go on steadily doing God's will, giving Satan no handle; at the same time having unhesitating boldness in confessing Christ, and in bringing out God's truth; but not anything of the flesh to excite or offend the flesh in another, except it be by the cross, and that will always be an offence. As it is said, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me." He took Himself all the rejection of man's wicked heart against God. "He set His face as a flint;" and so must *we*. But then we are not to fret ourselves by saying anything contrary to the grace of Christ, and thereby bring on us *needless* hostility. Then, again, it is not sufficient to be right in the thing that we confess, neither to be sincere. It must be God speaking by

us. That which flows from me ought to be of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, and according to the time of the Spirit, or it is not of the Lord; it is not the manifestation of the grace of Jesus. This requires the will to be mortified, and the flesh crucified; for if it be otherwise, there will be the blustering out of something without any grace. But assuming the *will* to be mortified, the flesh subdued, and the Spirit of God working, He says, (ver. 10,) "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." The Lord is here putting them, in a sense, on higher ground than Himself. What an amazing encouragement to our poor hearts! If *you* speak, they are even more responsible if they reject it than in rejecting me. This of course could only be true but as they spake by the Holy Ghost: there must be no water mixed with the wine.

Paul could say, "If *our* gospel be

hid, it is hid to them that are lost." I should not venture to say, If *my* gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. Paul could say so, because he gave it out as pure as he got it in. But it is not always so with us; and therefore we cannot say what the apostle could, because it was the truth and nothing but the truth that was given pure from God. I could say so as to the truth of it; that is, I can say if you reject *the truth* you will be lost, though I cannot say if you reject the gospel *I* preach you will be lost.

Ver. 11. Here the Lord encourages the disciples for the warfare, supposing the hostility of the world, which must be expected if the gospel is set forth in power, and guarding them against the fear of man. He says, "When they bring you unto the synagogues, unto magistrates, and unto powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." When God first sent out the gospel, He took care that it should go out pure. All we

speak ought to be by the Spirit, as it is nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost that God can use. But when it is by inspiration, which is nothing but by the Holy Ghost, then God takes care that nothing else but the truth shall be spoken. But when I am speaking it is not necessarily so guarded as that no error is mixed up with it. Of course anything really good that is spoken is in a manner inspired. But when the truth was inspired by the Holy Ghost, God so kept the man that nothing but the truth came out. It is not so now. When God came forth in creation it was by the Spirit. "The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." Everything was always done by the Spirit. He that God has sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. This was spoken of Christ. But now there is no warrant that every man speaks the truth, because there is no man *now* so qualified, as to leave no doubt whether there is nothing beside the Holy Ghost.

(To be continued.)

No chapter, hardly, that presents the difficulty of profound truth but should be received as simply as possible; and then let God be waited on, that our hearts may gradually enter into the mind of the Spirit. There are *two* veins of truth in this chapter, according to the persons addressed, and the turning back upon it after its first and simplest version is among the secrets for the saint to use.

The *occasion* is the desire of the people, at least the idle portion of them, for the Lord's power in feeding the five thousand, to be continued, and so to be fed after the same easy way; being unattracted by the Lord's grace. Divine wisdom turns this to account in this chapter. They repeat every device to induce Him to exercise the power again for them, or to enable them to do so; but the work they should work was to believe on Him whom God had sent. They cared not to believe, but craved to be satisfied. It occurs

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here, as in other occasions of the Lord's ministry, that as their unbelief proceeds from step to step, and that the Jews murmur and object, the Lord increases the difficulty to their apprehension. The general practice of the divine wisdom in this respect is expressed in the words, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (See Matt. xiii. 10, and following verses.)

Wherever there was full acknowledgment of *Himself*, to them He vouchsafed to explain mysteries which He hid from them that rejected Himself. He deals with each one variously, according to this measure; a varying scale according to the measure of the acceptance of His person and office. Is it Nicodemus? Is it the woman of Samaria? Is it His disciples? The expression of the truth is dark or plain, according to the measure of the faith of the person in Himself. It once goes so far as to lead absolutely and finally

astray; as in those who questioned His authority in driving those that bought and sold out of the temple. So here He uses the same method. We have two classes, the *Jews* who murmur, and the *disciples* who confess their difficulty. The difficulty had arisen in His presenting His doctrine in terms full of difficulty, and to the Jew, of insuperable difficulty (in proposing blood as to be drunk); and He goes from things hard, to things yet harder, to be understood by the murmurers. It is plain at first, for He concludes His first words with, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." It is the explanation, in grace, of His being the bread that came down from heaven. The bread from heaven, in the desert, did not afford life; this bread did. It is God's bread to give life. Their thoughts were material, were after the flesh, as Nicodemus's were; as the woman's of Samaria were.

But there was enough to bring reflection on Himself as of God: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Another opportunity is given. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." The comparison of the manna and Himself again recurs. They die, notwithstanding they eat the one; they live if they eat the other. But He closes with a new difficulty. The bread is His flesh which He gives for the life of the world. From murmuring, they come to striving among themselves. Thereupon the difficulty is again increased by the Lord, who says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." We see, therefore, how He proceeds from point to point; and to faith (as necessary to them) never goes beyond this, viz. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life," and He will raise such up at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever

liveth and believeth in me shall never die." All this is lost, and the darkness deepens over those who yield not themselves in subjection to "the only begotten."

But another class had been stumbled: those who said, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" But it is also what disciples of Jesus should hear; and to them the way of taking advantage of the words of truth and life are made known. The Son of man dies to rise and "to ascend where he was before," the object of worship and *the means of blessing there*.

But this was to introduce them to that which only the prepared of the Father could receive. He adds, therefore, this; and many disciples conscious of their end being short of this, cease to follow Him; conscious that it was not God that had put them there. The little flock, however, is appealed to; whether they will also go away; but "we believe and are sure," say they, "that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." He could not but except

him who was in reality none of them; "one of you is a devil."

We have therefore the history in its first simple results, hid from murmurers and brought out to saints in the glorious truth of the Son of God; God applying to the soul all things in Him as they are revealed to faith: "from faith to faith." And we are thus sent back to look for the instructions that saints are to receive beyond the gospel that blinded the murmurers; instruction which became the more needful as men resisted subjection, and adapted only to saints as striving on their way to God. Indeed, it is no small labour to keep ever on the ground of grace and dependence. Labour for "that meat," but labour as in grace, "which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." This is the *second vein* of instruction that we find running through this chapter, and from this point; and so, though we have died in Christ, yet evil lives, and we died that the power

action of his conscience pressed upon him, of the need of righteousness, which surely, if true, God greatly loves and defends (not in His own presence, for He would give better there, but) against the accusations of Satan, who would say that it is mercenary. That presence, however, reveals sin and powerlessness, which God will replace by righteousness and strength, in His strength, and establish that in which mercy and truth kiss each other. God knows how man returns to the first stirrings of his soul, and then pre-jealously, in His grace, renews the lesson He gives, and charges man in His grace ever to abide at the fountain of grace, which the thought of a condition of transformed in the renewing of his mind might lead from, while it is grace by death in the old Adam in practical denial of its workings in the lowly doer, (while we look at the eternal light within,) through which we are to pass. To eat the flesh and drink the blood is as necessary to the saint as to the sinner. The starting point is as needful

of evil might not live; and though our liberty is Christ, and our peace His peace, and we are commended to God in Him, yet He that is ascended where He was before becomes the blessed means, through life, of the power of eating that flesh and of drinking that blood which is everlasting life. We lament the thought of those who have turned these things to material or spiritual hope from things *on earth*. Our Lord would carry us up where He is, that nothing may lack to our enjoyment of God; and when thus as disciples, indeed, we own the words of Christ, that "they are spirit and they are life," we find the power wrought of God in the application of all we want unto His glory by us. Our hearts are drawn to the source of life, whatever form of help we want—unto the death of every rising tendency that is the relict of the first Adam, or to the expansion of that image to which God would eventually bring us. God, in His wisdom and infinite grace, knew how man is liable to return to the point the first

to him, as it is perfectly untouched, and keeps up the ever springing work of thanksgiving, nay, of rejoicing. But this is the way of growth, according to the high position of the Church's union with a glorified Christ, to the pulling down of every stronghold; and we are able to say, "is rather risen again."

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST AND CHASTENING.

Hebrews xii. 1—13.

In the former chapter the Apostle has been speaking of the various forms which faith took in the midst of the trials and difficulties through which the saints of old times had to pass; whether the patience which waited for the accomplishment of promise, or the energy which overcame the difficulties of the way, closing it with the distinct and definite contrast between them and our-

selves. In what follows he is applying this for our encouragement in the race which is before us. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the rest ran a part of this race of faith, and died in faith; that is, did not receive the promises. But if we look at Jesus, we see one who has got to the end of the course, and as regards His personal glory, He has got the promised joy. Besides, He has run the whole course of faith, gone through every trial of it; begun and finished it. You never can find yourself in any place of trial, where a believer can be found, that Christ has not been in it. He has trod the whole path, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. There is where the road leads to; so do not give up the cross. Jesus has borne it and has sat down there. It is worth running for. He came, no doubt, in divine love, but He walked in the path in which we have to walk, with all the motives which sustain and cheer us. He had before Him the joy of being before God in that blessed place. What com-

us, whatever hinders is as dross for oneself, because of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

This, then, is the secret of the Apostle's seemingly strange language. For it does seem strange, to a heart burdened and trammelled with conflicts and distracting circumstances interwoven with all its movements, to be told in a short sentence, You have only to throw them aside. The question lies within. The heart is divided. The weight which burdens its strength and the cords which entangle the feet are loved weights and cherished cords. The question is inside the things that beset it. It lies in the state of the heart itself. The moment all else is dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, it is easy to understand and to do what the apostle says. There is no great sacrifice in getting rid of dross and dung—one is glad of it. It has to be done, but it is easy to do it, and the weight itself is gone—the snare is broken. A heart, through grace, filled with Christ for

fort, in the path of difficulty and trial, to see that He has trodden it all, and was sustained in it all in the very way we are, by the joy of doing God's will and in dependence on Him.

"Wherefore let us lay aside every weight." It seems here as if the Apostle treated the difficulties we feel, very lightly; but, if we weigh the words, we shall be led into the blessed secret which made affliction light and the path a plain one for him. If a thing is a mere weight it is easy to lay it aside. If my eye is single and the only thing I care for is the race, it is felt only as a weight and it is easy to throw hindrances away. When it is otherwise with us it is difficult, felt to be impossible; but it is not because of the power of the thing, but because we are caring for it. We do not cling to weights, when they are *only* weights, in a race we desire to win. If you are talking of a sacrifice, you are talking of your love to the thing you are going to sacrifice. When the eye is singly set on the object before

His own sake, is the secret of running the race to win Christ.

But this supposes the whole truth of the certainty of redemption. The race begins by redemption. All experiences before that are the experiences, not of a race, but experiences to know whether God will have me. If I am going to run to Canaan and I do not know whether God will have me at the end, I shall run very uncertainly; but if redeemed and set in the race by Jesus, I shall run in liberty and joy; for He is my object at the end as well as my pattern along the way.

In what follows we get instruction on another point. It is this, that all along the way we pass towards the rest in glory, God is exercising our hearts to make us partakers of His holiness. This supposes a life which has desires according to the divine holiness and *can* partake of and enjoy it: that which is in its nature holy. We have already seen that it supposes redemption. True desert-work with God, that work in which God humbles us and suffers

us to hunger, and feeds us with manna, that we may know what is in our heart, that He may do us good at the latter end, is after the Red Sea. Experiences there were before, but they ended in being shut up by judgment and oppressed by terror. The salvation of God was shown there. Experiences after that were with God, who had redeemed them and when there was an end of belonging to Egypt. Slavery went before. Desert patience and proving what was in the heart and Canaan conflicts followed after the full, deep, complete bringing out of what the heart of man is with God. But these exercises have a double character, as we shall now see. "Ye have not," says the passage, "yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Here we have two principles which nothing but the Spirit of God could connect; first, resisting unto blood, that was in suffering for Christ; and secondly, at the same time suffering in a conflict against sin, and by which it is practically judged in us. God connects our

striving against sin with suffering for Christ; resisting unto blood is dying for Christ, but as this is in the conflict with sin, it cannot be truly carried on when the principle of sin and our own will is active in us. Hence this same suffering serves as discipline, and so in the next verse it is added, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Who would think of God's chastening us at the very time we were suffering for Christ? But so it is, for self is so subtle; it mixes itself up even with suffering for Christ, and hinders our service, and we may fear even to dishonour rather than to serve Him. We are apt to get discouraged when we have thus to judge ourselves in the midst of conflict and, it may be, tempted to sit down and do nothing at all. The judgment of self is right, but not the discouragement. Suppose I am serving Christ, and that I get discouraged in the warfare. Whence is this? Confidence in my own misuse of power—want of faith in God's working His own work. Now what is

God doing here? God is using it to exercise me so as to judge self. There is not a step of our lives that is not part of the process in which God is dealing with us. Before deliverance at the Red Sea it is a process to break down flesh so as to cast me over on the salvation of God. After this deliverance it is a system of experiences to exercise me *along with God*. The question of deliverance never arises again, but there is a quantity of things to be judged that I may enjoy that for which I am delivered. It is henceforth a question of communion with God.

In Moses we have an example of these two things; he was suffering for Christ and suffering for his flesh too at one and the same time. The Spirit of God (Heb. xi. 24—26*) tells us of the bright path of faith in which he was walking when he came among the children of Israel; yet the flesh accom-

panies him here, and with a mixture of human energy, nourished by the position he had been in, he slays the Egyptian. God surely allowed this that the breach might be complete; but he does now fear the wrath of the king. In doing it he looks this way and that way, and when it is known, flies. He was in the main suffering for Christ—bearing the reproach of Christ most blessedly, but much had to be purged out and subdued in him, and if he had to flee because he had identified himself with the people of God, he had to flee that forty years' discipline might wean him from all confidence in human strength. When that is gone, we see how little courage flesh can have in the presence of difficulty. Now, though flesh had indeed shewn its weakness, he can be a god unto Pharaoh. Something like this is the case of Peter, only here it was, alas! with an open and dreadful fall. He truly loved the Lord, but he had confidence in the flesh, in himself, yea, in spite of the Lord's warning as to the sifting of Satan and as to himself,

* Verse 27 refers to his subsequently leaving Egypt by the power of God.

Entering into the temptation he dreadfully denies the Lord. This was an extreme case, no doubt. Yet love to the Lord led him, mixed with false confidence in the flesh, which had to be humbled in this dreadful manner. The Lord lets him go through the process that he may learn himself, and what flesh is, and is worth, and where perfect grace is to be found; and then when converted, that is, his soul restored, he is to strengthen his brethren. If the flesh is not judged, the very effect of the zeal we have is to put us in the place where it comes to be known and judged.

In Paul, too, we see the same thing. A thorn in the flesh is given him, lest he should be exalted above measure. We see in him the action of devotedness in the divine life, and the action of the flesh kept down by that which would make him despicable in his preaching. (See Gal. iv. 13, 14.) When the Apostle thus suffered, felt the thorn, he was really suffering for Christ; yet it was the needed keeping

down of flesh. This is the effect of that wondrous grace which employs those who have yet to learn for themselves, as vessels of divine glory and truth to teach others. The vessel must be dealt with, as well as employed. God, in a certain sense, having given occasion to Paul's danger by the abundance of revelations granted to him, secures him from the danger, but by the known and needed spiritual process which is carried on in every soul, though by various means.

How precious is this constant care of God! He is always going on with us. The Hebrews were getting worldly, and persecution comes. It is suffering for Christ, and yet for sin. And the hand of God is there to give through it all senses exercised to discern good and evil. The work is going on, though I do not know all that is going on until afterwards. When the work is done, I get more spiritual, and am then able to see what God was doing all the while. His own work He will carry on for His own glory. The chastening

is not always for transgression, but if not, it is for the principle that produces it, or that would produce it, for it may not do so. (compare Job xxxiii. 17; xxxvi. 9.)

If we look at Israel in the desert, how constant and unceasing the care of God over them! Their foot did not swell, neither did their garments wax old. God was taking care of the very nap of their garments, but taking care at the same time not to minister to self. So in Deut. viii. we see they were to be in constant dependence. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, . . . 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 alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." It was on the one hand that they might know what was in their heart, and on the other, that man lived

by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. An humbled and dependent self, and a God who guided them and met their every need. Where was the way in the wilderness? There was no way. And so Moses says, "Show me now," not *a* way, but "*thy* way, that I may know thee." Thus he comes to know God as well as himself. And even in the land there is the same tender care. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God," &c. The danger was not of forgetting the land but God. "Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, . . . then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," &c. In the actual and real enjoyment of our highest blessings, flesh does not work. There is no mixture. When Paul was in the third heavens, there was no need of a thorn, but when he came down, there was the danger of flesh beginning

to work about the blessing. When we are walking in this new life, flesh has no part in it; Satan and the world have nothing to offer. Before deliverance, holiness is flight from sin, instead of enjoying God, so it is called "the bread of affliction." (Deut. xvi. 3.) It presses on the spirit until delivered. When delivered, God leads us through the great and howling wilderness where there is not a drop of water, and feeds us with manna, to humble us and to prove us, to do us good at our latter end.

What patient grace! Never withdrawing His eyes from us; exercising us to give the full perfect judgment of flesh in the power of the cross of Christ; that all the will, and movement, and activity of the flesh may be dead,—not in the sense of our being dead and risen, for we can always say that,—but practically. This is what we have in 2 Cor. iv. 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This is the settled purpose of heart, through grace, of the Apostle,

die in order to live. This cannot be. In the power of what life are we to die? Life is first. "We who live are always delivered unto death;" that is, life must precede death. The great blessing is fellowship with God. But, as a matter of fact, there is, in virtue of this, the judgment I form of myself reflectively, and this is of great importance. I am enabled to joy in God in loathing myself, though I may not have always to think of the self I loathe. This is not merely conversion; but, being converted, looking at myself in the presence of God's love. That is repentance. It is the real judgment of good and evil which is in the divine nature, with this difference, that the evil is in myself. Repentance is the holiness of God's nature applied to the judgment of self in its full extent in the presence of God's love. If I do enjoy God with an exercised heart, the effect is to make me discover all that is not light in myself, and I judge it along with God. I am separated from that bit of flesh which I judge. Oh! it is

to hold himself dead as regards all that was of nature, according to the power of the death of Christ. Then it is added, "For we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake;" so that there is not only the purpose of heart in the Apostle in keeping the flesh dead, but God delivering to it. Thus Paul is put down, so that not a bit of him as a man in flesh should be there, but the life of Jesus manifest in his mortal flesh. "So, then, death worketh in us, but life in you:" that is, the power of this Christ which wrought in him as death as regards the flesh, being thus freed and delivered from it in its outward operations; wrought as life in others. The fact that the work was practically complete in Paul as bearing always about the dying, caused that the life of Christ was the only thing working in them. In the measure in which the vessel is put to death, in so far does life work. Such a writer as Thomas a-Kempis, however sincere, begins all at the wrong end. He seeks first to

blessed work, and delivering work; for whenever I judge evil along with God, I am delivered from the evil. In all these exercises, the object of God is to do us good at our latter end. We judge of circumstances by their pleasantness or unpleasantness, God by the good of the end. The reason we do not like them is, that we like our own will, and that is the very reason why God sends them.

In verse 5, we have two things, Do not despise the chastening, and do not faint under it. First, Do not despise it. If you are under chastening there is always a reason for it, for God is love and does not afflict willingly. It will not do to say, I am suffering for Christ. That is very good, but God is not dealing with goodness in chastening, although to bring out goodness. He is dealing with flesh. Take Jacob. God does not let Esau get near him, but He takes him in hand Himself. Jacob feared Esau, because he had not walked with God; but he did not rightly fear God. God met his faith which was

true, and would not allow Esau to touch him any more than He did Laban. But if He preserved him from the hostility of his enemy, it was to deal with him much more closely about his ways and heart, and so the "man" wrestled with him first. Here, however, God did not reveal Himself. He sustained his faith and blessed him. At Bethel, when all the idols had been put away, God begins by revealing Himself, and calls him, Israel, as if He had never done so. So now is everything even which we have already in such a case with God.

The second thing is, Do not faint when rebuked, for all is in love. It is love putting us through the process of working out that which is hindering. Do not despise, there is reason for chastening. Do not faint, it is love which chastens.

"Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Here

to Him. No doubt He does it in perfect love to us, but there is a public government of God. "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days."

"For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Here we get another blessed revelation as to God. His heart is always working for our profit. And what is that? Is it merely that *I must* be holy? Far otherwise. It is not saying, you must have holiness to come to me, but grace, making us partakers of God's holiness. God would have our mind and everything wrought out into what He is. And what a kind of joy we should have in God when made partakers of His holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous." If I am correcting my child, it is not joyous to him, nor meant to be so. "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness

there is another principle besides confidence in the love of Him who chastens, and that is, reverence. There is a reverence for His divine title over us. God's hand is upon me, and I bow under it. There is a majesty in it which has its place. Even Christ bowed under the government of God. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Purging is not that which is in question here, but the submission of the will—another part of the divine lesson. It may not be a particular fault, it may be independence of spirit that has to be judged; but He governs. Angels see this. "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels." "We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men." There is not a step of our lives which is not a part of this spectacle. It is not thus merely the good that is done to us that is the effect of these dealings of God, but there is subjection to the Father of spirits. He has this title over us, and we bow

unto them which are exercised thereby." What makes us not to be peaceable? It is always our thinking of self. A man is peaceable when his spirit is not hankering after anything. When we have been exercised by the chastening, the new nature produces its fruits in the ungrieved power of the Holy Ghost, and in our hearts we are peaceable. Joy is sudden, something that arises up in our hearts and may sink down again and disappear, it is high and low; but peace is always even. The affections are quietly settled in God, peacefully confiding in Him.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down." Do not be discouraged. It is God who is working, and working in love; and He will do all that is needed to make you partaker of His holiness. Then there is spiritual activity and energy. How perfect His grace! "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." How much He has to bear with us! What petty pride, what levity! But He has planted a precious seed, and therefore He never ceases to cherish it.

LUKE XII.

(Continued from page 384.)

In ver. 13, one comes to the Lord, complaining of the injustice of his brother; "Speak to my brother," says he, "that he divide the inheritance with me." And the Lord replied, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" He was not come to set things right in this world then; though He will do this when He comes again. Had He been accepted as Messiah, He would have done so then; but the counsels of God were otherwise. It was quite right that the man should have his inheritance; but as Messiah He was rejected, and therefore could not then set "*justice* and judgment in the earth." He was then come about men's souls; therefore He says to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." For while the one sought to *defraud*, the other sought to *obtain*; and it was the same spirit in both. They were *both* loving the *possession* of

these things, and that was the whole secret; therefore the Lord told them, that "a man's life consisteth *not* in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

He could not be occupied with dividing men's inheritance, for His whole business was with their souls. The world was going to be set aside, therefore what had the Lord to do with men's inheritances? His work was to go on with God, doing His will; and His entire business as to men was with their souls; and this ought to be *our business too*, for we are associated with God on new grounds. But if we are seeking the world or riches, the effect will be practically to separate us from God. I always tremble now when I hear of a Christian getting on in the world; for "how *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" And who ever *escapes* the snare of getting on in the world? Generally there is a getting down in spirituality, when there is a getting up in the world. It may all be taken up in service to the

Lord, but that is quite another thing; then it would be a bright testimony. A person once said to me, What harm is there in riches? My reply was, Suppose they keep you out of heaven; what then? O! said he, I never thought of that! If riches do get possession of the heart, they surely must keep Christ out, and a Christless heart never got into heaven yet.

The real mischief is in the riches of this world getting into the *heart*. Mark that most solemn word in 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 11, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." It is they that have a *desire* for riches, fall into "many foolish and hurtful lusts, which

drown men in destruction and perdition." It is not the question as to whether riches are right or wrong in themselves; but as to riches being the *object* of the heart. If so, they keep Christ out. A man will then say, But suppose *I do not set my heart upon them*; but the Lord who knows our hearts better than we do ourselves, does not deal in this way; for He says, "Where your treasure is, *there* will your heart be also;" and not as it is often quoted, "Where the heart is, there the treasure will be." It is quite true that if the Lord give riches, He can give grace to use them; but even then they are a snare. The language of the "certain rich man" to his soul in this chapter is, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" but God says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" So is he that "layeth up *treasure* for *himself*, and is not *rich towards God*." Here comes in the

question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"Therefore take heed, and beware of covetousness, which is *idolatry*." For, be it ever remembered, that while riches are a snare to the *rich man*, to be jealous of a rich man, because of his riches, is as bad or worse in the *poor man*; for it just shows that he would also have them if he could. It is not a question about *riches*. The Lord wants to get souls into heaven, and riches will not take them there; that can only be by being rich towards God. The whole question is about Christ; for if Christ has His place in our hearts, the things of this world cease to be temptations to us. The man that is rich *toward God*, has no desire for *other riches*. But the man that layeth up treasure for *himself*, is *not rich towards God*; because *self* is at the bottom. All this has to do with the world. But now in Ver. 22, He says unto His disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no

thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." When speaking to the world He takes the lowest ground; but when He turns to His disciples He speaks differently. They may trust in God, for He presses upon them that as His disciples they were of great value in the sight of God. Poor worthless things in themselves, no doubt, still they were of great value to God. Do not you be uneasy, for God has a particular interest in you, and the hairs of your head are all numbered. If God feedeth the fowls, "how much more are ye better than they?" They were all God's subjects by creation, for He had not given up His title to the world. In the peculiar teaching of the Book of Jonah, when God had given up Israel as an earthly testimony, we learn that God's character of doing good to all and caring for all was not at all touched. "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand

persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also *much cattle*?" "But does God take care of oxen?" In truth He does, for they are the work of His creative power. But to the disciples He says, "You are of such value to God that He would have you reckon yourselves to be of value to Him even in the midst of this hostile world. Do not you be taking thought for the morrow; leave the morrow with God. Do not you be taking thought at all; for if by taking thought ye cannot do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? He is urging upon them unlimited confidence in God, who is to them as a tender Father. Therefore He says to them, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "Fear not, little flock, for it is *your Father's* good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Therefore, do not be uneasy in passing

through the desert, for the kingdom is at the end. And if God is going to give you the kingdom, though as sheep you may be killed here, still He will give you the kingdom.

Then after showing them what their relationship involved as His disciples, He speaks to them of His coming again. Ver. 35. They were to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." For though rejected for a season on the earth, He will return; and therefore He here tells us of the blessedness of those who will be found waiting for Him.

That which should characterize the saints is, not merely holding the doctrine of the Lord's coming, as that which they believe, but their *souls* should be in the *daily* attitude of waiting, expecting, and desiring His coming! But why? That they may see Himself and be *with* Him, and *like* Him for ever! Not because the world which has been so hostile to them is going to be judged, though God will smite the wicked.

It is true, there will be mercy to

those who are spared. But we have obtained mercy now, and are, therefore waiting for Himself, for what He is in Himself to us, and not because of *judgment*. That would not be joy to me, though it will be to some on the earth; for "In every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps," &c. &c. (Isa. xxx. 32.) This is not our hope, but simply waiting for *Himself*. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his *waiting* for the Lord. Every one should be able to read us by this, as having nothing to do in this world, but to get through it, and not as having any portion in it: "Turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to *wait* for his Son from heaven." This is thought a strange thing now, but the Thessalonians were converted to *this hope*—for they belonged to a world which had rejected God's Son, therefore they had to turn from these idols to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

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."

Thus we see what a present expectation the coming of the Lord was; therefore Paul says, "We which are alive and remain." But why does he say, "we?" Because he expected it then. That was Paul's character then, that of waiting for the Lord. And does he lose that character, because he died before He came? No, not at all.

Though Paul had a revelation that he should put off the tabernacle of his body, yet did he daily wait for the Lord's coming then; and that will be Paul's character when the Lord does come; he will lose nothing by his death. "Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord." The character of their waiting was to be like servants at the hall door, that when the master knocked, they were ready to open to Him immediately. It is a figure, of course, here; but it is the present

What I desire to press upon you all and myself too, is, the individual waiting for the Lord; not as a doctrine merely, but as a daily waiting for Himself. Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But that is not the question, but am I waiting for *Himself* day by day? In the second chapter of Thessalonians, the hope is connected with ministry, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at *His coming*?" Then Paul would get the reward of his service to the saints. Then in the third chapter, the hope is connected with our walk, as a motive for *holiness*, "unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints."

Then in the fourth chapter, the doctrine of the hope is unfolded; the manner of it comes out—"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the

power of the expectation that is alluded to. And the ruin of the Church has come in by practically saying, "my Lord delayeth his coming." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." "Your loins girt about with truth," for service. You must not let your garments flow loose; that is, you must not let your thoughts and affections flow abroad, but be ready, with your garments well girt up, and your lights burning. This is not rest, for it is an exceedingly *tiring* thing to have to sit up and watch through a long, dark night. But in the spirit of service, the heart, affections, thoughts, feelings, and desires must all be girt up. And this requires this pains-taking not to let the flesh go its own way; for it is a great comfort sometimes to do this, if but for a moment, but if we do we shall surely fall asleep like the virgins. For as the virgins went to sleep with their oil in their lamps, so we may go to sleep

with the Holy Ghost in our hearts. But blessed are those servants who are found watching. The Lord says, this is the time for you to be girded, to take your turn in love to serve and watch; but when I come again, and have things my own way, then I will take my turn in love, ungird you, and *gird myself*, and come forth and serve you. You must be well girt up and watchful in the midst of evil; but when the evil is done with, then you may take your rest. When in the Father's house, you may lie down and be at ease; and then your robes may flow down without any fear of their being soiled. In that blessed place of holiness and purity, you may let your affections, thoughts, and desires flow out without the fear of their being defiled.

The Lord does not speak to us, as He does to the remnant on the earth. He does not say to them that He will come as a thief in the night, but He tells them the tribulation will be so terrible, that He notes how many days it shall last, and says, "For the elect's

sake those days shall be shortened, or no flesh could be saved." But to us it would be nothing that our flesh should be saved on the earth—we would rather get *out* of the flesh. To them it would be everything to "fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." They would be amongst those who would not have Christ, and therefore will have antichrist; and so terrible will be the sorrow, that the Lord comes to cut short those days. They were too late for the other thing, but now, by reason of the sorrow, a short work will the Lord make of it on the earth. The Psalms express a desire for judgment, because those who express it then get their deliverance; but no Christian can claim this. Who could ask, "that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and that the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same?" Judgment will not be our deliverance, but going up to heaven before the judgment begins.

He *will* come in judgment as it is

said. "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But that is not for us—we are not His enemies; for He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And we are perfect *now*, but we wait by the Holy Ghost to have that which is ours by virtue of our union with Him; and when He comes forth to judgment we shall come *with Him*. The Lord comes *with* His saints, when He comes to execute judgment on the earth; and He comes *for* His saints, when He comes for the Church.

I do not desire judgment, but I do desire *that* which is worthy of being desired, that of being with the Lord, as the Lord and *like* the Lord for ever. It is the end of the whole thing as regards ourselves. Therefore, as the Apostle says, The times and seasons are nothing to you, for you belong to the day that will come, when the wicked shall be as ashes under the feet of the saints.

Ver. 40, 41. The Lord then goes on to speak of the conduct of the saints while waiting for their Lord; and

"Peter said, Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Now observe that this answer of our blessed Lord's was most remarkable, and in this way, that those who had the name of waiting for the Lord would become the world. In our country, in England, worldly people are all called Christians, and thus they are responsible for the *name* they bear, and not only for the power. So they that take the name of ministers are responsible for the position they take. For people will be judged not according to the power they have, but according to the *PLACE* they have taken. They cannot say, I have taken the place but have not the power, so you ought not to judge me. But you have taken the *place*, and therefore are responsible for the power, or you should not have

taken the place. If a servant comes into your house and spoils all your goods, you judge him according to the place he has taken. Therefore the professing Church or Christendom is responsible for having taken the place of Christianity without the power; and how can there be power where there is not life? If servants, they are to give to the household the portion of meat in due season, because it is a service to be done in the house while the master is away. So that whatever the place, whether little or great, the servant is to be in service to Christ, while He is away; and if faithful, He will make him ruler over all that He hath at His return.

Ver. 45. "But and if that servant say in his *heart*, My Lord *delayeth* His coming," &c. Mark, he does not say He will not come, but "He *delayeth* His coming." And the moment the Church of God said, My Lord *delayeth* His coming, it got into the world; and the Lord's coming was counted a heresy. For as soon as the Church lost the practical sense of the Lord's coming,

No. It is getting into the world and setting up a millennium in the continuity and perpetuity of the Church down here, which is virtually denying the Lord's coming. How can I make preparation for continuing down here if I am expecting Him daily? Men tell me that the Lord is providing for the continuance of the Church down here on the earth; but the Lord tells me in His word to expect Him daily to take me up to heaven.

It is a most solemn thing, that this thought of settling in the earth because the Lord *delayeth* His coming, is fast closing in upon the blinded hearts of the professing Church, and thus fitting them for the judgment that is fast approaching. The voice then ought now to be lifted up like a trumpet to meet this state of things. "Behold the bridegroom cometh." That will be the test again by which souls may yet be gathered out to wait for the Lord, and not settle down into the expectation of the perpetuity and continuance of the Church down here.

it began to decay and decline, and the hope gradually dropped out, until it was entirely lost. What awoke the virgins at first was the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." But they needed to be called out again from the place where they had gone to make themselves comfortable, although they had been called out before; and that which awakes them again is, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," &c. It is not that the Church had been saying, He will never come again, but, "My Lord *delayeth* his coming," just showing that the hope of His immediate coming had lost its place in her heart. The servant does not say he will be a heathen or a Jew, nor does he leave the other servants; but instead of giving them their meat in due season, he begins to beat them. And when it came to this they began to eat and drink with the drunken; not that they got drunk, but that they readily went on with the ways, customs, and habits of the world which they had been redeemed from. Is that the wilderness?

Now mark the result of all this. (ver. 46.) "The lord of that servant cometh in an hour when he looketh *not* for him, and will cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." He is treated according to the position He has taken.

Ver. 47. *Christendom* is in the worst case after all; it will be better even for the poor heathen than for it. "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." That which now boasts itself as the Church, will then have peculiar judgment; for "it shall be beaten with many stripes."

Ver. 48. While the heathen who ought to have acted according to the light of conscience "will be beaten with *few stripes*." God will not go on with evil, though He may bear long with it. And where Satan is working, believers cannot rightly deal with it, but by treating it as what it is. I have no power over it, for it corrupts the principles of the light within me, and brings darkness into my soul.

First, then, there is the waiting for

the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the answer to the question, "Speakest thou this unto us, or to all? "viz., it is to all that call themselves, and take the place of, servants.

The Lord make us faithful as those who are waiting for Him! It will be no joy to my soul for Him to find me heaping up riches when He comes; for there should be the testimony to the world that He is coming. Individual faithfulness is first, and then love to Him and to souls will flow out naturally.

THE POSITIVENESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST.

1 John iii. 1—10.

If we weigh the state of the church we shall find a great deal of what is negative in the christian life, and contentedness with what is negative. For example, a man sees sin, he takes for granted that there must be sin in him,

and it is true, and well that he should know it, provided it be not working; he sees the blood of Christ, and is happy. If his flesh is kept in check as to positive sin, and the blood of Christ is seen, he is content. That is what I call negative—a person settling in himself that sin is, and is met by the cross of Christ. It is not as speaking lightly of the cross that I say this. There is nothing like the cross. God Himself is glorified by it. The glory we can have with Christ. On the cross he was alone.

This condition flows greatly from all that is of nature not having been judged, and the heart then occupied with Christ. When there is a positive life in exercise which attaches itself to Him, and sees the excellency in Him, it never can be satisfied without seeking to have and be that which it sees in Him. Being free from sin (freed, if you please, for when this word is used in scripture it refers to slavery) there is the positive activity of delighting in Christ. The heart is so far delivered

from sin as to delight positively in Christ.

John takes up a positive active life, in the activity of which he supposes the Christian lives, and which has joys and delights of its own. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I get the nature of which we are made partakers shewn from the life which is lived. (If He is righteous, we know that every one who doeth righteousness has the manifested character of that nature, is born of Him.) Where has it come from? From God. I recognize this relationship of a child by the nature that is manifested. The apostle is not merely thinking of what we are in the title of righteousness, but of whom we are sons—whence we draw our life. Hence it is that he says in verse 9, "cannot sin," for it is the nature of God in which we live as born again. He takes the truth up, as he

does on every subject, in its own absoluteness, without modifying it by the contradictory principle in us. But the result of the possession of this life is brought in in remarkable terms. We are born of God, but the life which we have received is that eternal life which was manifested in Christ. (Chap. i. 1—3.) Hence he says, "It does not yet appear what we shall be," no one has seen the glory, "but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We shall be like Him; it is from the blessed consciousness of this, and the object thus set before us, that the activity of this life now flows. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself," (he does not say is pure, but) "even as he is pure." That is, the measure and standard which he has before his soul, is that which belongs to Christ as the object before His soul.

How different this is from the negative state, occupied with sin, perhaps thinking how I shall get rid of it! I am a child of Adam is the thought of such

an one; no, I say, I am a child of God. If we are sufficiently emptied of self to have Christ before us in this double way, as the life in which we live and the object for which we live, then the affections are associated with the object we like; and He is not merely object but life. The power of the life is exactly in the measure in which Christ is the object. There is where a Christian is happy. His soul's affections are set free and occupied with Christ. He is the One we love and delight in, and we want to be like Him and with Him. If your heart is dragging through the world, and you are trying to get as free from all the spots as you can, you cannot be happy. This positive life is real liberty of heart, and that is what happiness means. He purifies himself as He is pure.

If I am not living this life of Christ, the old, lawless thing is active. When there is not the activity of divine life, there is not merely failure in this, but there is the activity of the Adam life, and it is always lawless. "Whosoever

abideth in him sinneth not," and whosoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood abides in Christ and Christ in him; that is, if I am eating Christ and occupied with Christ, I do not commit sin, nor is my mind living in the sphere in which it has power. If you are not abiding in Him, you will get down to the other state I have spoken of, the mere avoiding of positive evil, while living in the sphere of thought in which flesh can find itself at home, while the spiritual affections are dull and inactive. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." I am in Christ on the same footing of righteousness, as to my walk down here, that He is, as partaker of the same nature and looking forward to a perfect conformity to Him. We have a positive life in itself which is itself. There is this positive life in connexion with Christ who is our life, and this life lives entirely on Him. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live

by the faith of the Son of God," &c. That is the way it lives. It has these two traits—pointed out in this passage—practical righteousness and love of the brethren.

A word on the way the soul gets into this living on Christ and with Him. I do not believe you can ever do that until you get free in your conscience. Till then you cannot get beyond this negative conflict with sin, which avoids the evil the new life sees and judges. If I have the new life, I find the sin in me; and if I have not the consciousness of divine righteousness, I cannot delight in Christ as set free; that is, I must think of the sin. Is not God holy? And have not I sins; not merely guilt, but sins in my members? Yes. Then "he that committeth sin is of the devil." Well, I commit sin and hence I am afraid. That is, the workings of flesh come back on my conscience and I must be occupied with self. The soul is not discharged from self as the ground of its standing before God, through divinely and self-

humbling conviction of sin, enough to be cast over on divine righteousness in Christ. It has not been brought to see that the case is perfectly hopeless and then to be cast over entirely on Christ. When brought to this, I am taken out of flesh by this work of redemption in Christ, so that I am made the righteousness of God *in Him*, and I do not look at *myself* to know if I am righteous before God.

What a contrast between that kind of negative life, with the head just above water and which says, I am alive, so I ought to be thankful, and this positive joyful life which goes out in active energy after Christ! But in order to this the staff of confidence in self must be snapped.

If your hearts are grovelling on with the world, that is not living on Christ. Why have you got these difficulties? Because you are inclined to them and nourish what is the seat of them by continually letting your heart move on in the sphere where Christ is not. Christ Himself is not enough

your object. There is surely grace enough in Him to help us, when through grace He is looked to, and a strength which is made perfect in weakness.

FRAGMENTS.

After all, the grand secret of making happy is being happy. If the love of God is flowing into me, the love of God will be flowing out from me. It is quite true that if I am hungering and thirsting, God will fill me. But hungering and thirsting after a thing is not the flowing forth of it from me to others. Moreover, if I have not settled peace in my conscience, there cannot be this out-flow, for there is nothing to flow.

But one may say, Are we never to hunger and thirst again? No, never, as if we had not already that which satisfies. So Christ says, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever

drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." A well of water springing up is not hungering and thirsting. It is not that I shall not desire more of the enjoyment, but it is like a child who has got something very good. I have got the well of living water in me. It is not thirsting after a thing that I have not. I have got the Holy Ghost. Having the Holy Ghost, I am brought into connexion with that which is infinite, so I can never thirst, for *I am* in connexion with it, that is, I am in connexion with God. But just because I am in connexion with it, the taste of it awakens desire for more, and it being infinite, there is no cessation in the flowing in. I am ever thirsting but never thirsty.

People think it a wonderful attainment to be able to say with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou

knowest that I love thee." But, in truth, it is the lowest possible ground for a Christian to be on. It is owning that he had gone on so badly, that if man were to judge, there would be no ground to speak for him at all; and it is appealing to the omniscience of the Lord as his only refuge. *His* eye could see that there was love at the bottom of Peter's heart when nobody else could see it there. Then we have marvellous grace immediately after; for, having broken down his confidence in himself, he trusts him with the thing that was dearest to him; "Feed my sheep."

END OF VOL. III.

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—Eph. vi.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1859.

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THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

PSALM LXIX.

THERE are three states of suffering in which souls may be. First, that which is their portion as sinners under judgment; second, the sufferings of a saint for righteousness, or love's sake; third, suffering as the consequence of sin under the government of God.

This last is not judgment and condemnation for sin, nor is it properly the chastening of a saint, though it may be used as such, and brings exercise of soul in such an one. Thus the consequence of Adam's transgression was to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and the woman was to have sorrow in child bearing, both connected with the government of God. The suffering of the Jews in the latter day will be connected with this kind of suffering, though it will seem as chasten-

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B

ing too. It is more difficult to get hold of this third kind of suffering. In it God is dealing with a man about his sins without his coming under condemnation. No doubt the Lord Jesus went through all these kinds of sufferings; of course, the first and last as saving or sympathizing with others. In representing God, bearing His reproaches, He suffered for righteousness' sake. For His love He had hatred. This was one character of His suffering. The next was that of suffering for the expiation of our sins. Of this, though it is not my purpose now to speak, we can never think enough. We can never get peace until we know it. "He was bruised for our iniquities." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

The third class of sufferings He did not go through, except anticipatively, just at the close of His life, when He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." If He had been in it all the time, He would not have spoken of going through it afterwards.

use all his power to bring his terrible-ness into their hearts. To Peter the Lord said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," when the same occasion for exercise was coming upon him. The remnant will be sustained by the High Priest during all the exercises and trials of heart they will go through.

All through the *life* of Christ, He never calls God *God*. We never find Him do so in the Gospels until the cross. It would not have been walking in the power of the relationship which was always unhindered. When on the cross, which was expiation, He does not say, "Father," until all being over, He was commending his spirit to Him, but "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All that was against us was there coming out against Him. The favour of God was hidden from Him. Righteousness was coming forth in the execution of judgment for sin. Never was there a moment of the Father's more perfect delight in Him; but if God was dealing according to His nature and being, it must be

At the close, He enters into a new scene, not only in the way of expiation, but Satan comes back after he had departed for a season. (Luke iv. 13.) He said, "Henceforth I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh." That character of suffering is not the present forsaking of God. However, as from Him, Satan stirred up the whole world against Him; but besides that, He brought the terrible-ness of distress from a broken law, the power of death, and an angry God to distress his soul.

We get the same character of suffering in the remnant. They go through all the consequences of their conduct in the government of God, though the condemnation they have deserved will not come upon them. Satan will have come down, knowing that he has but a little time. All his violence will be directed against Israel in that day. We have a picture of it in Job. Satan was let loose against him; his friends were against him, and what was worse, the terrors of God were drinking up his spirit. So with them. Satan will

against sin, and therefore all was against Him, for He was made sin for us. As soon as He has gone through it, He uses both terms, "Father" and "God." He comes out as having done the work, and when He has wrought the atonement, He can bring us into the blessed fruit of it. Not only are we brought to the *Father* but to *God*, and all that was against us before is for us now. Righteousness, love, &c., are all made for us. The very same things He is in His nature that were against the sinner are for the saint. Christ, risen out of death, and having entered (sin being put away) into the unclouded joy of God His Father's countenance, when He had perfectly glorified Him, says to His disciples, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." All that is connected with these names of God and Father flow out to us. We are holy and without blame before Him in love. "I have manifested thy name," He says of the Father; but now He could reveal *God* to them.

This would have been condemnation except through the cross. This is the effect of expiation on our position before God, besides bringing us into the place of children through adoption. Christ, then, never addressed God as God during His life. When Christ is made sin, then this relationship comes out directly: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God in His nature was there dealing with that which was contrary to it, that is, with *sin*. The sin is fully dealt with here, according to the nature of God; Christ has revealed God to us, after He has gone through it. All the revelation of God against sin was wrath; God's face was hidden. In His suffering, then, Christ was quite alone. It stood by itself, it was expiation. Chastening for sin is quite another thing. There is love in that; in the other it was wrath, and the effect of it is, not a single cloud is left between us and God.

The suffering of Christ for righteousness' sake is intelligible enough in its nature, though its depth be hard to

He had all kinds of sufferings on the cross; still, that from man disappeared in comparison with that for sin from God.

There is often in God's ways with men suffering for righteousness' sake and suffering for sin, or to prevent it, at the same time.* This often causes perplexity. For the Jews, under a sense of a broken law, there will be terrible trial of faith. They will see the ungodly in prosperity, while it is promised to the godly, "they shall flourish like the palm tree." The consequence of following in the way of righteousness brings dreadful trial on them, and yet what they go through is also in consequence of their sins, yet *not condemnation*. The nation has received antichrist, because they would not have the Lord Jesus. At the same time the terrors of the law enter the soul of the righteous, and Satan uses it all against them, urging that they have broken the law. Death is the judgment of God for sin. Who has the power of

* See 2 Cor. xii. and Heb. xii.

fathom. Our place in connexion with it is also simple, filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, suffering for love's sake; and this may go very deep into the soul too; still there is joy with it if not in it, as we find Christ Himself having meat to eat. Going through the world, His heart was refreshed by the thought of souls getting blessing, and yet there was suffering with it. He had consolation from His Father according to His perfect faithfulness, and *we* may feel with Him, as well as He feel with us. When souls reject the gospel, or the Church is going on badly, or saints are losing their own blessing; all this will affect us if we are not insensible, but we shall have balm in suffering in this way.

This 69th Psalm expresses this kind of suffering. Christ says, "I am the song of the drunkard." "In the multitude of thy mercy hear me." He has access to His Father, getting refreshment from Him. "My prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time." These sufferings of Christ were deeper, I believe, than we have any idea of.

it? Satan. They cry out in their distress, and God delivers them; but Satan presents death as a terror, and as the judgment of God, to bring their sins to remembrance. They suffer from their sins, but yet they have integrity, and are in the place of exercising integrity. They are brought so low, that though faith is not extinct, they scarcely have any. "Shall he find faith on the earth?" They cry, "How long!" There is faith in the word, but it is near coming to an end. They are like a teil-tree in winter, with no signs of life in it, their leaves all cast. Yet this remnant is the sap of life in the midst of death, and the prophet says, "How long!" The expression "how long!" implies some faith left. They are as though they were cast off, yet hold to God's promise. It cannot be for ever. There is the integrity of heart which will not wilfully break the law, and a terror of judgment, knowing what sin has deserved. The weapon Satan will use in that day is the *truth* of God; not the grace but the truth. Many souls are

in this state now, because of integrity of heart, and their sins are all brought up to the conscience. Satan is there, and the Lord allows him to sift the soul, because He has to lay the sins on the conscience, and it is a very terrible exercise when the grace which meets the need is not known. The sorrow of this Christ went through, when He was going indeed to bear the sins. He went through it *for* them. If they feel the terror of judgment for their own sins, which they will ultimately escape, that they may morally learn their state and need, and God display His righteous government, Christ went through the wrath, and did not escape, and at the close of His path went through the anticipation of it, which Satan, as the prince of darkness, pressed upon His soul, perfect in looking to God there as everywhere, and the spring by His Spirit to them for right feelings, when they pass through the shadow of it as an exercise of heart. This suffering of the remnant is not suffering *with* Christ. They get a little comfort by an influx

solemn question of what good and evil is must be learned under the government of God and with Satan against us. Christ went through the trial of this. No evil indeed was in Him and perfect good was, but His perfect obedience as a man was put to the test and He was tempted in all points like as we are, except sin. Would He stop in obedience because of what it cost? Would He allow the entrance of evil into His soul? Blessed be God! we know His obedience was perfect even unto death and the drinking of that bitter cup, and not the smallest thought of evil could ever find an entrance into His soul. The question of good and evil was tried to the uttermost, but only to show the utter exclusion of all evil by one who was always good, and walking in perfect good kept the evil always at a distance as such; that is, was perfect as man, perfect with God. In us the conflict and trial ends in the full acknowledgment of evil in ourselves and of perfect good in Him, and the victory too of good received from Him in life and

of hope, and they are down again in the mire. It is an alternation of almost despairing and hoping. Christ never went through this in His life, but He did go through it in death, Gethsemane, and drawing near to, only that He was perfect in His feelings in it.

A redeemed soul may be going through many exercises of conflict between self and Satan to learn there is no good in itself. We are cast on a good out of ourselves. There must be practically the knowledge of good and evil in the conscience. Different characters need different experience. If there be pride of nature, where there is much levity of soul, or where dangers and temptations are before us, great exercise may be needed to make the value of Christ known. You cannot prescribe to God a form of experience, but the soul must learn from Christ good and evil; all the good as coming from Him, and the evil as in our will and nature where it lives. Some often go through great exercise that they may be used to others. But this

maintained by Him in grace in our hearts. His soul then was to go through the conflict, not as though He had the evil, but as tested by Satan and doing it for God's glory and our sakes, whether in the presence of good and evil He will go through all and glorify God; and He says, "As my Father gave me commandment, even so I do." Then He was to go through it as a real man. He says to His disciples, "Tarry ye here;" but all that man is was used by Satan. Then His own forsake Him. He is left without comfort, which yet His soul would seek and did, and left exposed to Satan without any and alone. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Angels, indeed, came and ministered unto Him. This loneliness the remnant will not be tried by. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." No sorrow was like His. All that *man* was is turned against Him. He looked for comforters but found none. Then He goes through the power of death. (I am not speaking of expiation now, but of death as an evil pressing on man and

Satan's power in it, yet as terror looking forward.) Was He to give way? Was He to take it from Satan and so enter into the temptation and shrink from it, or fall into despair, or go through in obedience and drink this cup of wrath, taking all this evil and bearing the judgment of God for it? He went through "with strong crying and tears." He went through as none other could. The remnant will, in their measure, go through this exercise as an exercise of heart. Christ takes up language for them, "Thou knowest my foolishness," &c. That was not His own; He takes up the language with Israel that He may go through with them and sympathize with them, (not in the way of yet actually working out expiation.) He will come to them in it but not take them out of it, because they must learn what sin is—learn it in integrity and in the presence of Satan, fearing lest they should not get from under it, though indeed they will be delivered. He can come and sustain the soul under the trial and inspire faith under it, and show them how to

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There is something for faith to lay hold of, a rope to cling to in the waters, until they come to know the full redemption accomplished.

It is important for us not to miss a perception of all these different sufferings of Christ. We should not go into it merely critically—that is ruinous—but with the heart. It is most important also to remember that in expiation He was *alone*, without a ray of comfort, all light hidden. Besides, men being all against Him, He has the power of Satan to meet, and then the wrath of God. Perfect, absolute obedience, came out when put to the test. He went through everything. He was left alone in His own perfectness with evil there, made sin—and wrath came upon it—for God to be glorified. What the sufferings of Christ were, none can fathom. What this grand solution of the question of good and evil. We shall reap the blessedness in perfect good, blessed be the name of our God! where no evil can enter.

bear it. They are to be sifted as wheat, the grain not falling through, though the chaff does. He can minister faith to them, as to Peter, with a look at the right moment. They will see there is something to hope for. They may say, After all there *is* grace for a poor sinner, and then be sinking down in the mire again as bad as ever, while learning what sin is morally before God and under the power of Satan, appealing to God against the thing He has pronounced judgment upon. Thus they will learn the evil of Satan and the flesh and bless God for deliverance. They will be walking in darkness while hearing the word. There is no praise nor liberty in that state. (See Isaiah l. 10.) In Christ there was no inward darkness, but the whole power of it, as He says, was pressed upon His soul. "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and His soul was sorrowful even unto death. We should not be in that condition. The path of obedience is not the path of darkness to us, though there may be darkness in getting into it. They are told to trust.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

1 Cor. x.

The Lord's table is spoken of in this chapter as the **CONFESSION** of the Lord by those who partake. Various, we know, is the aspect given to this precious legacy left to us of the Lord. Circumstances in the conduct of the Corinthians brought it into another point of view.

The Israelites were baptized unto Moses and the judgments of Mount Sinai, in the cloud and in the sea; God therefore vindicated His glory on many various occasions, because He was not duly acknowledged in His attributes toward His people. Subjection according to their deliverance was forgotten. "Remember how I brought you out of the land of Egypt, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm," was the burden of the call of the Lord to Israel. "Now all these things happened to them as ensamples, (for us,) and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the

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ends of the ages are come.”* The apostle argued therefore that as to join the altar of the idol was to have fellowship with the idol that it could not be with impunity. To join the altar of the idol was fellowship with the idol; owned it, in fact, confessed it. If it were the table of devils, it was communion or fellowship (the word is the same) with them. Singleness of confession then was that which the Lord, strong as He was jealous, required. To confess any other Lord was incompatible and impossible; and as a common act (which the introductory act of Christianity was not) it partook of the nature of a common confession. At the table of the Lord, the assembly was one bread in the participation of the one bread or loaf. Saved by grace, there was no question of salvation, it was—who was Lord? The assembly therefore, whatever character of worship, thanksgiving, memorial of grace in the Lord’s death was shown forth in the Lord’s supper, it was the example

* We might almost say concentrated. So also end together in where that word is *συγτελεία*, &c.

belong to us down here; we show forth His death till He come from where He is. This is the proper and true confession of Him giving our confession its just significance in the world; waiting for Him and separate unto Him in that expectation. This manifest instruction from this chapter shown in these observations does not however pretend to include other doctrine in the chapter.

JOHN XIV.

Two things enter specially into the Gospel in our relationship to God, and both of them are needful. First, to have our conscience set at rest, by being in the light; and, secondly, to have the knowledge of God’s thoughts and feelings towards us, as both are made known in Christ. The one purges our conscience, i.e. Christ’s work for us; the other assures our hearts of God’s love towards us. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up.” “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” Both these

of the Israelites separated to God in the cloud and in the sea, that the instruction given in the parallel given by the apostle lies. It is then the unmixed confession of the Lord by a practical separation to Himself without any admixture of other subjection that we find in this chapter. In the Hebrews, the apostle says, “We have an altar (I do not suppose that this alludes to the table) of which those who serve the tabernacle cannot partake.” It is a much more serious question, but which vindicates the purity and singleness of the confession intended to be made by the *table of the Lord*.

Christendom looks on Christ as commonly acknowledged within its bounds, as received on earth, and mixing Himself with the world. God looks not at it so. Christ was rejected on earth and received in heaven. If we would acknowledge and confess Christ aright, it would be as rejected on earth and now at God’s right hand. If we belong to Him, we belong to Him there. He does not, as supposed,

we must learn in God’s presence. The whole secret of a soul being brought to God is, that it is brought into the light, for “whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” And the word of God, which is the expression of what God is, is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight.” We are brought into the light where everything is made manifest according to the holiness of God. Light is perfectly pure in itself, and manifests everything on which it shines, as “all things that are reprov’d are made manifest by the light.” “This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” If we walk in the light, *as he is in the light*, &c. This makes the indispensable necessity of our being absolutely and perfectly purified—for without that the light could only condemn. This is not deadness of conscience, for it is said, “awake thou that sleepest,” &c. In God’s presence we are made guilty and are

cleansed. This gives us to know the perfectness and the eternal character of that peace—for everything is brought into His presence, and we stand in that presence in eternal redemption. Being brought into the presence of God, He must either put us out of His sight for ever, or the sin. As regards the revelation of this, it did not come out until the veil was rent by the death of Christ. "But now we all with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,"—are not condemned by it—nor is sin imputed by it—but "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." There can be no true peace until the conscience is finally and perfectly purged, otherwise, the presence of God, which reveals the sin, would only be distress and trouble to the Spirit. And here it is that many have not peace. They may have the affections drawn towards God, and get happiness from that—for where the soul is attracted by Christ, and goes to Him, and rests on the graciousness of Christ, it has peace; though at other times,

now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I ABHOR MYSELF." He felt what he was in the presence of God, *when there*. Thus in mercy the soul is brought into the presence of God to settle that now, instead of in the day of judgment, and is brought to discern the new nature—and it is only in the new nature we can discern the depravity of the old, in the presence of God. For the want of this you may often see a soul thoroughly upset; and if the law has been dwelt on, it must be so; because there is the thought of something to do. But if I know of a certainty that there is nothing good in me, I shall not think of that; for if I know the tree itself is bad, I know also the fruit is bad. If left under law, it is that I may discover that; and inasmuch as we are partakers of the new nature we shall be able to see the utter impossibility for the old nature to stand in the presence of God. This shows us the need of the conscience being perfectly purged. God, therefore, by bringing us into His presence, shows us the blood of Christ, as that which

when the soul has not the consciousness of that it becomes troubled and distressed, but whenever the conscience comes to be exercised, then there is trouble of soul, because God has not brought that soul into the full blaze of light, that it may discover its own vile-ness, and that all has been done to meet it, and that for ever. There may be such a thing as believing our past sins to be forgiven, yet when we stand in the presence of God, to be uneasy because we have discovered evil in ourselves. Adam had to say not merely "I have eaten of the forbidden fruit," but "*I am naked.*" And so the soul in the presence of God has to feel that the sin is there, and that in God's presence it cannot be hid. Now it is often the case even where the soul knows the truth of forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, that in the presence of God, it is not at ease; it cannot say, *if this moment before God*, "ALL IS RIGHT," because it has never been properly there. How comes it that it has never been there? Job says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but

has put away sin perfectly, according to His holiness, and the conscience is freed for ever. God, who knows the sin, has put it away, according to His own estimate of sin, for ever, by the blood of Christ. When it was a work entirely between Christ and God, "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "Once in the end of the world, he has put away sin," and "the worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins." "He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," through the eternal redemption he has obtained for us, according to the infinite value of His work, done in the presence of God, according to the eternal nature of God, and therefore of everlasting efficacy. Thus the *conscience* is set at rest.

Then there is another thing, a settled *confidence of heart*. For Christ says, not only "peace I give unto you," but "*my peace*;" and it is very important to see the solid peace God would have you possess. When He says, "my peace," it is not simply peace, but *His* peace—the peace He has in God. The Father would you should have in

His presence, Christ's peace. What was it? Was there ever the slightest cloud between His soul and God? "I know thou hearest me always." He had the consciousness of the Father's eternal favour resting on Him, as also witnessed to at His baptism by John; and He rested in the Father's eternal delight in Him. It flowed from the nature of what God was; so that His soul could rest in it eternally, in abiding peace that never could change. The spring of divine love itself was bound up in Him who was to be the vessel to bear it for ever. Now He puts us in the same place of relationship as Himself, as He says, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God;" and there was the constant revelation of the interest He Himself had in assuring the heart of what was in His heart towards them, so that the soul should not sink; and also of His readiness to succour and sustain them in all their trials and perplexities. Was there ever anything came from His lips that could break down *their spirit*? Never. To break down *the heart* there

troublest thou the Master any further?" His reply is instantly, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" A bad conscience cannot trust. He must therefore bring down the conscience into the sense of sin, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in Him. What does the misery all around tell us, but *not to trust in man*. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man." Nay, we must not trust in the saints either, for no man can be a stay to his brother. God would not have us trust even an angel; but it is that He may come in Himself and sanctify the heart to Himself, because He is love. He is perfect love, and is so even in the midst of our sins, that we might be able to trust Him in all things, and say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus the soul is brought to trust in Himself.

"My peace I give unto you." Having wrought peace for us, He sets us in the presence of God with not the less certainty of divine favour than Himself. If it were not so, if but the least doubt rested on us, the more we thought of being in His presence, the

was plenty, that He might show mercy. The thief upon the cross said, "Lord remember me, WHEN THOU COMEST IN THY KINGDOM." He said, no; "*To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" The Syrophenician woman, who came as a dog, asked but for the crumbs; and He gave crumbs to dogs, thus lifting up her heart and leading her on. To the adulteress He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." To Peter, "who cursed and swore and said he knew not the man," He said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This was that his confidence in Christ's love should not be shaken, though it was needful that Peter's self-confidence should be broken up. But then there was restoring grace in it, as He adds, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He would have Peter to trust in Him, not only according to His unfailing love, but as having learned also that truth—"where sin abounded grace did much more abound." And if they even said, as in the case of Jairus's daughter, Thy daughter is dead—why

more miserable should we be. "*My peace I give unto you.*" "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God" (that the Father has proved His love to you in the gift of His Son, so that you can rest in it, not in the sense of anything of your own, but in Him and what He is,) "believe also in me." "I go to prepare a place for you." His love to His disciples not only put them into the same *peace*, but would put them into the same *place*, that we might rest in *His* love who could not be happy without having us with Him. In the Lord's Supper he says, "with desire (not they, but) *I have desired to eat this passover with you.*" He looked to enjoy this last supper for His own happiness, and to have the latest opportunity to be with them, to eat with them before He suffered. His love for them made it His own happiness to express that love, and so to be with them. The same thought is in the parable of the lost piece of money and the prodigal son. As in the prodigal son, many a one is pressed and uneasy to know how the Father would receive

him. Why it was the Father's joy (God's joy is spoken of) shown out in the character, and dealings, and ways of the Father towards the Son. The spring of love and joy was in the Father's heart. That is where the soul gets peace. "Perfect love casteth out fear." If you have the least fear, you must have torment. Your heart is not at rest; it has not peace such as Christ speaks of—"my peace." The first dealing of Christ with us is as sinners when we are convicted of the sin; and He does not leave us till He has brought the soul into His own peace. He was going away, and His disciples might have said, "If we had but Christ here always, to tell us to go there, and to do this we should be happy." But it could not be, because it was God's thought to bring them into the joy of the Father's house. However, it was to be no mere process of soul going on, in which they would be occupied about Him down here, but He says, "I am going away to be occupied about you"—"I go to prepare a place for you"—"and will come again and receive you unto myself." He will never rest until He brings us into full joy and glory with Himself. He has given us *His peace*, (it is not peace here in the world—He had anything but peace in the world.) And His conscience

had nothing to say. He was always perfect, and His heart could always rest in the perfect love of His Father and that is *His peace*. He gives us His peace—a peace fit for Christ—and is gone "to prepare a place for us;" as the necessary result and consequence of the love that gave us His peace. His *heart* is in it. He must have us with Himself. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be *with me where I am*." His heart cannot rest until He has done the thing fitting in the matter, as Naomi told Ruth concerning Boaz.

Now, let me ask, why so much toil and trouble, if we have Christ's own peace? And why can trial exercise? Do not you find many things distract, many things attaching themselves to the heart? But why? Because the affections of our hearts are not brought up so that we might "grow up to Him in all things, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." He does not say, your hearts shall not be troubled, but "*Let them not*." There is a need be for trouble to break down that which clouds the heart. But we have the Spirit of God feeding us, as taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us, and the hand of God breaking down every thing of the flesh, so that Paul could say, "I glory in tribulation." But why is this? Because it

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is profitable; for it is the means of his judging that in his flesh which was hindering his joy and blessing. It is not merely when we have known peace some time, but from the first beginning that we have learned the peace of Christ, that we may trust Christ. The confidence is perfect in Christ; and if I cannot say, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*," yet at least I can say, I know "*it is true*." One thing more. The Holy Ghost is given that we may enjoy this—the love of God. The joy of it is connected with the path of the Spirit. We must be brought to the conviction that there is sin, and that there is grace in the presence of it all to put it away. There is such a thing as the government of God as a Father in His family, and the favour of the Father must always necessarily be according to the ways of the child. "If a man keep my commandments, he shall abide in my love, as I also have *kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love*." Now when speaking of His grace to us as sinners, it is, "Herein is love, not that we loved him." In the path of the Spirit, we shall know what this love of God is. "I kept my Father's commandments, and abode in his love; if ye keep my commandments, ye shall also abide in my love."

DIVINE PERFECTNESS OF
LOVE.

1 John iv. 17.

The love of God is presented in two very distinct ways in this chapter: first, in the 9th verse as manifested in giving His Son *for us*; and then in the 17th verse, in its double fruit of love and life *in us*. God's love in contrast to man's love is distinguished by this, that while man must have something to draw out His love, as it is said, "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." God's love is without motive, there being nothing attractive in the object that draws it out. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." God's love sees no good in us. The brightest proof of God's love and man's enmity was seen in the cross. They met there, and the superiority of God's love was manifested; as Jethro says, "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them." Having

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shown out the first fruit in the 9th verse, i.e., the open manifestation of His love to us while we were yet sinners, we learn His purposes and counsels about us as saints; in the second place, in the 17th verse, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world." This is a very different thing from His first visiting us in our sins. "Herein is love with us made perfect." The perfectness of God's love toward His saints is seen in the bringing them to be like Himself. The sovereign grace of God puts the saints into the same place as Christ, that we may have the same kind of fellowship with the Father that Christ had. So in John xiv. the Lord says, "My peace I give unto you,"—that is, the peace He had with the Father—"not as the *world giveth* give I unto you." The world has the character of a benefactor, and that it sometimes gives generously I do not deny, but then it is by helping a man, as he is, out of the resources which it has, which

the question of putting Moses and Elias on an equality with Jesus, they both disappear: for when Peter said, "Let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias, while he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them," and instantly they vanished. "And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my *beloved Son*." It is not said, "hear *them*," but "hear *him*." "And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." If Christ in His wondrous grace reveals Moses and Elias as His companions and associates in glory, the moment Peter in his foolishness gives utterance to the thought that would place *them* on an equality with Christ, they must both vanish from the *scene*. It does not say, "as the Father loved them," but "as he loved me," (as a man,) for however Christ may bring us into the same place with Himself, if we elevate ourselves to an equality with Christ, immediately we shall be above Him; and it is ever the case that the more a saint enters into his elevation as

may be all very well, because by helping him it is only taking care of itself; but it is evidently a different thing here, for Christ takes us clean out of our condition, putting us into the same relationship with the Father as Himself. The world cannot give in this way; there is no guarding anything for self in Christ's unjealous love, but in us there is. Therefore He could say, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." His delight was to show that the Father loved *them* as He loved Him. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Jesus not only loves *them* Himself, but He will have it known by the world that they are loved by the Father, as He Himself is loved. Can there be anything more disinterested than this? (Though the word disinterested fails to give the full meaning.) Still all this is guarded, for Christ ever keeps His place as the eternal Son of God. As at the Mount of Transfiguration, the moment there is

being brought into the same place with Christ, the more he adores Christ as God over all blessed for evermore. This is ever to be borne in mind. The thought in verse 17, "As he is so are we," is of putting the saints in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness, "We are made the righteousness of God in him;" if eternal life, it is a divine life, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear;" if glory, it is the same glory, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them;" if it is the inheritance, we are "joint heirs with Christ;" if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ, "that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." The love is the most difficult thing for us to enter into, but the Lord would have our hearts enjoying it. All that we have in Christ is brought out in this passage, in this general expression of God's grace to bless us, not only *by* Christ but *with* Christ. Christ could not be satisfied unless it was so, we being the fruit of

the travail of His soul. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be *with me*." Again, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The Father's love is seen in giving His Son to die for us, and thus bringing us into the perfect place. Some Christians do not give this 17th verse all its power. They refer it simply to our position before God, respecting the day of judgment. Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it, for where there is a question about judgment, there can be no boldness. There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father. I cannot get the affections in full play, if I think God is going to judge me. But if I have the spirit of adoption, and I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for it; for God is my *Father* and not my Judge. Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of spiritual affections in me. And we

has done. It is clear there never could be a question between Christ and His Father, as He daily and hourly enjoyed the consciousness of His Father's love. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So also He says, "My peace I give unto you." Again He says, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." The Father's delight was in Christ and He knew it in the daily enjoyment of it. Well, "As he is, so are we." While Christ lays the ground of our relationship by being the propitiation for our sins and the source of our life, yet it is not by Christ's righteousness that I get *boldness*. I must be righteous, of course; I cannot have boldness without it, but besides this there is another character God has toward me, that of a Father; and I have another character towards God, that of a child. I have not only righteousness, but I am a Son. And here I would notice the defectiveness of some of our hymns, which call Christ our brother. We never find in Scripture that Christ is

ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it, but it is evident that if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

Then observe another thing: there is a great difference between spiritual *desires* and spiritual *affections*, though both have the *same root*. Spiritual *desires*, if the relationship which would meet them be not known, *only* produce sorrow. Take an orphan, for instance, in a family where the parent's *love* to the children is witnessed every day; the sorrowful experience would be, Oh! that I had a father! The child who has its parents has the same desires, but the relationship exists of parent and child, and it knows the joy and gladness. As the children of God we must have the consciousness of the relationship in which we stand to God. It is not merely that we have a divine nature, which gives us spiritual *desires*, but we must also have a consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought by the power of what Christ

called our brother. In the fulness of His grace He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. My father is a man, but I do not call him a man. It would show a want of filial reverence in me if I did. In nothing is the power of the Spirit of God more shown in the child of God than in the suitableness of his expressions and feelings towards God. If we are really enjoying the place of infinite privilege, the source and giver of these privileges will maintain His own proper place in our hearts. Theorizing about it will not do. A common expression is, We cannot be always on the mount. So far that is true, because we all have our place of service down here; but I would observe, that being in the mount of God's presence always humbles, though when a saint gets down again he may be proud of having been there. Paul was not puffed up when he was in God's presence caught up to the third heavens; but after he had been there he needed a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. The heart is never proud in

God's presence, and only when it is really there is it really in its right place, for when out of it the flesh turns everything into mischief. "As he is, so are we," not only in the same standing and acceptance as Christ, but brought by the communication of His life into the same relationship as Himself. While in the beginning of the Epistle the foundation is laid deep and wide in the cleansing blood, still the grand subject of the Epistle is the place into which we are brought. "Herein is love with us made perfect." If my heart has seized the truth that God as a Father is acting in grace towards me, there is no place for fear. In all my need, and even in that with which I ought to have nothing to do, in all my sin, I fly to Him. I could not in my sin fly to my judge, but I have confidence in my Father's love and I fly to Him without fear; for "perfect love casteth out fear." In all sins and follies I can always look to Him who gave His Son for me. That is where *grace* puts me. The *proof* of

left those ways and turned to better. The widow of Sarepta, in her experience, may illustrate this for us. (1 Kings xvii.) The sin of Saul against the Gibeonites was visited in the distant, closing days of David. (2 Sam. xxi.) "God moves in a mysterious way." He takes methods which are all His own, in the exercises of His hand with His people. But "He is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." We have to *bow* now—we shall *justify* Him for ever.

At the water of Meribah Moses and Aaron grievously sinned. They committed a very high offence in smiting the rock and challenging the congregation. But the water came forth, and that at once and abundantly, as though all were right. The whole congregation and their cattle drank of it, and to all present or immediate appearances, the Lord had no controversy with any one. But afterwards the Lord lets them know that their offence had not been overlooked, for that, by reason of it, they should come short of the land of

God's love is, He has given His Son; the *perfection* of His love is, that He has brought us into His presence.

ZIKLAG.

1 Samuel xxvii.—xxx.

In no place, save in the matter of Bathsheba, is David so morally low as in 1 Sam. xxvii. His loss of confidence in the Lord, and his consequent lies and artifices in the court of the king of Gath, are sad indeed. His heart, it is true, was not turned away from Israel. He was Israel's champion still, in all the desires and purposes of his soul, and had his eye towards Israel's prosperity and honour. But for present circumstances he has lost all faith in God.

It is not at once or speedily that the Lord begins the discipline of His saints. At the least it is not commonly so. Our sin may find us out years and years after it is committed. The Lord may call our ways to remembrance long after we have

, Canaan and die on the wilderness side of Jordan.

And how did the Lord Jesus, in the day of His ministry here, *quiet* the fears of unbelief before He *rebuked* them? "Peace, be still" was said to the waves of the sea, ere "How is it that ye have no faith?" was said to the fears of the disciples.

We find another sample of this way of God, in this scripture, on which we are now meditating. David, as we have said, was morally very low in 1 Sam. xxvii. But he meets with no present resentment. He goes with his 600 men against the people of the south, and victory and spoils are his, and he returns to the king of Gath, and at Ziklag enriches and secures himself.

What shall we say to all this? We may well remember, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And we may also remember, "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

David, however, is loved—surely he is, and, in the great sense, as dearly as ever—but his sin has not been slighted by the Lord. He is loved, and a gracious witness of that is shortly afterwards given him; for the Lord interposes to save him from the tremendous results of his unbelief and lies. Through the jealousy of the princes he is hindered from being found in the Philistine army, which was then gathering at Aphek, to march against Israel. It was the Lord who put that into their hearts, to preserve His child and servant from this terrible catastrophe. He once gave Joseph favour in the eyes of his master; He now gives David disfavour in the eyes of the princes of the Philistines. This was a most gracious interference. But the burning of Ziklag and the captivity of all that was in it are before him, to let him know, and know it with a vengeance too, that the Lord has not overlooked his sin.

But again I may say, very marked indeed is the grace of God towards

him in thus withholding him from the battle which was soon to be fought between Israel and the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. What would he have done had he been there? How could he have escaped the snare and mischief which his unbelief and sin had so awfully prepared for him? But God can turn the hearts of the children of men, as seemeth best to His godly wisdom, and now the envy of the Philistine princes is used for David to keep him back from the slaughter on Gilboa, as Abigail had before been used to keep him back from the blood of Nabal.

But how low had David fallen! He was another man when his own spirit had told him not to touch the Lord's anointed, and when his heart smote him because he had done even so little as to cut off the skirt of the king. Such moral or spiritual changes do we find in the progress of christian life, and they warn us to draw upon Jesus for "exigence of every hour," and not to think that we shall stand to-morrow

because we have not fallen to-day. But though the Lord pardons, He chastens. He forgives the sin, but He takes vengeance of the inventions.

David had received Ziklag as his wages for going over to the uncircumcised. Was it not "the wages of unrighteousness?" But the Lord can cut holes in the bags where we put such money as this. And so He does here. Ziklag had been visited, while David was in the camp of the Philistines, and Ziklag had been burnt, and all therein had been taken captive, wives, children, cattle and all, by the people of the south, whom David had afore beaten and slaughtered.

Terrible! Nothing could exceed this but death. *That*, however, the good hand of God had hindered—as we read on this occasion, "They slew not any, either small or great, but carried them away captive." And it was thus in the case of Job. All was touched by the hand of the enemy but life. But life was spared then and now, because of God's purpose of goodness

for Job's latter end, and because of like purpose towards the offending culprit, David. And so indeed in all the chastisements of the saints. *That is always spared and preserved, which is needed for God's abounding grace at the last.*

And now, we find *moral* recovery leading the way to another piece of history altogether. How right! It is a bitter thing to depart from Him; a blessed thing to return to Him.

David is enabled, as we read, after all this terrible catastrophe, to "encourage himself in the Lord his God." (xxx. 6.) What can be more blessed? Save indeed the answer which grace gives to this faith. Jonah looked afresh to the temple, when he was in the whale's belly; David encourages himself in God in the sight of the ruins of Ziklag. This was all the bitterness of his own way; but he is "strong in faith;" and I know not that faith was ever more bold; and the God of all grace vindicates its boldness to the full.

If the former sight were terrible, this is precious. David now begins in faith, as he had begun in unbelief in chap. xxvii. Ziklag in flames was the end of *that* course; trophies, and spoils, the honour and the wealth of victory, crown *this*.

After encouraging himself in God, he acts with bravery and earnestness. The Lord puts helps and opportunities in his way, and makes circumstances to favour him, and at the end crowns him with success, giving him not only to regain all that he had lost, but to enrich himself with spoils of the enemy.

What a witness is all this of the pleasure the Lord takes in the bold faith of His saints! David was under sore displeasure for a high-handed offence. But in spite of all that, (enough to make a coward of any man,) his encouraging of himself in God is thus crowned and honoured of God.

But still further, in this fruitful scripture.

The heart of man, we know, is a *deceiver*,—"deceitful above all things,"

1 Chron. xxi. A great public calamity was then hanging over them, and relief from that was the one commanding care and question that filled every bosom. All must have been ready, at such a moment, to forego their own personal private advantages—and David and Ornan, the king and the Jebusite, represent this, the one insisting on giving his threshing-floor, the other insisting on paying for it.

A time of gladness is also, by a kind of moral necessity, a time of largeness of heart. If we eat the fat and drink the sweet ourselves, we shall be ready to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. (Neh. viii.) Such is the day of 1 Sam. xxx. Fears have all been quieted, anxieties relieved and answered. The spoils of the Amalekites bespeak a day of triumph. David is full of generous, large-hearted thoughts. He will not brook the suggestion that the feeble ones who had tarried at the brook should not share the spoils with those that had gone down to the fight. And he himself

—so that "he that trusteth it is a fool." But it is a *vagrant* likewise. It is famous for its wanderings and uncertainties, as it is for its deceits. And happy indeed is the prospect of its being delivered from these its wretched conditions, when the presence of the glory of Jesus, and the atmosphere of the kingdom, free us, as I may say, from ourselves.

We get now and again some pledges or expressions of this—and the heart of David furnishes us with two of them. I mean on this occasion of the spoils of the Amalekites, in 1 Sam. xxx. **And at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, in 1 Chron. xxi.**

A time of conviction of sin, of anxiety of conscience, of the early strugglings of the soul awakened to its condition before God, is necessarily a time for the enlarging of the heart. The sinner is then so occupied with his question in God's presence, that he cannot be following his nature in pride or selfishness. It was thus with David, and with Ornan too, in the day of

sends round to all his friends, portions of what may be understood to have been his share of the profits of that joyous day.

Such was the heart of David, taken up by the hand of God on these two occasions. Different the occasions were, but David's heart in *such* a hand enters into the power of each. And how blessed if communion had in our souls its proper *separating* and *realizing* power: separating us from present attractions, realizing before us future, eternal glories!

We need to put the heart near to Jesus—to have it kept steady amid the changing scenes of Christian life—to have it enlarged by reason of spiritual joy.

David rebukes the Amalekite master here. He had left his servant behind him because he had fallen sick; David, returning to his comrades at the brook enquires after their health, and then gives them a full share of all that had been gathered by the victory.

And how should we, in the joy of the

Lord, rebuke the world and nature! But, "what do we more than others?" may well be the whisper and the enquiry of our hearts.

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE.

Genesis xvii. 1.

All the relationships we have with God are founded on these two names—God and Father. I can only know God in the way he has revealed Himself—and that is the way He has revealed Himself, as the God and Father of Jesus.

Hence it is said to be eternal life to know God thus, i. e., in the Son. It is never said, that they had eternal life in connexion with God Almighty:—we know they had, but it is not so characterized.

There are two things we have to know in God, that are precious to us—communion and God's dwelling place. Now this latter Abraham never had. We never read of God dwelling with

any until redemption is accomplished. God could visit, give promises, &c., but He could not take up a person, or body of persons, and say, There is my dwelling place, until redemption was fully accomplished. How could God dwell where He saw sin?

The more I go on, the more I see the immense importance of this, that the unqualified results of grace should have their place in the hearts of the saints. I am sure nothing can protect them against the incoming of the seductions of the latter days, but the consciousness that they are not of the world of which Satan is the prince; but that they belong to God in virtue of a redemption which has put them in connexion with Himself, apart from all question of sin, flesh, or Satan.

God blessed the faultless creature, but He was not the companion of the creature. He visits Abraham, but He has no dwelling place with Abraham; but the instant I get redemption at the Red Sea, I get the song, "This is my God, and I will prepare Him an

habitation." In the 15th of Exodus, and in the 29th, we find this to be the settled purpose for which He has brought them out.

Singularly lovely are the visits He pays to Abraham, but Abraham was a stranger on earth, and God was a stranger; but He has a throne in Israel. The worth of redemption is that He can dwell among them. Did God dwell among them when He said, "When I see the blood," &c.? No. He is passing through as a judge. The moment redemption is wrought, (i. e., the work done which takes us out of the condition we were in, and puts us into another) He dwells among them. This is an immense truth. Has God made any mistake as to the cleansing which He has accomplished by the blood of Christ? Any mistake as to the righteousness which He has made us to be in Christ, and on which He has put His seal and fiat because He likes it? Let your hearts say what the value of the redemption is on the footing of which God comes and dwells

in us. Can a single unsettled question remain if God has made me His home? He does not dwell with Abraham, but on the ground of redemption He does in Israel. In Egypt God had not lost the character of a judge, but of whom was He a judge at the Red Sea? Only of their enemies. His character is changed entirely; He is in relationship with them. So at Pentecost. Grace had come and sought them, but redemption had to be wrought; and then God comes and dwells with them. They are delivered and so cleansed as that God can make His abode with them. There is not one atom that does not bear the stamp of the blood and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be all kinds of exercises in order to maintain the relationship, but we are in it. It is there to be maintained.

In Genesis the 17th, we see the difference between a soul resting on promises for the earth, and the heart resting in God so as to have communion with God. It is a different thing

to get kindness, and to enjoy Him who does the kindness. The first revelation of God to Abraham gave no communion, but calls him from "Ur of the Chaldees." But Abraham will never bring "Terah" into Canaan. You may have left the world, and yet you will never get into Canaan with Terah. Many a soul is longing to be there, but there is a constant grieving of their Leader. Is He going to put His sanction on that? Never. When at God's call he went to go into Canaan, "into the land of Canaan they came." In the giving up of self and of the world—there is power. Abraham gave it up and Abraham had power. Lot had no power. Abraham brought Lot back, and had the spoil of the world, yet gave it all up. God was his portion. He had given up the world and not gotten Canaan. His trust is in God. He will not have a single thing in which God is not.

If I say, I am your reward (Gen. xv.) where do I get the measure and character of the reward? In your heart.

He is love—to be sure He is, and it is shed abroad in my heart, and I am living in it and on it. God talked with Abraham. I get not merely promises, but communion.

In the 15th chapter Abraham says, What wilt thou give *me*? In the 18th he is interceding for others. If you are living in the sense of your own need, your prayers will turn round yourself; but when there is that kind of confidence which is found in communion, besides prayer for your wants, you will be able to intercede for others; there will be the intercessional link. In the 15th chapter Abram remains Abram; in the 17th his name is no more Abram, but Abraham.

Has He not done the same with the Church? We are associated with the full tide of His own thoughts in grace. After the struggling at Peniel, God gave no revelation of Himself; but when Jacob got back to Bethel He revealed Himself unasked.

We are not in the flesh at all; we are not in Egypt at all; and the God

That is not wrong, but it went no further. It made what man could look for, the measure of what God could give. It could meet every want, but am I going to make God merely a servant for all my wants?

In the 17th chapter it is not meeting man even in respect of His own promises and man's wants. There it is, "I am the Almighty God," &c.; not a word of "thy." It is not, I am "*thy*" Almighty God. He was that, but He was much more. It is what He is. God reveals Himself, saying in effect to Abraham, "You have not to do with promises, you have not to do with wants; you have to do with me." "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Let there be the full answer to what I am.

What God wants is to take us out of it all to enjoy Himself. He has given us a nature capable of enjoying Himself. He is a Father and we are children. When He says, I am holy, our hearts reply, O what a comfort. Not a particle of sin will be in His presence.

we have found is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He talks with us. We are on our faces it is true, but still He talks with us on the ground of redemption. We are not in the old name by which we were known in flesh, but in Christ. "The Lord direct our hearts into his love."

DANIEL III.

In this chapter we have the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not in that character, however, i.e., not the outward difficulties and deliverances as here referred to, but it is the spirit of the thing that I desire to call your attention to, because there are various trials which attend the soul while passing through this world. In Israel God was showing forth His mighty power in temporal deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us it is a different thing. Being spiritually delivered, we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those that are faithful to God have always been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God characterize the seed all through.

Now it is another thing we find here (besides the love of power;) they use religion to unite and band together—to oblige conformity to the king's word—no matter whether king or pope if it is his religion, for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends, and it must suit man. And here we find it in full perfection. He who wielded God's power, and in whose hands God put it, never used it on God's part; for when God had tried man as the Jews by the law, &c., and they failed, He puts absolute power in the hands of one man, and instead of his using it in serving God, he sets up an image and commands all men to worship it. And what do we find God's people doing? They abstain from it in the character of the Remnant—they will not submit—they do not do it, and it is a great crime of course, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit. However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power or the exercise of it in grace towards

64 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

posed Nebuchadnezzar, it would have been all over, for God gave the king his power; but they submitted, and therefore God could deliver them.

The effect of these faithful ones being in the trial is—what? Why, the identification of their names with God—as He is also called the God of Abraham. “Whoever shall speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” What a blessed thing to be thus associated with God; having His name associated with theirs. And how blessed the identification of the saints with the God who is not ashamed to be called their God. It was by non-resistance—by bowing to the power and will of God; although evil as regards the exercise of it in the king's hand. If we get in the humble, low place of suffering under the power, we shall find God's power will be put forth to deliver.

We see here what quietness and peace of heart, whether it be refusing to worship, or suffering the furnace, or coming out with honour; it is sure to bring the blessed reward of ever having God's name identified with ours; and the God whom we have known as our God, and whom we have cleaved to in trial down here, and He to us, is the same whose name attaches itself to us in the glory.

His people. He may suffer them to be in trial—He may not always give outward deliverance; but *patience* is always the same, and the ground of confidence is the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances and trials are different and great, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same—it never hinders that. The outward trial may hide God's power from our eyes, but He is always the same.

I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged and ready to say, “Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;” and what could you get more? for what is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel, that “Emmanuel” was found among them. And, however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem, when a *false* god is set up, God remains the same.

Mark the perfect power of the king, and the perfect patience of these faithful sufferers. If they had resisted the power, it would have been over in a moment; as they would then have taken it out of God's hand. But *now* they change the king's word by their patience. If they had op-

THE INSTRUCTION OF DISCIPLINE.

Jonah ii.

The discipline of a soul under the hand of the Lord has many deep lessons in it; lessons such as no theory can teach, and which can only be understood by the light of the infinitely perfect word of God. Without constant self-judgment, it is impossible to say how much of divine truth, about those very exercises of soul, and these living ways of the Lord, as well as about other things, may be held, and taught too, as little more than theories, in regard to their present practical effect upon the heart. It is not that there is designed hypocrisy, but, through the levity of our minds and the unsubduedness of our flesh, the depth of God's truth and ways is not scanned by our souls.

Truth, it should be remembered, is not God; but, if the soul is to fully profit by the lessons of His word, God and His truth must not be disjoined.

Another thing too may be observed, that knowledge is not faith; though advancement in knowledge, and an ability to speak of the truth of God, are often mistaken for faith—or, at least, the heart may not be conscious, in its advancement in knowledge, how much faith and the soul's practical accordance with the truth, have fallen in the rear.

On this point, the moral of the prophet Jonah's story gives us a striking example. There was a double lesson which the son of Amittai learnt (learnt, at any rate, as he had never done before) under the Lord's dealings with him for his self-will and for his shrinking from the responsibility connected with the testimony with which he was entrusted. He might often, as a prophet, have enunciated the truths, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy;" and "salvation is of the Lord;" which are the burden of his confession when delivered from the fish's belly; (Jonah ii. 8, 9) but what emphasis did they gather in his soul through the Lord's dealings with him in the terrible

tookest vengeance on their inventions." Jonah's sorrow, that extorted from him his cry, was self-earned sorrow, and the trouble that made him say, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple," was trouble that came directly from the Lord as a chastening for his disobedience, still the grace that met his spirit, now broken by the discipline of the Lord, was unchanged in its character, and made him say, as he had never said before, "Salvation is of the Lord." His cry was by reason of his affliction, still his voice was heard. He says, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." The billows and the waves were rolling over and around him, and he was imprisoned hopelessly as in a living tomb, apparently cast out from God's sight, yet he looks again towards His holy temple, and he finds that God is in His holy temple! He finds that He is there to regard the cry of the wretched and to hear the prayer of the destitute! "He cannot deny himself." "The earth with her bars was about him for ever," yet his life was

circumstances, into which his disobedience and self-will had plunged him!

The grace of the Lord is wonderful in the height to which it raises its objects; but it is wonderful also in the depths to which it descends, and in the manner of its working in the hearts of those whose condition makes them need its intervention. God goes along the whole pathway of His people, as well as meets them in mercy at the beginning, and receives them in like mercy at the end of their course. And He will make them learn this, either as they, in obedience, "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God;" or as, by some discipline of his hand, He teaches them that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Faith always finds its answer in God, and finds too, in whatever circumstances, that He is "the God of all grace." Even where transgression called for this rebuke, it is said, "They called upon the Lord and he answered them Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that *forgavest them*, though thou

brought up from corruption. It was when his soul fainted within him that he remembered the Lord; and it was because he had been heard in these appalling circumstances that he records his prayer.

It is the object of the enemy at such a time to throw the pall of despair over the troubled soul; but God's Spirit leads the heart to look to the hand that corrects for help—to own its misery and in the depth of its sorrow to cry to God for deliverance. The path of disobedience may be trodden in carelessness when outward circumstances are smooth; and it may seem a happier enterprise to be sailing with a fair wind to Tarshish, than to be called to bear an unwelcome testimony to Nineveh; but when the storm arises and the voice of God's reproof is heard in the conscience, and thus He is teaching the truth that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy," nothing but the sense of His unfailing grace can sustain the soul.

It was God's complaint by the prophet against Israel. "They have not

cried to me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." Their misery oppressed them and they howled upon their beds in consequence; but there was no cry to the Lord. Nothing is so terrible as the stubbornness of spirit that refuses to look to the Lord when He smites! Better with Jonah to be in "the belly of hell," if even there the cry of anguish is wrung from the soul and addressed to God who alone can deliver—for then deliverance is sure.

Jonah had often prayed to the Lord before, and knew that He was the hearer of prayer; but this truth was much more deeply engraven on the tablets of his heart when he said, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." He had known too, and, as a prophet, had doubtless taught others, in the broad and general sense, that "they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy;" but in the whale's belly he was taught that to pursue nature's path and to choose his own course, however fair it might promise, was a lying vanity—in a word,

the dying of the Lord Jesus," and of the proofs of His delivering power, which he never learned so effectually as when he had to say, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver."

THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST.

2 Corinthians xi. 3.

It is very observable that a man of ordinary capacity, persevering in the pursuit of a single object, generally succeeds; while a much more talented person, pursuing several objects, succeeds in none. The time and bent of the mind when given to one object dis-

that every object the heart might choose for its ease in opposition to obedience to the will of God was a lying vanity. The thought of an escape from the disagreeable, humbling, unwelcome work of going to Nineveh, and the ship of Tarshish, with all that lured his heart from the path of obedience to the Lord, is now seen simply as a "lying vanity." "Salvation is of the Lord," in its application to the guilt and condemnation of sin, the prophet had known before he was cast into the sea; but there he learnt that truth in its application to the misery, and sorrow, and danger into which he had plunged himself by the wilfulness of the course he had taken. Like Hezekiah, in his affliction, and sorrow, and chastening from the Lord, he could say, "By these things men live and in all these is the life of my spirit."

The death of the Lord Jesus was everything to the Apostle, in the outset of his career, in relation to his deliverance from sin and his acceptance with God; but there was a practical lesson of "always bearing about in the body

tracts from another, so as to render success impossible. Now, God has set before the soul a single object, even Christ. He is presented to us as the object of present and everlasting confidence, the object of hope, the object of desire, so that to know Him is eternal life already begun; and the most gifted and advanced disciple cannot breathe a higher prayer than "That I may know him." The one comprehensive commandment of God, is, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him"—"look to him"—"delight in him." And the work of God is that we "believe in him whom he hath sent." Other objects, however good in themselves, must have a disturbing and distracting effect on the soul, unless duly subordinate to Christ. He Himself has ruled that we cannot serve God and Mammon, and has laid down the rule for the guidance of His disciples, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

A believer in Christ is a man of a single object, and if, by the grace of

God, he has a single eye to that object his "whole body will be full of light." A single object and a single eye are the two thoughts blended together in the expression, "The simplicity that is in Christ." From such "simplicity" the Corinthians were in danger of having their minds corrupted. In that high yet inexplicable sentiment or impulse of our nature, where affection and respect is mutually drawn forth between a man and woman, so that a single object becomes to each the engrossing centre of all the thoughts, we have an illustration of what the Apostle means by the simplicity that is in Christ, and to which he refers: "I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." But the Apostle turns from this to a very intelligible reference. "But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

"The serpent beguiled me," was Eve's only excuse to the challenge of

the Lord God, "What is this that thou hast done?" Whilst the principles of all sin are to be found in the one great original sin, the pattern sin, as it were, in that comprehensive word, "disobedience" the beguiling power of Satan, which led to the act, was the desire of knowledge and wisdom. After the serpent insinuated the lie, "Ye shall not surely die," he goes on with the seducing subtilty: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, *then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods*, knowing good and evil." The serpent beguiled Eve from the happy knowledge of God in nearness to him, into distance from God, and unwillingness as well as inability to come near Him. The subtilty which prevailed with Eve was that she would be happier if she exalted herself, that she would be wiser by disobeying than by fearing God; that there was something more desirable "in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," than in "the tree of life."

Again, was the Tree of Life, in the

person and work of Jesus, opened to men "to see, taste, eat, and handle," not in Paradise, but in the very world in which man was an outcast from Paradise. But, again, also hard by this tree of life, was presented another tree, "pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise," in "the wisdom of this world." Again there was room for the subtilty of the *old* serpent to beguile; by persuading those who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, that they could be higher, happier, and wiser, by means of the wisdom of this world, than they were as believers in Christ, and disciples of Christ. It appeared as a privation to them, and a degradation to call no one "Master" but Jesus, to know no wisdom but Jesus, "the wisdom of God," to look to Him as "the light," and for light, as well as "the salvation of God," and for salvation. "Surely the wise man and the disputer of this world may be helpful to us," might the Christian say in answer to any subtle whisper of the serpent. "Engraft the knowledge of

Christ on the rudiments of philosophy, and what a system will be produced!" The introduction of the wisdom of this world, corrupted the faith instead of helping it, destroyed the temple of God instead of rearing it. (1 Cor. iii. 17.) Human wisdom and disputation had resulted in undermining the fundamental truth of the gospel, the resurrection of the body. The Corinthians were in danger of losing the rich blessings of the gospel, by that which, through the subtilty of Satan, appeared an advantage to them. The philosophical teachers, who were really "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ," under the subtle guidance of "Satan, transformed into an angel of light," dared not, directly, "preach another Jesus," or pretend to give another Spirit, or to have another gospel—that would be too open and undisguised. But to draw off the heart from allegiance to Jesus, by other objects, to substitute human wisdom for the Spirit of God, and to make the gospel itself a subject of de-

bate and speculation, served the serpent's purpose better than open hostility. He knows that there is but one Jesus, and he knows who He is, the Holy One of God. He cannot deny this, but he can lead men to speculate on His person, till he has undermined all the doctrines of grace which result from the glory of His person. The serpent knows well his power over the conscience, for he is "the accuser of the brethren," and he knows also the only power by which he can be resisted successfully, even by the power of the cross, and to undermine that, has ever been his object; and, for this purpose, he finds no readier a tool than the wisdom of man. "For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness, but to us who are saved, the power and wisdom of God." The serpent knows also the value of the Scripture, and that it "cannot be broken;" by this weapon, wielded by Jesus Himself, at the season of His temptation, was the serpent defeated. He could mutilate Scripture, but he could not stand

against it. "It is written," foiled him in his subtleties. Glad would the serpent be to wrest this weapon, the sword of the Spirit, out of the hand of believers; and early did he begin through his philosophical ministers to corrupt that word, the authority of which he could not deny. "We," says the Apostle, "are not as many, which corrupt the word of God." It is easily corrupted by taking from it, or adding to it, or setting up anything as of like authority. The old serpent—the accuser of the brethren—is only overcome by them, by "the word of their testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb, and by loving not their lives even unto the death."

"There is but one name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved, even the name of Jesus." The serpent would beguile us, by adding something as supplementary to Jesus, in order to salvation, or by making Jesus one among many other objects; but whatever these objects are, they

will assuredly displace Jesus—He must have the supreme place, or none at all—He must be all, or nothing.

There is but "one Spirit," and the presence of that Spirit can be tested by the witness that He bears to the Son of God, in the great facts of the incarnation, cross, resurrection, and ascension, and coming glory of Jesus. There is but one gospel, even that of the grace of God, in present and everlasting remission of sins through the blood of Jesus, present and everlasting righteousness to him that believeth in Jesus. "Another gospel," if it pretends to be one, is "no gospel" at all, it troubles instead of comforts, and unsettles the soul instead of establishing it. The only wise God has alone devised a plan to secure His own glory, and the eternal blessedness of which a sinner is capable. He can alone announce Himself as a just God and a Saviour, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, because in it is revealed the

only method of righteousness by which a sinner can stand before God—the righteousness of God by faith.

The Corinthians were in danger, as we ever are, of being "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ;" and we are so corrupted whenever the highest object of human attainment is, in our estimation, more desirable than what Christ is of God made unto us and what we are of God made in Him.

The gospel announces to us the wondrous means of God's "possibility" to do that which is equally "impossible" for man's wisdom or even the law of God to achieve, even the making a sinner perfectly righteous in the sight of God. Until we realize that faith in Christ has at once set us in a position unattainable by the highest human wisdom or the most perfect human righteousness, we are in constant danger of being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. Satan knows how to ply the "highly esteemed" things among men to the subversion of the gospel of the grace of God. He will

use unto this end the religion of man or the wisdom of man. The early Judaizing tendency is an instance of the former danger now fully manifested; the subtle disputations of the Greek of the latter, now also fearfully prevalent. God has drawn the line between that which man can attain unto and that which He reveals. He hides, such is his good pleasure, from the wise and prudent that which he reveals to the babes. Now human wisdom has ever thought to obliterate the line which God has drawn between human investigation and divine revelation, by pretending to reach, by reasoning, that which can only be received by faith. Speculations on the person of Christ soon corrupted the simplicity of faith in Him; again men became vain in their imaginations. Men speedily became wise above that which is written, and thus superseded the authority of Scripture. Human intellect pretended to explain what God had been pleased to reveal, and thus the Holy Ghost was virtually superseded as "the guide

NOTES OF A LECTURE

on James i. and ii., 1—13.

I would follow with you, beloved, for a few minutes the Spirit's teachings in this Epistle.

I grant you it is not up to the level of the other Epistles—that to the Romans for instance, which teems in every part of it with dispensational truth. We get there under the hand of the Spirit:—Dispensational standing, iii—v.; Dispensational experience, vi—viii.; Dispensational knowledge, ix—xi.; Dispensational service, xii.

But our Epistle, though not up to this level, as we have said, is still, in the power of the Spirit, of the same high calling. The materials that we have here are common-place enough, it is true; and I love them the better because they are so; for thus it needs not that the soul be brought into any extraordinary circumstances to learn the lessons to which it is set. The Spirit looks after us, as it were, follows

into all truth." Thus faith, instead of resting in the power of God, was made to rest in the wisdom of man; for such indeed is the boasted authority of the false church in its traditions, equally as false philosophy, to which in appearance it is so much opposed.

To recognize the Scriptures as the only and sole rule, and the Holy Ghost the only infallible guide into the understanding of that which He has dictated, and as the glorifier of Jesus, are our greatest safeguards from being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. Whatever draws away the soul from Him must be regarded by us as an idol.

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

us into the details of every-day life, and would have us be through all its varied scenes just what we are in the Church—vessels of the Holy Ghost outside as well as inside in the activities of the new life, as much as when ministering in the Church; and it is to fix our souls emphatically on this truth, that the Spirit in Romans xii. has so blended what may be called ecclesiastical gifts with those that find their exercise in the varied social relations, that it is impossible to say where the one order of gift ends and the other commences. It is as members of Christ we are addressed throughout, as men of the Church, whether as teaching, prophesying, or using hospitality. "Not slothful in business,—fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." What you are at starting, beloved, that you are even to the end—in every relation and under every circumstance, a *man of the Church*. If I go out and become a man of the family, or a man of the neighbourhood, or a man of business, am I to be one whit less a man of the

Church? Nay, beloved, and again I would charge both you, and myself, never *lay aside* the Church-man. All is to be up to the level, and in the spirit of that consecration to which we are exhorted in Romans xii. 1. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c. It is this, as I judge, which gives that tone and character to the lessons to which we are set down in this Epistle, and which I would now look at for a little with you in the details.

First, then, we are set down to the lesson of trial; (2—4;) a lesson, I need not say, in the full character of the dispensation. A soul under the Solomon-glory could not be set down to such a lesson as this. It had its own proper experiences, beautiful in their day and generation, on its own proper teachings too. The law for instance, the ten commandments, very fine, in their age and generation; perfect, I need not say, but not fit for this day of grace in which the mercies of

God have been revealed. And it is that which sets us down to learn lessons altogether of another order, even to count it all joy to fall into divers trials.

And what, I ask, has authority to set me down to such a lesson as this? What but this, that I am called to follow a rejected Master. I have been led into companionship with a suffering Jesus.

Our brother has been praying that we may heartily welcome all trial and discipline, through which the flesh is made to wither, and the soul is trained into deeper fellowship with the precious peculiarities of our calling; a prayer not one whit too high for such a calling, though perhaps too much for some of us; a little above, it may be, the actual experience of our poor hearts. But, oh! let us yield ourselves to the teaching, if we have any fellowship with the precious peculiarities of our dispensation. Let us never forget that companionship with a sorrowing Jesus, is to yield to the heart its best joy in a world that has rejected Him. And let

us address ourselves to the little that remains of the journey, in the full power of such a calling, enduring hardness as good soldiers.

Next, we are set down to the lesson of rank and dignities. (9—11.) And here again we are in the power and spirit of the heavenly calling. Will the spirit of social order set me down to such a lesson as this? No, beloved, it is a lesson peculiar to the Church of God; to be appreciated only by those who are breathing the atmosphere peculiar to such a calling. And shall we leave the atmosphere of the Church, and go out and breathe the vitiated, inflated atmosphere in which the men of this world live, and move, and have their being? The Church has learnt that all flesh is grass; what then can we do with the varied glories and distinctions, in which the flesh would fain array itself?

Then we are set down to the lesson of temptation. (12—17.) "Do not err, my beloved brethren." This is too solemn, too sacred a lesson for man's

feeble, erring mind to exercise itself upon. Take heed, see to it that you trace no evil thing to a higher source than your own corrupt heart. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." And, on the other hand, be careful to trace up every good and right thing to no spring short of the blessed God Himself, even the Father of Lights, "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—a fountain that cannot send forth sweet water and bitter, but whence flows every good and perfect gift.

Then we are set down to another lesson; the finest of all may we not say, if we may speak of degrees where all is divine—the lesson of "pure religion." (ver. 26, 27.) Pure religion is just this, To be imitators of the Father in His boundless and rich grace, and to track the footsteps of a rejected Master—a separated Lord. If we are separated in the mere severities of nature, it will not do; we are to be in

sympathy with the largeness of the heart of God.

Then, brethren, we are to learn the lesson of glory. (ii. 1—9.) "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." How can the faith of glory have respect to the petty distinctions recognized amongst men? The world may well cherish and value its own titles and dignities,—honours struck out of its own mint. But what has the faith of glory in common with all this? And let us remember that it is in the light of this faith that we are called to discern glory—and faith only can discern it. The world has no eye for it. And surely we do not need to be told that the whole spirit of things around us is just after the fashion of the world's way of discerning. But let us seek to walk in the light of the glory to which we are called.

The last lesson to which we are set down is the lesson of grace. It is the royal law. Is "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," up to the mark of the

church's calling? No, indeed it is not. It was fine, very fine, in its generation, but not up to the measure of the grace that suits us. "So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." If we learn grace from any source short of the perfect law of liberty, we shall miss of the grace that becomes us, even of that infinite grace in which we stand.

And now, beloved, may we as those who have been called by glory and virtue—who have been made partakers of the heavenly calling, set ourselves down to the study of these homely lessons—addressing ourselves to the little remnant of our journey, in the full power of that heavenly calling, in the light of that glory, and in companionship with Him, who, though rejected here, has been glorified there. And though, as we pursue our way, our poor hearts will have to learn to the full the ruin of the Church, let us ever remember that it is our privilege to learn along with it the blessed sympathies of the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 14—16.

A FRAGMENT.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

There is allusion in these three verses to several passages of Scripture, the principles of which are peculiarly applicable, and the mind of the Apostle was imbued with the truth contained in these Scriptures. He had imbibed the sense, the sap—though you will not find the exact words that are here brought together recorded anywhere. The principle is this: whether it be Egypt, you must get out of Egypt—or Babylon, you must get out of Babylon. "And ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." He promises to be more to them than He had ever been to the Jews; He will have them entirely to Himself. Now we are not, like the Jews, to judge only of outside cleanness, but we are to judge the whole spirit of the world; and whatever is not of Christ we are to judge unclean. The world will come in with all that is pleasant to

A FRAGMENT.

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the flesh, but it will bring in all that can trouble, and will bring in judgment.

The Word of the Lord is that which the Apostle gives us, taking the sense of several Scriptures, and so applying them as to express God's mind with peculiar force and clearness. "I will dwell in them and walk in them," &c. He is here laying the ground, and we ought to be able to go on with that which He would unfold to us, and to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." If we have known the unsearchable riches of Christ, let us live in the enjoyment of our own proper things which God has given us in Him.

When a Christian gets into the world, it is dreadfully far. It is not that he may fall into its grosser sins, but when he gets into association with the spirit of the world, he gets out of his right sphere, and loses his proper blessings.

The Apostle says, "Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged!"

He had said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That is the testimony we go out with to the world. Ye have received this testimony; well then, take care that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: but now be ye enlarged. I want you to leave the spirit of the world, that your hearts may be enlarged; and that cannot be but as you are living in the new world, in the place where God has put you. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This was having fellowship with the world. If I go and dishonour God with idols, He will destroy the idols. He says, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

The Apostle had to write unto them, not as unto natural men, (because they had been converted,) but as unto carnal; he could not write unto them as unto spiritual, consequently was not able to tell them of that which was their portion

96 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Diffusing happiness around, its words are gracious, kind;
It soothes the heart with grief o'er cast, and cheers the drooping mind;
The widow's tear it wipes away, and, from its heaven-blest store,
Relieves the orphan, fatherless, the aged, and the poor.
'Tis goodness in activity, 'tis sacrifice of self;
'Tis occupied with others' good, and seeketh others' wealth;
It labours not that fickle man its work may praise or own,
There's but *one* smile it reckons on, that smile is God's alone.
It seeks communion with the saint, the godlike, and the good,
And bids the weak and tempted one, to stay himself on God;
It points the sinner to the cross, and tells of joys above,
And never tires while dwelling on the Saviour's deathless love.
O precious grace! divinely good! dwell, ever dwell with me;
Yea, with each child of God on earth bear constant company.
We need thy exercise to soothe the sorrows of the way,
Till glory crowns the work of grace, in heaven's unclouded day.

A. M.

and really belonged to them: for if they had not been faithful in that which was another's, how could he give unto them that which was their own? Wherever the heart is turned to idols, it is necessarily straitened in itself; it is not living in its own proper sphere, where the riches of God's house have entrance into the heart.

THE VERSATILITY OF GRACE.

"Unto every one of us is given grace."—Eph. iv. 7.

I LOVE to ponder o'er the various ways of grace,
The blessed features it presents, my heart delights to trace;
By God, the fountain of *all* grace, to each of His 'tis given,
And by its exercise is marked the citizen of heaven.

It weeps with those who weep, and joys with those who do rejoice;
It listens to the mournful plea, and heeds the suppliant's voice;
Stoops to the abject and the vile, the outcast, and forlorn,
Nor turns aside, although 'tis met by insult and with scorn.

THE CAPACITY FOR KNOWING DIVINE LOVE AND HOW WE KNOW IT.

1 John iv. 7—19.

I would add to the paper on 1 John iv., which you have published in the February number, some observations of a somewhat different character, though partly referring to the same truths. The verses which I would seek in a measure to unfold are from 7 to 19. There are two subjects in these verses—the capacity for knowing divine love and the manifestation or proof of it, or more generally how we know it. First, as regards the capacity of the saints, that in them by which the blessedness of God's love is known and enjoyed. It is twofold. First, participating in the divine nature; (verse 7;) secondly, God's dwelling in us. (verse 12.) This gives it its full and perfect character and forms the link with the manifestations of this love, for this reason, that we cannot then separate the capacity to

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enjoy God and the manifestation of God, because as dwelling in us the manifestation of Himself becomes power to enjoy Him. Hence, though for convenience' sake, I have separated the two points, capacity to enjoy and the manifestations of divine love which reveal it to us to be enjoyed, and this division for other objects is exceedingly important and never lost sight of in Scripture, yet as regards God's dwelling in us it is imperfect. We cannot here separate the capacity and the means. Next, then as regards the means of knowing the divine love. It is first manifested to us in its true nature in Christ's coming into the world to save in love, that had no motive in us; secondly, it is perfected *in* us in that God dwells in us and sheds it abroad in our heart; thirdly, it is perfected *with* us in that even while we are in this world we are as Christ is with God, so that we have boldness in the day of judgment. The whole is connected with the subject of the entire Epistle as displaying the traits of the divine nature in us by

and he knows Him, for he knows what that nature is, for he participates in it. A mere animal cannot enter into my thoughts as a man, for it has not my nature so as to be able to do so. If we have the elements of this nature as ours, we are clearly born of God and know Him, for that is His nature. This is the first essential principle of our capacity for the knowledge of God as love, the participation in this nature, and a most blessed one it is. Our being born of God, our receiving life is a real thing. It is our being made partakers of the divine nature. But for the full completing of this power of knowing God we must bring not only the divine nature as communicated to us, but God Himself in. This is still connected with its manifestation in loving one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. Thus the divine presence becomes the power of knowing God, of His love being perfected in us. We know that we dwell

the communication of that eternal life which came down from the Father, so that these things should be true in Him (Christ) and in us, as had been shown as to righteousness. Chap. ii. 29 and iii. 1st and following verses. Only the communication of life is completed here (love being the very nature of God and not an attribute) by the perfect manifestation of that love, and even by the dwelling of God in us. Righteousness and love are the two great characteristic traits of the divine life, but the latter is what God is. I do not say God is righteousness—I say He is righteous—but I do say He is love. Righteousness refers to others. Love is what He is in Himself.

But to proceed now to the examination of the verses, and first our capacity to enjoy the love of God. The Apostle exhorts the saints to love one another, "For," says he, "love is of God." It is so in its nature, for it is what He is. Hence when a man loves with these divine affections, he is certainly born of God, for he participates in His nature

in God and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. St. Paul, though, as he is wont, in a more dispensational way, tells us the same truth. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It is here said, remark, *of* His Spirit, because it is not a display of power as it might be when it is simply said His Spirit, as iii. 24, where consequently it is not said we dwell in Him, but such a working of the Spirit in the power of divine life that there is communion in the elements of the divine nature. We love for He loves. He has given us *of* His Spirit. Our being partakers then of the divine nature and God dwelling in us form our capacity for enjoying God in love.

I turn now to those things in which that love is manifested and proved. First, we have verses 9 and 10. In speaking of him that loves being born of God and knowing God, the soul might have been thrown quite back on itself to search the love there and fall into mysticism. But the Spirit of God at

once, while clearly laying down this partaking of the divine nature, turns the eye of faith to what is wholly outside us, in order to have the proof and learn the character of divine love. In this was manifested the love of God to us. This comes out in the fullest and most blessed way. He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. I was dead then—I live through another. It was pure and perfect love in the mind of God Himself—the expression of what He is in this love, for there was nothing in me to attract or awaken it. I was dead. But God gave the one blessed object of His undistracted and undisturbed love—His only-begotten Son—for me when I was dead. Herein, then, was love, *not* that we loved God, (that was law work,) but that *He loved us*. But this leads to another aspect of the state of the sinner. He was guilty as well as dead, but Christ came to be the propitiation for our sins. That is the pure love of God without a motive, but what was in Himself took us up

fore whom I appear. And so it is with us. He comes and fetches us Himself and changes our bodies into glorious bodies by the way; so that when we appear before Him, we are like Himself in glory. But this comes about by a real communication of life. We say we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." Paul, as I have said, treats it more dispensationally, but it is the same truth. I know I am as Christ is now, that He is gone to my Father and His Father, my God and His God. Risen after He had completely put away our sins, He has taken us in the power of resurrection out of the whole case we were in and put us in a new one before God, even that in which He is. To be as Christ the Son before God our Father is all that love could do. Thus love was manifested in visiting us in our sins: it is perfected in putting us in Christ's position before God, and that livingly. I have reserved for the last what comes second

when our state was one of death and guilt through sin. It was in this state and as being in it we were loved and the love applied itself to this. I look for it, therefore, in God and know its absolute completeness in Him. There was only a needy undeserving object in me. It was to my state of sin this love applied. If I look at the cross where it was displayed, I have no part in it but my sin. The love of God there was manifested in this that we, dead in sin and guilty, might live through Him, and know that propitiation was made for our sins.

I now turn to the last of the three points I mentioned—Love perfected with us. It is in this: that as Christ is, so are we. Love was manifested to us in that He came to us in love when we were in our sins. It is perfected in that as Christ is, so are we. We can say, "in this world," for it is here that we learn to know we are, in Him, the righteousness of God in unclouded light. How can I but have boldness in the day of judgment, when I am as the judge be-

in the chapter, because it speaks of our present enjoyment of this blessing. I have already referred to it in speaking on the point of our capacity to enjoy. It is said, (verse 12,) "No man hath seen God at any time." What is the remedy for this seeming impossibility of knowing Him? The answer here is, If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us. Here is a wonderful way of knowing God, of enjoying in the most perfect way His love. How great is the intimacy when He dwells in us and gives us to feel immediately the sweetness of His present love. No intermediate means to assure us of it merely, precious as we have seen these are and absolutely necessary to found our souls in the certainty that He does love us, we know it because we enjoy it directly with Himself. He has been pleased to come and fill our hearts with the consciousness of His love and to abide there. He becomes the home and object of confidence for our hearts, because He dwells in our hearts. He can dwell in

us because of Christ's work and our cleanness and righteousness in Him. Here is rest—here is peace, the spring of joy and the intelligence and pledge of what we shall enjoy with God above. This passage is the more remarkable through its correspondence with the 18th verse of the first of John's Gospel. The same difficulty is raised. No man hath seen God at any time. And how is it met there? The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Not who *was*, mark: He who is the one object in whom the Father's love concentrated itself in the most immediate enjoyment and delight. He has declared Him as He Himself knew Him; so he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Thus by the Son's coming into the world, we may, through grace, know God. This, along with the consequent promise of the Spirit on His departure, is the great subject of John's Gospel. God made known as the Father by His revelation in the Son. But how is the same difficulty

how without excuse you are, it is written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Do you confess that Jesus is the Son of God? God dwells in you then. How are you treating such a guest?

Allow me to add one correction of a thought fundamentally just, and one correction of an error of expression or copy. The latter is in page 36. Read, it does not say, "As the Father loves me," but, "as he loved me." That is it is not the infinite and eternal delight, but the Father's love to Christ as one walking down here. The other remark I would make is this—that while the contrast between knowing God as a father and as a judge is most just and most important, it is well for the Christian to remember that in a certain sense it is just as father that He is judge. As regards final judgment, or the imputation of sin, the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son. The perfect work of Christ, which has put away our sins

met here? God dwells in us. We know it by this great result of Christ's work, that cleansed and justified. God dwells in us, and makes us enjoy by His presence a love which has allowed nothing to hinder its making itself our own, and has communicated itself to our hearts by dwelling in us, so that we know that nothing hindered its communicating itself to us. We know it because it is communicated and God is nearer to us than any other object in the world. He dwells in us. Wonderful place given to us!—not an earnest of God's love, (there is of the glory,) but that love itself perfected in us, because He is there, and whom would we wish but He, and where He is, who shall compete with Him?

One sentence remains in the passage which I would notice. Some may say, This is too high for me, I cannot pretend to enter into all this, I must have something simpler. Friend, nothing is simpler than the presence and love of God, *where it is enjoyed*. That is what is wanting. And now, to shew you

and thus secured us from the judgment of them as guilt, brings us to call on the Father, who without respect of persons, judges according to every man's work. That is what delivers us from judgment as to guilt, brings us into that holy and gracious care which never overlooks anything in the children, and judges it according to the Father's own nature, into the privilege of communion with which the child is fully brought. The word of Christ was, *Holy Father* "keep through thine own name." That perfect love of God which has brought us into the enjoyment of itself has not changed Him into whose communion it has brought us, so that He should allow any evil. Indeed it would not be love. He deals with us in grace; warns, chastens, and if he chastises, it is that we should not be condemned with the world—but He allows no evil in His government of His children more than finally in the government of the world.

This chapter unfolds, in a very complete manner, the character and fruit of the life of Christ in us. The reader may remark an interesting difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians, which in some points have much resemblance to one another. Both connect the head and the body. To the Colossians the apostle speaks more of the person, glory, and fulness of the head from whom they were in danger of slipping away through the influence of philosophy and vain deceits on the one hand, and legal, fleshly, Jewish ordinances on the other. To the Ephesians, he unfolds the privileges of the members, and the whole standing of the Church; or, more exactly, its sitting in heavenly places in Christ, and being the habitation of God through the Spirit on earth. The Epistle begins with the highest blessings of the children of God, and goes on to the union of the Church with Christ. The consequence

of this order of instruction is, that the Holy Spirit does not see, as in the Epistle to the Romans, the redeemed living in sin previously and convict them of it, and shew how they are to be justified; a subject never spoken of in Ephesians, but looks at Christ first as dead, and sinners dead in their sins, and then the whole is the work of God in an unmixed new creation, and they are raised with Christ and sit in Him in heavenly places.* Hence their state is spoken of in broad contrast with being all children of wrath together, and, though there are precepts and directions, Christian life on earth is little spoken of, while the Holy Spirit is looked at as dwelling in the assembly, and in the saint, and they are not to grieve Him; and the development of a worthy walk refers to this calling to have the Holy Ghost in their midst.

* Hence, the Lord's coming is not spoken of, though the counsels of God as to it are, because the saints are seen already sitting in heaven.

In the Colossians, as we have seen, they were slipping away, or in danger of it; and Christ is largely put forward, and heaven is a hope. The fulness of the Godhead in Christ is declared; and then, Christ in them the hope of glory is spoken of as the aspect of the mystery which is in the Spirit's mind before them. The Holy Ghost is not spoken of in the Colossians, save in the expression, love in the Spirit, but Christ our life is. It is this last point I would a little bring out. It is a life which associates them with heaven, and is to be displayed in their whole character on earth. Let us turn to the third chapter. The second had already in unfolding the completeness of the saint in Christ, shewn that he was dead and risen again by faith of the operation of God which raised Christ. On this ground the apostle calls on them to set their affections on things above, where Christ was sitting on the right hand of God. Christ is more objectively put before them than in Ephesians, still they are associated with

Him, but personally. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." They are livingly associated with the position of Christ. He is hid in God. So is their life—for He is their life. There is no display of it in the truth of its glory yet. When Christ appears, for the association is unbroken and uninterrupted, they will appear with Him in glory. It will be remarked that this is not being members of Christ, but our life, following all the phases of His history after resurrection, because He, Himself, is our life. The display of it in contradiction to flesh and likeness to Christ down here is now unfolded. He was in heaven by His divine person, and so displayed a divine and heavenly life in man on earth. We, consequent on redemption, have a place with Him in heaven, and so display this heavenly character like Him on earth—buried into death and risen again; we have put off the old man and put on the new—Christ is our life. We have members on earth, but no life; we walked in evil things

when we lived in them. But that life is not ours now. Practically, we have to take care that everything of the kind is totally put down. Mortify, put to death, your members on earth—they are to be wholly and entirely set aside; they are the doings of the old man, but we are dead and must practically deny all that belongs to it. The wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience for these very things. All fleshly evil is wholly to be put down. But this is not all—there are things which are not lusts, but the unbridledness of the will, tempers. We put off all these also. Anger, malice, &c., are not lusts, but unsubduedness, want of self-government—all this is put off. So untruth as well as violence—Satan's two great characters in Scripture. We have (not ought to do so) put off the old man and his deeds.

Thus far negatively. But we have put on the new also. What is the measure of this new man? To this the apostle proceeds. It is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that

created it. Its measure of good and evil is its knowledge of God. Innocence had been once in one created in God's image, but no knowledge of good and evil. Then there had been the knowledge of good and evil, but acquired by sin. So that there was anything but what was according to the image of Him that created him. But now Christ being our life we are renewed into this knowledge according to what He, the perfect image of God, was, and that among men and as a man. Christ is our life, so that there is in the very nature of the new man, the elements and principles of these new apprehensions in the living delight in what is good, and horror of what is evil: but Christ is the objective measure of this—the one in whom we see the perfect display of the good we have to know; He is the image of the invisible God; we see in Him how the divine nature displays itself in a man. But this is the measure of good for us in the knowledge our hearts are to possess of it and follow, nothing less

than the image of Him that created us. Hence it is said, "Be ye followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ has loved us," where we see the way of God, and that in Christ, our pattern. And this goes to the fullest extent. Hereby know we love, "because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And this is the force, too, of what the Lord says—"Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He does not say, "*with*." It is not our responsibility for acceptance before God—we are perfect in Christ, but that is another point—but we are to be like our Father, act on the same principles—He is kind to evil and good, so are we to be. We are to be above the power of evil in grace, as He is. For Christ already, then, revealed the Father's name to the men given Him out of the world, and manifested Him so that he who had seen Him had seen the Father. The whole condition of the believer, what characterizes his existence as

such, is then summed up in one blessed word, often misquoted. All human distinctions are dropped with the old man they belonged to, which is now put off. Christ is all—the one sole thing which occupies me, is my object, the sphere in which my mind lives—all else has disappeared as motive or ground of thought, He is everything; the form of my life knows nothing but Christ, He is everything, in what forms and characterizes it there is nothing else. What am I? A Christian. I may be, as a fact, a slave or a freeman, a barbarian or a Greek—that belongs to the old man, forms no part of my conscious existence and motives. As a Christian, I may have, in various cases, to act according to the place I may providentially be in, as to the old man, and into this the apostle enters further on. I may be a husband, or a wife, or a child, or a slave. And because Christ is all, I shall behave according to the will of Christ in these circumstances, for my soul it is only a position I have to be a Christian in,

where it is one which Christ owns, and hence faithful to Christ in it. But these are details into which I need not further enter at this moment.

As to the principle of my life, Christ is all. But besides this, He is in all. He is the life and power to live for every Christian; so that He should be all. It is not Christ all in all, but Christ all, and in all—all as an object, in all as life and power. This is the Christian. The apostle now draws the consequences: "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved." This is my position. It is *as such* I am to put these graces on. I am to walk in the consciousness that I am an elect one of God; one on whom His full favour and delight rests as a present thing in sovereign goodness. It is not merely the doctrine of predestination, but my present conscious position. I am a chosen one of God in the world. Further, I am a holy one of God, born of Him; and in Christ I partake of the divine nature, and am set apart for Him. Besides this, I am beloved of

Him. What a state to walk in the consciousness of! And note, it is laid as the ground of putting on gracious qualities, not the fruit of having put them on. It is in the consciousness of these blessed relationships with God, which are real living ones connected with the nature of which we have been made partakers, that these qualities grow and are developed. Hence they are gracious qualities, divine ones, such as were displayed in Christ, found in Him and in us, as He is in us as our life—bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. What a picture of Christ in the spirit in which He went through the world! Nothing strong outwardly, or shining. God, nor the divine nature in us, does not want to shine nor attract admiration to itself. That nature, content in blessedness, can, without any need to seek itself, act in grace to others; and while ever consistent with itself, does not want a character, but what is good, and the good of others. As Christ did, so have we to do; be

the epistle of Christ. We can walk through a world such as this in grace.

But these expressions of the gracious and heavenly nature in man are not all. Love in its own proper and divine nature must be brought in. God is love, and rises in His own perfectness, which nothing can touch, and admits no evil, above all, yet consorts with nothing contrary to itself. I could speak of gracious qualities in man, and of having a quarrel against any in which these qualities were to be displayed. But God rises above all this, acts in the certain consciousness of His own charity. Indifference to evil is not charity. God cannot be indifferent to evil, and God is love. He can rise above it, bear with it, forgive it, put it away at the cost of giving up His own dear Son, but not associate with or acquiesce in it. The holiness of God's nature cannot be separated from His love. I could not call it love in a father, his making no difference as to his children being in evil or not; to be love there must be the holiness which requires

that we should get above the sin to be able to love. Else it is mere personal companionship or acquiescence in evil if it be there. Perfect charity is not called for where there is not perfect holiness. Nor could there be perfect holiness without perfect love, for an ungracious feeling or an angry one would not be holiness. Hence, love may be shown in chastening, in holding aloof, in a steady withdrawal of expressed favour, and in our relations with another in the firmness which refuses to associate with evil. Besides gracious affections, the perfectness of God's love is brought in. But here, **evidently**, the heart is stayed, because God is above all in love. He is never troubled. If we walk in love, His peace rules in our heart. Nothing separates us from it. We dwell in it. And there is thankfulness, for all comes from His love. But there is expansiveness in this nature, and by the revelation of all the riches into the communion of which we are brought, and we enjoy these things together. The word of

Christ is to dwell in us richly, and this in the way of joy while helping others on, and communion together. The former traits gave us Christ in us, properly speaking, though the heart be never without an object. This Christ, all to us, and enjoyed in the affections of our new nature. All this, and our passage through a world of temptation, is guarded by a simple but very fine and all-searching test—a joy to possess it if we are true, but detective of all want of truth or heart. Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, this is perfect liberty as to everything His blessed name can be connected with, and a test which detects everything, however apparently allowable or innocent or good to man's eyes, which cannot be done in that name. To the upright in heart, who seek only to walk as He walked, to glorify Him, to reproduce His character in this poor world, which so needs to know there is such a thing as the grace of it, to the upright heart such a test is invaluable, and links all the best

of grace is most true—precious in the heart that is filled with it, and precious in its mutual development. But it is not charity. We are told to add “to brotherly love, *charity*.” The reason is simple. If it is brotherly love, brethren are the object; and though when genuine and pure it surely flows from grace, it easily, in us, clothes itself with the character which its object gives it, and tends to limit itself to the objects with which it is occupied, and to be governed by its feeling towards them. It is apt to rest in its objects, and thus avoid all that might be painful to them or mar the mutual feeling and pleasantness of intercourse, and thus make this the measure of the conduct of the Christian.

In a word, where brotherly love ends in itself as the main object, brethren become the motive and governing principle of our conduct, and our conduct becomes as uncertain as the state of our brethren with whom we may be in contact. Hence the Apostle says, “Above all these, put on charity, which

affections of the heart to it. It judges all that would carry a fair appearance, and yet have reserves with God or motives that will not bear the light. This is the closing safeguard and rule which preserves from the deception of the world, and the seductions of the selfishness of one's own heart. I can only give an outline which may introduce the reader into the bearings of the passage. Any such paper as this can only be useful as it leads him to study scripture and the path of the blessed Lord Himself, remembering, if he be a Christian, that he is partaker of the life of Christ, and set to display it in the world, that He may be glorified.

CHARITY.

“And to brotherly kindness charity.”
2 Peter i. 7.

The common notion is, that brotherly love is charity, and indeed its most perfect form. This is a mistake, as the passage above shows. That brotherly love is a most sweet and precious fruit

is the bond of perfectness.” And another Apostle, “And to brotherly kindness, charity.” Now charity is love. But will not this seek to exercise brotherly kindness? Undoubtedly it will. But it brings in God. “God is love.” “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.” Hence it brings in a standard of what true love is, which mere brotherly kindness in itself never can. It is “the bond of perfectness” for God, and God in active love is its measure. Brotherly kindness by itself has the brother for its object. Charity is governed, exists, in virtue of the conscious presence of God. Hence, whatever is not consistent with His presence, with Himself, with His glory, cannot be borne by the heart which is filled with it. It is in the spirit of love that it thinks and works, but in the Spirit of God by whose presence it is inwardly known and active.

Love was active in Christ, when He said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers;” in Paul, when he said, “I would that they were even cut off

which trouble you." Charity, because it is God's presence, and we feel His presence and look to Him in it, is intolerant of evil. In mere brotherly kindness, the brother being the object before my mind, and, if God's presence be not felt, if I do not realize it, nature coming in so easily, and here in its most unsuspected and kindly shapes, I put man before God, smother evil, keep kindness going at any rate, and so far exclude and shut out God.

Charity is His active presence, though it will be in love to man. But it gives to God all His rights. He it is that is love; but He is never inconsistent with Himself. His love to us was shown in what was the most solemn proof of His intolerance of evil—the cross. There is no true love apart from righteousness. If God is indifferent to evil, is not righteous, then there is no love in grace to the sinner. If He abhors evil, cannot suffer it in His presence, then His dealings with us, as sinners, shew the most perfect love. If I have ten children, and they go

wrong, and I say, "Well, I am to shew love to them," and take no account of their evil ways; or if some of them go wrong, and I treat them as if there was no difference to my mind in their well doing, or evil doing, this is not love, but carelessness as to evil.

This is the kind of love looked for by unconverted men, namely, God's being as careless as to evil as they are. But this is not divine charity, which abhors the evil but rises over it, dealing with it, either in putting it away, or in needed chastenings. Now, if God were indifferent to evil, there is no holy being to be the object of my love—nothing sanctifying. God does not own as love what admits of sin.

FRAGMENT.

There are two things the Spirit witnesses to—as to my sins and as to myself. As to my sins, that they are gone: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." But as to myself,

His witness is, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

THOSE WHO SLEEP IN JESUS.

"I am the Resurrection!"

The grave its charge may keep,
And our loved ones crumble into dust,
While in the dust they sleep.
We count them still as living,
As living unto God;
Our hearts have no misgiving,
Ever resting in that word:—

"I am the Resurrection!"

Sad is our heart and home,
Most desolate the broken band,
Where the stroke of death has come.
Still are our lost ones living,
They are living unto God;
Waiting with us his bidding,
To arise, and meet the Lord.

Oh thou, "the Resurrection,"

When, when wilt thou appear,
To turn to joy our sorrow,
And stay the falling tear?
In this earth, where death is sweeping
Its myriads to the tomb,
Into this scene of weeping,
O Lord, when wilt thou come?

E. D.

PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST.

Acts x.

In this chapter we have the foundation truth of the reception of the Gentiles into the Church. And one thing very marked in the narrative is, how very present a thing salvation is. Cornelius was an officer, a devout man, who gave alms, &c. God was working graciously in his heart; yet still he had one thing to learn, and that was salvation. I do not say that in God's sight he was not saved, but he had to learn to know his relation with God as a present thing. So with the jailor. His heart was touched, yet he says, "What must I do to be saved?" Now when God begins thus to work, He finishes what He begins. Here we have the full bringing out of known salvation in order that there may be the enjoyment of God. A father may have forgiven a repenting child in his heart, yet if this forgiveness is not made known, the child cannot be happy.

Here then we have the first case of

the Gentiles being brought into the full knowledge of salvation. This is not simply conviction—a man's being regenerated so as to desire to have peace with God. There must be that, but the gospel is the *answer* of God to all these desires of the heart. The poor woman in Luke vii. was evidently renewed in heart when she went to Jesus. She felt such an attraction in Jesus as drew her to Him, but she had not the answer of Jesus, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace"—you are saved. That answer is the foundation of all the hopes and joys of the believer. The thing which characterizes a Christian arises from the knowledge of present salvation. It is not a desire after righteousness and a fear that if I do not attain to it, God will be against me as a Judge. It is salvation brought to me, not merely as a possible attainment, but as God's answer to all this felt need of the soul.

Peter speaks to Cornelius "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

content naturally to have it without God, but now it cannot have peace without God. We may try to distract the mind, but let the thought of God come in, and all our peace is gone. Now it must have peace with God. Conscience must be perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied. It may be labouring to satisfy God itself, for a time under law, but when really awakened and in earnest it soon finds that this it cannot do, and yet it feels that He must be satisfied. Do you think that if I have offended a father I can be happy without the certainty of his being satisfied? The conscience takes satisfying God as the measure of right and wrong. There is no peace till then. Then all is peace. Then it does not care though all the world is against it. It does not care for character. It is conscience the soul cares for. Now it can be honest about itself and acknowledge itself to be what it is. There is also a quiet sense of being in favour. There is the heart's assurance of having perfect peace with God. Now there is not a cloud on my

Mark, the Apostle at once speaks peace. Peace is a wonderful word. It is a far greater thing than joy. It excludes everything that would disturb. I may have joy, but then I think of this trial or the other and my joy is damped. But it is not so in peace. If I have sorrow, joy coming into my presence will but embitter my sorrow. But in peace there is the absence of everything that would disturb. God is never called the God of joy, but He is the God of peace.

Peter does not say, Keep on and you will get to peace, but he brings peace with him. He brings God's answer to all the need of this man's soul.

There may be peace in providence, but this peace goes a great deal further. It is peace with God. There are two things in this peace. But first let me say, it is with God that this peace is. The soul when awakened wants to have a perfect, thorough satisfaction that God has nothing against it. When the soul comes to know God at all, it is with God it wants peace. We are

soul before God, for conscience has been cleansed in the fountain opened. I have been there alone with God and all has been opened up and the whole thing has been settled. His love I know, and know just where I most needed to know it—about my sins—and that is peace. It is not trying to get on the best way I can and hoping that God will overlook the rest; no, it is with the knowledge of good and evil and with it peace in God's presence. It is not a negative thing merely, but something positive, something which God can delight in. He not only sees no spot, but He sees what gives Him delight. Now the conscience and the heart are both satisfied. Bring in the light and it only brings out my righteousness. Now if my conscience knows God as love, I cannot but wish Him to love me. When I know that God loves me as God only knows how to love, I am not only in the light but in the warmth and sunshine of His love. There is peace. Conscience in the light, and not having one thing with

which to reproach me, and feeling conscious of this; and on the other hand the heart in the perfect consciousness of His perfect love resting on me. Where that is not known there cannot be peace.

Now Peter does not preach a quantity of things in us, which, if we manage to get, we may have hope; but he comes and tells these needy awakened sinners "Here is peace for you, a made peace." It is made, and perfectly accomplished and now preached through Jesus Christ. Well, now the Lord says you are not at peace with God. He comes and says, "I am come to give you peace." He does not say, "Make your peace with God," for He, Himself, has made it. We are preaching a thing that is, not a thing that is not. Who was working in the cross? God's holiness. There peace was brought by the blood of the cross. The thing was settled by God and the Lamb alone, and about our sins too, when and where we could have no part. There righteousness was dealing with Christ about my sins, and the

result I see in resurrection. "He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father." If I own the sins through grace for which Christ suffered, and put myself in His place, I get in Him and His place before God, for He has borne the sins. I own these sins in the presence of God. I deserved that cross. But now I am in His presence in Christ, and righteousness gives peace to the conscience.

I wish to get peace in the heart. Well, where is there love as in the cross? The best thing God had given for the worst thing I had done. Will my sins hinder? Why they are the very things which have brought out God's love to me. I take Jesus as the measure of all the love of my Father. He gave Jesus for me. There my heart has peace—peace unspeakable. If a man knows God he wants Him all. The desires are now infinite, in object at least, the heart having been touched with the love of God. If we want love it is in God—joy, it is in God. And of course all this will manifest itself in life.

Upon the perfect remission of sin comes in another thing, the perfect power of enjoyment. As long as a man is trying to make terms for himself, he will resist the simplicity of grace. If I have anything to do in it I must pretend to satisfy God as to my part in it, and if I am trying to do this I shall never know God. No, it is by faith that I come to know God—faith which teaches me that it is done. I have but to believe—Christ thus gets all the glory, and I all the good. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the remission of sins." Not, whosoever believeth in the remission of sins. It is a joyous thing to know the remission of sins, but the soul will soon get weak if thinking of that. "Whosoever believeth in Him" turns the soul to God. I look to Jesus, and that is what gives joy, and changes me into His image.

Now, when Cornelius believes in Christ, as preached for the remission of sins, the Holy Ghost comes—in a peculiar manner it is true then, because

God was showing that He would receive the Gentiles. So it is not merely the knowledge of remission, but the love which was proved in the death of Christ. The Holy Ghost sheds it abroad in my heart, and peace flows as a river. He gives the apprehension of God's love, the spring of joy and the living power of glorifying Christ. The moment Peter says, "Through His name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive the remission of sins"—and we know the words went into Cornelius's heart—the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Thus we have first peace, then the ground of it, God's love and Christ's work; and then the power of enjoyment, the Holy Ghost.

Are you labouring to get peace? If so I am glad, in one sense, for you know your need, but you will never get it so. Do you think that God would have bruised Christ to make peace, if you could make it for yourself, or even with the help of the Spirit? "To him that worketh not but

believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The heart's intercourse with God is with the *God of Peace*.

A MAN IN CHRIST, AND THE POWER OF CHRIST IN A MAN.

2 Cor. xii.

We need to be taught of God, what this "man in Christ" means. When we speak of a man in the flesh or a man in the Spirit, we mean his state or position; what characterizes him before God. A man in Christ does not mean what he is *in himself*. It is the condition of *every child of God* "in Christ." This chapter, in what follows, shews us much of what flesh is, but in this state—"in Christ," flesh had nothing to do with it. The body had nothing to do with it. Paul could not understand it of himself. He says, "I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body I cannot tell," &c.; that is, it is not what he

alone." God's grace was working from Adam downwards; but that is another thing. In order to know what it is to be in Christ, we must know what this Christ is. Why should God have peace and blessing for a man in Christ? Because there was none for him anywhere else. There would be judgment for his sin, but no life or righteousness, or power, not one thing that he needs before God could he have without being *in Christ*. There is plenty of wickedness and pride, creature work of our own, but nothing that can go up to God. We may clothe ourselves in our own eyes, but Adam was naked *before God*, even when he clothed himself. There may be bright qualities, intellect, &c., but *who* is clothed in them? *MAN*. He prides himself in them. But there may be good qualities in any animal. There is a difference between some and others; some are vicious, others the reverse. The intellect of man and his wonderful faculties are not the question, but what do they turn to? Pride, title to be something, man clothing

was as a man down here. It is the position of a believer contrasted with that of an unbeliever. "If any man be *in Christ* he is a new creature." That characterizes him, and the value and import of it are unfolded in that passage. And again "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." It is quite evident it has nothing to do with anything he has out of Christ. Whatever he was before, he was in flesh; now he is *in Christ*, and all is measured by Christ: he has got his place in the second Adam, and not in the first. It will show itself in its practical ways, but this refers to his standing.

I desire to show, first, the force and bearing of this—a man being "in Christ." So long as Christ was in the world, nobody could say, "A man *in Christ*." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth

himself in his pride! Is that the way to heaven? God says, "there is none righteous, no not one." Does the man think so, who thinks to go to heaven that way? No! he has nothing else but filthy rags. When the voice of God is not there, the fig-leaves may do very well. They may do for man; but when God comes in, they will not do before *Him*. God clothed Adam, but then death had come in. When man clothes himself it only brings out his shame. When God clothes him he is fit for God—he has "put on Christ." There is no desire in the natural man to be with God; man has no desire to go to God. Conscience drives a man away from God, and his heart keeps him away. Any honest unconverted man would own he has no pleasure in Christ. It is thoroughly brought out that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The man out of Christ is either a gross outward sinner, like the publican, or the respectable and hard-hearted man who has no sympathy with the reception of a sinner. See what the Christ is whom we

are in. Christ comes; God occupies Himself with these sinners, but see how they treat Him. Knowing all the sin, all the hatred of their hearts, the breaking of the law, and a thousand other sins, He came for this reason—He came to seek sinners. The grace of God, who is love, has risen above all, that man is. If man feels what he is before God he gets into despair. You do not trust every one who comes to you, because you are sinners. God knows all about you. Christ came because you are wicked. If that suits you, *that is the God you have in Christ*. If that does not suit you, there is judgment for you. But, in Christ, God is above all the sin, and because it is what it is, He sends Christ. What man means by God's goodness is indifference to sin. God never in grace alters His holiness. Before a man could be in Christ, the whole work was needed to be done. He made Him to be "sin for us." The first thing is Christ made sin, and then grace reigns through *righteousness*. Christ was entirely

tual manifestations, as Paul had. Paul saw more of what it was to be there by what he saw here.

Now we see what the flesh is in connexion with this. In the beginning of the chapter, we see what the height was to which a man could be taken. The thief might go into Paradise the same as Paul, but it was a wonderful thing for a man down here to have these revelations. But in the end of the chapter we see what the flesh is capable of. Nature cannot go into heaven. If God is pleased to take Paul up there, there is no consciousness of being in the body at all. "A man in Christ"—"of such an one will I glory." There *is* the glorying of a Christian. How many a one would say, You must not do that; but Paul says, "I *will* glory in it." There is a man dead! No, he is not dead; he is alive in Christ—as a man *out of himself in Christ*. He will glory in this; and you could not help glorying, if you really believed it. It is not thankful, not to glory in it. You may not

alone to drink that bitter cup, and then God could not only save the sinner but glorify Himself about the sin. God would glorify Christ in Himself. When Christ was made sin, God was perfectly glorified. There was perfect righteousness against the sin, but love in bearing it. He is gone up to the throne of God, *as a man*. Now there is a Christ to be in; righteousness is accomplished; the whole thing is done; and the Holy Ghost is sent down to bear witness that God has accepted this man and His work. Righteousness is glorified in the presence of God.

As a Christian, I am a man, not in the flesh, but in Christ. The whole work is done that fits Him to sit on the right hand of God. He has glorified God, and God has glorified Him in Himself. But before I can have a man in Christ, I must have a Christ to be in there on the throne of God. Directly I take knowledge of what Christ has done for me, as applied by the Spirit, I am a man in Christ. It is not given to every one to have spiri-

apprehend all about it, but if you believe it you will glory in it. If Paul had gone up to a fourth heaven, there would have been all the more need for the thorn, or he would have gloried in that. The danger was not when he had the apprehension of the presence of God, but it was when out of His presence, when he got thinking of it. The revelation was not a source of strength; he needed something else. Whenever he preached, he had something to make him humble, something to keep the flesh down, (the thorn, not sin,) something to make nothing of *him*—breaking down the pride of man. He was *humbled*, because in danger of not being humble. There was strength for him. If he preached in a despicable manner, but souls were converted, (as they were,) how was that? If that is the way of getting blessing, it was not *Paul's* power, but Christ's power. Then let me have the thorn, he says. Thus we have the danger of the flesh dealt with in humbling him in the presence of man—breaking down that

very thing that would puff itself up, and Satan that would puff up is obliged to be an instrument to break it down.

Now, I have the *power of Christ in the man*, not only a "*man in Christ*." While in this world, I want something to carry me through, and to protect me from being cheated—something for the conflict I am in. That is *power in the Christ*, as well as being in the Christ. There was something there to keep the nature down that would have gloried; and besides that, it was the occasion of bringing in Christ. There is always something to glory in in Christ. Do not believe that the saint is not entitled to enjoy all the advantages he has in Christ. All the hindrance, all the wretchedness, made him glory more in Christ. He says, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities," &c.

At the end of the chapter we see what the flesh left to itself even in a Christian is. Flesh in its fairest forms, its capacities, &c., is all a hindrance. He may only glory in the old man, in its being *dead*—"reckon yourselves to

be dead," &c. We may rejoice in finding the flesh good for nothing. What man is in flesh, and flesh in a man, is all bad. God says, I will visit you by my word and Spirit, and then bring you to where I am. The *sins* are gone. But the *sin* is not gone you say. But "*sin in the flesh*" has been condemned. Christ has died for it, and I am clear, justified from it. I have got out of this condition thus condemned. If you have got into the third heavens, you may know that all the *flesh* could do would be to make you proud of it. A man in the flesh cannot please God, and the flesh in man cannot please God. If you were in the fourth heaven, it would be just the same. Sinful flesh has been condemned. Then I can say, I am dead and I am in Christ, the man at the right hand of God.

Whether an apostle or the simplest saint that ever was, I need the power of Christ in the man.

The Lord give us to judge flesh, and all the scene around that ministers to it.

"JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED."

Matthew vii. 1.

These words are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the plain path of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I know by the Word of God to be *wrong*, I must judge that he is walking wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust he may be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him, and consider myself, lest I also be tempted—think the best I can of him—but I cannot put evil for good or good for evil. There can be no right motive to do what is wrong, to do what is contrary to God's will. There may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing wrong.

Woe be to me if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The

saint must be very careful not to allow any sophistry to modify any submission of heart and conscience to God's judgment of good and evil. As regards the Church of God, the Scriptures plainly declare we are to judge "them that are within; them that are without, God judgeth." This is no imputation of motives nor habit of forming an opinion on other people's conduct, which is an evil habit, but the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God. It is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judging whether people are Christians. But this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are to be supposed to be Christians unless proved to be the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass a judgment on the point, whether such or such an one is a Christian; but the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian *is judging* that he is a Christian of

course, which is quite false. The Apostle says, "*the love of Christ* constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, *then were all dead.*" Believing this, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment, though the rejoicing of the heart, that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of the child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God's children, Christ's disciples. It *destroys all godly affections*. If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge, who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom this love is to be exercised? We must know each other as children of God to "love as brethren." He who objects to judging that such and such are God's children

wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them—then, if unhindered, the spirit of judgment comes in—but if I am, I must judge according to the Word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, "the brotherhood," I must know who they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work.

CHRIST AS OUR FOOD.

"And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."—Joshua v. 10—12.

I would say a word as to the way in which Christ may be considered as our food. He may be looked at as the food of the Christian in three ways.

objects to the love of the brethren. He is rejecting the spiritual affections on which the Lord and Scripture so much insist. There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others and expressing an opinion of them, if in questionable cases I ascribe even in my mind wrong motives—nay, if I do not hope in such cases that a right motive is at bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment and away from God. If severity of judgment with a person when I am bound to judge he is faulty possesses my soul—this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal and avowed estimate of right and wrong under pretence of not judging—to deny the knowledge of one another and mutual love among the saints, under pretence that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy and a mere cover to a man's conscience to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If saints maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge them who do

First, as a redeemed sinner; secondly, in connexion with sitting in heavenly places in Christ; and thirdly, as a pilgrim and stranger down here. But this last is merely accessory and not the proper portion of the Christian. The Lord said to Israel that He had come down to deliver them from Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan. He did not say a word about the *wilderness* when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there was in the power of redemption and for the accomplishment of His promises. However, there was the wilderness as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently, that is, in redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna which we have all along the road. It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have

seen, but the third ceases when the circumstances it was to meet have passed away. They did eat the passover and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover, for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased and Egypt had been long left behind. When in Egypt the blood was on the lintel and the doorposts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the doorposts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do, for if brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found.

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits.

their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt. In this we see presented, not the sinner that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections; his heart confidently flowing out to Him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified man, not merely as Son of God, but as Son of man; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld *Jesus* at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as He is represented in the Revelation, seated on a white horse, coming forth out of heaven. He will indeed come forth and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him and be for ever with Him. But we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now: manna is not

When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan—not only the Red Sea. That is, we have passed through death and resurrection; not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea, but as being dead with Him and entered into heavenly places with Him, as in Jordan. Then the character of God is known as *their God*, that is, the accomplisher of all that which He purposed towards them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love; not looking at God as in the cross pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus on the cross there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us! And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from

our portion, though it is our provision by the way. Joshua sees the Lord as the Captain of the Lord's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, that is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens! it is Christ down here. It is not our portion; our portion is the old corn of the land. That is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin, (excepting that God does give us moments of joy) because, while here, there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes and feeds us with manna, that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shows how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life. And that is a happy thing. For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things,

necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not occupied with heavenly joy in Christ. And these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord and hinder our joy. But if we would have our appetites feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna. For instance, something may make me impatient during the day, well then, Christ is my patience, and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace; not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this, for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily: for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege, but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace and

object, but if it be applied to what is in the heart, it can only be said in truth by the only perfect one.

PSALM CXXXIII.

God of love and consolation,
Hear thy children's voice of praise,
Who 'mid outward tribulation
Still a note of joy would raise.
For though earthly props are sinking,
Friends fall back, and foes prevail,
Cast on thee in love unshrinking—
Ours are hopes that cannot fail.
Teach us, Lord! the secret meaning
In thy "new command" reveal'd;*
We, who on thy bosom leaning,
To redemption's day are seal'd.
Give us more of that anointing,†
By thy Holy Spirit shed,
That we may through thine appointing
In abiding truth be led.
As the precious oil descended,
Which o'er Aaron's garments roll'd,
May thy saints in love be blended
Here, while scatter'd from their fold.
Satan's wiles and earth's commotion
Ne'er can rend us from thy breast—
In thy love's unfathom'd ocean
All thine own may safely rest!

I. G.

* John xiii. 34. † 1 John ii. 27.

turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

FRAGMENT.

"Thy kingdom come." This sets everything aside in this world that the kingdom of the Lord may come in. It involves the removing of things that are made that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Let us ask ourselves if we are quite sure that our hearts are so detached from everything here that we can truthfully say, "thy kingdom come." Are we quite sure that we should like to see Him come in this kingdom, which will involve the shaking out of everything that may not remain when He so comes? Surely it would wrench our hearts from a quantity of things that are attaching our affections to that which does not belong to the coming kingdom and must inevitably be shaken down. The Christian, doubtless, desires it as an

GOD'S GRACE AND GOVERNMENTAL DEALINGS.

Luke xiii.

There are two great principles in God's dealings, in connexion with man on the earth, which are developed in the Church of God, as such, and in the government of God. And these two things are very distinct the one from the other. In the Church the riches of God's grace are manifested; but in His governmental dealings, righteousness, and the display of His *attributes*, as justice, mercy, and goodness. We have an example of God's governmental power in Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's

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children, unto the third and fourth generation." Here it is in connexion with the Jews, and not only among the Jews, but it shows also that which is outside in the world in God's dealings. What we get in Exodus xxxiv., is not sovereign grace bringing a soul to eternal life, but governmental power; the exercise of which we may now mark every day around us. For if a man wastes his fortune, or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind, his children suffer for it. This is an invariable principle. We see also the exercise of righteous government in God's not clearing the guilty.

See God's dealings with David, because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house. . . . Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. . . . Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born unto thee shall surely die." Now, here was judgment for David's sin; and we know

that in his after life "the sword *did not* depart from his house."

This also is true of the Jews, for the murder of the Lord; as it is expressed in Galatians;—"What a man soweth that shall he also reap." This, however, is not *grace* but *government*; still it is true of a saint, as well as of a sinner. Both kinds of dealing God has with the saints *now*, that is in grace, and in righteous government. I shall never reap the reward of my sins in eternal blessedness—that is infinite grace; but in the way of righteous government, I shall reap the reward of my iniquity down here. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. . . . He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." It is grace as to sins eternally: but righteous government as to iniquity *down here*. God never lets go the reins of government, even over the world, although for a season He did not interfere in governmental power. As it is said, "The times of this ignorance God winked at." He did not say there was no sin; therefore they

were responsible. So that "Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." There was *sin* and death, though no *transgression*, because God had not then come in with law. But Adam had received a positive commandment, and had transgressed it. And sin must bear its consequence, which is *death*. But "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," then all will come out, and both will have their place.

The angels see and understand the government of God in the world; but in the Church it is quite another thing, as Peter says, "*Which things the angels desire to look into.*" The angels had seen the various wisdom of God in creation, when the morning stars sang together; but here it was quite a new thing; for by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God is displayed. God is going to have a people not belonging to the earth at all.

In the prophets government on the

earth is spoken of, because it is of Messiah's Kingdom that they speak. But God's government towards Israel in its Messiah-character is now suspended, but it will come out again another day. When the kingdom is spoken of it is government on the earth; but when the Church is spoken of it is as connected with the Governor Himself. The position of Christians is such, that they have in it a motive for the very commonest affairs of life: so that their daily conduct should be suitable to their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We are united to Him who will judge the world; and therefore when the apostle is going to counsel two foolish Christians that are going to law, he says, "what, cannot you settle such a *trifling* thing as that about money without going to law?" "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Could not those who are destined to do such high things settle their own smaller matters, without going to law, and that before the unbelievers? It is the sense of their high calling that Paul places before them;

which he desired might fill their minds as it did his. Therefore, if telling them as servants to be faithful in a house, and not to be guilty of purloining, he says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The *grace* having appeared, the *glory* is looked for; therefore the conclusion is, do you, as subjects of the grace and waiting for the glory, live *righteously* and *suffer wrongfully*, rather than avenge yourselves.

We have, then, God's government of this world, and of the Jew in justice, though in patient goodness; and His taking out of the world a people united to Christ in governing. If you look

into the prophets, you do not find any thing about the Church whatever; but about government, whether of the Jew or of the world. But when we come to the Church we find a suspension of government, in its outward, visible, and settled order, because the world had rejected Christ, who was their Governor. In the Church I get entirely a new thing; for the Son of God having been rejected in the world, is gone back to the Father, and he now says to us, "Ye are not of this world, even as I am not of this world." "Now is the judgment of this world, now is the prince of this world cast out." Christ, who made all things, is also set over all things in government, as Heir of all things; though not yet openly exercising His power thus. But Christ who is "Head over all things, is also Head to the Church, which is His body: a thing hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest. In Ephesians this is fully brought out; but there we have more of the fulness of the body; while in Colossians, there

is more about the fulness of the Head. This is because the Colossians were in danger of slipping back from the Head into the observance of ordinances; therefore the apostle presses the fulness of the Head upon them to bring them back again. But in Ephesians he dwells on the Church, the body, the *fulness of Him* that filleth all in all. The Church, as his body, is the *completeness* of Christ.

In Eph. iii. we read of the promise in Christ by the gospel given in the eternal purpose of God to the Church *before* the foundation of the world; whereas the promises given to Israel were given to them *on the earth* and *not* before the world was. The Church was called in the eternal purpose of God, *before* time; while the Jew was called out *in* time. In Col. i. 23—25, we read, "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is *under heaven*; whereof I, Paul, am made a minister; 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 fulfil (or more properly to *complete*) the word of God." That which still remained for God to give, and which *we now have*, is the revelation of the Church; for until the Church was revealed, the word of God was not complete. But now that which for ages and generations was *hid in God*, is fully told out. Here we see Paul's *two* ministries, first, that of the gospel, and then that of the Church. And the form which a believer's life now takes is, "Christ *in* you the hope of glory." A Christ in heaven, and at the same time dwelling in the saints now on the earth, is a thing which was hid in God *before* the foundation of the world. Unto the Jews had been committed the oracles of God; but they knew nothing of a body on the earth united to a Head in heaven, even to the man Christ Jesus, as members of

His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Until the Church was revealed to Paul, this was still hid in God's eternal purpose. As soon as all God's dealings, in the sense of proving man, were closed with the earth, by the rejection of His Son, ("This is the heir, come let us kill him,") all was closed to *men in the flesh*, and the Church is brought out in connexion with a man in heaven.

God sent His only Son, and Him they crucified. He had no other messenger. Christ was rejected as *Prophet*, as *Messiah*, as Son of Man, and as Son of God; and when man, as man, was thus fully shewn out, God comes in and acts for Himself. Him, whom man had put to death, God raises *from the dead*, and sets Him down at His own right hand in heaven; in virtue of which the Holy Ghost comes down and unites a people on the earth to this *risen Man* in *glory*. This is quite a distinct thing, and therefore it is that in scripture we constantly find a gap, as it were, leaving space for the mystery of the

Church, "which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid* in God," to be brought out.

Therefore, as we have previously remarked, the Church is not found in the Old Testament; but Christ's coming in humiliation, and His coming in judgment, are spoken of close together, without saying a word about the Church coming in between the two events. So, in Luke iv. when the Lord was in the synagogue at Nazareth, after preaching from Isaiah what referred to His then mission of healing the broken-hearted and preaching the acceptable year of the Lord, He closed the book and sat down, saying not a word about "the day of vengeance"—that being deferred until the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations had been manifest to the saints; or, in other words, until after the Church had been brought out.

It is of immense importance, for the steadiness of the soul, to keep these two principles quite distinct; for what often confounds people in the study of

prophecy is their not seeing the distinctive place which the Church of God holds apart from God's government of the world, or of Israel. But the very essence of the Church is, that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. They are all sinners alike; but when reached by God's grace are all brought into one body. The very principle on which the Church is based, would have destroyed the whole basis of the Jewish system. All along in the Jewish system their righteousness consisted in maintaining a distinct separation between themselves and the Gentiles; but now "there is no difference;" for both Jew and Gentile are made *one in Christ*. If the barrier which God Himself had originally set up had been broken down before Christ was crucified and risen, it would have been sin: therefore the Church could never have been even hinted at in the Jewish Scriptures. The principle of the Church could not be brought in, while the "handwriting of ordinances" remained. But this being "blotted out" in Christ, "the

twain (Jew and Gentile) are made *one new man*."

In going back to our chapter, (Luke xiii.) we see the Jews had the thought of God's government in their minds. Nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty wretch as this Pilate live, who had been mingling the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge of things, and tells them that Pilate is but a mere instrument in the governmental dealings of God with the nation. Judgment was going on in this present evil world. "Suppose ye," says the Lord, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." It is not that they were finally condemned as sinners here, but it was governmental judgment in this world which would overtake them all unless they repented. God had sent forth His judgment and caught these Galileans, and would catch the Jews

also unless they repented. For not only Pilate but God's Son was there, and they were practically rejecting Him. And how many of the Jews had *their blood* mingled with their sacrifices by *Titus* in the destruction of Jerusalem! Christ had said to the Jews in the close of the 12th chapter, "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." This is not a question of eternal salvation, but it simply refers to the state of the Jews: that is, the Jews will not come out till they have paid the very last mite. Jerusalem will not get out till she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. But she will get out from the chastenings of the Lord when they are complete. It is very evident that this passage refers simply to God's government of His people.

found none. In the gospel there is this difference, that *grace sows* in order to produce fruit; but in connexion with Israel's responsibility, He came seeking fruit and found none.

The sentence upon the fig-tree then is, "*cut it down.*" He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was cumbered by it. "The name of God is blasphemed through you among the Gentiles." Then comes in Christ's mission. "Last of all he sent his Son." God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but found *no fruit.*" Then a new Gardener comes in to try what He can do, and He said, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it," &c. This was all done, but still there was *no fruit.* All was useless, as far as Israel was concerned. Then God says, I will get rid of the whole thing; "*cut it down.*"

The woman with an infirmity (ver. 11,) whom Jesus heals on the sabbath day, brings out another thing that was working in their hearts, that is, the abuse of the law, which brought in

In the 56th verse of the preceding chapter, the Lord asks in the way of reproach, "How is it that ye do not discern this time?" And ought not *we* always to discern the time? Surely the Lord might often reproach us by saying, "How is it that ye do not discern this time? All the world is rejecting me, and if they do not repent before they get to the judgment, there is no hope." Natural conscience ought to tell you Jews not to reject your Messiah, for God is going all the way along with you to the magistrate, dealing with you in patient grace; and if you do not repent and be reconciled, judgment must come upon you; and then it will be the same with you, as with those whom ye think to be such sinners.

"I am come to send fire on the earth,"—(the *fire* of judgment) "and what will I if it be already kindled?" (Ver. 6.) The Lord is here dealing with the same state of things.

The *fig-tree* also is Israel; for God came *seeking fruit* in them, but He

hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall to water on the sabbath day, but they could not bear that a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound eighteen years, should be loosed on the sabbath day. One of the infirmities of man's mind is to use *possessed* truth to resist *revealed* truth. Paul was an example of this. As "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless;" still Paul thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. And so also Christ says of them in John xvi. 2—3. "These things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me." They were using the name of the Godhead which had been given them ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord") to reject the *Son*; for when Christ came in humiliation, they would not receive Him. Orthodoxy is used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing, it gains him credit; but when a new truth comes in, it puts *faith* to the test. So

the unity of the Godhead was used by the Jews to resist the reception of Christ.

The ruler of the synagogue said, "There are six days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." But he ought to have known that the Lord of the Sabbath was there. That single word "*daughter of Abraham*" ought to have told him who He was that stood there.

And the Lord answered him and said, "Thou hypocrite," &c.

In the 18th verse, the Lord goes on to say what the kingdom will be like, while the King is rejected and away.

While the king is sitting on His Father's throne, until He comes to take His own throne, the kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground which springs up and becomes a *great tree*; just what we see in Christendom. This fills up the gap between Christ's rejection and His coming again. There is no royal power exercised while the king is away; as it is said in Mark's

gospel, "It springs up men know not how." But when the harvest is ripe He will come again. He sowed the *first* time, and the *second* time He will put in His *sickle*. He does not, however, come looking for a *great tree*, but for *heavenly fruit*; though instead of the fruit He expected, He will find the seed has become a *great tree*, with the *fowls of the air* lodging in the branches. Pharaoh was a great tree; Nebuchadnezzar was a great tree; the high and great ones of the earth, the representatives of earthly power. Even Israel, who had been planted "*a noble vine, wholly a right seed*," was bearing *no* fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezek. xv., "What is the vine-tree more than any other tree," if it bears no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. We all know that the *vine* is the most fruitful thing that grows upon the face of the earth, and that the branches when cut off and withered make the best *firewood*; but they are useless for anything else. It was not a question of the kingdom here, but of fruit-bearing. The word

sown in the heart does not come to a great tree, but produces fruit.

In ver. 21, the kingdom is likened unto leaven; and leaven is just that which spreads throughout the whole mass in which it is placed, and also gives a character to the thing in which it is. It is the nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a great mass—a great system. Looked at as a doctrine it has leavened whole countries. Still it is not what the Lord could own, as leaven in Scripture is never used in a good sense. The idea is, it is the spreading of the thing while the king is away.

It should be observed that there is not a word here about the power of the Holy Ghost in connexion with the spread of Christian doctrine; He is simply speaking about the effect produced in the world.

In the question of the disciples, ver. 23, "Are there few that be saved?" the word "*saved*" is the same as that which all through the Old Testament signifies the *remnant spared*. Therefore the

question really was as to whether this remnant that would be spared would be *few* or *many*, when the judgment came. But this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them, (ver. 24,) "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Those who will get in may. The strait gate was *receiving Christ* at that time.

Some would come and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, "I know you not whence ye are." Strive to enter in at the *strait gate*, through which Christ goes before you—that is *rejection*. "For many (all Israel) shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." For, inasmuch as they did not receive Christ in humiliation, He says, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." It is all most simple when we see the *rejection* of Christ. For those who reject Christ in the day of His humiliation will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and instead of being His companions in the kingdom will be thrust out. The unbelieving Jews shall see the Gentiles

come into the glory of the kingdom, while they remaining in unbelief will be cast out.

The Pharisees came and said to Him, "Get thee out and depart, for Herod will kill thee." (ver. 31.) Now Herod was an Idumean and became their king; but what had this Idumean king to do with God's promises to Israel? Nothing whatever. In Herod we have a kind of figure of the wilful king, first in his trying to kill Christ, and then in his having no faith in God's purposes or Christ's glory. But Christ answers, "Go tell that fox" I shall do my Father's will till the moment come, for I am come to show divine power, and when rejected here shall be perfected in glory. What divine contempt for the apostate king was here combined with the most perfect human obedience! "Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following, for it cannot be that a *prophet perish* out of *Jerusalem*." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee;

effort He made was in sending His Son. The fig-tree yielded nothing—responsibility was fully put to the test, when the *soil* itself was found to be bad. I have tried the chosen portion, says God, and find the whole thing so worthless that nothing can be done with it. It is as though one had taken the sand of the sea and found it so impregnated with salt that nothing could be done with it; and the more digging and pruning that was given to it, the more *bad* fruit it produced. And we all are no better than the Jews were, for we were, by nature, children of *wrath* even as others. What! condemn *everybody*? Yes, to be sure, but then I condemn myself! Man's "heart is enmity against God." And the more pains God has taken, has only brought out the more hatred. The old man is condemned, and the gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was *lost*. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" And do we not find the truth of all this in ourselves?

how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" After all, *Jerusalem* is the guilty place. Let the Idumean king say and do what he will, it is Jerusalem that is guilty; for Jerusalem was nearest to Himself. And the nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the rejection, and the more dreadful the judgment, because it is the place of *love*. Look at Psalm cxxxii. "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation," &c., and at the end of Psalm lxxviii. it is the same election of Zion from the 65th to the 68th verses. "But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he loved." And in Psalm lxxxvii., "What is Rahab and Babylon?" I am not ashamed of Zion to compete with them. But Christ does not put the sin upon them until they have rejected both Him and His Father. But before bringing out this purpose of grace, God dealt all through with man on the ground of responsibility, and the last

But notice how the divine person of the Lord comes out here, "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered and ye would not!" Now a prophet could not say this, though Christ was a prophet, it is true, still He was *more* than a prophet. He was Jehovah; for none but Jehovah could gather Israel. As it is said, "He that *scattered* Israel will *gather* him." Israel had rejected Jehovah when under responsibility; but Jehovah will own them when He comes in grace. The Church will go up to heaven and the kingdom will be set up on the earth. And mark how the divinity of our blessed Lord shines out again and again in the gospels, while at the same moment the humanity remained so perfect. And here I would say a word or two as to the *way* of bringing this blessed *fact* out. For surely the circumstances through which the Lord passed in His path down here did bring out in a far *brighter way* WHO HE WAS, than any text that could be adduced to prove it. Not that I would set aside

any text, but suppose you *believed* there was a *God* as a truth; if He were to come down by your very side and say, Here I AM, would not that be a very different thing? And though Christ was the humbled man all through His path here, (for He was ever the servant of all,) yet when the service was of *no use*, then it was that God shone out. "Before Abraham was, I AM." (See in the 33rd and 34th verses of this 13th of Luke.) The moment He said, *I must die*, since you reject me, immediately *Jehovah* shone out. "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have *gathered thee*"—and who could gather ISRAEL but *Jehovah Himself*?—"but ye would not," therefore "your house is left unto you desolate UNTIL ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the *name of the Lord*."

The complaint in the Psalms is, that there is none to say, "How long?"—none to count upon the faithfulness of Jehovah to His people. (See Psalm lxxiv.) The expression, "How long?" is often used in the Psalms; and in

Lord." He can give as Jehovah, in grace, the *answer*, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus—whom, until then, the heavens have received—and then our connexion with Him comes in. The prophets spoke only of earthly things, though divine; but to the Church it is "Holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly calling*!" You hath He quickened together with Him in the heavenly places, and that gives security. How did I get in there? By virtue of Christ; He is my title and is He not a good title? My desires are to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in heaven. And these are my desires in fact, and that is what the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and we get it as our everlasting portion. When Israel is brought to repentance, then "the stone which the builders rejected will be the head of the corner," and owned of them. They will say, "O! give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." Alas, they will receive another first! But when

Isaiah vi. it refers to chastening, and not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble or fall? (Rom. xi.) In Isaiah vi. the prophet having uttered those words, "Make the heart of this people fat," &c., taken up by the Lord in John xii., the prophet then says, "How long?" He was in the faith of God and reckoning upon God, and having God's mind, he cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks, "*how long*" the chastening is to continue. To which the Lord answers, "There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but in it there shall be a tenth, and so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." The *sap* is still there, though there be no leaves.

So in Psalm cxviii., "The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto *death*." In the same way, the Lord does not say, Your house is left unto you desolate, and therefore you shall not see me again. No, but He says, "Ye shall not see me, UNTIL ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the

their hearts are turned and grace works, then they will use the language of Psalm cxix., and find the expression of the law within their hearts, and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say, "How long?" then Jehovah Himself will give the answer.

And though applied to Israel here, yet we may learn what the Lord is, for He never changes, and though He executes judgment in righteousness, *grace* is found in His heart for faith to lay hold of. "When he comes shall he find faith on the earth?" Well, if there be not *faith* to be found, or a *prophet* to be found, there is *One* who will lay up in His treasures something for faith to lay hold of in the sovereignty of *His grace*. We see Jehovah in that humble one, that humble man, and see how He is able to rise above all iniquity; and thus to see Jehovah shining out through it all, how precious He becomes to us, and that

we are one with Him should endear *Him* to our hearts, and in learning *Him* may He give us to follow Him.

DEUTERONOMY VIII. 3.

"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."

No one is led into the place of weeping, without getting *some* joy. Israel were already God's people: He leads them into the wilderness to humble them; He makes them hunger that He may give them manna; He leads them into trial that He may give them something better. Some would say, If in the midst of the leeks, onions, and flesh-pots of Egypt God had given them the manna, they would have rejected all other things because the manna was better; but it is not so. While the flesh

What think you of possessing in *measure now* all that we shall possess in the day of the Lord? Then pain of body and pain of heart would all appear very light, and we could say with the Apostle, after enumerating things that would make some people mad, "these *light afflictions*, which are but for a moment." Why do not we thus speak? It is the right of all who have the Spirit. Outside the sanctuary, until the Lord comes, there will be troubled hearts and diseased souls, but it must not surprise us; it is all alike an opportunity for the display of God's grace which spreads itself abroad to meet the misery. Every want that pressed on the Lord Jesus always gave an occasion in His soul to the cry of faith.

FRAGMENT.

One atom of brokenness of spirit is better than filling all London with miracles.

is surrounded by that which suits it, it is fed by it, and will reject the better things. Day by day, hour by hour, God is leading us to that condition of hunger that he may give us something better, something not discernible by the natural mind, but satisfying. When I have tasted the manna, there is a *reality* about it; it is not faith any longer. If I am hungry in the wilderness, and am fed and braced up by the food, do I not know it? Can power come into my veins and I not know it? It might be a matter of faith that we are to have the manna to-morrow; but it was a matter of feeling and reality that they had eaten it to-day. As we eat and are strengthened, let us say, I *know* that man doth not live by bread alone. We feed on Jesus the living bread, the gift of the Father, and we may say that we are miraculously fed from heaven every day by supernatural food, that we might know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT.

The light, in many paths, or currents of it, through scripture, shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

The light of resurrection thus shines. It is a mystery which is accepted by faith at the beginning. Abraham believed in God as a quickener of the dead.

The resurrection was implied in the words of God to Moses, out of the burning bush—"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac; and the God of Jacob," declared the resurrection. (Ex. iii.) Our Lord tells us so. (Matt. xxii.)

But it did not tell us of the resurrection in all its purposed, counselled glory. The One who was to be the first-begotten of the dead, "the Second Man," was also "the Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. xv. 47.) And being so, a body worthy of Him would be prepared for Him; and this could be nothing less than a "glorious body." Consequently the body of the Second

Man, the risen First-born, being "the Lord from heaven," was a glorious body—and all that are His, bearing His image, are to rise in glorious bodies like Him.

This is told us in 1 Cor. xv. and thus, the light of the mystery of resurrection shines brighter and brighter, through scripture, reaching its noon-day strength in this 1 Cor. xv. The body of the saint is to rise again, as Ex. iii. intimates, and as Matt. xxii. teaches—but that it is to rise in glory, we do not learn till we reach 1 Cor. xv.

But again:—

The Last Adam is "a quickening Spirit," as well as "the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 45.

Being such, He is not dependent on the body which He has assumed. And thus we find it, in the progress of the Book of God. This blessed "Last Adam" comes forth and manifest His virtue as "a quickening Spirit," showing us that He depends not on His body; for when the Lord Jesus is about to die, He says to the Father,

"Into thy hand I commend my spirit."

Jewish faith had not, dispensationally, reached that point. It expected resurrection, as we have seen, but we do not learn that it formally looked for the separate existence of the spirit. Such a mystery may have been prophetically or passingly glanced at—as in Eccles. xii. 7—but it was not dispensed in the doctrines made known to Israel. The Lord Jesus, however, manifested it, as we now see, in Himself, when He came to the time of His departure.

Jewish measure, and the measure of Christ, the quickening Spirit, met on the cross. The dying thief said to the Lord, "Remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom," thus recognizing a future kingdom, and a portion in it, by resurrection. The Lord Jesus, the quickening Spirit, replied, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxiii.) The spirit was not to wait for the kingdom.

Stephen, the first to follow the Lord,

after this, out of the body, says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The Holy Ghost by that letting us learn this, that the elect share the blessedness of the disembodied state with the Lord Himself. Christ, as the quickening Spirit, imparts His virtue to us; as He does, as the Lord from heaven, share His glory with us. (Acts vii.)

Stephen's face shone "like that of an angel," and he said, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." His body carried the pledge of its future glory; his spirit at once inherited its due place, the presence of the Lord, returning to Him who gave it.

We are wrought for, or destined unto, the glorious body, the building of God, the house not made with hands—but its time is not yet come. But He who has wrought us for this house is God, who, in the meanwhile, gives us His Spirit; so that, having the Spirit, we go to Him as soon as ever we leave the body, and with Him wait for the better body.

This 2 Cor. v. 1—6 teaches us. The

history of the body of a saint is kept distinct from the history of his spirit. The body waits for its glorification; the spirit, absent from its present body, is present with the Lord.

The spirit returns to Him who gave it, as we learn from Eccles. xii. 7. The Lord Jesus gave it, (the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the risen Christ,) as we learn from John xx. 22. The Lord Jesus receives it as returning to Him, as we see in Acts vii. 59.

The history of the body is not interfered with by the history of the spirit; nor is the path or history of the spirit interfered with by that of the body. In the hour of the rapture, or the resurrection of them that are Christ's, they will be together.

For, the body which is sown in the earth, and there sleeps, while the spirit is returned to Him who gave it, is raised, as in the day of harvest, changed and glorified (1 Cor. xv.), and then translated to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. iv.)

In the language of scripture we are,

at times, identified with our *spirit*—as when the apostle says, “having a desire to depart and to be with Christ”—for in such a passage, the apostle speaks of his *spirit* as being the same as *himself*. At other times, we are, on the other hand, identified with our *body*, as when the apostle says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” for in such a passage, he speaks of his *body* as being the same as *himself*.

The spirit of the dying thief went that very day, the day when his body fell asleep, to Paradise. But he found the Lord there already, as the Lord said to him, “This day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise.” For Jesus gave up the ghost before the thief, and thus was in Paradise before him, ready to receive him there.

Paul, a man in Christ, was taken to that same place, Paradise, the place of the separated spirit, and returned to the body, when the trance or rapture was over. And by that journey or translation he was enabled to illustrate certain doctrines which he taught.

that is, to know “scripture,” and then to be sure of His “power” to make it all good.

God has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, though man has not. And did He not do so in old time? I mean in such cases as in the two children, the child of the Sareptan, and the child of the Shunammite. (1 Kings xvii.; 2 Kings iv.) And did not the Lord Jesus in His day do the same? As in the persons of the widow’s son, of Lazarus, and of Jairus’ daughter. And the Lord’s own life or spirit was retained till all Scripture, to the utmost jot and tittle of it, was accomplished—till He could say, “It is finished.” (John xix. 28—30.)

And this reminds me of a difference between the death of the Lord and the death of Stephen.

Stephen’s was the death of a martyr. He bore witness to the truth, and provoked the hatred of the world. He then convicted his enemies, bearing witness of the evil of their ways, and thus he further provoked them, till they

For in his own person he verified this—“absent from the body, present with the Lord”—and in his experience he realized what he also taught, “to depart and to be with Christ which is far better;” for there, in Paradise, he had visions and audiences which he could not utter, when he came back to life here.

There is the presence of Christ “in spirit,” and there is the presence of Christ “in glory.” The disembodied state is the first, the resurrection and the rapture will lead to the second.

It is written, “There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the hour of death.” (Ec. viii.) But God is able to retain it. Is anything too hard for Him? In mysteries like these, as the Lord tells, we must know two things, “scripture” and “the power of God.” (Matt. xxii.) For what God says He can perform; what He promises He will make good. And it is the business of faith to learn what He has said and what He has promised,

would bear it no more, and stoned him to death.

This was a sudden, heated burst of enmity, and the righteous was the victim.

The Lord’s death was not this. He died as the Lamb of God under God’s hand, as He died as a martyr under man’s hand. Man hated Him, as he hated Stephen, even to death. That is true. But He did not fall, simply under man’s hand and hatred, as Stephen did; He was smitten of God, as Stephen was not. And therefore it was no sudden, heated burst of enmity that took His life from Him—all was calmly, fully accomplished, in order that eternal counsels might be made good, and scripture fulfilled. And till all was finished the Spirit was retained. There was no accomplishing of counsels after this manner, nor fulfilling of Scripture, in the death of Stephen. There was no hand of God in that event, save as He was there to illuminate and cheer His elect. Man alone was putting Stephen to death, and that

too in a sudden, heated burst of hatred. He was a martyr, and only a martyr. But God's hand was principal in the death of Jesus, and therefore all was calm and deliberated. He was God's Lamb as well as man's martyr. There was no opened heavens to Jesus, as there was to Stephen, no sight of the glory of God; but, on the contrary, three hours of darkness, desertion, and thirst. The heavens were opened *by* the death of the one, and *to* the other as he went through his death. That is the difference as to the sufferers themselves. In the mode of the death, as I have noticed already, Stephen's was under a *sudden burst of hatred from man*; Christ's was *calm and deliberated*, life retained till scripture was all fulfilled.

And here let me add, faith has not to do with problems or difficult propositions, but with facts, with declarations and promises in their full simplicity. And the more the reader of them is a child or a way-faring man, the more will he find them to be plain

in the day of the resurrection of those that are Christ's. We read of that face, that it was as if it had been the face of an angel. And the Lord, in Luke xx. says, speaking of those of whom Stephen is one, "they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

DIVINE PERFECTNESS OF LOVE.

1 John iv. 19; v. 7.

(Continued from page 43.)

"We love him because he first loved us." We now delight in the Lord, but we did not come in in that way, it is a mistake to think so. We do not come in by loving God, we do not love God because He is lovely; we are not competent, we cannot love Him, we should not be sinners if we could. But we are sinners, and must come in as sinners—as debtors to His grace, and then, having come in as debtors, and

and easy. And they are sure as well as simple; because they are the words of Him who cannot lie; yea, of Him who glorifies Himself in their accomplishment.

I might have noticed the scene on the holy mount, in connexion with my subject—I mean the transfiguration.

The transfiguration may be received as a verifying or an assuming of the fact of a resurrection of the saints; and not only so, but as a pledge also of such a resurrection being *glorious*. It was a little sample or foreshadowing of the day anticipated in 1 Cor. xv. For that day will be the day, as I may call it, of the general transfiguration, when "they that are Christ's" shall be raised in bodies of glory, as Moses then appeared in the sight of Peter, James, and John. Jesus, on the holy mount, was transfigured, and Moses and Elias appeared in glory with Him.

And the shining of Stephen's face, to which I have already referred, as a partial transfiguration, an earnest of that glory in which his body is to shine

finding God to be what He is, *love*, meeting us in our every need, then we love Him, finding how He had first loved us.

Verse 20. "If a man say he loves God and hateth his brother he is a liar." Here we see the truth is checked in an interesting way by practical details. If a man does not love his brother, he cannot love God; wherever the divine nature is, it is attractive to one born of God.

Verse 21. "And this commandment have we from him." We have another important principle in this verse;—whatever the energy of the divine life in me, it will always bear the character of *obedience*. While there was in Christ the devotedness of love, there also was obedience; we are to love the brethren, as being led by the energy of the Spirit, but to love them in the holy place of obedience to God. There is nothing so humble as obedience. So the Lord said, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." So, again, when Lazarus was sick, and they sent

to Jesus, He abode two days in the same place, because He had no word from His Father. And so, if I have any little service to do for my brother, it must be done in obedience to the word of God. It is what Satan tried to get the Lord out of in the wilderness. "Oh!" says Satan, "have your own will, if it is in ever so little a bit, by making these stones into bread, now you are hungry." "No," the Lord replied; "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And here we get a counter-check to all the workings of the divine nature, for if it is not a command, it is not of God. Man may put on all the forms of love imaginable, and become like an angel, but if it is not in obedience to a command it is nothing, and will not do.

Chap. v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and there we get the link between God and the family. When any one is born of God, he is my bro-

ther, and is that which is a link between my soul and God. If the question be asked, "how am I to know who is my brother?" every one that is born of God is my brother. I may have to sorrow over him sometimes, but still he is my brother, because I am linked to him by the same divine nature. It is of great importance to remember this in the present day, because where the Holy Ghost really acts, there will be a tendency to follow different courses. There has been an awakening from the deadness around, by the power of the Spirit. There are glimmerings of light. Mere stones would be motionless, but a moving power comes in, and they all go in different directions. If they were all *subject* to the Spirit of God they would all go one way.

And there is another thing to be observed, that we are not at the beginning of Christianity, but at the dark end, and escaping, as it were, by different roads. The very fact of the operation of the Spirit of God, if we were absolutely and perfectly subject

to the Spirit in all things, would be to produce perfect unity; but we are not thus subject—and being what we are, there is a tendency in us to go in different directions. The remedy for this is, that in so far as my heart is in fellowship with Christ's heart, love to all saints will be there; to the same extent that Christ is valued, will the saints be valued. In proportion as Christ's thoughts are known to me, will all the saints be in my thoughts. I do not know Christ's love rightly if one saint is left out. As it is said, in Eph. iii. 18, "May be able to comprehend with *all saints*, . . . that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." If I should leave one out, I should leave out part of Christ's heart. In Coloss. it is, "your love to *all saints*."

In Colossians we have the fulness of the *Head*, and in Ephesians the fulness of the *body*. God's grace working in me makes every one born of God the object of my affection. I cannot go every way at once, and a real difficulty arises now, how to walk in fidelity to

Christ and in love to the brethren, so as not to let the affections get into a loose and general way. I cannot love God without loving all the children of God. By this we know that we love God, when we love His children, and *vice versa*.

Now that is reasoning in a circle, as men say; but there is truly in it a counter-check against the evil of our own heart. If I love the Father, I shall love the children for the Father's sake, but if I were to lead them to do anything wrong, it would shew that I did not love them for the Father's sake, but for my own satisfaction and pleasure. If it is for the Father's sake you love the children, then it is as God's children you love them, and not for your own comfort and pleasure; and this is proved by your loving God and keeping His commandments. Obedience and faith, in your own walk, will prove that it is as God's children you love the brethren. How practical is this, both in wisdom and in love. If I know that a member of the body of

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Christ is going wrong, does that make me cease to love him? No, but because he is going wrong my soul is more deeply and affectionately going out after him, as being one with Christ. To be able to love the brethren *faithfully*, we must keep close to Christ.

Again, we have what I call a counter-check. If one comes to me with a vast amount of truth without holiness, I cannot recognize such, he is not of the Spirit—He is the Spirit of holiness. Or if there be a great show of holiness, and truth be absent, that also is not of the Spirit—He is the Spirit of truth.

Satan never touches that which is born of God—he cannot touch it. Worldliness is a dreadful hindrance to the saint; we have the three-fold opposition, in the world, the flesh, and the devil; the world opposing the Father; the flesh opposing the Spirit; and the devil opposing Christ. The difficulty lies in this, maintaining our nearness to Christ, which the world coming in hinders. Then I am open to all sorts of

dence in you, through the Lord.” How is this? Paul, himself, had got nearer to Christ. Faith sees not only Christ in the glory, but sees also the connexion between the glory of Christ and saints, the link and tie between God and His people, and it is that which enables one to get on. So Moses said of Israel, not only God was their God, but “they are thy people.” The greater the trouble the greater the joy, because that is the link; the real hindrance is the world—there is nothing takes the energy of the Spirit out of the heart like the world. See Gehasi in the king’s court; his heart had drawn in the spirit of the world, and he was able to entertain the world with the mighty actings of the Spirit.

The world must be entertained, and it will be entertained by religion, when it cannot get anything else. All that I know of the world’s path, spirit, affections, and conduct, is, that it has crucified my Lord; not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose

error, for I shall not take the trouble to be right unless I am near to Christ. It is very troublesome and disagreeable, sometimes, to have to do with saints—(sinners too). One cannot give up this thing, another cannot give up that, and so they get off the foundation; and if we are at a distance from Christ, we shall be ready to give them up, and shall not take the pains to get them right, when they happen to be wrong. So Moses said, “Have I conceived all this people, have I begotten them, that thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?”

Paul says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you;” you have got off the right ground, and I must have you born again; I am travelling over again for you, that you may be right, because you belong to Christ. When Paul looked at them in confusion as they were away from Christ, he could only say, “I stand in doubt of you.” But when he looked at them as in Christ, he could say, “I have confi-

it was but yesterday you had seen Pontius Pilate, the chief priest, and elders of the people putting Christ to death, would you feel happy to-day in having communication and fellowship with them? Well, the stain of Christ’s blood is just as fresh upon the world in God’s sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed makes no difference in the moral guilt. The question is, am I to get under the power of the world, or am I to overcome it?—in my heart I mean. When Christ was down here, with all the beauty and moral grace in which God the Father would delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment or common feeling, drawing them to Him. The world in all its classes, rulers, priests, pharisees, and the multitude, all have been associated in hanging the Son of God and Son of man on a gibbet. Such is the world’s true heart. If I have seen the glory of His Person, and see that He is the very Son of God who came down, and that the world turned Him out, can I

be happy with it? The link between the thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart; so that in all sorts of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts my eye, and my eye affects my heart. Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children for instance; I want them to get on well in the world, I must have good places for them in it; and nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ, and Christ is everything to it. What do I read of Abraham? That he left his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and sojourned in a strange land where he had not a place to set his foot on. We are not of the world, and so it is the test of our affections; for we are not at once taken out of the evil, so we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy

must I do everything to Christ? Oh! that very question proves a heart away from Christ, showing that it is bondage to you to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to *scorn* the world in the least, for God's grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome, that which my heart is in danger of being led by. I will now just look back to the three points on which I have touched.

1st. Perfect love with us. There is not merely the manifestation of God's love to the poor sinner, but association with Christ's life, putting us in relationship with God.

2nd. Love to every saint is our place; but we are to love them as God's children, and ourselves being found loving God and keeping His commandments.

3rd. We are to overcome the world, the heart resting on, looking to, eating, feeding upon, Christ, gets the consciousness of what the world is, and overcomes.

The Lord keep us in humble depend-

to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, That is true of the heathen world. Yes, but it is true of the whole world. Though it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out, it was true before. God had spoken by His servants the prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, I will send my beloved Son, may be they will reverence Him when they see Him, and Him they crucified, thus proving that Satan was the master of man. So the Lord said, "O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee!"

You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart is kept near to Christ, and I shall not want the world if Christ is in my heart. If my delight is in that in which God delights, that is Christ, then I can overcome. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." What!

ence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us. His strength made perfect in our weakness.

CHRIST THE SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE.

Heb. iii. 1—6.

The constant tendency of the heart, even when brought up to our privileges in Jesus, is to slip off from them. When Satan finds he cannot resist the introduction of the power of the gospel by false doctrine, he then seeks to get something before the mind, as worldliness, the cares of the world, and a thousand things, to keep the soul from simply looking to Jesus. When the truth is first presented to the soul, he tries to hinder its reception; but when it is received, his effort is to diminish its power, in some way or other, and the only remedy for this is the heart being occupied with Christ Himself. We need an increasing knowledge of Christ in order to keep our hearts out

of the world, for the heart that is learning Christ cannot stay about the things the world presents, but desires to go on to know Him more fully. In looking to Jesus, it is not knowing a doctrine merely about Christ: it is *Himself* we want to know. It is "the truth as it *is in Jesus*" that has a charm for the soul; for grace and truth came by Christ Jesus, and it is never known in the power of faith out of Him. There never can be that power which detects the course of false doctrine, but as the soul is dwelling in Himself, "rooted and built up in him." (Col. ii. 7.) The heart centred in Him is able to look out and see all the extent of the divine revelations to the soul. "Wherefore, holy brethren," says the apostle, "partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." There is always a tendency to slip back, and thus lose all practical power; but because of this, does He try to shake their confidence of what they are? Not in the least. God never does this,

having knit up our hearts to this, he then shows us His glory. Now there is great grace in this: for it is not merely as an abstract truth, (a system of theology, saying, This is God.) No; but he says, I am going to talk about one who was amongst you—the one between you and God—the one who brought God nigh to you, and stood for you toward God. I am going to talk to you about Him "who was faithful to him that appointed him."

Here we get this glorious Person in an official character, and thus He was appointed. And we look at this blessed and glorious One in office, "who was faithful in all His house." "*Whose house are we?*" And this is of the greatest comfort to us; for it is thus we get this glorious One so very near to us—so close to us as to be interested in everything that concerns us. For Christ, "as a Son over His own house," was interested in carrying on all God had intrusted to Him, as Moses, the servant, was interested in bringing Israel up out of Egypt. But he pre-

but He shows us our inconsistencies with what we are.

So the apostle calls back the hearts of the Hebrews to the place of grace where God was dealing with them. As in the Corinthians also he says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." They were puffed up by the evil; and it is not that the apostle would allow the evil to pass, but he first sets them on the ground where God had set them. And so he comes to our hearts and says, Do not you turn away from the ground where God has set you. He calls us up to the spring of it all in the heart of God, and then says, How can you be seeking the world and what it has to give, when you have such a portion in God?

I would now say a word of the manner in which he presents Christ. He is going to speak of Christ in the most glorious way he can; but he does not begin with it. He first speaks of that which is a link between their hearts and this blessed and glorious One, and

sents Christ to us as worthy of more glory than Moses. "Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house, for every house is builded by some one, but he that built all things is God." And thus I find myself brought into union with Him who created all things. I was brought close to Christ when I got this blessed familiarity, and then I find that the One who condescended to be in this blessed place of nighness to me was God; and so I learn that all my concerns are in His hand, who is God. Moses was faithful as a *servant*, but Christ is faithful as a *Son*, who knows the house belongs to Him—"As a Son over his *own house*, whose house are we." It is His own house, for Christ, as a Son over His own house, is not only the God who created all things, but the one who takes an interest in everything that concerns us, just as a son over his own house. And thus I find myself brought into the presence of the whole universe in *Him* that created it.

Now this is the way the Spirit of God would carry us on through the world, not as merely leading us through the world, but keeping our hearts above the things of the world, while passing through it.

As the Son cannot but be faithful to Him who appointed Him, when I see that the One that is thus interested in His own house is the glorious One that created all things, I learn that it is God, Himself, and I can trust Him. He also makes us to see that it is the interest of the Son, and not merely an official appointment; and thus the heart knows Christ has all the interest in it as a Son over His own house; and thus our hearts are fixed on Him, and enlarged on Him; our affections are drawn out and enlarged in their own proper sphere; and the heart, thus kept from worldliness, is enlarged in a divine way, and it is such a comfort to think that the most ignorant soul, if taught of God, gets enlarged and sanctified affections.

man, it necessarily comes athwart all that men are cherishing and pursuing. The thought of these verses is that the believer is to rejoice in that which brings out his real condition in God's grace; because it is divine truth which alone does this. By getting social communication on heavenly subjects it brought the one down, and raised the other up. The world had lost its power *in principle*; and then it is found that inequality of position is that which draws out affection, and not equality. The metaphor in verse 11 states the fact that when judgment comes, the rich are more exposed to trial than the poor; for example, in political revolutions, wars, and earthly changes, &c.; but the great point here is the judging all that appears by letting in daylight upon the scene. Judgment is upon the whole scene we are living in.

James i. 9—11.

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

The Jews had to be guarded against a wrong thought of the expression of God's favour, because all that which the gospel brought out is so contrary to that which they had been accustomed to. The general character of the epistle of James is like a continuation of our Lord's teaching on earth. It does not present truth in its heavenly application, but in connexion with its judgment of earthly things. The Lord looked at all earthly grandeur and the only thought of His heart was, that *God has not His place*: so here. The divine nature cannot adapt itself to man's lusts; and therefore when in a

THE THREE WHO ARE WITNESSING—"THE SPIRIT, AND THE WATER, AND THE BLOOD."

1 John v. 6—21.

In the preceding verses the question between God and the world is brought to an issue; for the Son of God having been seen in the world, and *in* the world and *by* the world *crucified*—thus putting the world to the test—God could do nothing in the world in the hope of finding good in it, after it had crucified His Son. Jesus had to say, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Having hung God's Son on the cross it is plain that that act cut the world off from all possible association with God, and thus the world has become a thing to be overcome by the saint, as the apostle says (ver. 5), "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" But he then adds, "This is he that came by water and blood."

That is, he now presents the character—
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ter and value of the cross, "He came by water and blood." The water and the blood are as a witness on God's part; the testimony that God gives: for it should be observed that the words "witness," "record," and "testimony," are all the same word in the original.

You may remark here, that "This is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This is the thing witnessed. This is the record (or testimony) that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in *His Son*. It is not in the first Adam, but in *His Son*; not in man, nor by his works, nor by any means whatever, but it is *God's gift*. "He hath given," and though we possess the life, it is not properly and intrinsically in us; but in *His Son*. When we are quickened, the life is not looked at as *in us*: for Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is therefore immutable. If Christ's life, indeed, can in any way be annulled or set aside, then can the life in us be so likewise, and not otherwise. If Christ can die, so can we; but if death hath no

to understand what our life is; for our thoughts on regeneration are necessarily altogether imperfect until we apprehend that it is a real life which we have, a life associating us with God's Son, a life not possessed before, and in virtue of which we get communion with the Father, who has given us eternal life—not *in us* but "in *his Son*."

We get brought out in various testimonies what Christ is to us, as in 1 Cor. vi. 9—11, where the apostle, speaking of the offscouring of the earth, says, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And so here we get a corresponding testimony brought out in these three witnesses, *the water, the blood, and the Spirit*.

In John xix. 34 it is recorded that "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." The blood and the water flowed from a *dead* Christ. Hence we see how manifestly the link between the natural man and God is

more dominion over Him, no more hath it over us. And this it is that gives the amazing value and most blessed character of this life, viz., that its spring and source is in Christ. It is given to the Son to have life in Himself. (John v. 26.) And thus He becomes, through grace, our life. For example, my finger has life, my natural life, flowing through it; but the seat of life is not there. My finger may be cut off, though I am not here supposing that a member of Christ can be cut off (which is impossible); but if my finger be cut off, the life still remains in my body, the seat of life not being in my finger. My finger was as much alive as the rest of my body, but the seat of life was not there. The seat of life is in Christ. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." Hence all the character of the life and all the communion flows from the blessed truth—"in *his Son*." The character of this life is nearness to God. Christ Himself is my life. It is of the last importance for the strength and comfort of our souls, and for all blessed delight in God, clearly

broken, and broken for ever! For "in that he died, he died unto sin once." All that Christ could have blessed in nature is now entirely and for ever gone; and if there is to be any blessing now, it must be in a new nature, and through a dead Christ; as also all connexion and association with God. Expiation, purity, life, can alone be had through a dead Christ. It is a dead Christ that must purify me if I am to be purified; for it was from a dead Christ that the water (the symbol of cleansing) flowed. Until the death of Christ, God was dealing with nature, to see (or rather to teach us, for we knew what it was) if any good thing could come out of nature. But the cross proved—God's rejected Son proved—that it was not possible that any good thing could come out of nature. Man is not merely a sinner driven out of Paradise, as we know Adam was; but man's state now results not only from his being turned out of God's presence because of sin, but from the will and energy of his evil nature, which has cast God out of His own world.

The cross shows that man's nature is utterly incapable of being acted on by any motive whatever which could set it right. This is very humbling, yet very blessed. Heaven will not do; earth will not do; the law will not do. I have yet one thing in heaven; my beloved Son. I will send Him. It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But no. The determination of man's will is to have the world without God. This is what man wants. He will not have God in any sense. Here it is brought to a climax; and the very worst display of Christianity will be just this. If any of you should be seeking pleasure in the world, you know you do not want to find God there; for if you did it would upset it all. Thus are you saying in spirit, "Let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours." You may not have lifted up your hand to slay God's Son, but you have turned Him out of your heart. Man's great abilities will be much more developed in the day that is just approaching, than they have ever yet been, in trying to make the world go

232 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Christ. At that moment it was all over with the world. The question between God and man is settled as to man himself; for not only is man turned out of Paradise, but when God's Son came they crucified Him, and now grace comes in; and the Christian goes outside the world to get, in God's rejected Son, the life which is to be had in Him alone. This is God's record that He hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Amidst all this turmoil and trouble where shall I get peace? The moment I get a pierced Christ, I have that which expiates and purifies. All this is not a theory, not a doctrine merely, but a reality; for the moment my conscience begins to work, I find that by nature I am separate from God; that my carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not only the world that has crucified God's Son, but *my sins* pierced Him. This is an individual thing, for this is how individual souls are brought into the blessing. When I have real faith in what God's Word tells me about my own evil, then the question

on thoroughly well without God. When was there ever a time when everything was going on so well, as men speak, such unity among nations as now, or such drawing out of resources? The cry is, "Peace, Peace," by the energies and working of man's will without God. Man looks for progress in the philosophy, commerce, politics, and comfort of this world, but still there is in his *heart* a dread of the consequences of the progress of this self-will. Thus is fulfilled the apparent paradox of Scripture, the cry of peace combined with "men's hearts failing them for fear." Now men would say that is a contradiction, but it is not; for while men are building up commerce, and arts, and science, in the energy of self-will, who is there among them that would undertake to answer for the state of any nation in *three years'* time, or for even a much shorter period? Man is afraid of the working of *self-will* in his neighbour, though he likes to exert it in himself. But the Christian has learned that the question as to the world is settled in the rejection of

THE THREE WHO ARE WITNESSING. 233

arises, What am I to do? All that which makes me a mere moral man declares that I could have nothing to do with God; but through a *pierced* Christ I have *three witnesses* that I can have to do with God. The highest act of insolence that it was possible for man to do against God, brought out the very thing that put guilt away, even the blood and water flowing from Christ's pierced side. Suppose it was but yesterday that I wielded the spear against Jesus, the very act that brought out my enmity brought that which put it away. I cannot estimate sin aright until I see the water and blood flowing out of the pierced side of Christ, putting it away. But then I must be brought to the consciousness that *I* in spirit was there; *my* enmity to God did it; *my* sins pierced Him. It was thus God addressed the Jews, telling them that they had killed the heir; i.e., their hearts had consented to it. Those Jews whom Peter addressed, saying, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," had not actually murdered the Prince of

life. They had not held the spear any more than you did; but in the same spirit they refused Christ a place in their hearts; and it is thus God deals with the world. His question with the world is, "What have you done with my Son?" As with Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" And the only answer they can give is, "We have slain Him."

The moment the *Messiah* was rejected, that moment all title to the *promises* was lost to the Jews. All hope of salvation—everything is now gone from them as a people; and now if they would get blessing, they must come in as sinners and have their sin put away by the blood that flowed from the pierced side of their Messiah. Now then as all title on the part of man to anything is gone, God is giving eternal life. God must direct the heart away from itself (except to the sense of its sinfulness) to Christ. Have I estimated my own sin as the murderer of Christ? Well, the blood has put the sin away; for the blood has cleansed the man who held

and intents of the heart; and it is that by which God's thoughts are communicated to us. And it is out of the pierced side of Christ that these testimonies of God flow, thus writing death upon every production of nature. For it is not a modifying of the nature, which now exists, that the cross brings in, but the counting everything outside Christ to be dead, as there is not a thought, lust, or desire about the world upon which Christ does not write death; and thus it is that we get altogether new affections, "dead unto sin but alive unto God" through the life in His Son. And the real character of purifying is this writing death upon everything that flows not from a pierced Christ. The water is the purification, but the purification is through a dead Christ. Christ all His life through was the pattern in man of what man ought to be; but our participating in this could only be by the cleansing of His death.

But there is a third thing, we have not only the blood which expiates, and the water which purifies, through which

the spear that pierced His side. We are nothing but sin; well, Christ was made sin for us, and through a dead Christ we get the blood as a witness that our sins are all put away; the blood being a witness of the perfect expiation of all sin. Christ "hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here, however, it is not looking at the part man took in it, but at what Christ came into the world for, and which He accomplished.

There is, however, the *water* as well as the blood, and what is that? The water cleanses as the blood expiates: "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." While the blood expiates the water cleanses. The water bears witness to the same life-giving power. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Spirit of God is the source of life, and the power of the Word, and gives life. Practically the Word is the instrument, the incorruptible seed; and it is also a discernor of the thoughts

we are dead to sin; but He has obtained for us the Spirit, the presence of the Holy Ghost, as the power of the word. It may, perhaps, be objected, I don't find myself thus dead to sin and purified. But you have a hatred to sin, which is a proof of your having died to it. And "In that Christ died, He died unto sin once, so likewise RECKON ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin;" for God ever treats us according to what He has really given us, treating us as though we had realized it all. So in John, the Lord says, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Now they did know HIM who was truly the way to the Father, yet Thomas objected and said, "We know not the way," because they had never realized it. The instant I believe in Jesus, I am called on to *reckon* myself *dead*. I am never told to *die*, but I am told to mortify my members that are upon the earth. But I am never told to die. A man under the law will be trying to die with all his might, but he will never succeed. A Christian *is dead* and his life is hid with

Christ in God, and therefore he mortifies his members which are upon the earth, as living in the power of the life he has in the Son of God. Observe, he does not speak of our life being on the earth, for that is above with Christ in God; therefore he treats us as dead, but our members which are upon the earth, we are to mortify. He never tells us to kill ourselves, but faith takes God's testimony as true, therefore I say I am dead, and because I am dead, I have to mortify my members, being as dead to the earth as Christ was, for I have God telling me that I am dead through believing. This is most practical as to peace of soul; for the moment I believe in Christ, I am delivered from all these things. I am not seeking to die, for I have the secret of power and count *myself* dead. There is a practical difficulty as to the water, for how can I say I am washed, if I still find myself to be dirty? But I can say I am dead *in Christ*, for I shall never succeed in killing myself. The moment that I believe in Christ, all that He has done as a Saviour is mine,

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Redemption being perfectly accomplished then the Holy Ghost comes down in person, so that the position of the Church on earth is between these two things, the redemption made, and the glory in prospect, as the Holy Ghost comes down between the Church's redemption, and the Church's glory.

The knowledge of being dead with Christ gives me a pure heart as being myself dead to nature, sin, the world, and law. By the blood, I get perfect peace and a good conscience; and then the Holy Ghost comes down from God; thus we have perfect peace with God, having God's own witness. Well then, I have left the whole scene; I have done with nature altogether; my sins are all gone; the blood has put them away, and I am now dead unto sin, and alive unto God. The cross, the wounds of Christ, are the door by which I entered, and the presence of the Holy Ghost is the power by which I enjoy the fruits of it. As we have seen, the witnesses of God on the earth are *three*, the *Spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, and

and God appropriates and applies it to me. I may have failed to realize it, but the treasure is put into my possession.

Some souls often say, I believe all the value and efficacy of Christ's work, but I cannot apply it. And who asks you to do so? It is God who applies it, and He has applied it to you, if you believe in its value and efficacy. The moment we believe in Christ, we have the Holy Ghost as bearing witness, "He shall take of mine and shew it unto you." Just as the Son came down to do God's will, and then ascended up again into heaven, so at the Son's ascension, the Holy Ghost came down as a Person on the earth; for the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as being on the earth, and it is this which gives the true and peculiar character of the Church of God. And here we get the *third witness*, in the Spirit of Truth coming down to the earth. The moment I believe, I am sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. All that I can produce of God's good fruits as a Christian, is in consequence of being sealed by the Holy Ghost.

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these three agree in one; "for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son."

The heart is constantly looking for God to give it a testimony about itself; but God is giving a testimony about His Son, and not about what we are; if God were to give a testimony about us it must be about our sin and unbelief of heart. But no; and it is of great importance in this day of infidelity, to see that if God gives a testimony, it is about His Son, and what He is to the sinner. If you believe that, you will get peace.

If I am going about to get a standing before God on the ground of my holiness, that would be self-righteousness, and of course I shall not get a witness from God as to that. But if my soul take its stand with God, on the testimony God has given to His Son, then I get the witness in myself: when I have got this faith, I have got the thing in my own soul. For instance, look at Paul before Agrippa: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear

me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds." He was so thoroughly conscious that the Christ in His soul was the Christ in heaven, and he was so happy in this consciousness, that he wished the whole company were like himself (except the bonds), having Christ as a well of water springing up within. That which makes heaven to be a heaven to the saint, is just this, that he finds the same Christ in heaven that he has in his own soul; and all the subtleties of infidelity cannot touch the soul that possesses Christ thus within. No reasoning of an infidel can shake my confidence if I am happy in Christ; for if a man came to tell me there was no Christ, when my soul was happy in Him, I should not believe him. There may be no intellectual or logical proof on my part, but there will be, to a certain extent, a moral testimony in the happiness of my soul, and the warmth of my affections being centered in Christ. I have often found how much it tells with men of all conditions, to assure them that I am per-

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The treason is in keeping away God's message from His servants. It is not merely the servants' right to have the message, but it is God's right in giving it that is called in question, as it is interfering with God's right of communicating His thoughts in His word.—Whenever God gives a revelation, man is responsible to receive it. God has given a witness in which He reveals the glory of His Son, and when man calls in question that word, he is disputing with God in the testimony of His grace as to what He is.

Who can explain the riddle of this miserable world, without Christ? Go into the alleys and lanes of this vast city, and see the woe and degradation even in this best and most civilized of countries, and learn there what sin does. In the drawing-room you may philosophize about it, but it is not in a drawing room that you will learn what the world is. But when you tell me that it was because of all this sin and wretchedness that God's Son came down into this world to put the sin away, then I can under-

fectly happy in Christ, and quite sure of going to heaven. Are you so? they say; I only wish I could say it. It would not be a proof to an infidel, his merely seeing you were happy; but it comes home to the heart of man, as there is a craving in man's heart that will never be met till he gets Christ there; for man is never happy without Christ, whatever he may say.

"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." The sin of men is in making God a liar, when they do not believe the record God has given of His Son; for men do quarrel with you when you tell them you know that you are saved. They say, How can you know that? Which is just as much as saying that God is not capable of communicating any blessing to man. It is calling God's wisdom in question as well as His power in the testimony of His mercy and grace. This is what I have felt in the great question about the Bible. It is not whether it is the people's right to have the Bible, but it is questioning God's right in giving it.

stand it; and God gives eternal life, not life for a moment, or a life we can sin away, as Adam, but eternal life, which is above and beyond sin altogether, being in His Son, and therefore as near to God as can be. "This life is in his Son," who was ever the subject of His Father's delight; for when down here, God could not be silent in His expression of joy, saying, "This is my beloved Son."

And God, in giving me eternal life, has also given me a nature and capacity to enjoy Him for ever. I am brought into an association with God, a relationship to God, and an enjoyment of God, which the angels know not, although holy in their nature, and exalted. We are thus brought near that we might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be "filled with all the fulness of God."

In what a wondrous place we are set, if we could but be purged, not from gross sins, but from the *vanity* and *earthliness* that fills our minds, to enter into all our blessedness, and the association which we have thus with God, the very

same which Christ has! He hath borne the wrath of God for our sin, that this full cup of blessing might be given to us. In all this God would have simplicity of heart. A man may talk about many things, but knowledge apart from Christ will never do; but if we possess Christ *within*, Satan can never touch us; and if he comes, he will find Christ there, who has overcome him. It is a sweet and blessed thing, that any saint, though born but yesterday, has all in Christ that I have. And if one says, But I am such a great sinner, well, the blood has put that away, and settled that question for ever.

"And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." There is a confidence in God that applies itself to all the details of life through which I may be called to pass. This is the confidence we have in Him, His ear being ever open to us, we have what we ask for, when we ask according to God's will. How wondrous is this, that God's ear is ever open to us, for surely we

should not desire to ask for anything contrary to His will. "And if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." I am so made to know the love, that if I ask, I shall have. If I am really in earnest to do God's will, to preach the gospel for instance, and there are hindrances in the way—Satan in the way—I have only to ask, and I have all God's power at my disposal, His ear being open to me. If you know what conflict and difficulty are, what a blessing is this, to have God's ear open to you, and to know if you are doing God's will, you will always succeed in doing His will.

"There is a sin unto death, I do not say ye shall pray for it." Temporal death is here intended as chastening in the way of God's government. "There is a sin not unto death." And if there be real intercession God will forgive us. (James v. 14, 15.) If you ask me what the sin unto death is, it may be any sin; it may be the telling of a lie, as in the case of Annanias and Sapphira.

(Peter does not pray for them.) See also the case of Stephen, when he said, "Lay not this sin to their charge." And in Corinthians, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The horribly confused state of the Church causes the government to be kept more in the hands of God; and from the saints' incompetency to walk in the power of the Spirit, they are necessarily more thrown on the Lord, whose faithfulness to us will not allow our sins to go on unjudged. "He withdraweth not His eye from the righteous."

May we be so walking in the power of holiness that we may not be struggling with sin under His correcting hand. May we be walking in full communion with His grace! Amen.

THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB.

Rev. xxi. 9, and xxii.

This bride of the Lamb is to be the convoy of the glory back to the earth, to its place of power and government on

the earth. The Lamb's bride is found in heaven, (chap. 19,) but here she is manifested, not only to show us her beauty, but to try our hearts by her light. It is not merely the beauty and attractiveness of the scene, but that which applies itself to the heart and conscience. If we are seeking *ourselves*, (i.e., our *own advantage*), we are *not* in moral harmony with this scene. Here it is her joy as well as her dignity to bring, *not* her own glory, but the glory of God back to the earth. How is it with our hearts? Do we desire to be the ministers of His praise, and not of our own? We ought to be putting on the character of this city before we reach it: it ought to be the breathing of our souls, "Lord, conform me to this thy glory."

1st. We have the *stability* of this place, it hath *foundations*. All that I desire to notice now in this description is, to draw from it that which will affect our hearts. Do we delight in its stability? Dissatisfied now, we ought to look fully in the face of all around, and say, It will not do for me; but when we

look to Jesus, can we say, "*This is my rest?*" We shall be established in abiding rest, how far can our hearts now go to Jesus and acknowledge Him as our rest, and sing in spirit, "*This is my rest for ever?*" There is nothing in these foundations that can be moved. Are we in company with this? Can we look to Jesus and say, We have tasted in Him the desired end of our long wearisome journey?

Ver. 22, "I saw no temple therein." *All* savoured of worship; there was no need of set days, *the whole is sanctuary*. Do we breathe in unison with this? It is a long journey to flesh and blood; the strong sleep in going up the mountain, and in the garden, and when the word is to watch. But there is a worshipping atmosphere where no provision is made for the flesh. O! let us now pray that we may find greater liberty in worship; and wherever we are, may the thought of the presence of Jesus be our sanctuary, and may we not only *delight* our hearts with this wondrous vision, but try their affections by it. What is the light in

to go forth with the little or much I may have, I am not of this city. Do not you delight in this city? I know it rebukes you, but do not you delight in it? We would not blot out a feature of it for worlds, though it may chasten, and humble, and rebuke us. While we are surveying our dignities, we are trying the strength of our affections, how far we are in present sympathy with this city which brings down to earth not its own glory but God's. As long as I am not satisfied with Jesus, I am not in company with the stability of this place, and all its worship, light, purity, and rich benevolence. These are not only rays of glory, but they are features of moral character.

Chap. xxii. 3. "His servants shall serve him." Oh! do not you know what it is to grow weary in service? And are you not angry with yourself for this weariness? This very anger tells you that you are in full sympathy with that place where His servants *shall* serve Him. Is it not happy to know that by and by, without fatigue of heart,

which our souls are walking? Is it the light of the simplicity of Christ? Is the Lord God and the Lamb the light of our souls? Acquainting ourselves with our duty in our calling by the way, but the knowledge of God and the Lamb the light to guide our feet? Through the whole scene, we are *of* the holy city, though not *in* it yet. Nothing that defiles can enter in; the purity of the place is such, everything brought in there is sanctified. Is my heart delighting in this? Do I love the pure things that suit the presence of Christ?—having that within me that, having breathed the atmosphere of this holy city, can desire to cherish this? Then not only in the blood of Christ do I read my title, but in the Spirit within me do I read my sympathy with Him, if I love the things that are pure.

The healing of the nations (chap. xxii. 2,) shows the *benevolence* of this city. What did she do with her river and her tree? She sends them forth to heal and refresh the earth. There is her benevolence; and if I am niggardly, refusing

or weariness of spirit, you shall serve Him night and day. By the grace of God, this very anger in our souls shows our sympathy with this city. Are we not daily obliged to go to our Father, and complain of our little love; and is not this the Spirit forming us for the glory? (ver. 4.) As we look at *His* face, He will stamp ours with the mark that we are *His*, for with Him we shall reign. It is the glory of a king to have a happy, obedient people, and that will be the glory of these millennial kings—these that constitute the Bride, the Lamb's wife. All under their rule are happy and blessed. In the 11th verse, is a solemn word, a day is coming, which will no longer be a day of salvation; when once the Master riseth up, and shutteth to the door, there will be no more entering in. In the 16th verse Jesus shows Himself as the root and offspring, &c.; and in the 17th verse, the Spirit seems to catch that character of glory and says, "Come." Have you and I laid the scene of our happiness in the presence of Christ? Do we never allow

a hope, or indulge an expectation, the moral character of which would hush the desire of "Come *quickly*, Lord Jesus?" We should say to our hearts, "Where have you been gleaning to day?" It is not merely that we have to acquaint ourselves with passages like this, but there is to apply them to our hearts. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Here is full liberty, beloved, to him that heareth, and *whosoever will*. If any say, I have not heard; well, have you any thirst? are you *not* satisfied? will you come? He is most condescending, come to Him as a poor sinner, if not as a believing saint. In verses 7, 12, and 20, we have, "Behold, I come quickly," but the context in each is different. In the 7th, like the 12th of Luke, or 24th of Matt., He comes as the thief; in the 12th, He comes as the master to his servants, bringing his reward, his kingdom and glory; in the 20th, he comes *Himself*, alone as the Bridegroom to the bride; and her response is, *Amen*, (or *I am satisfied*.) Thou art all I want—the richest answer to Him.

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made "partakers of the divine nature;" (2 Peter i. 4;) and having this nature, "the law of liberty" allows me to walk according to it; and, consequently, not according to the flesh, though the flesh may be there. The precept takes in what the new nature would do if unhindered; and thus our desires have the sanction of the word of God. Moreover, it cannot be a perfect law unless it is "a law of liberty." For if it be addressed to that which has no desire, it is simply its being addressed to the flesh, in which good does not dwell. "A new commandment I write unto you; which thing is true in him and in you." Christ's commandments direct and form the life that is in us, as they are the expressions of His own life; and they form ours by His authority: for it is *commandment*.

"The law of the Spirit of life" is a different thing. It is not a commandment, but the necessary consequence of the life that is in us—like the law of gravitation, &c. "Looking into the perfect law of liberty" is looking into these commandments.

May we stir up our hearts and our affections to be ready. Have I laid out for to-morrow, and so hindered myself from being able to say, "Come, Lord Jesus." "Surely, I come quickly." Amen. This is the simplest, the heart's desire. We thus indeed say our Jesus is our Omega. It is the desire of our souls to keep ourselves in the sympathies of this place. It is written, we are not of the world, though in the world; we are to be of heaven, though not in it—answering in all simplicity, "Even so, come. Amen." Ver. 21. This is our power, *the power* of the bride to adorn herself, make herself ready.

"THE LAW OF LIBERTY."

James i. 25.

"The law of liberty" is this, when a command is given which it is the greatest desire of the heart to obey. The fulfilment of the "royal law" is when we are free to do nothing but that which belongs to the new nature. We are

"AS THE TRUTH IS IN JESUS."

Ephesians iv.—v.

"The truth as it is in Jesus," is here connected with putting off the old man and putting on the new; for you cannot have the *practice* of the Christian life, without the life itself. But *having life*, the commonest duties are connected with this truth of the body of Christ. For example, Lie not one to another! because "members one of another." This is the secret of the elevation of a Christian's conduct.

All our duties flow from our relationships. A child's duties result from what he is to his father; the wife's to the husband, &c. A Christian is put in the most responsible relation; and his highest privilege is to have the *Lord* brought into everything, because thus his affection to Christ is tested in all. The precept which forbids my purloining in a house, brings God to remembrance. (Titus ii. 10.) We have our place in Christ before God; and God has his

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place in us before men; so that whatever does not suit the presence of God, does not suit a Christian.

The first effect of the presence of God is to annihilate a man. Therefore in ver. 2, in connection with walking worthy of the high vocation, it is "with all *lowliness* and meekness." Then another thing follows—long-suffering and forbearance. There is to be no hurry with our brethren. In this chapter, up to ver. 6, we are *all alike* addressed; afterwards, according to the sovereign will of God, given to individuals.

The expression, "That he might fill all things" (ver. 10,) shows that faith cannot look out on a place which divine love and righteousness have not filled. *He* has come down in love, and gone up in righteousness.

"Perfecting of the saints," (ver. 12,) refers to them *individually*; "Edifying of the body," collectively. I can use my members as servants, but the moment I make them anything else but servants, *it is sin*. When man fell, he was *under* the evil. Now we are to be

and waiting for Him. If I am here, and He is there, we are two and not one. But the truth, in this Epistle, rises higher, never looking at the saints as *apart from*, but as *in* Christ. The whole body is ever so connected with the Head, by the power of the Spirit, that they cannot be separated. "Members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "No man ever yet hated *his own flesh*; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Thus, then, in Ephesians, whether it is *blessing, testimony, conflict, or where we are*, all is *heavenly*; and the measure and standing of our conduct ought to be the heavenly man. "As the truth is in Jesus."

In chapter i. *the counsels of God* are considered. Chap. ii. *His power* to us—ward who believe. Chap. iii. the character of His blessing to the Gentiles. Chap. iv. the character of the saints as the body of Christ in heaven, and as the habitation of the Spirit down here. Also the practice becoming such. In chap. v., which we are upon, we have the exercise

over the evil, "renewed after God." "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The character of the Epistle to the Ephesians is peculiar in one remarkable point, it sets the Church, already so entirely in Christ the Head, that it does not speak of the coming of the Lord. The reason of this is evident: it supposes the Church to be *with Christ*. It ever views the Church in the Head. First, as to its testimony: "That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." 2. As to blessing: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ." 3. As to where we are, "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." 4. As to *conflict*: "Wrestling against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

If I look at the Lord as *coming* for the saints, I see them distinct from Him. *Individually* we are so of course,

of Christ's love towards those so united to Him.

It is not only what is the place of God that we need to know, but what is the exercise of Christ's affections towards us in that place. So here, it is not the plans and thoughts of grace that are presented to us, but the *exercise* of grace. It shows us the way Christ feels in *His* relationship to us.

Whatever we are, divine teaching ever connects the commonest details of ordinary life with the highest privileges. That which loosens the bonds of common life is not the *testimony of God*. Whatever are the privileges of the saints they are brought to the *light*; and it is by the *light* every thing is tested. Truth always fortifies conscience in a man, in His common-place duties. Of course I mean a just conscience, for there may be a *morbid* conscience. The truth would ever lead to the fulfilment of those common duties, *which all own to be duties*.

Again, wherever the grace and love of God act on a saint, they always go back to God. The incense in the holy place

always ascended, but the fragrance was not for the priests, but *for God*. It was burnt entirely for God, but the sweet savour was diffused all around. Whatever Christ did He did *to God*, and it was a sweet savour. If it is not so with us it is nothing but *selfishness*.

Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us. Here is the greatest act of love *to us*: but it was "a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (ver. 2.) Love cannot come down and act in this heavenly, this perfect man, without its perfection being *Godward*. Love having *God* ever before it, can go on ever according to the mind of God, amidst all opposition. In its perfectness, however, this could be found only in Christ. We have it, but it is mingled with much failure.

Love, however, comes down from God, and must return to God. We know how self-applause, and how many mixed motives creep in with us, *afterwards*, if not at the time. But oh! how earnestly should we seek that our motives may be *single to Godward*. It is a dreadful

thing for the grace which God has given to be used for *SELF*. Never did Christ seek His own glory. It was always His Father's glory that He sought. It is indispensable for *internal* holiness, (I speak not of external) to have the heart exercised about this.

All our privileges bring us *to God*. God has a certain character, and He cannot allow anything unsuitable to that. "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." It is not, we have got light, but we are light. The very nature is light. Darkness and light can never be together. This broad truth is laid down in ver. 5, but it rests not here. It adds (ver. 6) "Because of these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience," or unbelief.

Mark, how unbelief is the *root* of all sin. It is not the only sin; but all sins deny the character of God. In ver. 8, it is said, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

This principle having been laid down, we have the measure and standard of this light (ver. 14) even *Christ Himself*.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Christ is the standard, you are *asleep* a little, not *dead* actually, but practically as if dead. Let me awake, then, and get all I can in Christ. But what do I get in Christ? Every thing! This awakening does not mean the conscience merely, for the avoiding certain things, but it is the getting Christ Himself formed in us. While I have the *nature* I have also *Christ* the *object* before me, and He is light! Light is *before* my soul, as well as *within* my soul; Christ is my *life*, and I get in *Christ* *divine perfection*, as well as *life*.

Christ shall give thee light. Let us take one instance. People think it a great matter if a man has what they call a fine fortune left him! But Christ says, "How *hardly* shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God." "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." "Woe to them that are rich!" Riches may be the ruin of a man. Is that *light*?

"See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (ver. 15.) There is not only to *avoid* certain things, but there is something to be *gained*. *Divine wisdom to live Christ*. We have to walk with all the wisdom of God. Satan is seeking to trip us up; to dim our testimony; to cause that to be seen in us which is *not Christ*. We are called in a world that is against us, to be waiting every opportunity to seize it for *Christ*. We are to *live Christ* before the world. That is what is meant by wisdom and redeeming the time. It is not merely not *wasting it*, but seizing it for Christ. The devil seeks to pre-occupy men's thoughts and affections; but we want to redeem time from this, by seeking every opportunity of introducing Christ.

"Be filled with the Spirit." (ver. 18.) Nothing but the Spirit—a vessel filled with one thing—the Holy Ghost, the spring and source in the soul, of all you do. If it be so Christ will be the subject. The Spirit may give understanding, and the mind still be working; but when "*filled with the Spirit*," the whole

man becomes the instrument in His hands, so that he thinks, feels, utters, only what the Spirit gives. I speak here only of power, not of *revelation*. Thus, filled with the Spirit, the flesh would not meddle with the things of God. But too often we mix up *our own* thoughts, and we introduce things at the wrong time. We want to be as clay moulded by Him.

What a deliverance is this from self! What a consciousness of the power of God in us, when thus filled with the Spirit! All must acknowledge how little there is of this in us, and how all is so *mingled*! so little of the complete setting aside of all that is of man! If we fail the conscience has to be dealt with; but our normal condition is to be walking with God, "filled with the Spirit."

Our proper joy also is in God. "Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (ver. 19), while looking *up* or looking *down*, giving thanks to God and the Father! What, for tribulation? Yes! because the Spirit gives

me to see God in the tribulation. Filled with the Spirit, I am ever giving thanks to God. See how Christ rejoices in spirit, saying, "I thank thee, O Father," (Matt. xi.) when, as to circumstances of sorrow around, His heart was *breaking*. The secret of this was, that while grieved with Israel's rejection of Him, He was in perfect communion with His Father, and with the glorious thoughts of God about His Son.

Very often the flesh is not broken down enough to make a man take the place and walk in the truth which God Himself has revealed to the soul. Thus it was with Peter (Matt. xvi. 17, 23), though he had just made the blessed confession of Christ which the Father had revealed to him, when the Lord spoke of His path of humiliation, as the Christ, "the Son of the living God," before the Jews, Peter could not bear it, and beseeches Him not to speak thus. Peter's flesh was not broken down enough to walk in the power of the truth he had received and rejoiced in. So it is with us.

But now we pass to God's revelation of what Christ is in His relationship to His body the Church. As in Rom. viii. it is in the first part of the chapter God *in* us; and in the latter part God *for* us. So here God speaks of what Christ is *for* the Church. The spring of all is Christ's love. "*He LOVED the church.*" God showed Him that pearl of great price. Christ must have it, though He give *HIMSELF* for it! All that Christ is in the perfection of *His holiness*, wisdom, and grace—all that is *Himself*—all that He gave for the Church! The shedding of His blood is not spoken of here. Not only what *He* had did He give—not His life only, but *Himself*. A man cannot give more than Himself. Thus wholly is Christ ours by divine gift and according to the perfectness with which God gives. Christ loved the Church; but having a bride, He must have her according to His own mind. He does not sanctify her first, and then make her His own; but He makes her His own in order to sanctify her. (See ver. 25, 26.) Hence the washing of water

by the Word. The written Word is the mind of God. Thus Christ gives the expression of His own heart and mind to the Church, in the Word, in order to make it like Himself. "Sanctify them through thy truth! Thy word is truth." This testimony to all that God is in Christ is applied to the Church to conform her to Himself. God must have the Lamb's wife like Himself. Even nature teaches this, and thus Christ applies the Word which is the revelation of God in Christ in order to bring us into this likeness to Himself and to cause God's thoughts to be ours. (See chap. i. 2, 3.) "Holy and without blame before him in love"—this is what God is, and this is what the love of Christ is doing for the Church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The Word cleanses a man's affections; and not only *cleanses*, but the end is to make *glorious*. Even now the glory shines in on us, and we are changed from glory to glory. Thus the apostle saw the light—the light of Christ—at

the end, and each step as he approached he got more of that light. The power of the glory is applied by Christ through the Word. Christ must have the Church FOR HIMSELF. We get this principle in Canticles; not that I think we have the Church in Canticles, but the Jewish remnant; still we get the principle of Christ's love there. The first thought is having got Christ, but then follows, "I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me." I belong to CHRIST. It is a remarkable and beautiful expression in Gen. ii. 22 with reference to Eve as a type of the Church. The Lord God builded (see margin) a woman. The Lord presents this woman to Adam. The second Adam, being the Lord God, presents this glorious Church to *Himself* without spot. All the perfection of God became man in order that He might be satisfied as to His Church. Ah, here the heart gets happy and humble! It is when I am dependent on the affections of another that my heart gets humbled and learns to rest in a sanctified way upon the object of affection. Our hearts

no longer thirst. (See John iv. 16.) We get our life out of Christ. (Gal. ii. 20.) The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. All through this time of our weakness we have the unceasing love of One who nourishes and cherishes us as His own flesh; and there is a kind of blessed *necessity* for this. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord, the Church, for we are members of His body, &c. (Ver. 28.) It is most sweet to take the motives of our duties from the pattern we have in Christ. There is not one relationship owned by God for which we fail to find a pattern in the things of God. In this passage it is the devotedness of love. It is not *the blood*, but all the perfect, the precious, tender, unceasing care of love, (of His love who *gave Himself, for us*,) until He shall present us to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish. How our hearts need to be learning more of this love of Christ which passeth knowledge!

PERFECTION.

Hebrews vi.

Nothing seemed to be a greater burden on the heart of Paul than to keep the saints up to their privileges. The Hebrews saw that Christ had died for them, though *that* had not the power over them which it ought to have had; but they were risen with Him also. They were in Christ in heavenly places within the veil, and the question was, were they realizing that.

There is great force in the expression he uses in chap. v. 6, "*ye are become*, such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." "Are become" marks the process by which they had reached the state they were in.

Freshness of affection, and quickness of understanding go together. There is less spring, less apprehension, less clearness when our hearts are not happy. On the other hand, my judgment is clear when my affections are warm. Motives that acted before cease to be motives when my affections are warm.

PERFECTION.

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Freshness of affection being lost, the Hebrews were "dull of hearing;" and so were "*become* such as had need of milk, and not of strong meat." And then the apostle explains that those who use "milk" are unskilful in the word of righteousness and are babes; while "strong meat" belongs to those, not who have made great progress, but who are of full age,—*men* in the truth in opposition to being *children* or babes,—and who have "their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

But how can I separate the "knowledge of good and evil" from the knowledge of Christ. If I were to try to separate between them of myself, shutting Christ out, how could I? He is my standard of *good*; and it is what I find in Him that gives me power to judge what is *evil*. How can I walk as He walked without Him? "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, (or the word of the beginning of Christ,) let us go on to perfection."

Instead of wasting your time with what has passed away, go on to the full

revelation of Christ. Be at home there, and understanding what the will of the Lord is. For how can I walk as He walked without Him? I know not how to attempt it. The secret of everything is found in that truth, "Ye are complete *in him*." As Christ Himself also has said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and *ye in me*." But what is that? and where is Christ now? In heaven. Then I am there too, and my affections should be there also. My hope is to be thoroughly identified with *Him*. For the portion I have is what He has—life, glory, all that He has risen to—and all my associations are with Himself. There is the difference between "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" and the full perfection. Of Christ Himself it is said, (chap. v. 9,) "Being made *perfect*, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

Now He was not made perfect down here, but in being glorified in heaven. He went through the experience down here; as it is said, "He learned obedience

by the things which he suffered," and then went into *heaven*, to be Priest, because our blessings and associations and hopes are all up there. He is "made perfect" as our High Priest in heaven and not down here. He had not received that point in the counsels of God, in *glory*, when He was down here. Now He is there He has associated me with Himself in that place. I can see that Christ has been through this world so as to be able to sympathize with me in all my sorrows and all my trials; and He has also borne my sins in His own body on the tree. But where is He now? He is in heaven; and I am there too in spirit, and He will soon bring me there in fact. *Where He is*, is His being "made perfect." The work is done, and now He is showing me the effect of its being done; and is teaching me the walk that belongs to the redemption He has wrought out. He has taken my heart and associated me with Himself, and He says that is *the perfection* I am to go on to.

Where did Paul see Christ? Not on

earth; for long after He had left the earth he was a persecutor; but he saw Him, as we all know, in heavenly glory. His only knowledge of Christ at all was of a Christ in heaven. His course on earth He might learn; but the revelation of Christ that brought his soul into the presence of God in the power of an accomplished redemption, was the revelation of Christ in heaven and in glory. Hence he says, "Though we had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The Christ he wanted to "win," (as he says in Phil. iii.) was a glorified Christ. It may cost me my life, but never mind. That is my object; after that I am reaching. I am alive from the dead, because Christ is; and I want to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. I am not in the flesh, but in Christ. I have the consciousness that this work of Christ has put me in a new place, (not yet glorified in body, but) in a new place as to my life and associations and home; and this is the *perfection* we are to go on to.

It was this that ruled the apostle's affections, as he says, "that I may win Christ." This was his object, to "bear the image of the heavenly." His mind was full of it. The Holy Ghost has come down to bring all these things to our remembrance. Believers are united to Christ in glory. It is never said that Christ is united to man; but believers are united to Christ. Then the apostle was living by the power of the Holy Ghost; so that one may conceive what a trial it was to him to see these people going back to the first principles. They were all true, but if people stop there they stop short of a glorified Christ. To the Galatians he says, "who hath bewitched you?" because of himself he says, "I knew a man in Christ." "A man in Christ" is a man risen out of all that connects itself with the law and ordinances, as well as with sin and death, and all that is sorrowful or attractive in this present evil world. His spirit is broken to find the saints resting with things on earth about Christ. The Holy Ghost was come from heaven to

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make them partakers of a heavenly calling; to associate them in heart and mind with Christ, and to show them things which would not only keep them from "the evil which is in the world," but from the world itself.

The Hebrews had a temple standing when Paul wrote, where Christ, Himself, had been. Why, then, should they have left it, if Christ had not judged the flesh, and shown that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God?" "The middle wall" had been put up by God, Himself; how should they dare to break it down, if God had not done it? If God had not said that He would not have to do with flesh any more, how could they dare to leave the camp, and go outside? CHRIST GLORIFIED is the end of all the first principles, and we have to go through the world as strangers and pilgrims. The only thing God ever owned in religion was Jewish, which had to do with the flesh—with men here in the world—but that is gone by the cross. All is crucified; "the handwriting of ordinances" has been blotted

out—"nailed to the cross"—and thus taken out of the way; and in a glorified Christ we see the end of all that is abolished. Henceforth our life, our home, our associations, are all in Christ.

But the doctrine of the beginning of Christ was not that.

What do we find as long as Christ was upon earth? Why the testimony of the law and the prophets, which taught righteousness and called the nation to repentance and faith. Christ Himself also speaks of a judgment to come, which they believed. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead. Baptisms or washings and the laying on of hands, they had them. They constituted the elements of a worldly religion, and were sanctioned by God until the cross. The Messiah coming on earth is the "doctrine of the beginning of Christ;" but now I leave that and go on to perfection. I do not deny these things, but I go on to the fuller revelation of Christ. These first principles are all true, but then I have other and far better things.

Saul might have been the brightest

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saint going under the old order of things, but not knowing Christ. But supposing a person got into the heavenly things and was "enlightened" and had "tasted the heavenly gift, and was made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and then gave it up—what could he do then? What else was there to present to such an one? There might have been a going on from faith, in an humbled Christ to a glorified Christ, but there is nothing beyond. For it should be observed there is nothing of *life* signified here. The expressions do not go beyond the indication of truth that might be received by the natural mind, and the demonstrative power of the Holy Ghost, which persons might partake of, as Scripture shows, without being participators in eternal life.

There may be light in a sense without the smallest trace of life, of which Balaam is an example. Of the stony ground hearers also it is said concerning the word that "anon with joy they re-

ceived it"—they "tasted the good word of God." Moreover, Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest: he was a partaker of these "miracles of the coming age." And Christ had said (Matt. vii. 22) "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" Still they are disowned of Christ as "workers of iniquity."

But there is this farther in the case supposed: "They had crucified the Son of God afresh," by turning back again from these heavenly things, and therefore could not be renewed to repentance. The nation had indeed crucified Christ, but they did not know what they were doing. This could not be said of those of whom the apostle is speaking. This was not ignorance, but will.

There is a great difference in what is expressed by "anon with joy they received it," and the word ploughing up the soul—giving the sense of sin and bringing into subjection to God's redemption. The result of life is seen in

fruit, not in power. In the parable of the sower the seed received into good ground "brought forth *fruit*." In the other cases there was "no fruit brought to perfection." If there is any fruit, the tree is not dead. Hence the apostle says, "We are persuaded better things of you, and *things that accompany salvation*." These were not power merely nor joy; for these might exist and there be no life. Judas could cast out devils as well as the rest; but Jesus said, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." The connexion of your heart with Christ—the consciousness of God having written your name in heaven is the blessed thing. The fruit which the apostle takes notice of, in ver. 10, is love to the brethren. This was there, and showed itself in the active ministering to the saints, out of love to the Lord's name; while full assurance of hope to the end was to be desired. There might be working of miracles without knowing or being known of God; but fruit-bearing in

Christ's redemption, and He is come to tell us that we are in that Christ, who wrought the redemption, and is now in the power of an endless life within the veil.

But what is the practical consequence of all this? Why, if the glory He has is mine, and I am going on after Him, then all the world is but dross and dung in my esteem. This will be faith's estimate of everything in the world, when Christ is filling the heart's affections, and when the soul is pressing on after Him, in the certain hope of being for ever with Him. One moment's real apprehension of Christ in the glory is sufficient to dim the brightness and glitter of every earthly thing; but the soul must be occupied alone with Christ for this.

If our affections and desires are lingering on earth, or stopping short of a glorified Christ in heaven, as the one in whom our life is hid, and to whom we are presently to be conformed in glory, and that in the glory where He is, we shall find soon that earthly things are

grace is the token of being branches of the true vine.

In the example of Abraham, the apostle presents an encouragement to their faith, which needed to be strengthened. Abraham had the promise of God, and he believed it; he had His oath, and he trusted it: but we have more. It is not to us that God presents a promise of future blessings, and adds an oath to assure us of their accomplishment; but He has performed all that He calls us to believe. We have a redemption now in the presence of God. Christ, having wrought the work, is sitting down in the presence of God, and in spirit has brought us there. But we have more than that—for, in hope, we are partakers of all the glory which belongs to that redemption. We have life, redemption, the Holy Ghost as the seal; and more. The forerunner is gone in, and the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of our union with Him, and not merely that our sins are put away through the blood-shedding of Christ. We have the Spirit in virtue of

something more than dross and dung. Leave a stone on the ground for a time and you will find that it will gradually sink into it. And our hearts, if they are not practically in heaven with Christ, will soon become attached to earthly things.

There is a constant tendency in earthly things to press down the affections. Duties are more apt to lead away the soul from God than open sin. Many a Christian has been ensnared by duties, whose heart would have shrunk from open sin. But we have only one duty in all the varying circumstances of life—to *serve Christ*. And we should remember that if things on earth are dark and the heart is tested in journeying through the world, all on the side of God is bright. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto *perfection*."

FRAGMENT.

The presence of the Holy Ghost down here, as truly sent from above as the Son, though in a different manner, and

consequent on the accomplishment and establishment before God of divine righteousness by Jesus Christ, is the key and centre of all that belongs to the christian estate.

Righteousness has been established before God, in heaven, and perfect love shown to the sinner on earth. Christ has made good both perfect love on God's part towards man in his sins—for God so loved that He spared not His own Son—and perfect righteousness for faith before God—for Christ is our righteousness before God. Of this the Holy Ghost is witness in the gospel, in the whole creation, (see 2 Cor. v. 19, 20; Col. i. 23,) because Jesus is on high.

LOVE TO JESUS.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”

I love thee, precious Lamb of God,
Thy name to me is dear;
No charming music falls so sweet
Upon my listening ear.

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I love thee as the *dying* One
Upon the cursed tree—
Ah! there I measure, Lord, thy love
To such a wretch as me!

I love thee as the *risen* One,
No longer in the grave;
Triumphant now o'er death and hell—
Omnipotent to save!

I love thee as the *reigning* One,
Upon the Father's throne,
With majesty and honour crown'd,
And glory all thine own.

I love thee as the *coming* One,
And oh, I wait to be
Upborne in clouds of glory bright,
Dear, precious Lord, to thee!

Come then, oh Saviour, quickly come!
Drive hence earth's night and war:
“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come,
Thou bright and Morning Star!”

A. M.

I love thee as the *humble* One,
So lowly in thy birth,
Who made thyself of no repute,
Though Lord of heaven and earth.

I love thee as the *spotless* One,
The holy and the pure;
Made sin, that I its fearful weight
And curse might not endure.

I love thee as the *gracious* One,
So gentle and so kind,
Who wiped the falling tear, and loved
The broken heart to bind.

I love thee as the *faithful* One,
Who did the Father's will;
Who never sought thine own, but did
His blessed Word fulfil.

I love thee as the *patient* One,
Rejected and reviled;
Yet ever calm and tranquil thou,
Beneficent and mild.

I love thee as the *suffering* One,
Unpitied in thy woe.
No heart responsive beat to thine
When waves did o'er thee flow.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ACTS XIII.—XX.

The Apostle Paul, in some sense, may be said to end his ministry in Acts xx. He ceased then, formally, to be the *servant*, being soon to become the *prisoner*, of Jesus Christ. It was a transitional moment. His ministry had now continued since the time of the opening of chap. xiii.

If we look back at him, in these chapters, and review his labours—as a husbandman in the field of the gospel, we shall find him using at times *the plough*, at times *the seed*, and at times *the plough and the seed together*—and all this, in the skill of one who understood the character of his work, and the different husbandry, which different soil demanded. And it is happy to be able to mark such skill as this—the skill that distinguishes and understands the work that is to be done, as well as the diligence that does it.

We find this same skill, in a divine
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and perfect form, in the Lord Himself. The Lord is seen at times taking the nicest and most distinguishing knowledge of the work that lay before Him. In the parable of the sower, he lets us learn how He had surveyed the field in which He was working; how He knew that in one place it was but as *highway* ground, where *Satan* prevailed; in another, *stony* ground, where poor impotent *nature*, unequal to render anything to God, was disappointing His service; in another, *thorny* ground, where the *world* was hindering the ripening of that good seed which He was sowing; in another, good ground, where toil was rewarded.

Thus did the Divine Husbandman Himself take knowledge of the scene of His labours in its large and various characteristics. But His gracious, delicate, and yet keener sense acquaints itself likewise with fainter and more minute differences. He speaks of one "not far from the kingdom of God." He loves the rich young man who came to Him under some struggle between heart and conscience. He calls aside

the misled multitude to teach them in gentleness and patience, while He exposes and rebukes their misleading teachers to their face. He separates between Nicodemus and the people of Jerusalem, though he and they together were moved by the same influence, the miracles which He was working. He will sit down in the midst of the twelve that accompany Him, and separate ingredients found among them at times. He will distinguish between Mary and Martha, when put to do such unpleasant work, though He will leave them both still, as with an equal love!

And how perfect all this was, in the way of a Husbandman in God's field, who will be skilful as well as diligent! And in his ministry through these chapters, I mean in the samples of his sermons, which are here recorded for us, we may trace this skill of his divine Master, (and surely, by the Spirit of his Master) in the Apostle Paul.

At the opening of chap. xiii., the church are met together at Antioch, and there and then, Saul and Barnabas are

called out for work in distant fields. *Saul*, soon after this, became *Paul*, the more confined Jewish name taking its Gentile, larger form (I believe, under divine suggestion), because the scene of service was now enlarging itself, and Paul was predestined of God to fill it more specially than any other, and to become the characteristic minister of this full and abundant form of grace.

In the synagogue of another Antioch, an Antioch more completely beyond the Jewish boundary, our apostle begins his series of preachings. He is invited by the rulers to give the congregation a word of exhortation. Of course he is ready to speak to them, for he was sent forth by God with "words" for sinners all the world over. But it is "fallow ground" he finds here; a people who give no evidence that they were seeking the Lord with interested consciences—for it is such seeking that is the witness that the fallow has been already broken. "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord." (Hosea x. 12.) But where such seeking is not, the

plough must be used, the ministry that convicts the conscience and lays the sentence of death in the creature. Accordingly, Paul uses the plough here. He warns the people of Israel here in the synagogue at Antioch, lest that word of their own prophet should be made good against them, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." But since they had invited him to give them a word of exhortation, and had now quietly waited and listened, he casts in the seed as well as uses the plough, telling the synagogue of a risen Jesus, and of forgiveness and justification through faith in Him. (Chap. xiii. 38—41.)

This, surely I may say, was skilful husbandry—husbandry such as the nature of the soil demanded.

Soon afterwards, however, we find him doing somewhat different work at Lystra in Lycaonia. He has no invitation here, no assembled, attentive audience, but a blinded, idolatrous people, who needed to be thoroughly awakened. Under the instructed eye of the apostle, the ground here was merely one of "thorns;" and

the word to guide him was at the door—"break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. iv. 3.) We find, therefore, only the plough in the hand of this skilful husbandman. He runs into the midst of the people at Lystra, and challenges their consciences to take knowledge of their condition before God. He would fain drive the conviction deep into the ground of their heart. There was nothing but this for it. The field demanded this husbandry. A besotted multitude, who would fain worship men of like passions with themselves, have to be arrested, if haply some light from God may awaken the conscience. (Chap. xiv. 15—17.)

Again I say, how perfect is this in its season! Some may object, Paul does not preach the gospel here. It is so; but this was his wisdom in the Spirit. He does not cast in the seed, but breaks up, if he may, the thorny fallow ground. As his Master at the well of Sychar before him would reach the conscience of a poor sinner; and thus, when the conscience was awakened, He had seed of

the most precious quality for the soil, saying to her, "I that speak unto thee am he." Paul had the same seed at hand for these blinded sinners at Lystra, if, like her, they were convicted; but his earlier business, like that of his divine Master before him, is with the plough.

We next find him as a preacher or witness of the gospel at Philippi. Here he lights upon two distinct pieces of ground, each of which had been broken up already, and his hand is called to till them. Lydia was a seeker of the Lord, a Gentile, who had been already brought to worship the God of Israel. The Apostle meets her at the river side, where she and other women used to pray together. The soil of her heart is thus ready rather for the seed, than for the plough; and, accordingly, the Apostle "sat down and spake to" her and her companions. It was the happy, noiseless work of the sower. Gently did the seed fall into the ground, which the Lord of the harvest as gently opened to receive it. (xvi. 10—15.)

So, the gaoler. The Lord breaks up

his fallow. Rough and hard work it may have been; but it was the hand of God that did it, and did it all alone, ere the Apostle is called to enter on his work. For, amazed at what had happened, when the prison doors had been forced open by the earthquake, and yet the prisoners had not fled, though he discovered that his life was safe, and that he need not kill himself, yet (as one standing on the brink of hell, his soul, not his life, became now his anxiety) he cries out to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And the Apostle's only business is to tell him of Jesus. (xvi. 25—34.)

This was easy work and happy work; the work of a sower in prepared ground, ground that made a sure promise of bringing forth herbs meet for him by whom it was about to be dressed.

We have, however, still to follow him: and we find him a preacher again, at Athens. (xvii. 18—31.)

It is not the rough ground of Lystra that he lights on here—but it is equally a field of thorns, which needs just the

same husbandry. Blinded, vain idolaters the men of Athens are, as were the people of Lystra. Refined and tutored, it is true—schoolmen of various wisdom after the manner of men; but refined or rude, Athenians or Lycaonians, the fields of these blinded idolaters are all "fallow" under the eye of God, and Paul has only the plough in hand here. After exposing their folly, not so much in their *acknowledged*, as in their *real, palpable*, ignorant worship, he speaks to them of the resurrection of Jesus, in its connexion with *judgment*; telling them that "God had appointed a day in which He would 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." This was using the plough. The Apostle seeks to convict the conscience. He treats this select, well-tutored assemblage, at Athens, as "fallow ground," a field of "thorns," the only thing to do with which was to break it up. It was only plough-husbandry that suited it.

This closes his preachings in this great season of his ministry. But we may surely admire the various, perfect character of it—the skill, as well as the diligence of this servant of the Lord of the vineyard.

These same chapters would have allowed us to look at Paul, as the husbandman at other work, visiting the fields which he had thus ploughed and sown, either, as it were, to water or to weed them. For he goes among the churches, to give them exhortation, or to confirm them. But I do not look at these and other matters, found in these chapters; but when we reach the opening of chap. xx., we find the Apostle in the midst of the church again, as we saw him at the opening of chap. xiii.—with this difference, however, that he was there, at the beginning, at Antioch, called out from the church to go forth to labour; here, at Troas, at the end, he is in the midst of the church during church-service, celebrating, in the breaking of bread, the proper standing of the elect of God, and worshipping in

POSITION OF THE BELIEVER BEFORE GOD.

Read Eph. i.

You so continually find the hearts of Christians, even, so little thoroughly founded on the work of the Lord Jesus, so feebly conscious of their relationship to God, that I desire briefly to bring out again what the position of the believer is before God as presented to us in this Epistle and in Romans.

Before beginning, however, I would first allude to one thing that hinders people, and that is want of earnestness of purpose. Thus you often meet persons who say they want peace, and yet they can go and play all the day. Is it a wonder if they have not peace? Others, again, may not be trifling, but they throw their heart into business. The effect, of course, is the same. How little of what Barnabas exhorted to, "That with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord!" How little of what Paul had before him, "This one thing I do!" Or of the prayer in the

the sense of the salvation of God. And, surely, there is beauty in this variety. The Spirit calls forth, from God's assembly, an energy that will go out with plough and seed, and waterpot, to do good work in distant fields, still untilled; or, He will awaken that assembly itself, to do its own proper service within its own borders—for we are either to go abroad, and there *publish* God's salvation, or to come home, and there *celebrate* it.

Then, at the very close, at Mileta, we see our Apostle, who had, at the beginning, been *sent forth* to his ministry, and had then *pursued it* skilfully and diligently, and then *celebrated* the fruit of it, now *taking leave* of it.

This was a transitional moment, as I have already called it. He is leaving his ministry, and entering on the last rough stage in his way to heaven. He is careful about others, but all at ease about himself, and in readiness for his departure. He thus appears before us in this scene, which closes our meditation.

BELIEVER'S POSITION. 301

Psalms, "Unite my heart to fear thy name!" Nay, they are afraid even to look earnestly at their relationship with God; they are afraid to see it.

I am persuaded that many souls are in such a condition; possessing life, it may be, but contented without a full, distinct living in and knowledge of God and His righteousness, so as to walk always in the liberty and joy of a known relationship. Now to be uncertain of our relationship with God is not the Christian state. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The spirit of fear is not the spirit we get in virtue of the righteousness of God. It is very useful in its place, but where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

The great thing which hinders this is flesh, that is, the nature we get from Adam. The flesh has its desires and delights, and it has its condition before God—sin; just as we have life in Christ, and we have righteousness in Christ, that is, standing and life. We are apt to think that scripture speaks only of flesh as to

its corrupt workings; but *it has its standing before God*, as well as its workings. I cannot be guilty and righteous at the same time; I cannot be a saint and a sinner at the same time. We have to get well hold of this, that the man in the flesh is a guilty man before God, one who has no righteousness; a man, indeed, ever living in evil, but besides that a sinner before God. I may be in conflict with my sins, and yet know no acceptance, and I may be in conflict and yet know acceptance. The mere question of conflicts, and overcoming, is not the whole question of acceptance. I may have a child struggling with an evil temper, and vexed with itself because of it, and yet my heart may be delighting in my child. I have to overcome before and after acceptance; only I fail before and succeed after. But for acceptance God cannot have any sin at all.

The Epistle to the Ephesians takes up the work of God, without any reference to any experience at all. It takes up the sinner where God sees him Him-

whenever law comes in; first, as to his conduct, and then as to what passes in his heart. Then God meets this condition in the third chapter in the blood of Christ. It is not one dead in Romans. We have somebody to begin with who wants justifying. He finds the law of sin in his members, and more, he is a captive. The war, it is true, will be to the end, but not the captivity. But what about righteousness? Is the man with the law of sin in his members, which leads him captive, righteous before God? The very opposite, and wretched because so. Where is the way out? There is none for the flesh, and that is what we are speaking of.

Then he is taking up what is passing in his heart, to draw the conclusion of what is passing in God's heart. What is known of God? His righteousness. In what character? That of a judge. Is that all you know of God? Redemption is unknown. It is the case in this eighth of Romans, of one under law trying to make out righteousness, looking at God as a judge, and finding it

self, and puts him where God's power has put Christ. It does not speak of justifying, nor of any work in order to it, but it takes the sinner up just as he was and puts him up where Christ is. It puts him in the place of a child, and says, walk as a child.

Romans speaks of us as alive in sin, Ephesians as dead in sin. Therefore, in Ephesians, God takes into His own presence, according to His own nature as God, and according to the relationship of children. We are created again in Christ Jesus. There we get nothing but the work of God. What has a man to do with his own creation? Nothing whatever. Therefore God places him there according to the power which put Christ there.

But *we* do not begin there, with being dead, where God begins in Ephesians. Therefore in Romans i. the picture of man's state is fully brought out and then what meets it. It is not men "dead in sins" that we get, as in Ephesians, but a responsible person living in sin, and so he has a conscience of sin

cannot meet him. It is the condition of a sinner who is to answer for himself before God. This is all true, but am I to learn nothing of what Christ did for people in that state? It is the standing of a man who has to answer for himself as a child of Adam, before God. Now, if that is your case, you are infallibly lost.

This sort of exercise is very useful to break us down to find the need of another standing altogether. The blood of Christ is the answer to what I am, a sinner before God; but besides, Christ's standing is my place in the presence of God in spirit. Till this is known, the question is, How am I to get done with this conflict, which always leads to so much sorrow? (Not that the conflict ceases, only when *redemption* is known there is power.) Well, the end is this, I must reckon myself dead; there is no use in the conflict. I cannot deliver myself. Where the Romans end as to experience, Ephesians begin as to doctrine. Then I am created anew in Christ Jesus.

We must come to a positive, full, true sense of this, that we are dead. Till

the soul has been brought to this, it has not got a standing in Christ: it is not expecting it; it is seeking help. But, if I may so speak, is Christ going to help Himself to be more righteous? "O, but I find so much evil in myself!" "In yourself!" Are you to be accepted in yourself? "So much evil!" Why, there is nothing else. You are trying to get an experience which will set you right before God: but you cannot, and ought not. What we are brought to is the full, certain, most holy, sin-judging discovery, that in the flesh dwells no good thing. Are you going to have your standing with God ascertained by the knowledge of good and evil in *you*? Will God pass it over lightly? No; but He takes us out of it. He cannot have us in the flesh at all, because there is sin in it. All comes to this: death and resurrection. We were baptized into His *death*. You must come and close with Christ as dead about sin, and own, I am there. (I must be alive unto God in entirely another way.) I have judged myself as I ought to do when brought to acknowledge that

place, "holy and without blame before him in love."

You never can get really and rightly practically into the blessing spoken of in Ephesians, unless you have got really and rightly into the consciousness of this, that you are dead. Otherwise you will have the new thing and the old thing. Therefore we must distinguish between the conflict and the standing. The flesh never ceases to be an enemy, but now it is locked up. If I have got the flesh locked up, he may lust as he pleases. He has no power. For the Spirit is life because of righteousness. You cannot get *that* until you have given entirely up the other standing.

If a man looks at the experiences of his heart he sees inconsistencies, and that is not divine righteousness. He must be brought to death. There is no hope of getting better, and while under the law no power of getting better. But when brought into the presence of God, where all sin is seen and judged, then we get on true ground. We thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

not one stone have I found in the morass of sin to put my foot on before God as to righteousness. I am dependent on the goodness and grace of God. I have learnt what I am, what sin is, what my condition is, and learnt that flesh never can be set up again. The old man must come to the cross, to death experimentally. Then there is full deliverance. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." I am not now answerable for what I was as a sinner. Why? Because Christ has answered for it. That is closed. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

You will find that in Romans Christ is not followed to His exaltation except once. (Chap. viii.) And the reason is that Romans is this, that Christ stood there in *our place* and wrought that work. It is the close of my experience as a sinner. Now I come in Ephesians to the beginning of my experience as a saint. What has God done? He has taken the One who was dead for my sins and set Him up in heaven. That is my

I cannot but regret that I find in Christians uncertainty as to their relationship with God, looking to experience in connexion with their standing. *Our* experience is not Christ, and He is our righteousness.

A WELL OF WATER.

John iv.

In the preceding chapter we get the quickening power of the Spirit and the contrast between the old and the new creation; here we get another thing—the dwelling of the Spirit in the believer. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in* him a well of water," &c. Of necessity a man *must* be born again—born of water and of the Spirit, if he has to say to God. This is what has to be presented to the sinner: "You *must* be born again," while at the same time we know it must be God's work. It is not in a legal sense that it is said, "ye must," because we know a man cannot accom-

plish it of himself, but there is a moral necessity for it, because until born again the sinner cannot have one desire, or any thing in him, suited to God. It is the requisite flowing from what God is, and what the sinner is. But there is not this moral necessity for the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer. There is no requirement in that, but it is the expression of pure grace. It is not a thing necessary to man, but one given by God, and therefore, not only the Jews, but the Gentiles might have it. "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. For the Jews, even, it was necessary to be "born again," and that was the instruction of chap. iii. In chap. iv. it is a pure gift of which He speaks, and He would show Gentiles might have it, as well as Jews, for this was a poor Samaritan He was speaking to.

The life that is given brings in power, as well as a new nature. The new nature has certain characteristics, love, holiness, &c. "He that is born of God sinneth not." But there is another thing, viz., power; and without this the

very desire for holiness will occasion distress of soul and the sense of condemnation, and there will be neither peace, joy, liberty, nor consciousness of relationship; all which are formed on the *indwelling of the Spirit of God*. The Spirit of God produces these effects in the soul in which He dwells, bringing forth in us what is like God. Thus we see the difference between the Holy Ghost quickening, or giving a new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in us and giving us power.

The woman comes to draw. The Lord asks for drink. She is surprised at His asking *her* for water. Before, we have seen Him talking to a Jew, a Pharisee, a Rabbi, but here was a poor Samaritan. She was astonished at His having overleaped all bounds, and come in perfect freedom to speak to her. But here was the gift of grace come down to her as well as to the Jews.

Passing over the details of her conversation, which are most interesting, I will notice the lowliness of Jesus, in His acting towards her. His position

here is founded on His entire rejection as coming in the way of promise. He is on His way, as rejected, to Galilee, the place where God visits His remnant. (Isa. ix.) "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." He left Judea, and God leads Him through this wretched, apostate race; just a picture of the Lord's acting now in sovereign grace, gathering out Gentiles before He comes to the remnant. That which lays hold of a sinner is sovereign grace. Christ is rejected by man, and man is rejected by God. There is mutual and complete rejection. *Promise* is gone because *Christ, coming with the promises*, was rejected. "My soul abhorred them, and their souls abhorred me." It is now a rejected, humbled Christ, bestowed as the sovereign *gift of God*. "If thou knewest the gift of God." God was *giving* freely, and *He who gave* was there. He who could create another heaven and earth if He pleased, came to ask drink of her! What confidence in His grace it inspired! He does not expect her to ask of Him until

He has asked of her. Our pride would say, "If I accept favours of God, He will accept favours of me." Here is God Himself coming and saying, "If thou knewest the gift of God," &c. He would be dependent for a drink of the brook by the way; such was the position He took! When He could put Himself in such a place as to ask a favour of her, all the sluices of her confidence are opened. "He must needs go through Samaria." His path led through it. That was the path in which His love in coming down here put Him, and it overleaped all bounds.

There is nothing so hard for our vile hearts to understand as *grace*, but there is nothing so simple. If you knew the Person of Him who asks, you would know the perfectness of grace coming down to the wretchedness of man to bestow. It is not now you *must* be this or that, but here is God comes down to you. He is at perfect ease with the woman though she was going on with her sins; she a Samaritan, and yet there is God going on with her. The revela-

tion of God in this way gives the consciousness that she can get what He has to give. The moment a soul apprehends what it has in Christ, IT HAS IT. "Sir, give me this water."

There is a thought *added* now (ver. 16) her sins have to be made known. There is no understanding of what He has to give until the conscience is reached, and she has the conscience of sin. If the things of God could be reached by the natural understanding, man would in a sense be a match for God. But man is not in that position with God now, whatever his position was in innocence. Now when the conscience is opened it brings the sense of need. Then the sinner sees nothing but sins, and sees also that nothing but God's grace can meet them. A man never gets spiritual understanding until God has dealt with his conscience. Until the flesh is in a measure judged the Christian has no power to understand God. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is," &c. When I know the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, I know that I have

got. He shall never thirst, never thirst after anything else, whilst there will be the increasing sense of need of the living water continually. I cannot say this practically of one whose soul is hankering after earthly things. When there is this hard crust over the soul there is need of humbling; but the natural state of a Christian is to go on, and have more given. A Christian sunk down into the flesh is thirsting. If I hunt down to the bottom of his soul I may find the well; but there ought to be rather the sense of possession than of need in the soul. Here is rest and power. We have not only everlasting life in Him, from whom we shall never be separated, but the man has a well of water *in himself*. "It shall be in him a well of water." This is power coming down from God; heaven is brought down into my heart. It is the power of divine life bringing me into fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is nothing short of all that is in God dwelling in me. I have got something that lays hold of that life, the gift of

everything I can need, because everything is in Him—love, power, holiness, everything is in Him. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him," &c. A detected sinner is in a different case to being in possession of the well, and yet the detection was on the way to it. The way to bring this well into the heart was to convict of sin. She was in the presence of God! Do you think of that?—That we are in the presence of God. We should never sin if we did. The woman follows the natural course of her own thoughts in talking about the water from the well (verses 11, 12). But Christ says, "the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water." In using what sin gives in this world it is soon spent. The strength is gone in the spending—the spring becomes dry. But with spiritual things it is just the reverse, the more I spend the more I've got. The water becomes a well "springing up," spiritual capacity increases. "To him that hath shall be given." Besides, it leaves no desires for anything else, no hankering after that I have not

God. Mark, it is here the well of water in the individual. There is an eternal spring in my own soul. There's a power in the person associating him with all that is in God. The man drinks it in, receives it as a thirsty person, and then it becomes in him a well which makes him partaker of what is in God. It brings into intercourse with, and to *feeding*, in spiritual apprehension, on the things of God. It has not reference to outward gift, but to living power in the soul embracing all that the Father and the Son have, and it has its character and stamp in the person of the eternal life to which it springs. These everlasting things belong to the person who enjoys them. It springs up to everlasting life.

I now turn to Rom. viii. to trace the way in which the Spirit is brought out there as life and power. As the breath of life was given to the first Adam, and he became a living soul, so we have the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. After life there is power also. This is the consequence of the sentence passed upon sin

in its whole nature, not on sins only. In Christ on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh. God has dealt with it, and judged it in the person of Christ. As soon as I am quickened, there is the enquiry, How am I to get rid of this sense of sin in the flesh? It is already condemned. Not only are the sins condemned, but the principle of sin is condemned. "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh—they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." There is power, not only desire. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The Spirit is not only the source of the new nature, but the power that puts this new nature into living connexion with its object. It is not only the flesh on one side and the new nature on the other, but I have the Holy Ghost in the new nature. God has condemned sin in the flesh by the death and resurrection of Christ. There is the revelation of the Father and the Son, received by the soul, in which the Holy Ghost dwells.

tion. I am thrown into entire association with Christ. I am a child of God and have the consciousness of the Spirit of adoption. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," &c. We are set there by sovereign grace. It is not what *we think about it*, but what *we are*—"the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The Holy Ghost cannot say, "I do not know whether I am saved," "I doubt," "I hope to be saved." The Holy Ghost brings it into the heart, and gives the blessed sense of the relationship.

When the high priest went into the presence of God, the light shone upon all the names engraven on the breastplate, and that was an inferior relationship, but it is true that the same delight which the Father finds in Jesus, He finds in us. There is the shedding abroad in the heart of Divine love, by the Spirit, just as a candle sheds abroad its light in the place where it is.

So if the Holy Ghost really dwells in my heart God's love is there, for God the Holy Ghost is there. Though it is my heart, it is God's love that is there.

The Holy Ghost now works in power on the new nature, because Christ has dealt with the old. This is not like the Spirit as given to Balaam; but it is showing how the believer receives the Spirit after he is quickened. "Ye are not in the flesh, but *in the Spirit*." This puts me on the ground of what *God is to me*, and not *what I am to God*. As to our standing, this is our position. The Father loves me as He loves Jesus. I own no life but what the Spirit gives, and because of the Spirit dwelling thus in me as the grand link with the Father and the Son, there is not one bit of the believer which belongs to sin or to the devil; but spirit, soul, and body, we belong to God. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness."

Another thing is, that He will quicken these mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. In the burial of a Christian, I cannot say we commit the body to the earth, but to Him who redeemed it. There is also *relationship*. "Sons of God." If led of the Spirit I am a child, I have the spirit of adop-

The Spirit sheds it abroad by being there. Just as Christ being in the heart draws down his own love into it.

Again, if the Spirit thus dwells in us there will be the consciousness of groaning with the creation around. If we walk through the world with Christ's love filling the heart, there is not a single thing but will awaken sorrow—the sorrow not of irritability, but of love. Christ did ever the work of love, but with what a sense of the way in which death had come in. He was always sorrowing because all love. The Son of Man was "acquainted with grief," not only trouble, but grief. It went into his heart. We see Jesus groaning at the grave of Lazarus, although He knew what deliverance He could effect. If we had been going to do it we should have gone gaily in, because going to bring comfort to the family, but Jesus had such a sense of the groaning of creation that he groaned.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities by putting us in communion with God's love. The Spirit by dwelling in me

makes me to realize love in the midst of sorrow. Instead of selfishness it produces prostration of spirit in the sense of what is around. The Spirit takes up the sorrow which nature sinks under, but helps my infirmities by putting me into communion with the perfect love of God shewn in Christ's humiliation. The Holy Ghost being given to us in Christ, and God having come down to us in all our necessities, we are carried back into the midst of the sorrow and the sin in the sense of that in which believers groan. This woman at the well (John iv.) was conscious of the creation she belonged to. She had no power to overcome sin, but perhaps was well wearied with it; coming as she did in the heat of the day to draw water, not at the hour that others came, for shame. She did not know what she was coming for then, and when she had got the living water, she went back to the city to tell the Samaritans. Thus should we carry back the love which has delivered us into the world from which we have been delivered. The Spirit helpeth our

cold and indifferent to it, yet not selfishly affected by it, but full of tenderness and compassion towards those who are suffering. He hath set us an example that we should follow in his steps.

THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT.

John xiv.

Having taken up on other occasions the quickening power of the Spirit and also the Spirit as a well of water springing up to everlasting life, I now desire to look at the further blessing connected with the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

We have seen how the quickening is connected closely with Christ, and not only with Christ, but *entirely* and *simply* with Christ; born anew of the second Adam in contrast with the first. Then we saw the Spirit of God become a spring, or source in us; and there are the blessings flowing from that. There

infirmities. Our understandings are not fully informed of what we want, but the "Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." If God searches our hearts what does he see there? A quantity of sin to be sure, but He sees desires there. The Spirit maketh intercession according to God, and yet from poor creatures who do not know what to ask for. The use the Holy Ghost makes of it is to take up the groaning. Every groan I utter is the positive witness of blessing in the midst of sorrow because of the intercession of the Spirit according to God. What a well of water! it is not crying out for self, but so realizing the blessedness of God's presence in the midst of it that selfishness is gone, and a means opened while in the body of being the vessel of the intercession of the whole creation; all our own sufferings lost in the thought of its being the path to glory. Christ's heart was moved when He saw sorrow. He would not have us

are also relationships flowing from it. There is not only power given through the Spirit dwelling, but there are relationships resulting from the redemption accomplished. There are not desires only, but development and power of union and communion.

We have the Holy Ghost in virtue of the work of Christ, which gives perfect rest. In Christ we are set in the presence of God. The Spirit unfolds all the consequences of our being thus brought into God's presence by the work of Christ: the consequences in glory, the glory to come; and more than that the Spirit of God becomes the power for the exercise of those relationships. No man can know the blessedness of a relationship except in the exercise of it. As in nature it is so, so with the Divine relationship. All depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost down here.

Two great truths are connected with this:—First, The accepted Man, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, (not any man in creation) is in heaven.

The one who came down is gone up and is in the presence of God. Secondly, The Holy Ghost down here is associating us with all that Christ is in heaven. All that the Church has here is founded on this.

Thus we have three important truths as the result. First, The Holy Ghost makes my person His temple. Therefore it is said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." I must use my body as a vessel, an instrument of the Holy Ghost. His presence is the measure of my condition, His dwelling in me is the measure of my conduct. It is joy to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Power also is the result of being anointed with oil. — "We have an unction from the Holy One," &c.; and again, "led by the Spirit." The fact of the Holy Ghost's being here is the immense principle of the Christian's life. The next thing is, we are brought into fellowship with the *Son*—and the next is fellowship with the *Father*.

When Christ ascended on high, by virtue of his having become man, He could

say, "I ascend to my God and your God," and in virtue of His being God He could say "to my Father and your Father." His having made us children by adoption we have this special relationship with God, and so true, so deep, so real a thing is it, that He says, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God;" thus being rooted and grounded in love, that we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God. This is the amazing infinite sphere of blessing which we are brought into by the Holy Ghost. Because the Holy Ghost dwells in us He becomes the spring of affections and feelings suitable to the relationship. He cannot help it. A man feels it in his prayers. He finds his heart going out after the Lord. He has desires he cannot help expressing about the Church, &c. See the case of Ananias in Acts ix. 13. There is that kind of intimacy between him and Christ that he can reason as it were with Him, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man." Again, if it is a

question which concerns me as a child; I naturally ask my *Father* for certain things I want, but the soul cannot have freedom of intercourse with God in His majesty unless our hearts are clear before Him as our Father. We want in certain things to go to God as God, and in others as Father; and in both we have this blessed freedom of intercourse through the Spirit, as well as that of the members of the body, with Christ the Head. All are the free gift of God. When I fail I fly off to my Father to get help, for I cannot have communion with God when I've failed; and as a member of the body I need the Holy Ghost to take of Christ and make it mine because His. This is not community, all is *gift* to us, but all that Christ has and is in glory as man is ours, for he has given it to us—"Another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This is consequent upon Christ's going up to the Father. Christ goes up and receives the Holy Ghost because of what he has done for others. As Head of the

Church he receives it that the members may share it with Him. Jesus received the Holy Ghost down here for service. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, Acts i., but what is said in Acts ii. 33, is "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." In the one case He was *sealed* by the Spirit at His baptism; in the other He received the Holy Ghost to shed abroad on us at His ascension to the Father,—“I will send you *another* Comforter.” He calls Him "*another*," because Christ himself was their comforter while he was with them. Christ was to go away. He could not abide here. He must ascend to heaven. "By His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place." Christ being our advocate there, the Spirit comes to advocate our cause here.

It is said, "The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive." The world having broken with Christ, can have nothing whatever to do with this Spirit of truth.

They were not only to have this Comforter as they had had Christ, who only abode as their companion and then went away, but (ver. 17) He was also to be in them, and not only with them. Here, in ver. 16, it is, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." Here Christ is obtaining the Holy Ghost for them. In chap. xv. 26, it is, "the Comforter whom I will send unto you"—as divine Head of the Church, though a man. He had a title to dispose of everything, and *He sends* the Holy Ghost. (See also chap. xvi. 7.) Then another thing is, the Father sends Him in Christ's name, because of His acceptance of His work. The immense, the unchangeable, resting-place of all blessing is the name of Jesus.

As to its present condition, all connexion between the world and God is closed. (I do not speak of *providence*.) The world then sees Him no more, but Christ says, "ye see me." What an immense difference between the Church and the world—to see this blessed one.

ye shall live also." He unfolds this connexion afterwards. (ver. 20.) "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This is not said at the beginning of the chapter. It could not be said until there was union through the Holy Ghost's being given. They ought to have known the Father by Christ's being with them, but they could not know this further thing. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father," &c. When the Holy Ghost was sent down, the Church knew not only of the union of the Father and the Son, but also then *our* union: "*YE in me*." The Holy Ghost then leads to Christ as the object of our souls—to Christ as our life—and to the knowledge of Christ in the Father, and we in Christ. This source of life is in us. "Because I live ye shall live also." This is more than the fact of the security of life. The very One in whom he lived was to be the source of life to them. We have then the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. Instead of knowledge

He is the object before us. The Son having been rejected from the world, all communion between the world and the Father is closed. They say, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." "Now is the judgment of this world." "Upon us the ends of the world are come." "But ye see me." When the world sees nothing, we, in the power of faith, behold Him who is invisible; our eyes thus always resting on One in whom the Father finds delight—not the natural eyes of course, but I know that my affections are set upon the One in whom the Father is fully satisfied.

There was an adequate motive for the Father to love Christ. It is undiscerned by us in our natural minds, but the Holy Ghost brings us into blessed communion with the Father's mind. "Because I live ye shall live also." Believing in Him makes me know what His estimate is of Christ; and it is also by virtue of believing in Him that I have *life*. Not only is the *object* the same as the Father Himself has, but the life is the same. "Because I live

viewed in connexion with the Father Himself, and with the Son, it is "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." All is in virtue of accomplished redemption—the Son having taken His place at the right hand of God.

My relationship then is founded on Christ, and in all the perfectness of Christ's standing before God for me, but the power to enjoy it is the Holy Ghost. Christ takes his place on high—sin is all gone, for he has borne it away, perfectly atoned for it, in having been made *sin*. The holiness and the love of God have been made known by the dealing with sin upon the cross in a way in which nothing else could have revealed them. Having done it all Christ enters the presence of God the new man, and where He is, we are. Therefore *the place* of the Church involves entire deliverance from all fear, because having the spirit of adoption I am not before God now as my judge, because I am His child. My very existence as a Christian flows from this, I am born of God, a child in the

house. In virtue of being thus born I have my existence before God as His child—the work of Christ, of course, being the foundation. He has borne judgment—law, sin, &c., are all gone, and I am free from every charge before God. The reasoning goes on, Rom. viii. 13, “If children then heirs,” &c. All we now have and are will be manifested in glory, but we are now speaking of the position before the Father with Christ the model man, the First-born of many brethren. Have we lost anything of the majesty of God in all this? Certainly not. Christ has brought God to us in all His glorious attributes instead of taking from them. The soul has all the holiness, majesty, as well as love brought home to it. Reverence, adoration are wrought there by the Holy Ghost. A son does not the less admire the excellence of his father, because he is his father. All true worship is the returning back to God from us all that the Holy Ghost has revealed to us of God. Chap. xiv. 26, “He shall teach you all things, and

bring all things to your remembrance,” that is, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name. This is the full character of our relationship with Christ. He shall bring to your remembrance whatsoever *I have* said unto you—not only what *He is*, but the remembrance of all that Christ expressed on earth; and it is a delight to my heart. Every word that came from Christ’s mouth was God speaking through a man. Comfort, wisdom, love, all came from Him in perfection. “Thou hast given me the tongue of the learned,” &c. The Spirit does not, of course, reveal to me Christ as now on earth, but I have not lost Christ a bit as to what he was down here. He brings all that He was to our remembrance now. The Holy Ghost gives me Christ as the manna that came down from heaven, as well as what *He is now* as the hidden manna, and that is giving me to feed on Christ.

Mark the difference between Christ’s commandments and those under the law. Christ was life, and all His commands

were the expression of that life which He had in Himself. So with us; for we have the life in Him. *Christ is our life*, and His precepts are the guidance of the life which we have in Him. Did *life* result from what *we are doing*, all would be over with us. I see the ensnaring world all around me, but I have not only the Word of Christ to direct me, but I have the power of Divine life—*Christ Himself* to help me. 1 John i. “There is an object before me.” There is more direction for my feet in what *He is*.

Chap. xvi. 13. “I have many things to say to you,” &c. It is not here the *path* and teaching in general, as we have had, “But when He the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth.” This is a *present* thing; not “He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you,” different to His being the remembrancer of what He *had said* while He was with them on earth. What He hears He speaks. These are the things in Heaven brought down to earth by the Spirit who is on

earth. It is the revelation by the Spirit of all that Christ is. Having taken the place on earth as the servant, what He hears He makes known to us, and Christ is now in heaven for us. The Spirit also shows us things to come, He brings out all the glory before us, the future hope. I thus look forward to the time when God shall unite all in Christ as Head. “In the dispensation of the fulness of times that He might gather together in one all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” In the future all the glory is to be Christ’s and we are heirs of it. *It is to come*, but the Holy Ghost makes it known as *ours*. Thus I look forward to the time when all is manifested, and I am to share it with Him. The glory belongs to one who has identified Himself with and suffered for me. It belongs to Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, and all His glory is ours; and this is not all, for He says, “All that the Father hath is mine; therefore, said I, He shall take of mine and shall

show it unto you." Thus I am to know what that is. My soul is to know all the glory which this humbled Christ is to have. "He will guide you into all truth." Everything is set in its right place in the soul, Christ being the centre of all, and all being centred in Christ. All is our own as members of His body, and if He has set Him to be the Head over all, it is to His Church. The Holy Spirit leads us not only into the hope of the future glory, but also into the consequences of union with the Lord Jesus Christ now, in the most intimate relationship possible. The Holy Ghost shows us, in Christ, all the affections of Christ in exercise towards us, in virtue of that union as the bride of Christ, the Son, as Ephesians goes on to show: not only how the head is connected with the body, but how the husband is with the wife,—“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.” This is enjoined not only as a duty, but according to the example of Christ Himself—“No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and

cherisheth it even as the Lord the church.” Thus is this ministry of Christ towards us because of this relationship.

Mark the double character of holiness and power there is in this. Take care you do not grieve this Holy Spirit who brings you into the enjoyment of all this. Whatever is of the world and of the flesh grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed. It is the measure of what becomes a Christian, a spiritual man. Then as to power, we are to be filled with the Spirit—so filled that as to our place in heaven we shall be all joy. In the fulness of communion the soul gets its place in the heavenly choir, singing and making melody to the Lord. But then I am in this world of sorrow. And what am I to do? To see God in all; “giving thanks always for all things unto God and our Father,” “rejoicing in tribulation.” It naturally takes some time to work this thankfulness in us; but of Jesus Christ it is said when He was rejected by Chorazin and Bethsaida,

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father.” He saw God in it. And so when we can see sorrow coming from God, when we see that His hand is in it, we can thank Him for it. It is not so at once with us sometimes, but it is wrought in the soul afterwards, when the risings of the flesh are subdued.

Being filled with the Spirit, is having Christ the actual source of all that arises in us of thoughts and feelings. A man's spirituality is measured by this. When there is nothing else but Christ, we are filled with the Spirit. What liberty this is! Freedom from sin and all besides to serve God. The liberty of the saints must be a holy liberty. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death. We have the Spirit of adoption founded on redemption; thus we have liberty towards God and from Satan. What would have been taking Christ's liberty from Him, if it had been possible, would have been hindering His doing the Father's will.

There are two things for us to think of from this subject. 1st, The amazing grace which has set us in such a place, even as temples of the Holy Ghost. 2nd, We are called upon not to grieve the Holy Ghost who dwells in us, that we may not occupy Him with our faults and failings, instead of with those blessed things which are ours in Christ.

May we keep our affections fresh and happy in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

HOW THE LORD GIVES STRENGTH.

2 Cor. xii.

We are apt to make a mistake in speaking of our weakness and unprofitableness, forgetting that it is when we have done our duty we are unprofitable servants. When we speak of our weakness of spirituality or conduct, we mean our failure. But when Paul speaks of weakness, it is that which makes room for power, “when I am

weak then am I strong," and the result fully produced is with the consciousness of there being no strength in us. This is a very different thing to our failure. Our failure ought to lead us to humble ourselves before God for that which led to the failure. If we have not done what we ought, why have we not? We cannot glory in not having done it. There is a strength that the babe in Christ may have, and needs—power guided by wisdom, and that does not fail. When we have not been emptied of self, and are full of self-confidence, we must be broken down; pretension to strength is always in the way for failure. The first step towards failure is forgetting our entire and absolute dependence. As Christians, we *know* we have no strength, but *forget* we have none.

This chapter brings out in a remarkable way the dealings of God in giving strength. There is a wonderful scene going on in the heart of man. God does not let us always see it; it would not be good for us; we could not bear

it. Sometimes the veil is drawn aside; and, as in the case of Job, the heart is exposed to itself; God and Satan are seen to be there. It is a serious thing when God thus lifts the veil and shows what is going on for good and evil in a poor little heart like ours! God "hath set the world in their heart," and if it *ends* there, it is all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Another question as a moral question is the WILL of man. (When will is not at work and sorrow comes in, it is the happiest position; for sorrow without will is a means of blessing.) The first who begins that question is God. It is a question of Satan's power, man's will, and God's goodness in the midst of all that. You have the conscience of evil in your hearts, and the evil is too much for you; you do not know what to do with it. This conscience of good and evil has come in by the fall. Adam had the conscience of good and evil with sin and by sin. He had it by disobedience. Conscience therefore cannot guide a man right. The con-

verted man has the light of God to bear upon it. That shows man what he is. The soul has to own its badness, and to say, God is right. I go with Him morally in condemning myself. God shows man to be vile as to nature, rebellious as to will, and hateful towards God as to his affections. And it is a blessing when He shows it to us: but it is not *deliverance*. That is another thing. The glory of God's ways is that He puts us down completely as to ourselves, by the fact that our salvation is wrought out by another. When I had done nothing but sin, I find God has condemned sin in the flesh. Where? On Christ. I see my sin all measured and dealt with on the cross. Thus I am brought to God, and in the presence of God no one is proud. It is away from Him (as to the consciousness of it) that pride works.

The beginning of the chapter shows us what a "man in Christ" gets, revelations, &c, (if we do not have these now we shall by and by,) and afterwards we see what flesh in a man is, what it may

come to; debates, envyings, wraths, &c., as in the end of the chapter. There are the extremes of both, revelations in the third heaven, and flesh in its worst character. Most Christians are in neither one state nor the other practically.

How sadly we are generally dragging through this world as those who are not capable of having their citizenship in heaven! Of some God was not ashamed to be called their God, because they were looking for a city beyond this world. God is ashamed to be called the God of those whose hearts are only here.

Paul says, "I knew a man in Christ, of such an one will I glory." That is what all Christians should have got hold of. If you are not a man in Christ before God you are lost; it is presumption to think of being anything else. Can I know that I am going to be like Christ in glory, and not glory in it? We must glory. Paul was not glorying in the revelations when he was in them; he had no time then to glory; but he glo-

ried in what was his portion, Christ, his life, righteousness, glory, &c. Paul speaks of these revelations as having been given fourteen years ago. It is not intended that we should always be living in the wonderful enjoyments connected with the glory of Christ: if we were it would be sight, not faith. There was no danger of being puffed up when in the third heaven, it was when he came down to Paul again, there was the danger. There is no danger in the presence of God.

I learn now another thing, viz.; that it is not God's thought at all to alter my flesh, my old nature. The tree is bad; the flesh can be puffed up in Paul in the consciousness of having been in the third heaven. There is no good in *me*. I am a sinner. This is more than living under the curse of a broken law. Where *I* am, where my flesh is, I should pervert even the third heavens. In verse 7, we see that God turns that by which Satan would have tempted him, into a rod to keep down his pride. We are not told what the thorn was,

but it was something that made him despicable in preaching (alluded to in Galatians) to meet the pride that would come from the revelations. Numbers were converted, not by Paul's eloquence, but by the Lord's power. Their faith was not to be standing in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

Thus we have *Christ for the man* upon earth. We must be brought down to nothing, having no strength in ourselves. The flesh was not allowed to act in Paul, a thorn was sent *lest* he should be exalted above measure. That is the normal condition of a soul, viz., power given not to sin.

If the heart is exercised in dependence we judge the root of the evil, and it does not come out. Our business is to learn the evil in our character by judging it and not by its coming out. If I have a proud character, and am humbled before God about my pride, I go out, and am more humble than a very humble man by nature. I have not a bad conscience by the flesh being in

me, but I have if I allow it to act. The thorn is sent to prevent it.

In verse 9, we see how he came to *power*. The question of righteousness has been settled by Christ being at the right hand of God. It is a settled thing. It is practically learned when I am saved, and then I have a title to the third heaven. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." The Lord never gives us *intrinsic* strength. He makes us feel our dependence. I am made to feel my weakness when I see how my flesh would pervert even the blessings that are mine in Christ.

Therefore will I rather glory in infirmities, not in sins, but in infirmities, e.g. distresses, persecutions, &c. The Spirit kept him from that which would have given him a bad conscience.

DEATH WORKETH IN US.

2 Cor. iv.

Two things are remarkable in this chapter. 1st, How entirely it is a *new*

power by which we are enabled to glorify God—although we are so apt to mix up with it human energy and strength, and so bring in weakness. And 2ndly, The deep consciousness the apostle had of the value of the saints to the Lord. Therefore he could say, "All things are for your sakes;" and that is how he looks at himself. He offers himself a sacrifice—"ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." He could say, "Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For 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. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." He gives up himself to them, and says, "I am content to be all this, and to suffer all this; yea, to lose my life for your sake. It is all right. I ought to be a sacrifice for you; it is God's object

I should be for you." For He who was entitled to glory was content to leave the whole and to give up Himself—even His Messiahship and all. Christ gives up *Himself* for us. And therefore he could say, "All things are for your sakes." It is encouraging and cheering of heart to know that all things are for our sakes—"that the abundant grace," &c. Then the vessels in which the Lord may choose His grace to work are counted as sheep for the slaughter; always bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus. "Death works in us, but life in you." Just so far as death works in ourselves, life can work by us in blessing to others. And I would just say here, It is a remarkable way the apostle took Christ's place. Of course it was Christ's grace in him. By bearing about in the body the dying, not *my* dying, but the death of Christ, that had put an end to him, that another power might work by him. As far as my energy is concerned, it is death. "Always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in

John was beheaded He went into the wilderness. The world had nothing to minister to Him; but He in divine power ministered to all the necessities of poor sinners in these destitute circumstances; and here he showed, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The poor sinner found the place destitute, but Him full of all blessing in this destitute place. He healed the sick and abundantly fed the hungry, and made the wilderness the place of blessing, because the place where He was. Rejected righteousness in John was the occasion for drawing out more grace from Him.

You never see a Christian go through his course without being "brayed in a mortar." Unsuspected evil may demand this, but it will, under God's hand, be thus.

our mortal flesh." Not Paul's life, but the life of Jesus. Knowing, He that "raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also." He is counting on the same power that raised up Jesus raising him. Just as Christ took the resurrection as the answer to natural death, so the apostle, "that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

Two things I would notice:—1st, it is a comfort to be able to say, everything is for our sakes. Secondly, how far can we say death worketh in us, so that the life of Christ should be made manifest in our mortal body? If to shine out of our hearts it must be as bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and then, come what will, we can say, that the full portion of Christ is ours.

FRAGMENTS.

Matthew xiv. 1—21.

When John was cast into prison Jesus went into Galilee: but when

THE POWER OF REDEMPTION.

Read 2 Cor. v.

Redemption sets us at rest and in peace in the presence of God. The whole character of christian life flows from being brought back to God, and thus we are called to walk with God. To believe that we are brought back into the presence of God is not presumption; it is faith. It is presumption to think that we can be saved in any other way.

The character of our life is that of constant dependence on divine power. If we are "troubled on every side," without being distressed, it must be because the power of God is working. If "perplexed," without being in despair, it is because the power of God is there. But then I must hold myself entirely as a dead man as regards nature, and in the possession of a new life in Christ. "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." (iv. 10.)

With Paul the flesh was not allowed to interrupt the power of this divine life, so that it flowed on in an unhindered way. This is a blessed state, and we should know it in our measure. Whenever the life is in activity it always rests on its object; while the character of the life is that of perfect obedience and simple dependence. The obedience of Christ is very different from our thoughts of obedience, which often imply a will opposed to God, and moreover it involves in us much that is to be abstained from, as well as many claims to be yielded to. With *Christ* the Father's will was the motive, the only motive for whatever He did or suffered. Hence the motive I have in acting, as far as I am a new creature, is the doing of God's will.

It is an important fact that sacred Scripture never tells me to die to sin, for this I never could do. But the Scripture tells me that I am dead, that I have died with Christ, and this is christian liberty. I begin with being dead with Christ. For I cannot die to

sin, when sin is the character of my whole life apart from Christ. But how then have I this death? I have *another* life; I am alive in Christ. I am to mortify the flesh most surely, but then it is only in the power of this life which I have in Christ that I am able to do that; and God's dealings with us will help us therein. But when I look at self that is not faith: I cannot indeed see what the life is which I have got, it is all so marred. But when, by faith, I look at *Christ*, faith's object, I see it all—love, joy, patience, obedience. And we are partakers of this life, as Christ said, "Because I live ye shall live also." And again, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I thus get confidence with Him, and then His perfectness, which shines as light, shows me all my inconsistencies; and the more I see of them in the light of Christ's perfectness, the better.

In the power of this life I find myself practically dead, and I see my house in heaven, as it is expressed in

verse 2. This makes me groan. But why do I groan? Because I have seen and tasted the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in person I am not there yet. The groaning is not from disappointment, but from earnest desire, "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (Ver. 2.) As yet we are not in the positive possession of this glory, but longing to possess it; for faith rests on the ground of our position in that deliverance which has been wrought for us. Hence there is no Christian, however weak, but has a title to long for the glory to which he has been predestinated. It is true of every believer, that "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

But we must not think that the earnest of the Spirit is the earnest of God's love. It is the earnest of the inheritance, the earnest of glory; as in Ephesians it is said, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which

is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory."

What God has done to save us, He has done perfectly. He has loved us also perfectly, and because of this "we have boldness in the day of judgment." Not only have we boldness before the throne of grace, but "boldness in *the day of judgment*."

Christ also, into whose presence we go, if we depart, and before whose tribunal we are to appear, gave Himself for us, as the apostle says, "Who loved me and gave *himself* for me." He gave not His life only, not merely His word, but all; His affections, His heart, all that constituted Himself. We have not a thought of blessedness in Him, but He has given it to us. For though we are the subjects of redemption, He who has wrought redemption has an eternal interest and stake in it; as it is said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

There is no kind of hesitation or fear about himself or about believers when

Paul says, "We must all appear," or, as it might be read, "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." Faith realizes this manifestation before God as a present thing, and this is most healthful to the soul. It is that which gives activity to conscience, which is a most necessary thing in our daily walk with God and before men. Paul's conscience was always at work. He exercised himself day and night to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. His was a purged conscience, still it was an active and an exercised one; and it was manifest before God.

It may be that there is no outward or allowed evil, but there is something in every heart which we cannot help knowing that we are sparing, something that is not Christ in us. But we must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. All is indeed grace, but the present working of grace is to exercise the conscience. The effect of grace is *now* to bring into the light and to make manifest. Having salvation in

Lord, or in a state that will not bear to be manifested by the light. When life acts, it acts upon its object; and just as far as I am occupied with an object outside of myself, I get rid of self. This is true even naturally.

The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God; and hence I do not measure sin by breaking commandments merely, though that of course is sin, but I measure sin by the presence of the Holy Ghost in me; as it is said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." If I grieve the Spirit I lose my discernment, and sin dims my power of sight, and deadens my spiritual senses; so that the Spirit of God is obliged to bring me to the miserable work of being occupied with my sin (as Peter was) instead of being occupied with all that is precious and joyous in Christ. It is very grievous that, instead of doing the work which it is His delight to do—even revealing Christ—He is obliged to reveal our sins to us, till we weep like Peter over

Christ, and being seen in Him, and righteous too in Him, and consequently having peace of conscience and rest of heart, I can afford to judge myself: to judge myself in the light which makes all things manifest. The Lord grant us deliverance from every reserve in our poor hearts! for there is power of life in Christ to enable us to triumph over sin and death, and to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us, and died for us, and is now seated at the right hand of God. We are already risen in Him and are to be manifested with Him in the glory. Shall I then allow any wretched object or idle vanity to occupy me instead of Christ? It may be perhaps some folly, or some piece of self-importance, or some evil disposition, or even the cares of this life! All this grieves the Holy Spirit of God, and the consequence is, that the eye is dimmed and the power is gone. Of the good Shepherd it is said, "He restoreth my soul:" and therefore our hearts should not be satisfied to go on at a distance from the

our self-confidence and departure from the Lord. All is manifest unto Christ. For a moment look back on all your ways from your youth upwards, (but you cannot bear to do this if you have not settled peace,) look at them *all*, and look at them all in the light of God's Word and Spirit. Look at your sins before conversion and after conversion: how many there are! By this review, again and again, as humbled and led of the Spirit, I get a special increase of blessing. I retrace the foolishness and sinfulness of my doings and the patience and long-suffering of my God. I see Him guarding me here, teaching me there, lifting me up when I was ready to fall, and comforting me when I only expected punishment; and hence I adore and praise Him the more! But if it be thus in looking back *now*, how much more will it be in the moment when set in the glory! I shall then know Him and see Him, and trace all His ways in the fulness of that light which now, in the measure of it I possess, manifests Him and myself in

contrast. For surely it is just in the measure in which I can judge my ways in His presence, that the effect is adoration and praise.

It should always be remembered, that Christ is not our life, without being our righteousness; and that, neither is He our righteousness without being our life. If this be surely grasped, it will enable the soul to look at the judgment-seat of Christ with perfect calmness; and only, as has been stated, to use the thought of our being manifested there, to give present activity to conscience, if thinking of oneself, or if thinking of others to persuade them, if haply they may be brought into the light now, in grace, in which all will be manifested, ere long, for judgment. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade *men*." And then the Apostle immediately adds, as regards himself, "But we are made manifest unto God." This is a present thing. It is the light in which he is already manifested, and in which he seeks to walk. The knowledge and

power of the life we have will bring us peace in the place of terror, for Christ is the object of this life. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in *the face of Jesus Christ*." This fulness of glory, the glory of God Himself, we have as the treasure in our own souls, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Paul goes on to resurrection, and comes back again to the object of his faith, and then sees himself in the glory. I look to attain to this resurrection (Phil. iii.), and would have my conversation in heaven. In result we get a double truth, the power, the expectation working in us, and the blessed fact, that He will Himself receive us into the glory. The doctrine of all this is found in the last verse of the chapter. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Confidence is founded on *His* being

made our righteousness, who was made sin for us! But there is another thing which is exceedingly sweet to me, a profound consolation, a wonderful depth of joy, viz., to look on Christ, and to say, that is my life. Death has no power over the life of Christ. Divine power, working in life, swallows up death, and brings entire deliverance from what sin has wrought. The same divine power which wrought in Christ, in raising Him from the dead, is now working in us, and will raise us up by Jesus. And then how plainly do we see, that God does not take counsel of man. He takes His own thoughts and executes His counsels in the riches of His grace! The Prodigal's own thought was to be made "a hired servant." But the father received him according to *his* thoughts; robed and fed him according to *his* thoughts. So the Lord has set us in His place as man. As He said, when on earth, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world gives something out of itself; but Christ brings us into Himself—into

His joys, into His peace, into His glory. If Christ comes, mortality will be swallowed up of life; if He does not come, I shall give up mortality. We shall all appear before the judgment-seat, but before that we shall be up in the glory; received there by Christ, as He says in John xiv.: "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." Can I then be afraid of the tribunal? No. The more we learn of God's ways, the more we shall delight in God's ways. It is an amazing and solemn thought, that we are made manifest unto God! But faith realizes this position, viz., our position in the presence of God. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord," what then? Is he afraid? No! But the knowledge gives activity to love. "We persuade *men*." Paul stood in the presence of God, and manifest to God; and if we thus stand in the presence of God, we shall find out how little the heart knows of "bearing about in the

body, the dying of the Lord Jesus." We do not find it out, unless we are thus in the light.

The right effect of the judgment-seat is, not what shall be disclosed by it in future, for that is Christ, and I have solid peace because it is Christ in whose presence I shall appear, but *the present* power to be before it; making it the test of conscience now, and the standard by which we try our thoughts and ways. May we each know it, and walk in it!

PETER'S MINISTRY IN ACTS X.

In what various forms the grace of God shines on the pages of Scripture! At times the eye catches some fresh image of this, and looks at it with admiration. An instance of the way of grace will be found in this chapter.

It is the record of a piece of spiritual husbandry. In the narrative which it gives us, we have the *soil* that is about to be cultivated; then the *sower*, and

and did them with a heart that would fain bow to God and seek Him. God had found him, but he had not found God. But here, grace shines in its tenderness—for such a condition of soul as this is of price in His sight; so that a special message is now sent from heaven to guide it in the way of peace. The angel tells Cornelius that he had a memorial with God, and that he himself had been sent expressly to put him in the way of hearing words of salvation.

Now this is full of tender grace. The first throbbings of an awakened soul are precious with God—surely so. The parable of the prodigal son witnesses this. The love which the Lord felt for the rich young ruler in Mark x. may also, I believe, witness this. So, His words on the publican in the temple in Luke xviii., and the answer He gives the scribe in Mark xii. The first stirrings of a convicted conscience in the Samaritan of John iv., and so to this day, all such motions in all hearts are known to Him and by Him. And

the *seed*, and the *lord of the harvest* presiding over the whole work from first to last.

Cornelius and his household are the soil, now under the husbandry of God. Peter is the sower; and the words which he spoke in the house of Cornelius are the seed. This is all plain and simple. But the chief thing to be noticed, we may say, is the hand, the divine hand, that presides over and orders all this interesting action.

And in this action we get witnesses of grace in its *tenderness*, in its *strength*, and in its *glory*.

We have two visions, one to Cornelius and one to Peter.

Cornelius, at the time when this scene opens, was a piece of fallow-ground which had already been under the action of the plough. He was prepared for the sower by the hand of God, as all "good ground" is. He had been under certain exercises of conscience. The Father, I may say, had been drawing him. He was not at ease. He did many things religiously,

sweet and rich is that grace which takes such a form of condescending tenderness, and exercises that considerateness of love which listens to these feeblest and earliest cries of infancy. But as it is His own visitation that has awakened them, so does He wait on them to bring them to fruitfulness.

Peter, in this scene, was the minister of Christ. He was the sower, according to the figure I have used. He was the servant of the Lord Jesus in the gospel of God; but his heart needed to be enlarged. It was not of the same measure as the Master's; the Lord, therefore, has to send a message to him. A vision and a voice address him, while in a trance, to prepare him for a sowing time among the Gentiles. He was not up to this. He does not understand it, and he resents it. He must be right of course, and his Master wrong. "Not so, Lord," he says. His eye had never surveyed such distant fields as these, save with scorn, as no part of God's vineyard, or within the range of His husbandry. But the

Lord is peremptory, as of old He had been with Jonah, and lately with Ananias. Peter must go with the seed where God had already been with the plough—yea, where He had been, in counsel, ere the world began; for even then He had “cleansed” the Gentiles.

Thus, by the *strong* and the *tender* hand of God, the ground and the sower are found together. What forms of grace! Peter is made to visit this Gentile plough-land, this distant field, already broken up, but not as yet sown. Grace, as we saw, in its tenderness had valued the throbbings of a freshly awakened, uneasy conscience; and grace, as we have seen, in its strength and decision, rebukes and overrules the slow-hearted servant, who knew not the riches and the largeness of that truth which had been entrusted to him. Accordingly, these two visions, the one to Cornelius and the other to Peter, have different secrets in them, each very blessed. On the authority of the one, we may tell every convicted, trembling soul, that its trouble is known and

marked by God; on the authority of the other, we may tell every sower of the seed, that he may go to the ends of the earth with that which he has, and bear the tidings of full forgiveness and acceptance to every sinner that will, by faith, use Jesus and His salvation.

Light and consolation are here, surely. These two visions turn to blessed testimony; and as we have two visions in this chapter, so have we one seal. The seed of the sower is sanctioned in a glorious manner.

Peter's sermon, so to call it, is the seed. He tells the house of Cornelius, and all gathered then and there, (all were alike welcome to hear,) that Jesus had come preaching peace, had been slain by men, raised by God, and that His resurrection was set in the eyes of all men, both for judgment and salvation; for judgment on the world, for salvation, full remission of sins, to all who would believe in Him. The Holy Ghost then falls on all them that heard the word. He had fallen on the disciples assembled at Jerusalem at the appointed Jewish

Pentecost, sealing the great fact of the exaltation and glory of Jesus; now, He falls on a distant Gentile household, sealing the word of salvation as upon the ends of the earth.

What glorious grace was this, I may say. If we saw the *tenderness* of grace in the vision or mission that visited Cornelius, and the *strength*, or decision and largeness of grace in the voice and the vision that addressed themselves to Peter, here we see nothing less than the *glory* of grace; the Holy Ghost, who had before sealed the fact of the exaltation of Christ, now seals the truth of the salvation of every poor sinner all the world over, who will believe in Him!

Very blessed, surely. The Spirit endued the disciples at Pentecost, giving them words of life for all the nations of the earth; the Spirit now seals those words of life in this first-fruits of the nations.

May I not, therefore, say, that this chapter gives us the sight of a precious piece of divine husbandry? We see

the ground that was to be tilled, and then the sower, the seed, and the hand of the Lord of the harvest, presiding over all in ways of tender, earnest, and glorious grace; and all this to bring sinners back and home to God. It was not to put the Gentile and the Jew together, Cornelius and Peter, but to put God and the sinner together, that all this august and interesting action takes place; and to put them together under such a seal, as no malice or force of earth or hell can ever cancel. And there is no rest for us till this is reached; for our relation to God is, indeed, the *great* circumstance.

And on the authority of this chapter I may say, with what earnest personal zeal the Lord is seen to apply Himself to the work of salvation; for this chapter illustrates that. Visions, oracles, missions of angels, the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself, here tell us of His zeal. “I will do it,” says Jehovah, by His prophet, speaking of the redemption of Israel in the last day. “Assuredly with my whole heart

and my whole soul." What words! "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this," says another of the prophets, when prophesying of the kingdom; and in the day of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, as we read in Exodus ii., iii., we hear and see the same—the Lord so earnestly listens to the cry of Israel's sorrow. "Their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant, and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." It is all God, and God in deep personal affection. And then, the vision of the burning bush is the same. It tells us that God was already in Egypt, in the midst of His people's sorrows there, ere He rose to send Moses there.

All Scripture abounds with the witness of this intense personality, so to express it, with which the blessed God gives Himself to the work of salvation. The whole of Luke xv. again shows it to us. The personal *toil* of the Shepherd, the personal *diligence* of the

woman, the personal *affection* of the Father, in the three parables there, bespeak this. So, also, the whole of what is seen and heard in Luke i., ii. All heaven is there earnestly occupied with that great mystery, the birth of Jesus, or the incarnation of the Son, which, as we know, was the preparing of the way for the salvation of God to enter this world of sin and death. Gabriel, chief among those who wait in God's presence, is sent on special messages. Hosts of angels are there, and the glory fills the fields of Bethlehem. Old men and babes, matrons and maidens, youths and widows, shepherds and priests, all are summoned to take their place in the common joy.

Surely we may let our hearts know that God is a cheerful giver. He does not *send* His blessings, He *brings* them rather; and brings them not merely in His hand, but with His heart.

Surely, after meditating on this chapter we may say, with what tenderness and strength did God grant "repentance unto life" to the Gentiles! With what

a vigorous hand did He "open the door of faith" to them! (See Acts xi. 18; xiv. 27.) He does His things, blessed be His name, like Himself, in ways that tell us it is Himself that is doing them. Such an entrance did He make, in the day of this chapter, upon the nations of the earth, with the grace of His gospel; so that we, sinners of the Gentiles, may sit in His presence, and no longer talk of the crumbs under the table, but take of the full feast on the table—take of it as our's by title written and sealed by His own hand.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

Phil. ii. 5—13.

We get here a material help to the judgment of one's own soul as connected with one's *walk*, because we have the example of our Lord: a course, and a mind displayed in that course; *shown* to us *by the Spirit of God*. All the work connected with that Blessed One being emphatically the work of *obedience*, it is the mind of Christ definitely and

distinctly laid before us, as that which we are called upon to follow. From first to last He manifests *obedience*; from first to last He carries out the *mind of the Father*; from first to last carrying out and giving efficacy to the counsels of God and thoughts of the Father's heart. "Lo I come, to do *thy* will, O God!" On one only occasion was it, "If it *be* possible let this cup pass;" but even here it was immediately followed by, "*nevertheless not* my will, but thine!"

The gospels give us blessed *details*; but in this portion we get the *principle* that guided Him even more magnificently set forth than in the gospels we find it—tracing His whole course down: "Equal with God," yet "taking the form of a servant." Not merely the Son of *God* become Son of *man*, and as such to have certain glories which attach to Him as such—a place in the heavens—sway over the earth, &c.—*that* would have been a carrying out of the mind of God; but there is much more. We get (ver. 8) 'the

depths to which this spirit carried Him! There was the *cross*! that cross which had a legal curse connected with it. There was that cross, which, having a legal curse connected with it, made it to Him, as Son of God and as an Israelite, *emphatically bitter*! Was there that entire subjection of will? Not only not the *desire*, as with the first Adam, to stray out of the circumstances, but complete subjection to the will of His Father? Had He a mind? Had He a will? There was indeed a mind and a will in most entire subjection to the Father's mind! If the path of obedience God had traced for Him did not terminate on the life-side of the cross, but on the death-side of the cross, was He going to take it up? Yes! "He *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, *even* the death of the cross."

We have nothing told us here as to the object of the cross—nothing told us in connexion with the cross. It is simply presented in connexion with obedience and subjection to the Father's

will in it. We have nothing put out here, as we have elsewhere, as to how the cross was God's measure of what the world was—of what Satan was—of the thorough detection of what man was in the *flesh*—it is put out nakedly as what the *obedience* was of a man who walked on this earth! And it is not that His obedience ceases there—far from it. He was told to sit, and He sits, in patience waiting, and has waited these eighteen hundred years! When the time comes that the heavens are to be purged—by and by—He will be told to rise, and He will rise *in subjection to God*. He will do it in the perfect character of the servant! As it was in humiliation—as it is now in patience—as it will be by and by in glory—all traced out as the expression of the *obedient* mind, the *perfectly subject* mind.

There is an especial *force* to the soul in this, when He is speaking to us who have known the power of that cross, that that mind which was in Christ being found in us, that we should trace

out the expressions of that mind as it came out here upon the earth. I am sure if one has known that cross as the place where Christ settled with God, the question which He alone could entertain in the presence of God; (the question about our sins and guilt and how we find ourselves *free* among the dead;) so, I am sure, shall we be prepared to find every action of the spiritual life associating us with the cross here below.

Satan will ever be proving the flesh; but what does the flesh know of obedience? It is *indeed* important for us to walk in the Spirit. Unless there be the quiet, deliberate settlement in our minds that there will be the cross with it, it is impossible we shall find the steps by which He went, and which He thus tracked out for us in the desert, through the place where God first met us, and by which we shall reach the glory. All are linked with the *cross*—the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. I believe, if you weigh God's glory properly, you will not find any

circumstance in your onward path that is not connected with the sufferings of Christ. And I believe nothing so tests and settles what is of the flesh and what is of the Spirit as this principle of *obedience*, as being the mark of Christ's mind when in this world. This known, recognized principle of *responsibility to God*—individual responsibility—that which Christ ever walked in, will be found an immense help to our own souls. It is responsibility always; not in the old nature, (*that* can bring no fruit to God,) but in the new. Everything that is of the Spirit has the mark of the spirit of Christ's *obedience*. The more we have it the more isolated we shall be *with God*. Aye, even among the saints, it will be more, "Lo, I come to do *thy* will" *alone with God*, as we get to this point of fellowship with Christ and His obedience—an obedience in a path constantly strewn with sorrows.

Just turn to verses 12 and 13, where the apostle applies to the Philippians the exhortation which he had given

them, and they certainly will confirm this truth.

The presence of God and the nearness of God—not our taking hold of the power of God, but God's power laying hold of and working in us—produces a "fear and trembling." You can never have a really cultivated sense of the presence of God, without the consciousness of what the apostle refers to here, a "fear and trembling," for "it is *God* that worketh in us."

I have been surprised, as an individual, by the multitude of questions which are settled by this one answer so simply, when the question of any practical conduct appeared entangled, by observing how the principle of obedience downward, even unto death, which marked Christ's path from beginning to end, being applied to the person proposing the difficulty, will detect whether they were puzzled to know how Christ would have acted, or whether they had a will of their own that did not *like* the path which Christ would have taken.

against himself, *lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.*"

We ought, in the power of the Spirit, to be longing for Christ, because of the excellency there is in Him. It is not because of the judgments that are coming, that we should wish to be with the Lord; for in the book of Revelation, when all the judgments have been gone through, He presents Himself to the church as "the bright and morning star;" and the bride says, "Come," it is her response to Himself for what is in Himself, and not because of the judgments. And when He has presented Himself as "the bright and morning star" to the church, He does not add, "Surely I come quickly," until the church has first cried out, "Come," in answer to what He is in Himself, and therefore a desire produced by the revelation of Himself.

. The reader is requested to correct the following errors in printing, in the last number:

Page 291, 14th line from the top, read *love* for "leave."
298, 4th " bottom, read *doing* for "during."
299, 13th " top, read *Miletus*, for "Mileta."
304, 3rd " bottom, read *seventh* for "eighth."

It is truth we cannot evade, that the Spirit of Christ in the disciple leads into a path of humiliation and the setting aside of self, though it be step by step. In whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, it is the same mind that was in Christ Jesus that we are to seek, and that is a mind of deep *individual subjection* to God—a mind of entire and *constant obedience* to God here below, even if it be unto the death.

FRAGMENT.

We may have the hope of the Lord's coming as being glad to get to the end of the desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to be out of it because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong; we should be in the spirit of *waiting* pilgrims, not *weary* pilgrims, for we ought not to be weary. I do not say we are not weary, but we ought not to be so. "For consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER.

Matthew xxii.

It is a remarkable thing, until we know what man's heart is, that whenever the Lord Himself acts in the world, men call in question the authority by which He acts.

Take Moses, for example:—he was the minister and witness of the Jewish dispensation, and yet his authority was constantly questioned. It was the same also with the prophets:—they came with the testimony of God, and they slew them. When it was a question about religion, the accredited system that gives honour to the people, it was *received*, but the moment it was to affect the conscience before God, then it was called in question and *rejected*.

When the Lord comes in by the conscience, it is always called in question; but when it is something accredited as a system to raise the honour of the people, then it is received. Hence, we constantly find the Lord, in dealing with

men, does not refer to His miracles, or to anything of the sort, but applies Himself to the consciences and the souls of men.

Moses wrought miracles to establish his mission; and so Christ says, as a matter of testimony, "If I had not done among them works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Still, in His ministry, Christ appeals directly to the consciences and souls of the people. And the people felt this, when they said, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man were true." So now, where there is the outward acknowledgment of Christianity, it is necessary to appeal to the conscience, and not to stay at mere orthodoxy, and the general truths of the gospel.

When "the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him, as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you

one thing, which, if ye tell me, I in like-wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" After reasoning with themselves, they answered Jesus and said, "We cannot tell;" thus proving their moral incapacity to judge the smallest things of God. Therefore, said Jesus, If you cannot tell whether the mission of John was from heaven or of men, "neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Their confessed incompetency in the one case, to judge, proved their insufficiency in the other. For, in truth, the real power to judge right and wrong is found in the conscience of the man that is addressed. Hence, we know, when the soul is subject to the Spirit of God, by the conscience of the man being engaged in judging himself. When the judgment of the soul is about itself, one is sure that the truth is received in the conscience; but not till then do we know that the truth is "of God," because it has judged the heart; and thus the

judgment of the soul is formed about itself in the presence of God.

In the parable of the two sons, the Lord makes another appeal to their consciences; by putting the question, as to which did the will of his father; showing that the mere professor of religion was not judging himself before God at all. He says, "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." He was a self-willed, rebellious son,— "and said, *I will not*; but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise." He was a civil professor, "and said, I go, sir; and went not." Now Christianity has nothing to do with *civility* before God, but its power is found in the subjection of the heart and conscience to God. The mere profession of religion is nothing but hypocrisy before God, and therefore the Lord says, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." If the prophets are sent, and Christ is sent, it is plain that God is dealing with souls as not being fit to

enter the kingdom of God. Until the word of God has reached the conscience, the Lord talks about "*entering*" the kingdom; proving that they are all *out of it*. And God does so now with men. He takes them up as not being *in* the kingdom, but as having yet to enter it on the ground of conscience and repentance, and on the direct testimony of the word of God coming to the conscience.

But how was it that the publicans and harlots were nearer the kingdom of God than the Pharisees? Not, certainly, because they were vile merely, but because they were more subject in their consciences to the word of God, than the others.

If the word visits the soul, it brings the conscience down to the level of the word, and to an acceptance of the judgment which it brings; but if God is rejected, despair brings the conscience down to the level of every sinner, and to the conviction that it is without God.

But Christ now takes up another parable, for He is still dealing with the

Jews; and says, "There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it." He looked that His vineyard should bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. God sent His prophets seeking fruit, and them they ill-treated; and last of all He sent His Son, and Him they slew.

It is, plainly, not the principle of grace that is presented here, but of righteousness. It was seeking for fruit where there was no fruit to be had; for they hated His prophets and killed His Son.

This is the sure and only result of God's dealing with man on the principle of righteous requisition. And that not merely where the law is the standard of that requisition; but it is the same when the highest advantages of distin-

worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."

This testimony was not to Jews merely, but to the whole world. "So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." And then comes in the question of the wedding garment. Here we find professors again. The Lord has now totally relinquished the intention of seeking fruit from man, as man. He now deals with conscience, and conscience deals with *the sin of self*. So that when the conscience is roused by the word of God, it knows that God has judged it.

The Lord did seek for fruit in Israel; not in Cain's family, but amongst the people whom He had separated to Himself by many privileges. The Lord had such a dealing in the world with man, and He was then seeking for fruit. Of course He knew the end from the beginning; but man was thus tested and proved, and the result is the ex-

guishing goodness lay the ground of responsibility. Fruit may be sought, but there will be none; but the hatred of the heart will shew itself against Him by whom the advantages were bestowed. Hence, in the parable of the marriage supper, God is acting entirely on another principle—that of grace. "A certain king made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come." The Jews were the *bidden* people, and they would not come. "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." And they would not. Then "the king was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Here the Lord closes with them, as a nation, and takes up another thing. "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready but they which were bidden were not

pression, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how art thou become unto me the degenerate plant of a strange vine."

All these pains had been taken in the Lord's wisdom for producing fruit: and more than that, He *looked* for fruit; but there was no fruit to be had. God sent His prophets to Israel, showing that He expected fruits; nay, Christ Himself came in that character to the Jews. For God says, "I have yet one son, I will send him; they will reverence my son." They will give the fruit to Him. This is shown in the parable of the barren fig-tree. (Luke xiii. 6.) Thus God did seek for fruit. His ordinances, His word, His prophets, and last of all His Son, all were spent upon them. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" And yet no fruit was to be found in God's vineyard. One thing is certain, that the more care God took in providing for its bearing fruit, the more it brings out man's wickedness in refusing it. And last of all, and worst of all, it brings

out the deliberate enmity of the heart of man against God, in the wilfulness which crucified His Son. What good then would it do to dig about a bad tree? It would only bring forth more bad fruit. The law of God only brought out man's disobedience; and the claim of God for fruit did but provoke the enmity of the heart of man against God for claiming it. Not only have they refused to give the fruit when God sent His servants, but they have killed His Son. The thought of producing fruit, therefore, as if in the vineyard, when not there, is a proof of the truth not having reached the conscience. It is like the son who said, "I go, sir, and went not."

But to the parable. "A certain king made a marriage for his son:" he provided for his guests. Here God lays aside the principle of His whole dealings before. He is not now looking for fruit, for this one simple reason: He has proved the tree to be bad, or rather the soil to be bad. It is no matter what is sown in the soil; it is all bad. God is now inviting souls to partake of

what He has provided. He is not asking them to bring anything with them. The *king* is not asking them to bring their own supper with them. It would have been insulting his majesty for anyone to come with his own supper at the door. But there is *one thing* which they *must* have; it is the "*wedding-garment*"—Christ's righteousness. But suppose these poor people had said, I cannot come; I am so poorly clothed; or refused to take the wedding-garment. This would not do: there must be a wedding-garment for a wedding-supper. It does not signify whether one is rich and in costly apparel, or poor and in rags; each must have on the wedding-garment. Nothing suits God's house but the garment that suits the wedding which is going on there.

This dealing of God has displaced the principle of seeking fruit, which had been tried. God tried it by His own means and in every way, and has set it aside, because of the fruitlessness of the plant. And any that attempt to be accepted on this ground are denying

that God has tried it and set it aside. The thing in this parable is, that the condemnation depended not on anything in the person, but in the rejection of the invitation that was given. Christ first sent to the Jews (His friends) to invite them to the kingdom. Then He dies, and is raised again. He then sends again, saying, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." They rejected the invitation; and as for his servants, they slew them. So now, if any are rejecting the gospel of Christ, it is the same thing as if they had crucified God's Son. God is saying to you, "All things are ready." My dinner is ready; "my oxen and my fatlings are killed;"—Christ has died, and is risen again. There is not a thing to be done. All is ready; and yet it is shown that men prefer their five yoke of oxen to the gift of the only-begotten Son of God. God thus presses on the conscience of the men: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it; and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to

his merchandize," &c. God says by His servants, The supper is ready, all things are prepared—and then, not come on a certain day to supper; but, because Jesus is dead and risen, God has accomplished for Himself all things for His own glory in the perfect and finished work of Christ. The command is therefore, "Go ye into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." He does not count how many; but only turns back to see one thing. The guests have sat down at the table: but have they on the wedding-garment? Have *you* put on Christ? What a folly if you have not! He has sought you: have you on therefore the garment that suits the house? That suits the heart of the king who made the wedding? That suits the wedding-glory of the Lord Jesus? Unless He is met in this, He is met with insult in His own house. If the glory of God in Christ is not the thing in your heart, you have not understood what God is about. You have not got God's thoughts in bringing you there. It is for the glory of the Lord

Jesus Christ; and if you have not apprehended this, you have not apprehended the object of God, nor believed the truth of God in your soul. It is a wedding, and how have you forced yourself into God's house, not having God's thoughts, not having put on the wedding-garment that God has provided for the marriage of His Son? But suppose you have not got on this garment. What is there you have not, which you may not get this moment—freely get in Christ?

Everyone that is at the marriage adds so much to the glory of the feast—so much more to the honour of Him who made the marriage for His Son. Has your pride been brought down, so that your soul has submitted to Christ? If so, you have submitted to an accomplished salvation.

When the guest is seated at the table, he is happy and secure in the enjoyment of what He who had provided the feast had called him in to partake of. And God is satisfied in beholding him who has put on the Lord Jesus Christ as his righteousness. It does become us to

finds us alike sinners and at a distance from God, when received, sets the heart in the place of nearness to Himself, and in the place of the precious privilege of listening to all that Christ has to tell us about His own and His father's love. Especially is it not enough to heed these precious communications as truths presented in the form of general address; they should be listened to as the very voice of Christ addressing the soul. It is to me—to you—that the Son of God, whose blood has washed away our sins, is speaking when He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He is not now speaking to "uncircumcised hearts and ears," or abroad amongst the unheeding multitudes; but to His own disciples—alone and apart in that room, where in infinite grace He has just laid aside the towel and taken His garments again, after washing their feet.

Many things might well fill their hearts with sorrow—the treachery of one, the denial of another, and the cowardice of all; but especially the

honour the Lord Jesus Christ in all our ways; but the fruits of the Spirit are—what? "Love, joy, peace:" the first fruits, those nearest to the source, are love, joy, and peace, as the soul rests on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All setting up of fruits, apart from this, is the rejection of Christ, and is contrary to His glory.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

John xiv.

Most touching and comforting to the heart of the believer are the communications of the Lord Jesus which are recorded in these four connected chapters of this wondrous gospel.* And there is no fruit of grace more precious, nor any that more endears God to the soul than that which sets the heart in peace to receive the overflowings of Christ's love in this form of personal address. It can never be too strongly borne in mind that the grace which

* Chapters xiv., xv., xvi., xvii.

thought of the loss of His companionship, which had been, without their almost knowing it, everything to them and in the place of everything besides. Still He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." How tender is this grace! But why not troubled? Because *faith* should ere long do more than sight, even in regard to *Himself*, as well as with regard to their eternal portion on high. He says, "You *believe* in God"—unseen, unknown, except by *faith*—still *God*—God known, trusted, loved, owned, waited for, prayed to, the spring of comfort, and the eternal stay of the righteous—"Believe also in me." This is the precious secret. Faith in Jesus tells the heart not of what He once *was*, but of what He now *is*. Instructed indeed by the *past* of His precious history of love, and grace, and condescension, and gentle goodness, *faith* in Him gathers all up into a present *now*, and gives all a personal, present reality to the soul. Yes, gracious Lord, to *believe in thee*, is that which brings thee, with all thine untold love and grace, to dwell

with personal, present comfort in my soul!

Let us not think that Christ is here laying the basis of their salvation, which once secured, the heart has no more to seek. He is not doing this, but He is opening the springs of eternal *comfort* in a world that would soon present an utter blank to their sorrowing souls. He says, "Believe also in me." You have known me here by the seeing of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and you have left all for me. Now you must "believe in me," and faith will follow me up where I was before; there not another, but the same, and with the same undying, unchanging interest in you.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: (abodes:) if it were not so, I would have told you." It is *the Father's house*, the *home* of the family, where "the first-born amongst many brethren" is gone before; and He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." How surely, if *Christ be known*, really known, heaven becomes the object of desire. But then

POWER TAKEN BY GOD.

Rev. xix. 1—6.

We are very little conscious of the blessing granted us, in being made acquainted with God's purposes, even those of judgment. The *first* thing, of course, for the soul to be anxious about, is the possession of *peace with God*. But then the heart will not be shut up to that, but is enlarged of God, to enter into the whole scene and scope of glory, in which the Lord Jesus Christ delights, and in which He will have us with Him; and, in connexion with this scene, into the judgments on opposers and enemies, consequent on His taking His inheritance.

If we think of the past or the present, in scripture or profane history, and consider how power has been abused, we cannot wonder at the joy Heaven evinces, and the song of praise bursting forth at God's taking the government:—"The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Trace it back to the flood. After delegating the new world to Noah, we find man despising the authority of God, and idol-

it is no longer heaven in its vagueness, nor God in the distance of His creative power or in His uncreated glory; but it is the *Father's house* in all its positive attractiveness, and the Father in all the grace and love presented in that endearing name.

"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." Sure never were there words more simple; but what floods of revelation do they pour into the soul. How is the heart of the Lord Jesus still linked with His saints. Himself it is that is preparing a place for us; it is in *His Father's house* we are to dwell; it is He Himself that is coming again. He says He will receive us to Himself, and where He is there we shall be also.

Lord Jesus, it is enough. We want no more. We wait thy coming. *Thy* heart it is that is careful for our happiness and provident of our home. *Thy* love designs, *thy* power accomplishes, and *thy* faithfulness secures it all.

POWER TAKEN BY GOD. 405

atry coming in; in fact, the whole course of the world is according to the prince of the power of the air—according to Satan—and not according to God; all is apostate from God! The more religious they were, the more Satan was honoured. As the apostle says, "The things the Gentiles offer, they offer to devils and not to God." It is not simply the natural lusts contending, and the motives enlisted on the side of sin; every way, it is all the devil's. What a change, when God shall take the power into His own hands, and we can sing, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

All idolatry is summed up in Babylon, "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." Go back to Nebuchadnezzar. The head of gold turns to idolatry. And I would note here, that all that was connected with the worship of Pluto in pagan religion, (a shadow of truth men never effaced even here, though hell and the devil all that remained of it,) and you will see that the unity of the Godhead was not the truth denied. That which man quarrelled with was *that*

which reveals the Mediator. Satan cannot deny there is a God, but he will try to hinder (by putting another object between) His light and love from shining into the heart and conscience, and so revealing Him who alone can give us peace. When the golden calf was made, the devil did not take away the name of Jehovah; for they said, "To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah." So now it is not the name of God cast out; but the introduction of that which hides the truth. All Satan's aim is to blot out the Mediator. So John, in his epistles, when Heathenism and Judaism were combined in this one object, meets it by "God is light," and "God is love." And the saints are to be partakers of the same. So long as Satan can hinder that, he will give the name, and call it Christianity; but his object is to keep up distance between our souls and God, and to prevent us from reaching the blessed end for which Jesus suffered—"who died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Blessed be God, we have such a mediator, who brings us to God, raising us up to

out in its place. The pretended heavenly thing removed, Christ will bring forth His bride and produce her before the world in the glory prepared for her. While He is hid with God, we are hid too. Our display shall be with His display. The Church and the world cannot go on together. By the Holy Ghost she is planted and set down here in the character of witness. In as far as she is true, she is hated by the world. For a brief season there was gladness and the people glorified; but she has to walk by faith not by sight now. A heavenly character is hers. "Ye are not of this world." And He cannot appear till we come forth with Him.

God will have realities. Now although He is bearing with corruption, it is only in order to the gathering to Himself His Church. She having gone up and been received of Christ, He will come back with her, and be manifested to all. May we keep ourselves for Him until He comes.

Him; not as Satan tries to bring God down to us—"after the similitude of a calf eating hay." The corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ is Satan's wide-spread power over the nations in the hands of Babylon,—but "Strong is the Lord God that judgeth her."

The first verse ascribes salvation and glory, &c., to God—not to the Lamb—but to God on the throne, reigning; first, executing judgment, then reigning; to the God of heaven sitting on the throne, (not coming to earth in the characters known to the Old Testament saints, as Shaddai and Jehovah,) judging Babylon. He reserves to Himself the judgment which puts down Satan's power and malice. Be not surprised at power unintelligible, yet chaining men's minds. It is Satan's work. It is quite beyond us, and cannot be put down till the Lord God takes the power and gives perfect deliverance. Christ cannot display His long-affianced bride until the evil is removed, that which is false and corrupt put aside, and that which is true brought

GOD'S GOVERNMENTAL DEALINGS.

In the early days of the Church, the elders were called for, and prayer was made. If the sick man confessed his sin, there was forgiveness; and if thus healed by prayer, and life was spared, it is plainly a question of God's governmental judgment, and not of salvation. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death (plainly temporal death), he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." (1 John v. 16.)

This is certainly not a question of eternal life, but of temporal government; and the Church ought to be God's interpreter in this—"One amongst a thousand to show man his uprightness"—and able to discern God's mind. If a soul that knows the grace of God has committed sin, his real place of "uprightness" is the confession of the sin. God has concentrated His mercies in the Church, the place where redemption is

owned, and there ought to be spiritual power to discern in such cases. There is not *law* now to bring sin to the conscience; but there is righteous chastisement in God's family; and we sometimes see immediate discipline for immediate faults. But if the will is broken, and sin is judged, the need of chastening no longer exists, and it is removed. Mercy, indeed, is over all God's works; still, where redemption is owned, God's governmental power is exercised, and there ought to be the knowledge of it, according to the revelation God has given of Himself, and of His ways.

CREATION.

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."—Gen. i. 31.

THE earth beneath is beautiful,
And every tree and flower;
The heaven above is beautiful,
In sunshine and in shower.

A thing polluted 'neath the curse;
A troubled groan is all,
That meets the eye and ear of faith,
Since Adam's fearful fall.

And all must pass like fleeting clouds
Of early morn away.
The whole creation waits its change,
Its solemn purging day.

The Lord of day, the peerless sun,
Shall turn to darkness soon;
The shadow of the day go down
Upon the gentle moon.

The stars which through six thousand years
Their changeless course have kept,
Shall fall like withered leaves o'er which
The autumn blast hath swept.

And He whose voice once shook the earth,
The trembling heavens shall move,
And judgment's voice awake the hearts
That never woke to love.

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The golden day is beautiful,
That wakes the world with light;
And beautiful the gems that bind
The shadowy brow of night.

There's beauty where the tempest flaps
Her dark wing o'er the deep;
And where the calm, still waters lie
Hushed into quiet sleep.

It shineth o'er the ancient hills,
Whose mighty bosoms hold
Memorials of a giant race
That walked the earth of old.

And down amid the blossom'd vales,
And through the twilight wood,
God hath made all things beautiful,
And all was very good.

Ah! who would think, to look abroad
Upon a world so fair,
That all is enmity with God,
That sin and death are there?

Alas! alas! the vision bright
Is but a fading dream—
Those scenes of beauty and delight,
They are not what they seem.

THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."—Eph. vi.

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LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1860.

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THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

MEDIATION, PRIESTHOOD, INTERCESSION, SONSHIP.

MUCH as may have been written and taught on the subjects presented in the heading of this paper, it will often be found that there is a want of distinctness in the minds of believers, as to their place and application, as they are unfolded in scripture.

The object of this paper is not so much to enter into the nature and results of mediation, priesthood, intercession, and sonship, as to present the place and bearing of each for edification and profit. In attempting this, scripture alone must be our guide. And he who studies scripture most will be most struck with

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its wondrous perfectness; and at the same time will be most impressed with his own imperfect apprehension of its divine and infinite fulness. Augustine used to say, "*Adoro plenitudinem scripturæ!*" And we, in like sense, may say, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part."

All truth, however, has its place—that of grace, that of privilege, that of responsibility, that which views us as creatures, and that which relates to us as children; that which discloses our position, as risen with Christ, and seated in heavenly places, and that which directs our walk and worship, while here on earth; and all should be sought to be maintained in practical effect.

Nothing can be plainer, from scripture, than that the believer is viewed in different positions and different relationships and aspects, and the truth appropriate to each is to be carefully noted. There is the position of being in the heavenlies in Christ, and also of being upon earth, as to our members. There is the relationship of children, and the

fruit of the Father's infinite love and grace could alone be ours—could alone be possible it should be ours.

As little can sacrifice, or mediation, or priesthood, be present to the mind in conjunction with the thought of the blessed, wondrous truth of our being "members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones." This is not its place. Here it is the participation of a common life and the union of the members of the body with the head. Any other idea interposed would be like "not holding the head," and would be the introduction, in a figurative sense, of schism into the body.

In sonship also, the same distinctness and separation of ideas exist. The title and privilege of sons presents relationship to God, in the correlative position of Father. Hence it is characterized by liberty of access, by the spirit of confidence, and, if you please, subjection to the Father's will; but especially the spirit of adoption is that which is essential to it, and characterizes the relationship. It is the result of Christ's whole

responsibility of servants. There is the position of worshippers, and that of witnesses for Christ. There is the place of pilgrimage on earth, and there is the subjection of creatures to God as supreme: while, as to all the springs of our life and blessing, it is said, with marvellous grace, "We are in him, that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal life."

The idea of mediation, priesthood, or intercession is not connected with the thought of the Church's position as stated in Ephesians ii. 5, "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ;" except indeed as to result. For however this blessed position be the result and fruit of mediation, &c., what is presented in it is, union in life, and identity of place with Him who is our life. It is a position which is marked and characterized by the position of that blessed One through whose love and excellency, and sorrows, and death, this

work in redemption, as it is said, in Gal. iv. 4—6, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because *ye are sons* [he here speaks of Gentiles, as before of Jews, when He says, 'that *we* might,' &c.] God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." Under the law believers were in the position of servants; but it is here stated that they must be redeemed from under the law, in order to receive the adoption of sons, law and sonship being impossible to stand together. The Gentiles being sons of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, receive the Spirit of God's Son, or the spirit of adoption, or sonship, in accordance with their relationship.

The spirit of adoption, then, is associated with sonship, and not law, or mediation, or priesthood. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." As sons of God we

are partakers, not only of the effects of Christ's death, but we are brought into the same relationship to the Father, and into fellowship with the Father who gave His Son for us, and into fellowship with the Son, who is our deliverer.

In general, then, it may be said, that mediation is necessary to establish the relation between God and the creature, which sin had interrupted: as it is stated (1 Tim. ii. 5), "There is one God, and one mediator between *God* and *men*, the man Christ Jesus."

Priesthood and intercession maintain the practical worship of those brought nigh to God.

Mediation presents Christ as accomplishing the grounds of reconciliation between God and man. The very term indicates this. It is one coming between two parties. "A mediator is not a mediator of one." There must be two parties where mediation is at work. This was the case in the giving of the law. "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." Moses was this mediator; not as accomplishing the con-

have availed as the basis of the people's forgiveness. Hence, the answer of the Lord, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

Moses was the mediator of the law, as passing from the people to God, and from God to the people; and as receiving the law from God, and communicating it to the people. But the law being a dispensation of requirement, no mediator could bring the parties together. I do not, of course, speak here of Christ "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But Christ is no mediator of law; but the mediator of the new covenant, which was in truth a covenant of promises; and He accomplishes all that was essential to make it possible for the promises to take effect. This is what is implied in the passage already quoted from Galatians. "A mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." The contrast here is plainly between law and promise. Law, of necessity, supposes two parties, and allows of a third, as mediator. But promise is restricted to

ditions of the law, but as receiving it from God and communicating it to the people. "And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord. . . . And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments." (Exodus xxiv. 2, 3.) It needs not to dwell here on the mediation and intercession of Moses, after the people had sinned in making the calf (Exodus xxxii.), since, lovely as it is in its place, it only presents the contrast to Christ's mediation and intercession, rather than the type. This may be seen in the expression of Moses, "I will go up unto the Lord: *peradventure* I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written." This could not be—nor if it could, would it

one. "God is one." God gives the promise, and He fulfils the conditions which can alone make it take effect. Hence the force of the expression of Christ, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." It is that which gives effect to the new covenant; as the mediator brings the promiser and those to whom the promises are to be accomplished together. Still, it cannot be said that the Church or believers are brought under the formal terms of the new covenant. Their connexion is with Christ as the mediator of it, and with His blood, which is the blood of the new covenant. But the new covenant is to be made with Israel, who possessed the old covenant. This is plainly stated in Jeremiah and in the Hebrews, where the new covenant is only introduced to show that the first was old. (See Jer. xxxi. 31—34, and Heb. viii.) This is by no means to deprive believers of their rightful portion through grace; but, in truth, simply to enlarge its sphere. For if we speak of promises, it is not said, the promises of

the new covenant are ours, as under that covenant, but "ALL the promises of God"—however many and great they may be—"in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." In Christ we inherit them all.

"There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This is much more general in its sense. It presents Christ as the necessary and provided ground of reconciliation between God and men. He is here the daysman of Job, necessary and able to bring both parties together.

The Church of God can only be said to be the subject of mediation in regard to the common condition of sin and distance from God of its individual members, since all "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." But the Church is in the enjoyment of the full effect of Christ's mediation; as in Colossians, (chap. i. 20, 21,) when speaking of God's purpose to reconcile all things to Himself by Jesus, it is immediately added with regard to believers, "*You hath he reconciled in the body of*

his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight."

Priesthood is always viewed as the medium of worship for an accepted people. Israel, as an earthly people, yet brought near to God, received their priesthood after their redemption from Egypt. However, it only presented the shadows of good things to come. Priesthood cannot be associated with the highest position of the Church as members of Christ's body, however it has to do with the worship of the Church on earth. For if we speak of having "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," it is plain that both sacrifice and priest must be before the mind, as essentially connected with "the holiest of all." Still, it is in Melchizedec-character, and in the power of an endless life, that the Lord Jesus is priest to believers.

Intercession is based upon priesthood, as we see by Heb. vii. 24, 25. "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; wherefore,

he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." But it is presented apart, in the question of our security, in Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession* for us." Moreover, the Holy Ghost in the believer makes intercession, as it is said, Rom. viii. 26, "The Spirit itself *maketh intercession* for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." And, again, "He *maketh intercession* for the saints according to God."

There would be a moral incongruity in associating anything but the affections and conduct, which belong to the relationship, with the Church's title of the Bride of Christ. It is plain that, if my heart be occupied with this blessed relationship of the Church toward Christ, I can only understand how I ought to feel, as an individual member, by having before my mind what is suited to this position, in its purest and truest character, as an

earthly position and relationship. In my intercourse too with God in the relationship of a child, my heart is only occupied with the grace and love which have put me into this relationship, and with the character of Him whom I delight to own as Father and God. All truth, again it may be said, has its place; but then, how varied its character and how vast the range of that grace of which it is the perfect but varied expression! And how our hearts need enlargement according to the prayer of the apostle, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

See 1 John iv. 13—17.

John says, teaching us under the Holy Ghost, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." John himself afterwards experienced the boldness of which this scripture speaks.

In the Isle of Patmos he was brought into a day of judgment. The first revelation he had there of the Lord Jesus Christ was a revelation of Him in *judicial* glory. He saw the Son of man standing among the golden candlesticks, with eyes of flame, a voice as of many waters, a countenance as of the sun in his strength, and with feet as though they burnt in a furnace. And all this, and more of the like kind, was a solemn, terrible exhibition of Christ in the place of judgment. Before Him John falls as one dead. But the Lord speaks comfortably to him. "Fear not," says He, "I am the First and the Last; I am he

that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." By this He would impart to His servant, though now in the presence of judicial glory, all the virtue of His own condition, as the One who was in the place of victory over all the power of the enemy. As He Himself was, so would He have John to be. (See Rev. i.)

This was excellent and wonderful, and full of blessing. And John at once proves in his soul the power of all this, and acquires "boldness" in that "day of judgment." For now he listens to the voice of this Son of man challenging and judging the churches, but he listens unmoved (enjoying the boldness he had acquired) from beginning to end.

This, I may say, has a great character in it. But still more. Another scene of judgment succeeds this of the Son of man among the candlesticks, and John is set in the presence of it. He is summoned by the sound of a trumpet to heaven, and heaven was then preparing itself for judgment. Thrones were there,

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and they were thrones of judgment, for the elders which sat on them were clothed in white raiment; and voices, lightning, and thunder were seen and heard there, witnesses that the Lord was about to rise up out of His holy place for judgment and in wrath.

But John still maintains the boldness he had acquired. And so all through the action of the book. Trumpets, vials, earthquakes, fire, smoke, and other terrible sights and symbols, enough to make a Moses quake, as in a day of Sinai, pass before him. The rider on the white horse and the great white throne are seen, and also the scene of "the second death" in its terrors. But John is as unmoved as the living creatures and crowned elders themselves. They were on high, but he was still "in this world;" they were glorified, but he was still in the body; but he is as calm as they are. As they were, so was he—such was his boldness in that day of judgment. And when the sealed book is seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and a loud voice, as of

a strong angel challenges all to loose it, instead of dreading the moment when such an awful volume should be opened, he weeps because no one was found equal to do so. He longs to have the secret of the throne disclosed, though that throne was a throne of judgment.

Thus is it with John in the Book of the Apocalypse. But we may observe, that something of this same security and its attending boldness, in days of judgment, had been enjoyed by the elect of God in earlier times—as in the time of *the flood*, in the day of the *overthrow of Sodom*, at the time of the *exodus*, and also at the time of the *passage of the Jordan*. These were days of judgment; but the security thrown around the elect was nothing less than God's own. He was imparting His own safety, so to speak, to His people then.

He shut Noah in the ark *with His own hand*. The waters were then the ministers of His judgment, but his hand kept them outside. And they could no more prevail over God's *hand*, than they could over His *throne*. His safety,

therefore, was Noah's. As He was, so was Noah, in that day of judgment.

So in the judgment of the cities of the plain, even in the behalf of such an one as Lot. Lot was saved so as by fire, out of the fire—a salvation in nowise honourable to himself. He suffered loss, for his works were all burnt up. But the angel *could do nothing till Lot was clean delivered*. And I ask, was not that also as it were *divine security*?

In the night of Egypt it was the same. He who carried the sword had appointed the blood. He, to whom the vengeance belonged, the Judge who was executing the judgment, had ordained and pledged the deliverance. "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Was not this imparting His own security again to His people in a day of judgment? I say not how far they may have experienced or tasted "boldness" in their spirit, but this was title to it.

And so, in the passage of the Jordan. The waters were then, as in the day of Noah, ready to overflow their banks, as

in the time of harvest. But the priests were in the midst of them, and the ark or the presence of God likewise. And there the ark and the priests remained till all the people had passed over. Jesus was in the boat, and He must sink if the disciples did. The safety of the camp was as the safety of the ark. As it was, so were *they*, though amid the swellings of Jordan. The judgment of Canaan was beginning, but Israel was under *divine securities*.

All this witnesses again and again how the Lord shares His own condition with His elect in the hour of their most solemn necessity. He is beyond judgment, above it, the executor of it, but the value of His own place He imparts to them, while they are still in the place or world that is to be judged.

Thus do we see it from the beginning. But our Scripture (1 John iv. 13—17) tells us that we now enter on our title to this same boldness *in somewhat a new way*.

The apostle declares that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the

world," and that the love which thus deals with us is a "perfect" love. That the Father should so set His heart upon our return to Him—that in order to accomplish it, He should send the Son from the bosom, *this is perfect love*. And the fruit of this perfect love is nothing less than this, (and of course it could not be,) that we have boldness in the day of judgment. (See 1 John iv. 13—17.)

Noah, as we have seen, had boldness in such a day, because the hand of God had shut him in. Lot also, because the angel who acted under the God of judgment, could do nothing till Lot was safe. So Israel in Egypt, and Israel in the Jordan, as we have also seen, had like divine security from the ordinance or presence of God. But we, the saints of this gospel-day, whom the Holy Ghost is teaching through the apostle, have "boldness in the coming day of judgment by a more excellent and wonderful title—because *we are loved with a perfect love*. God has put the value of the Son of the bosom upon us, and

the love that has done that is a perfect love.

This surpasses. Our boldness has truly a wondrous character attached to it. It is conferred on us, not merely by *the hand*, or by the *ordinance* of God, but by His *love*. Noah, and Lot, and the children of Israel, in their several days of judgment, might have said, "As he is, so are we," because God had made Himself their security. His safety was theirs, as we have seen. But we, the saints of this day, resolve our security into the love of God, as they did into the hand or ordinance of God. The security is the same—equal and perfect in each case. But ours is the witness of a nearer and more affecting title. Ours is personal. Noah was in the ark; we are in God. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." And in a *new* sense we say, "As he is, so are we in this world." We are *loved* as He is—"accepted," as we read in another place, "in the Beloved." We are not only secured, but loved. Ours is boldness in the day of judgment, because there is

with us or upon us the perfect love of Him to whom judgment belongs.*

“THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS
THE EYE.”

Read Luke xi. 33—36.

THE candle being lighted, there it is, whether people can see it or not. A *blind man* perceives not the light, though it may be shining never so bright. So if a man likes to go in the dark, I should say he has some bad motive in his heart; or else his eyes are bad, and cannot bear the light. But if my eyes are sound, I joy in the light. So the *word* is painful to one who has not clear

* I would add, that, as far as the judgment of this world in the day of the Lord is included in the general thought of judgment, the elect now gathering will be separated from it. They are all children of light and children of the day, and the judgment of the Son of man cannot overtake them as a thief in the night. But this truth or mystery is not what John, in the passage we are considering, has before him.

The eye receives the light. The light never varies. It is the *eye* which *varies*. The eye is either *single* or *evil*. It is not said *single* or *double*; but *single* or *evil*. “If thine eye be *single*, thy whole body shall be full of *light*.” “If thine eye be *evil*, thy whole body shall be full of *darkness*.” “The light of the body is the eye.” If Christ be my object, my whole body will be full of light; if not, it will be all darkness; since it is either *all Christ*, or it is *all evil*, however *religious* it may appear.

If I have only Christ as my object, all is simple—I may have difficulties to overcome; nay, if following Christ only, in a world that is entirely opposed to Him, it must inevitably lead to difficulties in the path; still the path will be plain and simple.

The light is set on a candlestick, “that they which come in may see the light.” Therefore one is forced into this question—Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. He was in the world, and for the world; but does the world see the light? God

eye-sight, who has not the single eye. When the soul is in health there is full perception of the word; the whole body is full of light, having no part dark.

This is a most solemn word to us all. A person, converted but yesterday, may be full of light, though he may, in many things, need the teaching of God. Still, it applies as much to the babe in Christ as to the grown man. If we are only faithful to the light, God will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. But there is a teaching of God, when God Himself is in the soul; then everything is seen in God's light.

If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not; but if he is walking in the night, he has to think which turning to take, but if walking in the daylight, he may walk on without thought.

“If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light, having no part dark.” When the candle is there, we see all around; the light shows itself, and by itself shows every thing around.

has displayed Himself fully in Christ; and if Christ has displayed Himself to your soul, the effect of that will be to manifest your condition. Do you say, “Suffer me *first* to go and bury my father?” If so, there comes out this secret, you have something in your heart that is taking precedence of Christ there.

When I do not find my body full of light in any given circumstance, I know there is something not single in my eye—something that has not yet given way before the power of Christ—something not yet given up, or something perhaps that has come in. If I am keeping anything in my heart besides Christ, my conscience is bad; and my eye being evil, my whole body is full of darkness. People often say they cannot see: of course they cannot, when they have some other light. Moreover, that which they do see will quickly be given up, if they are not walking in the power of that which they now possess. How often have we seen saints who have had light and departed from it, having even that

light taken from them. Such, indeed, may get an *easier conscience* perhaps, but then it is on a *very much lower level*.

The "single eye" relates to the state of our desires and affections. Even the common affairs of life may hinder the unqualified spirit of Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearing His word. But the admonition is, "Take heed that the *light which is in thee be not darkness.*" If our standard be *not Christ*, the light in us will *become darkness*. If we have taken for our measure something that is not Christ, and *Christ alone*, the manner of our judging will be wrong; and the light in us having become darkness, we shall be guided wrong, and mistake our path.

But if the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when we see anything that would not glorify Christ, we say, That will not do for us. The vessel may be small, but it must be wholly for Christ.

May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ;

our new-nature instincts have their free play. God is ever true to this heaven-born nature; and if He *cuts* and *prunes* round about it at times with the keen knife of trial, it is because He is concerned for our blessing—for our heavenward progress—for our deeper enjoyment in Himself. Thus I believe the very clouds that are allowed at times to roll over our spiritual horizon are among the "all things" that are working together for our eternal good, if we are thereby stirred up to more self-judgment, more weanedness from the world, more delight in God. We are thus *gainers* without question by our trials, and are able to say experimentally, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." May the Lord, dear brother, if it be His will, strengthen your body and fill your soul with peace which passeth all understanding. Isaiah xxxii. 17, 18.

contented to walk with Him; desiring no other path: having our eye upon Him, and upon Him only. So that when other objects are put before us, we may be able to say, It will not do for me, for it is not Christ. Oh! may we be simple concerning evil, in a world of evil. May we be so occupied with Christ, that there may be no room for it to come in—not making it our business to judge the evil, but remain simple concerning it. And may Christ be so the one object of my heart and affections, that I may have no *dark corner within*—the Holy Ghost making Him the centre round which every thought and desire of my soul is entwined.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

WHATEVER loosens the children of heaven from the soil of earth should be regarded as a blessing, however painful it may be in its operation. Born from above, we tend heavenwards whenever

FRAGMENTS.

Luke viii.

THIS chapter commences by connecting the Lord's actings, in the cities and villages He went through, with His acting in the Pharisee's house; which involved the owning of worthless ones, blessed in Him, He presenting Himself as their help, and accepting of their services, as the expressions of blessing realized in Him. The three companions whose names are recorded, seem to imply, First: manifest evil in the flesh, because of seven devils in-dwelling. Second, evil connexion in the world because of relationship in the flesh to the enemies of the Lord. Third, names of obscurity as to the flesh, about whom little could be gathered,—as Susanna. Such were found of Christ and blessed in Him. The devil being cast out, a new relationship is set up. The name of obscurity is brought to light, because owned of Him. All the old things are worthless and evil, but all done away in Him, and all things become new.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

In this parable a new thing is introduced—nothing of the flesh is owned, but the seed is sown—the word of God.

This word is subject to three great hindrances to fruitfulness—to be trodden down—to be taken in without any depth—to be received amongst other principles,—as those of nature. Each cause of unfruitfulness soon develops itself. If trodden down, the devil takes it away. If it is not valued, it will soon be taken away. This treading down is open undervaluing, and the expression of supposed worthlessness. The devil is seen in this by Him, who knows the mysteries of these things. Many do not know them.

If it be received without sustaining power, the time of temptation will be the time of falling away. The temptation is not the cause, but the absence of power to preserve the word in growth under circumstances that would blight it. Blessed are they that endure the trial. If the trial is against the word, there is that within to sustain in it.

If the word is received amongst principles of nature, to let all grow up together,—cares, riches, and pleasures of this life,—the result will be that the word will be choked. In the preceding case there was the absence of that which would sustain in the lack of moisture—in this the presence of what would choke, cares, &c., and no fruit is brought to perfection. But blessed are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. The thing of value with such is *the word*. The devil cannot take it away, because it is not slighted. The hour of temptation is endured, because of its known blessedness, above and beyond all trial in the flesh. The things of the flesh cannot choke it, because the unholy association between it and them is not allowed. Such have their trials, but they are sustained in patience. If there are trials still fruitfulness is there, because of the deep abiding of the living nurtured word. And if cares, riches, and pleasures of this life come in competition, they are of the

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flesh, and such can be mortified; but the word is held in the Spirit, and is thus paramount to them all, because of the power of God.

The intelligence of these mysteries is given to discipleship—blindness about them and want of intelligence is the state of others.

You find men maintaining philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Such is not the labour of discipleship; and therefore beware of such. The faithful labourer will sow the seed; and the seed is the word of God.

The obedient ear and heart will hear the word and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

BRIEF NOTES OF A LECTURE
ON JOHN XVII.

There are two things precious to us before we arrive at the full result of God's thoughts of grace: the first is the perfect manifestation of Himself in Christ; and the second, this being brought into our hearts; Christ being in us—not merely revealed to us, but communicated to us. In this chapter we get, in general, what Christ is for us and will be to us as on earth, and in the end what He will be to us in heaven. And this last point I have often thought the saints do not get with sufficient clearness. It is not merely mercy to sinners, but man brought into a blessedness that was not thought of when men were not sinners.

The Lord lays the ground of it all in His own Person and work before He begins to pray. First, He is the Son with the Father; and second, He is the accomplisher of the work by which the Father is glorified. First, we get His Person, the eternal life which was with the Father. God had revealed Himself

as Almighty and as Jehovah, and accordingly He protected Abraham and was the God of Israel. But these names did not carry eternal life in them. But now the Son comes, that eternal life might be manifested, as it is in 1 John i. "We have seen and declare unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And then, secondly, we have His work because of the sin of man. We have the glory of Christ in this double character, and in Him thus glorified we get the ground-work of all that we are. Our whole condition hangs on Christ glorified. Man—though He was much more than man—is now glorified in the presence of God. He is there, first, as Son; and, secondly, in virtue of His work as man on the earth. God now takes the chief of sinners, cleanses him from all sin through the precious blood of Christ, and instead of giving Him a place with the first Adam in his rejection, He gives him one with the Second Adam in glory.

Beloved friends, we want to know

him, He has given them to us; if the glory, He has given it to us; if the love, He manifests the Father's name that it may be in us. It is not dispensing downwards to a child of Adam what a child of Adam could receive, but becoming life to the soul, so as to be power in us, so that we might enjoy what He does.

If you are labouring to meet a Judge, all this is simple madness. Men think they have to meet the God of judgment as responsible sinners to answer for themselves. That is the way people delude themselves. Do you think you could stand? It is madness to dream of such a thing. It is denying Christianity altogether. Have you peace?—perfect peace—Christ's own peace? If not, you have not got what Christ gives. You have not got what Christ wrought, and brought, and gives—a peace with the Father as He Himself had it.

In verse 8 we see the interest that Christ's heart takes in making us happy. "I have given them the words which thou gavest me," &c. He desires we

redemption—we want to know that whilst there is a judgment to come, before it has come God has interfered in grace and wrought redemption in the cross of His Son. The same Son who is to come to judge *has* come in grace already. So now the ground on which I stand with God is not that of a responsible man to answer in the judgment, but because I was utterly lost on that ground, God has put me on another. When the Judge comes, He has saved me already.

Now He goes on to apply it. "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world," &c. That is, He brings them into the place of sons. And how? O what a blessing—as He knew it. O if we believed what the worth of Christ's work in humiliation is and what the love of Christ's heart is—how it could not be satisfied without our being in the very blessedness He Himself was in! It is love without reserve. It takes the person that is loved and holds back nothing. If it is the words the Father has given

may enjoy the fellowship of the Father as He does. I can understand how the world hinders the enjoyment of it; but do you *believe* it? Do not fancy it is learning you need; it is not; it is *grace*. It is the conscience understanding that when I could not answer for myself, another in love came and answered for me. It is the soul brought through divine teaching in the conscience to know that it is lost; but, that being a settled thing, to know another thing that the Father is on my neck for joy that I am found. There will be conflict and temptation, but *there will be no conflict with Him*.

He now begins to pray for them. (Verses 9—13.) All this refers to our place in the world. "And now I am no more in the world," &c. "And these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." O mark it well—*His joy*. I need not ask you, Christians, if you think Christ meant to deceive us. Well, if not, Do you believe this? Have you got it? His joy fulfilled in your—

selves? It is not our weakness that hinders; for when I am weak, then I am strong. It is the very thing I would seek to drive out—this thought of our weakness having to do with it, the thought of the first Adam standing. You will get plenty of leaves but no fruit. Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever is the judgment of God on this barren fig-tree. It rejected and crucified His Son. It must be cut down. Now is the judgment of this world; and as individuals we must be brought to this in the cross. We must be brought to that point of the cross in which we see that man was enmity against God come to him in grace. (Men were sinners before.) But having come there, I meet in spirit Christ on the cross, and as He has taken my place, I get His place—a place in Himself and with Himself in the glory to which He is gone.

He now puts them in the place of testimony. "I have given them thy word," "and the world hath hated them," &c. This also is His own place. "Because they are not of the world,

even as I am not of the world." "They are not of the world," &c. Again, let me ask you, Do you believe that? "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Nobody could send us into England. We are in it. God could send an angel into the world. That is the way that Christ sends us—redeemed sinners—who are not of it. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." That is negative. Then in verse 17 we get "Sanctify them through thy truth." That is the word—the one guide in this wilderness. Moses said, "Show me now"—not a way—but "thy way, that I may know thee." O that is what the Christian wants. My way shows what I am, and God's way shows what He is, as regards the world, and that is Christ.

In verses 18, 19 He goes further. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself," &c. I get not merely the word as guiding, but I get it all as light and love in Christ Jesus. Christ has set

Himself apart—if I may reverently say so—as the glorified model man. The Holy Ghost takes that and ministers it to my soul. I love it—I feed on it. Thus we are taken out of the evil by and to the good. You will never get through the world happily in any other way. Is there happiness in vanity? It is that which leads astray. But show me a heart that through grace is always thinking of Christ and it is always happy. For the love of Christ that has gone up for us has come down to us. I know I have got for my joy what is the Father's everlasting delight. He loves me! O that is the delight of my heart. It is that that keeps the heart away from evil. In ninety-nine things out of a hundred that you do wrong—that are not holiness—it is not that you do not know that they are wrong. It is not light that you want; it is power. You have not Christ as power. Your heart is not delighting in Christ. If it were, the evil would not have power over you. It would not occur to you. When my

soul is walking with Christ, the Lord Himself is there to sanctify. The heart that is thus occupied with Jesus has got its object. Therefore He said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." There is not the craving, then, that makes a man unhappy; and there is not the craving that spoils your judgment of right and wrong. *We want an object that is a motive.* It gives hope and energy; but besides, there is communion, and it is communion that makes happy.

That is our present portion, but He goes further. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." Still it is manifestation; He is not speaking of communion here, He does not say, "I in them, and they in me," as in xiv. It is, "I in them and thou in me." It is display, Christ in the Father, and we in Christ.

We have not yet got to our own proper portion. We have had the Father's name manifested, His word given to us, Christ setting Himself apart for us,

and giving us the glory the Father had given Him. But all that is down here. That does not satisfy Jesus—He wants them with Himself. It is not to be displayed—not He there, and we here—but to be with Him. “That they may be with me.” That is the Church’s PROPER place. That is what distinctively connects us with Christ. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee,” &c. Christ was in the world, He was despised in the world. Oh, but you have loved me, He says to the Father, before ever there was a world. I want them to be with me according to this love—to be in the blessedness and understanding of the love you had to me before ever there was a world to manifest me in. It is not display, which is wonderful enough, but to be at home with Him according to the love he had with the Father before the world was.

More than this: He wants us to know it now. “I have declared to them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may

be in them, and I in them.” Again, I would say, Christ does not mean to deceive us. Have you got what Christ is here giving? Do you know that the Father loves you as He loved Jesus? Oh, what a world we are in! “The world hath not known thee.” But where have your thoughts been this day? Have they been filled with Christ, in the consciousness that you are the delight of the Father? It does not need intelligence to know that the Father loves me, when He is on my neck and I in my rags. It is not being converted or thinking of progress. The prodigal was not thinking of his progress then. *He was with his Father.* It is one thing to be making inquiries as to the progress of my heart, and another to know that there is not an atom of the Father’s heart He holds back. But how can we have it? Through this redemption. For He cannot have the sin. Therefore, He gave the everlasting love of His heart for me, sinner as I am. But when I have learnt and known it, I enjoy it. What I want

you to have is the knowledge and consciousness of the Father’s love in this way. And, indeed, the highest apprehensions of love a saint can have is the very love that was proved for the vilest of sinners. The sin is gone, and in the place, where I see it gone, I have learnt this perfect love. And if there is a sinner here, I present to you this present salvation. Why? Because Christ is glorified at the right hand of God. Whoever receives it, enters at once into the fruit of Christ’s work, which God has accepted, and proved that He has, in that He has set Him at His right hand.

To you, who are saints, I would say, Are you walking as redeemed persons in the earth? We need exhortations daily, every one of us; but are you walking in the consciousness of redemption? Have you this consciousness of being loved of the Father as Christ is? If you have, then walk in it.

One word I would add on the twenty-fourth verse:—“That they may be with me, where I am.” This connects itself

with the rapture of the Church; and so, when Paul speaks of it, he finishes when he has said, “So shall we be ever with the Lord.” He has nothing more to add. “We shall be ever with the Lord.” Does it ring in your heart as the fullest, richest blessing?

PRIESTHOOD, THE PROVISION OF GOD’S LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE.

Exodus xxviii.

WE all know that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the key to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It is the key to all the offices of the Lord Jesus. The word that runs through the whole of it, the key-note, that which makes the epistle so precious to us, is that word “Son.” It is the “Son” who is set before us, as fulfilling all the offices of all those who were raised up as types. He is the One by whom the Father has spoken. The Son is the

Captain of Salvation. The Son is the High Priest. The Son is the Mediator of the New Covenant, &c., &c. And what is the meaning of the name? It tells out all the fulness of the heart of God. We are not to stop short of God Himself. The way to secure the not stopping short of God is to think of Jesus in all His offices, as Prophet, Priest, &c. The word "Son" leads us up into the heart of the Father, into the bosom of God. *There* is our resting place, there is our home.

In reading this chapter, the thought to be kept in mind is, that God seeing our need, our sinfulness and infirmities, has provided His Son as our Great High Priest.

Verse 1. "And take thou unto thee Aaron, thy brother," &c. It is God who chooses who the High Priest should be. This is alluded to in Hebrews, chap. v. to shew that Christ's priesthood comes altogether from God, and the word "Son" is found in connexion with it.

One part of the glory of the Lord

human family of faith. The Holy Ghost delights to expatiate on the fulness of Jesus—how He becomes us! Not only as made higher than the heavens, but as having passed through all ages and scenes down here. Having been a child, He can sympathize with all the feelings of childhood; having been the carpenter's son, He knows all the trials of the daily course of an earthly calling; and having been tempted of Satan, He knows what sore temptations mean. "For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

This chapter will be blessed to us, just as we discern what the person of our High Priest is. He is now serving us, a minister of the holiest before the Father, as the first verse says, "That he may minister unto me in the priest's office."

Verse 2. "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron, thy brother, for glory and for beauty. They were holy,

Jesus, is executing His Priesthood on our behalf. We may see ourselves vile and worthless, but God infinitely values us. The heart of God is set upon His children. And so the Lord Jesus esteems it part of His glory to sustain the office of Priest in God's presence for us. If I look up to heaven I see Jesus presenting our prayer to the Father. Not like Aaron, who was sometimes asleep, and had to be roused to put on his garments. Jesus is ever alive to take the feeblest cry and present it to our Father. How this tells out the heart of God towards us!

Observe, another thing, the Priest was to be taken "from among the children of Israel." Now whilst it is true that the "Son" is made High Priest in contrast with men who have infirmity, yet there is this much of comparison that He has the nature that can sympathize. "As the *children* were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." For it is the "seed of Abraham" He helps. Thus He takes up relationship with the

glorious, and beautiful. There is everything in Jesus to satisfy our new nature. Wherefore, let us gird up the loins of our minds to look into these things. Instead of being occupied with earthly things, let us search into His attractive glory and beauty. It is the knowledge of the Lord Jesus alone, that can enable us to look at all we once prized as dung and dross, and to say, to earthly things, "I have something better."

This chapter is most precious as the record of our Father's heart towards us. He knows what poor, infirm, weak children we are, and He deals with us accordingly. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." God does not act towards us according to what we ought to be, but according to our need in the condition in which we are. God came down from heaven because we were not what we ought to be. Grace supposes sin and ruin, everything at enmity with God. But when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. We cannot think of ourselves

too vilely; but God has put our names on the shoulders of His Son, and on His heart. That is our joy. Nothing short of this grace could meet our need, or satisfy His love towards us.

One remark I would add as to the names of the children of Israel. They were not engraved according to merit, but "according to birth." (Ver. 10.) Reuben, Simeon, and Dan's names, were as much engraven there, and were as near the heart of the High Priest, as Judah and Joseph's. The most inconsistent believer in Jesus is as much on His heart as the most devoted saint. This is grace. And it is grace that breaks our proud hearts and touches the life of the soul, and breaks the power of sin, and constrains us to give ourselves up in holy, happy service to Jesus. In Luke xv. the shepherd seeks His sheep; and when He hath found it, "he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." So as soon as I am saved, I see my name engraven on His shoulders.

In verse 12, we see that the stones were "for a memorial unto Israel" as

well as "for a memorial before the Lord." Thus Israel were to know that they were ever borne by Aaron, whilst Aaron bore them ever to remember them. I know myself as a poor, weak, failing one, full of infirmity; and although I am forgiven, I must also see myself sustained in the presence of God. I may say, that is true of Paul; but it is true of me also. Yes, my name is as much there as that of Judah; for Dan's and Simeon's were there. "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ is God." Adam failed, Israel failed; but we are set in Christ, and therefore secured. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But besides the knowledge of our security in seeing our names graven on His breastplate, we find that "he is able to succour them that are tempted." If we look up and see our names on His shoulders, we shall have the succour we need. But if we forget Jesus, and go on in our own strength, we shall be easily overcome, even by the naughtiness of a child.

Is it not blessed to remember Jesus as the minister of the sanctuary in heaven, where He is ever ministering for us? And this too as the expression of the love of God toward us. For the Holy Ghost, as the end of all His teaching, would ever lead us up through Jesus to God Himself. Thus we have communion; and we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE WILDERNESS.

Read Heb. iv. 7, to the end.

We find here, not the Lord Jesus primarily, but a very solemn warning to those to whom the epistle speaks. The question is raised about His people down here, pointed to by Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness; whose difficulties, on the one hand, brought to light their want of faith and power, because the flesh was not judged, and on the other, the correction of the Lord, because they were found practically connected with Satan and not with Himself. Then there is a turn, (ver.

12,) and the soul is cast into heavenly association with Christ, who is there analyzing every thought of the heart, saying, "I will not let a single *thought* pass." (See ver. 12, 13.)

The question with regard to Israel was about the unity of the kingdom that God had taken up. He went down and took up a nation of slaves, and said, "These are my people." He prepared a tabernacle, and was to be among them. The question at issue was of unity with God's work. It was no wonder when God said, "I am King," that in effect He said also, I will settle all these questions. I will show who I am. I will show Pharaoh who is King of Israel—who this Jehovah is whom he does not know. And He lets Pharaoh go on to show out all the power of Satan. He brings the people, and they come out with a high hand. But the sea is in the way, and stops them. Well, *whose* are they? He will now see whether the people know where their centre is, and whether their hearts could really answer Pihahiroth (i.e., the

opening of liberty) to all the difficulties. Then He traces their path—the water opens—a wall on either side for them. Israel goes down into the bottom of the sea, and their enemies pursue after them. The waters that stood on either side for Israel come together irresistibly upon Egypt, and Egypt is destroyed. But God and Israel are on the other side.

God, and God *alone*, was able to bring them through. He could have taken them into the land in a few days. But how many *years* did it take them to get to Canaan? Very many. But in the long wilderness path they learned to have to do with *God alone*. He would have the question put home to the people, whether they were the people of the living God—whether they had any spring in themselves, or whether all was flowing from Him. There was *no* spring in one of them. There might be a fulness of blessing into which God led Israel in the land of Canaan; but, as far as they were concerned, they were to *prove* there was not an Israelite that got one single drop of water as flowing

of Pentecost, and has continued through the 1800 years since, and in this our day cannot be evaded, and cannot be limited so as to shut out the bearing of it on individuals, is a question of real *unity* with the thing that God has wrought—a question of vital and also practical fellowship with Him.

From the moment the glory of God has been shown to me, until I see His face in glory, the question is still of practical fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—a fellowship growing out of vital union with Him who is alive from the dead. This question I cannot evade in any one thing, circumstance, or action! *All must* have reference to that practical *unity*.

Having settled the whole question about the clearing of His people from all that was against them—their acceptance before God, and the character of that acceptance, He settles we are all to be in the wilderness. Christ is, in patience, sitting at the right hand of God; but you and I are in the wilderness.

But because we are enabled to say

from himself: God, and God alone, was able to supply them. *He* takes them through the wilderness.

It was the place of blessing for them: and it was the wisest place; because He could there make them all feel, not *only* that God could people Canaan, but *that* He was occupying Himself individually with them. And hence, they must have done with circumstances, and be satisfied with God, and nothing but *God*.

God took them up, and revealed to them certain types and *shadows* in connexion with what He was doing for them, and what they were—the whole *substance* of which has been accomplished now. Responsibility in connexion with the substance may have been put into man's hand, and man *failed* in it; still, God began with the truth that Christ is risen and set down at God's right hand. Responsibility thus came in, that everything to be done on the earth should be done in the light of the tabernacle which *God* had pitched.

The question which began on the day

that the judgment of all sin is behind us, and enabled to see that we are dead *with* Christ, have we nothing to do practically with dying daily? You are *not taken* out of your body: the law of sin is in your members. The question is, How far are we, practically, through faith, able to *live* as those that have died and are risen? How far can we be vessels of this individually? The grace of Christ has extended to us just where we were. Are we, then, vessels in whom the power of faith has made good *all* the blessings in Christ Jesus—vessels in whom He can work with this practical conformity to *His* life, death, and resurrection, in this wilderness? If *His life* had not been brought in, there never could have been this question; it never could have taken this shape. But in the wilderness, where we are, it is realized.

When the last dispensation has been brought in, and, spite of blessing, it has been *proved* that man can hold nothing, but is like melted gold poured into a vessel unfit to hold it, the

precious weight of the metal smashing it into shivers; when it has been proved that man has *entirely* failed, the world got its power, and Satan the direction of things here below, all our rest, all our repose must be found in the simple recognition of the entire failure of man and the unfailingness of God.

But why has the wilderness this power over the Christian?

We have got Satan behind, as to judgment, it is clear. But then what a long experience has he had of the heart of man! How skilled he is in seeing the suitability of the things he has set up! He has seen what man's heart was beguiled by—how skilled he is in using all that!

But what is the secret of his power with regard to us? What leaves us exposed to feel all the weariness of the wilderness—one foot dragging behind the other, scarcely able to drag up our ankles after us? The secret is just what came out with Israel. It had to learn itself in the wilderness, and we have to learn ourselves there. But what gives

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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.” But if He knows everything in me, and knows it by contrast to what He, the perfect Son of man is, I do not *want* to hide my face as to the evil in me. I do not *need* to get a bit of Peter's ways or a bit of Jacob's ways coming out from me.

Christ suffered as my Substitute once, and received at the hand of God the whole judgment due to me. That Christ who has blessed me is the person with whom I have got to do and a part of whose glory is set forth in these verses. The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any *twoedged* sword. The Son of man with His sword in His mouth, as presented to us in the Revelation, is the Person with whom you and

freshness to the heart in the recognition of all failure? The heart having *individually* to do with Christ, what comes out here is, the heart having to do with Christ, who can read to us individually what is in us, and be the applier to us individually of the remedy? What is to enable the saint to have *in the wilderness* a fresh heart and never to be puzzled? Verses 12 and 13 of this chapter give the answer. The practical experience of the truth presented may differ very much; for it must be different in those who instead of learning by failure—by following their own hearts in their walk through the wilderness follow this and that vanity because their hearts are *not* connected with God—and those who do turn to Jesus and follow Him always! Peter's experience was different from Paul's, Abraham's from Jacob's. But Abraham had far less knowledge of *self* than Jacob. Abraham took God's word for it and went on *with Him*. He trusted God and had clean done with himself. Jacob had to realize the force of these two verses.

I have to do. I do not *want* to know myself as Jacob did. I do not want to detect a bit of Peter in myself. If I put myself in His hand and read all down what He knows of me—knows of me as I am in contrast with Himself—I hide my face *in Him* for He knows it all.

Have we then cultivated thoughts, not about ourselves, but about acquaintance with the heart-searching Son of man in heaven, who sees right down to the very bottom—the very thoughts and intents of your soul, and who sees and divides between them? Has your soul been before Him that He may discover the first buddings of everything—that He may put His hand in and stop them? Some deceive themselves by the *intentions* of their own hearts; others by their *thoughts*. His eye goes right down and discovers all. How far in any soul; (not of a sinner, for His priesthood has not to do with such;) but how far does He find in *us* that we are vessels in whom the Spirit of God abiding, there is this power of His death through the know-

ledge of His resurrection? His eye comes right down. He is never deceived. That is the first element to my own soul of having a fresh heart in the midst of apostasy in the wilderness. If there were a corner in my heart—the least corner—that Christ had not searched and probed—if there were the least atom undetected by Him, I am undone. I could have *no* peace. Would I like to hide *any* thing from Christ? If it is Christ I have got to deal with, would I like to blind Christ? *No! I would not!* In desperate illness to *blind* a physician would be death! I cannot *afford* to blind Christ to my state, if I *could* do so. Would I not like him to know everything—every intention, every thought in me, down to the bottom, that He, who alone can, may bring in the remedy?

In my practical walk through the wilderness, I would rather have Christ searching out my weakness—pointing out what has to be corrected—than friends praising me for what is not praiseworthy before God! Who am I; that He should search me out, and give me

in heaven. True, but it has got to do with Him who is the antagonist of Satan, and so get practically under another power.

Christ is above, reading every thing for you; in every thing He lets all the affections of His heart flow out upon you in the difficulties of the place where you are—and we do not *give* up, for we have a great High Priest, passed into heaven, touched with the feeling of our infirmities!

But what is the real cause of the little going forward in unearthliness? Why has there been any turning back? Why has there not been a *going on* in that holy, perfect Nazariteship? Why am I practically less heavenly than I was? I believe the answer to be this: The heart not abiding in the light of the *searching eye of Christ in heaven*. Making its experience down here, instead of reading the whole volume in the light of Christ: being *before God* in every thing. There is no power of blessing but what begins with Christ, and goes on with Christ.

to know where the springs of God should flow into me—should give me to see just where there is anything that chokes the inflowing? Who are *we*, that God should deal with us after such sort? God wants there to be more freshness in us. You cannot have it if you do not understand, not merely that man has utterly failed in the responsibility that has been put into his hand, but that as Christ looks at us, individually, He says, I cannot put any confidence *here*. It may be very fair before man, but will not do for God—as a *seeming* fair parchment—but all shrivelled when you want to use it. We must have *done* with self.

Just see practically the difference of a soul that is in that state before Christ, and knows that the Christ, who has apprehended it for the glory, has marked every thing for us in connexion with that glory: it will never stand for a moment questioning the sufficiency of *His* work. Mark, too, the *effect* upon a soul that has thus individually to do with Christ. *It* is on earth—Christ is

CHRIST A WITNESS.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”—John xvii. 3.

In a sense, man, when under law, is *principal* rather than God, for all depends on his obedience. Man is the active party there. It was thus in the Garden of Eden. Not only Adam's own enjoyment of his estate there, but the Creator's continual enjoyment of the work of His hands (as Creator) alike hung upon Adam's allegiance. And it was thus also under Moses. Not only Israel's continuance in Canaan, but Jehovah's place in the midst of His land and people, under the first covenant, rested on the answer to this question, Would Israel be obedient?

Under grace it is otherwise. There God becomes principal; and the sinner's blessing depends on Him and His faithfulness. God is the active party: He is the giver, man the receiver. And this is as it should be. This puts things in a moral beauty, and in right relationship to each other, as well as

raises God's delight and glory in the scene before Him and under Him; and increases and secures the blessedness of the creature.

This distinction, too, brings out the Lord in the different characters of a *Judge* and a *Witness*.

The law makes God a *Judge*; for He has to see that the one bound to Him, as under law, is keeping his place and doing his duty. The gospel makes Him a *Witness*; for He has, in grace, to reveal what He is, and not to be watching and proving what man is. The law makes man its object; the gospel makes God its object.

What a grander and more blessed thing this is! The glory of being a judge of man has no glory, by reason of the glory of being a witness to Himself, which excelleth.

Now, the character of a witness is that which the Lord Jesus at once assumes in St. John, and maintains throughout. In a sense, He is a Judge in St. Matthew; because there He is seen as coming to look after the con-

dition of Israel, whether they were ready for Him, and thus equal and entitled to hold their place as God's Israel. Such a ministry as that in a sense made the Lord a Judge, as the law did; for Israel's condition was to answer the old question, should the link between the Lord and His people be continued or broken?

In John's gospel it is quite otherwise. The unfaithfulness of Israel is assumed at the very beginning. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And this being so, Jesus is a witness. Man having failed in the place of responsibility, God becomes principal in the exercise of grace, or in the ministry of Himself and His salvation to sinners. He is therefore at once called "the Word"—so called, because He is a witness, or one who declares God and the Father.

Other evangelists, as well as God, call Him "the Son;" because that is His personal title. John alone calls Him "the Word;" because that is His characteristic title in his gospel.

Being then a witness, we have to notice the character of His testimony; and we find it to be this: it tells of God, or witnesses to God, *in such form as suits a sinner*. So that, we further read, not only that He is "the Word," who, having taken flesh, dwells among us; but does so, "full of grace and truth"—full of truth, as revealing God, full of grace, as suiting sinners. This is simple.

Accordingly, it is only sinners, convicted ones, who are joined to the Lord, in the progress of this gospel. And this tells us what the Lord is, in this gospel. He is a *witness of God, or of the Father, to sinners*. He will not be a judge; He will not be a king; but a witness; and that in a ruined world. This shows itself strongly in chap. viii. The Pharisees would have made Him a judge. They would have seated Him on Mount Sinai; but He has nothing to do there. He refuses, with a silence that is significant, and a simplicity that is sublime. He writes on the ground, as though He heard them not. He

who had come from heaven as the One that was in the bosom of the Father, could not seat Himself on the fiery hill. But refusing to be a judge, He at once becomes a witness, raising Himself up and saying, "I am the light of the world." His office is to bring back light, or God, to that world which, through the lie of the serpent, had lost Him, and lies in the darkness of being without Him. And thus, "the light of the world" brings, as He further says, "the light of life."

The Witness of God is the Quickener of sinners. And in order to that, as He still further tells us, He consents to be "lifted up," like the brazen serpent on the pole, made a victim for the altar, that life may be brought (the only way it could be brought) in righteousness through death and atonement. And yet, further still, He lets us know that the accepting of this Witness and His testimony makes the sinner "free."

All this we get in John viii. 1—31. And this acceptance of the testimony of this Witness is *faith*. Faith is that

obedience which a witness must look for: conformity to its demands is the due answer to law—faith to testimony.

I pass on to chap. xviii. There this same Jesus of John's gospel is in the very character which He had taken up at the beginning. He is a witness still. (See ver. 37.) Pilate had said to Him, "Art thou a king, then?" Jesus owns this. He avows His kingdom. "Thou sayest that I am a king." And this is pregnant with the intimation that the day will come when He shall take His kingdom, and exercise His rights there. But He plainly tells him that, as for the present, His business was to bear witness to the truth. He who had before refused to act as a judge, now postpones to act as a *king*, that He might be, and that only, a witness to God, and *of* God, in the midst of a world of self-ruined sinners. This He lets Pilate know was His then present ministry. He had been born, He had come into the world, for the end of such a ministry; and we find, all through this gospel, from the beginning of it,

thou hast sent." (Chap. xvii. 3.) And this knowledge of Him, which is eternal life, I may here add, appears beautifully to show itself in cases where either the *convicted sinner* or the *rebuked saint* is able, morally able, in spite of the conviction or rebuke, to *abide in His presence*. And such cases this same gospel gives us. This may be easily apprehended; because distance from God is the state or region of death. *His presence is the place of life*.

When a soul can abide near Him, or with Him, in spite of conviction; that is, though it have sinned, and been found out, life is in that soul. And it is only the knowledge of Him—the knowledge of Him in Jesus, whom He has sent, (which is indeed the only knowledge,) that gives the sinner, or the soul, this capacity, this *moral power*, to abide the divine presence.

The Samaritan of chap. iv., and the convicted sinner of chap. viii., illustrate this capacity. They are exposed, deeply and fully; but they do not leave Him till all is perfected in their condition.

and now at the end of it; He had been faithful to it. And this loved and cherished work we know He is pursuing still, all through this gospel-day, till "every one," as He further says, "that is of the truth," i.e., belongs to God in grace, "hears his voice."

Simple and consistent, yet full of grace in its glory, all this is.

To His glory, by and by, it will be, that, as a judge, He will clear a defiled world of its corrupters. To His glory it will then be, that, as a king, He will rule a restored world in righteousness. To His still brighter glory, and still deeper joy, is it, that He now bears witness of the grace and salvation of God in a world of sinners; holding up God's truth in the face of the old serpent's lie, and manifesting God's love in answer to the charges of His accuser.

Now, this being so, He being a witness, we are to acquaint ourselves with Him. This is our duty. And the fruit of this is life; as He says, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom

Adam, too, in the beginning, in Gen. iii., and the Joshua of Zech. iii., illustrate the same. And, I may add, the prodigal in the parable is made to do the same. Each and all of these, though with loss of character, exposed, convicted, left as without a word to say for themselves, remain in the divine presence, which is the region, the native land, of life.

Adam might have remained under cover; and the convicted sinner might have gone out with her accusers: but they, like all in like faith with them, stay, though guilty. This was life, the knowledge of God in Jesus. Nay, it is *eternal* life. To keep the law would be life; but it would be life only for the day, or by the day. The same life would be to be acquired by obedience each succeeding day. Fresh title to it must be made each successive moment. The law, therefore, is never said to give *eternal* life. But this knowledge of Him, which restores us, sinners as we are, to the presence of God, is eternal life. It is drawn from Him who has

eternal life in Himself; and having abolished death by putting away sin, (the secret, or spring, or principle of death,) thus has it for us sinners.

But, beside these cases of *convicted sinners*, we have cases of *rebuked saints*, having moral capacity to stand in the presence of God. And this capacity is the *pulse* of that life which they already have, as the capacity of the convicted sinner to stand in that same presence was the *first* symptom of that life. We have instances of such rebuked saints as Jacob, David, and the Peter of John's gospel. Jacob is rebuked, and rebuked sharply, in Genesis xxxii., where the Lord wrestles with him; but Jacob holds on; yea, though in the process of the wrestling or the rebuke, his thigh is put out of joint. This is very fine faith. This is courage which can only be accounted for by a rich, precious knowledge of God. And he holds on, in spite also of the word of the Lord: "Let me go, for the day breaketh." This is very fine, and the Lord delights in it. He gives him a blessing and a

But Peter is another of these rebuked, yet believing saints, in the day of John's gospel. He sinned, denying His Lord with an oath; but He knows Him against whom He thus sinned, and this knowledge enables him to exercise that faith which keeps him in the presence of the Lord. As soon as he heard from John that the Lord was on the shore, he threw himself into the water to reach Him.

Was not this another pulse of that life which this saint had through the knowledge of God in Jesus? How strongly, I may rather say, is that pulse felt to be beating in all this! And blessedly again does He, who is the fountain of this life, own this life in Peter, as afore He had in Jacob and in David. He prepares a dinner on the shore, where He, and Peter, and His companions sit together. And Peter is set in full office again, pledged a strength and a presence that shall carry him through all temptations, fiercer by far than those under which he had lately fallen, and moreover, put on the way to

name of honour, and then joy in the Spirit. So David, He had sadly transgressed by going over to the Philistines; and the Lord very solemnly rebukes Him for this, by allowing the enemy to sack his town of Ziklag, and then to burn it. (1 Sam. xxx.) But he so blessedly knows the Lord, knows Him whom he had believed, that in spite of all this, which was surely enough to make a man a coward, David holds up: he encourages himself in the Lord, as we read. And this again, as with Jacob, was precious faith, such faith as can only be accounted for by the soul having rich knowledge of God. And God acknowledges this faith. He gives David a victory, and the recovery of all that he had lost, yea, and a capture of such spoils as enables him to send presents to all the towns of his native land, so that the dishonour he had brought on his good name, by going over to the uncircumcised, may be obliterated and forgotten for ever in these fresh glories. What riches of grace in God! What beauty in that faith which is the workmanship of the Spirit in the saints!

the heavenly glory, as in the train of his divine Master—all this, surely, as fully blotting out the remembrance and the stain he had incurred, as the victory, and the spoils, and the distributions of David had obliterated from his kindred and his country the remembrance of his dishonourable sojourn among the uncircumcised.

What living histories are these! And these stories of convicted sinners and rebuked saints, finding in spite of shame and challenge, a home in the divine presence, are true to this day.

Eternal life is still gained by the sinner, when such knowledge of God in Christ is communicated to him as enables him, morally enables him, and righteously entitles him, to take his place in the presence of God. For that presence again we may remember is the region of life. The Son of the bosom of the Father is such a witness of God in this world that sinners who by faith receive His testimony, as delivered for their sins and raised again for their justification, enter into eternal life. It

is eternal life to know Him, to know Him who says, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."

GOD REVEALING HIMSELF.

Genesis xvii.

There were several distinct ways in which God revealed Himself to Abraham, as Almighty, as Jehovah, &c. Again it is said, "The word of the Lord came to Abraham," giving him a certain prophetic revelation of something future. But in this chapter He revealed Himself in a new character and in a certain sense in a more important one, viz., as God Himself. It is what *God* is. That gives it an immense character and of great import to our souls. Because if we have not come to God there will always be a question in the conscience. If I have not come to God how can I tell what He will be to me when I do come, for I have certainly to come to Him. If my conscience is not perfect

is the state of my affections—but can I go into the Holiest without raising a question in God's nature or in my conscience?

It is God here, not Jehovah. The very substance of this chapter is that we have to be with God. But, first, we have to stand each man for himself *before* God—in Christ of course. But how can I have communion with a person to whom I cannot come? There may be hopes and fears, but no communion. It is a blessed thing to be so perfectly brought to God as that He can talk with us without raising one question in our conscience.

I will turn a little now to the privileges we get when set in this place. They are here alluded to in the covenant of circumcision, that is, the whole arrangement of God's purposes in connexion with Abraham as head of a new race.

But, first, I would remark that it is no Adam-race. The Adam-race had its place and standing as turned out from God. We forget it too often. If I look at myself as a child of Adam, I may say, are not you to be judged? Yes, of course

for God all will have to be settled over again. So when God had not done the work which perfects the conscience He did not reveal *Himself*. He dwelt in the thick darkness. But now in Christ the conscience is perfected, that we may be able to stand before Him when His whole character is revealed.

There are a multitude of blessings given when we are brought into relationship, and exercises in which the soul is perfected with God. But these suppose relationship as existing. This one great question must be first settled, Can I stand before God at all? If the exercises go on before it is settled, before I have been with God, there never will be peace. But when I have been before Him there is peace; and that is what faith does. Then it is a question of communion. God Himself can come and talk with us, as here He does with Abraham. True, Abraham was on His face before God, *but he was there*.

This is the character of the book of Hebrews. Can I go into the Holiest? Not, can I walk down here—not what

I am. Then you are to be condemned. There is no judgment at all without condemnation. "Enter *not* into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Settle it well in your minds, that there is *no* judgment without condemnation. If God were to judge Adam when *innocent*, He would judge His own work. But when Adam sinned then it was God had to judge him. We turn God into a judge by *sinning*, and so necessarily judgment is condemnation. God does put man under law just to bring that judgment into his conscience. We have to get this thoroughly into our minds, that there is no judgment apart from condemnation.

Here I find what led me to that: Abraham set up as the head of a new race. Of course it was through grace, but it is not Adam-seed, but Abraham-seed.

The world, after the flood, had become settled in "nations and peoples and tongues." God called Abraham to leave it all. "Get thee out of *thy* country,

unto a land that I will shew thee." God was in effect saying to him, I am doing an entirely new thing—I am going to have a people for myself. Believers answer to this now. This brings out in full definite distinctness, that God called out of the very system which He Himself had set up, but which had departed from Him. It is the mark of the character of faith all through. Whereas Adam's race is a convicted, condemned race, Abraham's is a called race. Thus we get the coming in of God into the very scene of judgment, and taking men out of it.

Now mark the consequence. God sets about blessing them in His own way. It is not putting them on conduct or responsibility, but it is God going to shew how He blesses people. It is through the church that He is teaching angels this. When the angels see the thief on the cross, Mary Magdalene, Paul, you and me, in the same glory in which Christ is, then they will see the way in which God blesses. It is the setting up by God of an entirely new thing,

river in us to those who have it not. It is Christ Himself, all and in all. There is the place where the Christian is set. I get turned now from the fact of being able to stand before God to the enjoyment of God, so as to be the expression of this in my words and ways. Alas! it is hindered. There are plenty of things to be corrected that we may enjoy it more; but it is where we are. What a difference between this and going on with the world, so as not to know if we are saved!

This chapter is higher up than the 15th; but in the 15th we get the ground of it. He does not say here, I am *thy* God; but, "I am the Almighty God." It is the proper revelation of Himself. In the 15th chapter, "he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." God can now talk with him. That is the way all these particular relationships have place. They are founded on this, "it was counted to him for righteousness." They are all founded on His estimate of righteousness; for *who* was counting?

of which He is the origin. There were faithful persons before, Abel, &c.; but they were never called out of a judged world. Now He sets them as His family.

Mark another thing. Having called this people out, He has made us the depositaries of His blessing after His own heart. It is a great thing to be the very expression of the way in which God blesses and shows the exceeding riches of His grace! Is it in a stone that God does this? in a heart that does not feel? It is in a heart that knows God. It is the possession of the love of God, which is His nature, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." We dwell in Him, and He in us.

Now mark the consequence. That is the character of our blessing, but it is the witness of it as well. (I need not say it is grace.) I am in it, and it flows out. That is the other divine thing. We have all the blessedness that is in God; and that becomes a

"He counted it to him for righteousness." I may ask a person, Is your heart happy in Christ, or are you going on with the world? But that is quite another thing from asking, Is your conscience perfect before God, so that you can stand before Him? It is a terrible thing to have my ways to be settled at the day of judgment. People say they hope to get off then; but all that is from *their* counting righteousness! Here I get *God's* counting. It was counted *to* Him, not *by* him. We have God Himself counting the thing, and bringing it to him. What does He count? Is it human righteousness? No. He has counted that, *and condemned it*. It is divine righteousness that He is counting. That sets me on a ground on which I can have communion with God. "We joy in God." You cannot talk of enjoying God if there is a fear of judgment. A prisoner cannot talk of enjoying his judge. I must get God's righteousness. God reckons every believer divinely righteous. We are "made the very righteousness of God in him."

In this chapter it is *God*. It is God Himself, taken as God, in His own holiness. I can talk with Him, on my face it is true, but still I can have communion with Him. The heart is perfectly free in God's presence because God had made it free. God has counted Christ to me for righteousness, and He has told me so. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest." When we come to the details we see how—in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is my faith. God has proved His righteousness in accepting me, in making me righteous. How do I know that God is righteous? In His having set Christ at His own right hand, because He has put away all our sins. I see it in the reward given to Christ Himself because He has put away all my sins.

In chap. xvii. Abraham receives the seal of the faith which he had in chap. xv. "He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Circumcision was the seal to him; the Holy Ghost is to us, the seal of faith. In Romans iv. he is presented as Father

source and origin; second, this calling is to such an enjoyment of blessing as that we are to be a pattern and model of blessing to angels; third, that which puts us in present relationship with God so as to enjoy it, as "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." All is founded on divine righteousness. It is not the reckoning of *conscience*, but *God's* reckoning it to those that believe in Jesus. I can stand in His presence now, and have communion with Him. David could go and sit before God and say, "Is this the manner of man?" No: it is the manner of God. Thus He gives the capacity in righteousness for free, happy, blessed intercourse with Himself. He says, You are my children, and I am your Father. It is a people called out of this world. "Get thee out of *thy* country." O, what a different thing from dragging on, uncertain how it will end, or having no taste for fellowship with the Father—no sense of what Christ has spent His life for, that we might have the enjoyment of it.

of all that believe, head of this new race, just as Adam was head of the sinful race.

What a sense the Apostle Paul had of the blessing he had in God, how he felt himself to be a blessing! He says to Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." What fulness of meaning in that "as I am!" He had that consciousness of His own blessedness that he could not wish them a better thing than to be as he was. "And not Agrippa alone, but all that hear me this day." What a partaking of the divine nature! As it is said in Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." If a creature has got God, he has got what is infinite, though he himself is finite. The best wish I could wish a person is to be a Christian.

We do well to remember distinctly these three points: first, that it is not the responsibility of a ruined Adam-race, but that it is the calling of God, starting all from Himself as a new

The Lord give us to be vigilant and diligent, and to remember His presence where only we can enjoy it.—*Brief Notes of a Lecture.*

1 JOHN V. 10.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

There is an impression of intense personality, of individualizing each of us, in John's writings, which cannot fail to strike us, whether we read his Gospel or his Epistles.

The Gospel opens with this. It tells us that the world did not know Him who made it, that Israel did not receive Him to whom they belonged; but that "as many" as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.

Here is personality at once. This "as many" bespeaks it.

When we read the Epistles we find the same. Each of us, as it were, feels himself addressed.

It is the fellowship of the *individual* saint that is contemplated at once, as in the first chapter of the first epistle. There are orders or ages among these individuals, these elect ones, as fathers, young men, and little children; but each order has *personal* knowledge of God, and each one of them his own individual standing with God. The fathers "know him that is from the beginning," the young men have "the word abiding in them," the little children "know the Father." There is an anointing in them. (1 John ii.)

So again, each of them has the seed of God *in* them. (Chap. iii.)

So again, each of them has God dwelling in him, by the Spirit that He has given him; (iii. 24;) and the virtue or quality of that given Spirit is declared in this, that he who has Him makes a true confession to Jesus; and though they be but little children, yet do they, by virtue of His indwelling

Spirit, overcome the lie that is in the world. (Chap. iv. 1—4.)

And so again, each of these knows for himself the great fact that God dwells in him and he in God, through this Spirit given to him, and that given Spirit also enables him to make a confession to the grace of the Father in sending the Son, and also to the personal glory of Jesus, that He is "the Son of God." (Chap. iv. 13—15.)

It is "whosoever," again, and again, and again, in this Epistle, and such language intimates individuality, just like the "as many" of John i. 12 already mentioned.

Each has been given an understanding to know Him that is true, as we read at the close. (Chap. v. 20.)

It is in company with all this that, as I judge, the apostle says in chap. v. 10, "he that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself." It is in character with the whole Epistle.

According to John, the individual saint is divinely independent. He is not left dependent on whatever religion

his country, or his birth, or his education may have provided for him. He himself has been personally, individually visited of God. He himself has received the Spirit, and therewith the divine seed, and light, and life, and truth, and unction—he has the witness in him, and needs not that any man should tell him what he is or whose he is. He knows this of himself. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

PRAYER.

Brief Notes on Luke xi. 1—9.

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go

unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

In answer to their request to be taught to pray, the Lord here puts into the lips of his disciples the expression of spiritual desires; but it is not the entrance of the heart into the proper communion of the Church after the Holy Ghost had been given. The desires are perfect, but the place of conscious relationship to the Father, which gives confidence to the heart, was not yet known. It is looking up from earth to a Father in heaven, to care for them, and not sitting in heavenly places themselves. Still Christ teaches them, first, as to God—to call God "their Father;" then directs them about the Father's glory; "Hallowed be thy name;" then

as to the kingdom—"Thy kingdom come;" then to desire that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Secondly, He comes down to notice their daily necessities. In these, he teaches the need of constant dependence—"Give us day by day our daily bread;" "Forgive us our sins," and "Lead us not into temptation." "Forgive us our sins, *for we also forgive,*" supposes that grace is already known, and should produce softness of heart. If I know that all my sins are forgiven, as having been imputed to Christ, that does not produce hardness of feeling or indifference about them; neither as to my own sins, nor the failings of others. It is not a question of justification here, but the Spirit of grace and truth in the soul, and the conscience being kept tender.

In the parable of the friend at midnight, we are taught not right desires alone, but the necessity of earnest, continued supplication that waits on God. God is supreme in government; and, though His goodness is perfect and infi-

nite, there is, rightly, *majesty* in His goodness, which takes notice of all the circumstances through which we pass. In answering my prayers, therefore, God will use His own time; and this is right. For suppose a child asks his father for anything, and the father replies, "You must wait a little, then you shall have it;" and the child says, "No, I cannot wait, I must have it now, I must have it directly"—surely this would not be the right conduct of a child toward his parent. So, if we get out of a waiting position, we get into wrong circumstances, and the evil has to be corrected and judged, then blessing will be the result. While *waiting*, faith is exercised, and the spirit is broken down by the sense of need. But there may be more than what needs correcting in us. Look at Daniel as an example. He was a man greatly beloved, and he prayed for *three whole weeks*, and ate no pleasant bread during that time. Now what was the meaning of this? Why, that God had given Daniel such a deep sense of identification with Himself, in His pur-

poses toward Israel, that He could make him wait three whole weeks before he has his request granted. This, in itself, was a great privilege; for it was having fellowship with God. So that it is an act of God's grace, if He makes us wait, in order to create a desire in our hearts, according to the deep interest we feel in what we seek at his hands. In the case of the friend who asks for three loaves of bread, there is a depth of interest betrayed in the desire for the thing; and because of his importunity he gains it. And there is always a certainty of God's answering in blessing, according to His thought and purpose of blessing—though He delay for the exercise of our hearts.

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke xviii.)

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION IN CHRIST.

A Lecture on Eph. i. 1—14.

It is important, in order to understand, by God's blessing, the truth presented in this epistle to notice two things: first, The point of time, in the revelation of God's thoughts and counsels, in which it comes in; and, secondly, The special subject which it is the purpose of the epistle to unfold.

As to the first, Scripture speaks of "a due time" in which "Christ died for the ungodly;" and it is necessary, if we would learn the force and application of the truths of God revealed in this portion of Scripture, especially to notice the "due time" of this epistle.

It is of far greater importance than is generally imagined, in order to understand fully almost any part of the divine word, to notice the order of God's dispensations; and to have before the mind a general idea, at least, of the subjects with which God's word is occupied.

In the study of the Scriptures, it has been almost forgotten by Christians, that the word of God is a whole; and that, as a whole, there is a connexion, more or less intimate, between every part. And the order in which divine truth has been revealed renders it very necessary to consider, when Scripture is quoted or referred to, whether it is from the Old or New Testament; and also what particular subject is being presented. For it will be seen at once, as an example, that God could not speak about "the forgiveness of sins" to Adam in *innocence*, because sin had not yet entered into the world; though to us poor sinners it is the most precious and significant of God's gracious communications, and lies at the very threshold of our entrance upon the knowledge of all God's character and ways.

Again, He could not have spoken to Noah about, no more destroying the earth by the waters of a flood, until after Noah had witnessed that visitation of divine justice upon the old world. Afterwards, indeed, to him and to us the bow

Messiah, who was the hope of the nation, and in whom all the promises made to the fathers were to be verified. His rejection in this character, opened the door for higher blessings to those who believed, both of Jews and Gentiles, but the nation thus lost their claim to the promises, and in a future day will be brought in on the ground of undeserved mercy.

This may illustrate what is meant by "the due time" of this epistle.

But the second point is also important to be observed; which is the special subject it is the purpose of the epistle to unfold.

It is very natural for persons when they are not in the enjoyment of the peace of the Gospel, to have their minds more occupied with the *means* by which God brings sinners to Himself than with the fruits and displays of that grace which flow from a God of goodness, through the accomplished work of His only begotten Son. But this epistle is not occupied with the means of a sinner's reconciliation to God. It rather pre-

of promise had its assuring voice, and told, and still tells, of a God who, in the midst of "judgment, remembers mercy."

But much less could God speak to us, as in this epistle, of being "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together with him," &c., before Christ had appeared in the world; or before He had been rejected as their Messiah by Israel. For the death of Christ was, on the part of Israel, the rejection and forfeiture of all the distinctive promises of God, to them as a nation, in their rejection of Him in whom all these promises centred, and in whom they were all to be fulfilled. But in the counsels of God, which rise above all man's sin and the creature's failure, the rejection of Christ by the nation to whom he had been promised, gave occasion for the bringing out of the hidden purpose of God, that "the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." But this could not be until Israel had been proved by the coming of their

sents us with the fruits and blessings of God's wondrous grace, when the stage has been (so to speak) cleared for their display; and when every barrier to their full, wide, and eternal flow has been, through the accomplished work of Christ, removed. It is not, however, designed to disparage or treat lightly this subject of the *means* by which a sinner is brought nigh to God, much less to discourage the heart that is seeking for this knowledge. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians this subject is treated fully and divinely; and would that all God's children were established in this truth of personal acceptance and justification through faith in Christ crucified and risen from the dead; that they might, so assured, go on to the understanding and enjoyment of that grace of God which, as it flows so freely from Himself, is made the portion of every believer in Christ.

God has shown to us the full counsels of His own grace in Christ, and He would have our hearts established in that grace. He has presented to us the

excellency of the person of Christ, and the place which He now occupies in his presence; and connected with this He presents the place to which His grace has brought the Church, or believers, as the fruit of Christ's work—"the travail of his soul," and blessed issue of His victory over sin and Satan and death.

In the address of the epistle, "to the saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus," we have a designation of all believers; which shows that, whatever be the height of the blessings presented in it, or the depth of the grace it discloses, they are the portion which the God of goodness has given to all His children, however little their apprehensions may take up the blessings, or rise to the height of the goodness of Him by whom they are bestowed. It is important to notice this, because it is the portion of God's grace, and not that of my attainment. And the way to understand and to enjoy it is not through a clear intellect, but a simple heart. It is not activity of mind that God's

apostle speaks: "Grace and peace from God *our Father*, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" are the special titles of God in this epistle; and they are employed to make us know our relationship with God and our place before Him in Christ, as well as His relationship with Christ. For His purpose from the first "predestinated us;" i.e., those who believe on His Son, "to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." And this is in accordance with the word of Christ, when He was risen from the dead: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God:" and also with that connexion of the believer with Christ expressed in his declaration, "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" "Christ liveth in me," says the apostle.

As to the Lord Jesus Christ, these titles mark the relationship in which God stood toward Him; as the humbled man on the one side, and His eternal

revelations call for, but a quiet, unquestioning faith. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

Ordinarily, it is true, the state of the Church seems to call for instruction of a lower order than that of this epistle; that is to say, lower as to the character of the positive truths presented, as having more to do with the walk of believers, or with their individual encouragement, and the assuring of their faith; as also the raising of their motives, and teaching them what their walk should be in the world. Still it is exceedingly needful, if the heart is to be formed for Christ, and if it is to enjoy its portion in Christ, and to honour the goodness of that God who has so opened the eternal springs of his love toward us, that we should be often dwelling, apart from anything else, near to this boundless ocean of love, which flows independently of all, but *the good pleasure* and grace of Him whom we know as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." For in this title we get our place and relationship, as the

relationship with the Father on the other. As He said on the cross, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" and in the garden, "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*"

There is marked, then, in the first place, and with the chief prominence, the *source* whence all this goodness flows: For, surely, I may say, it is not so much the blessing as the *blessor*, that is here in prominence. Or if the blessing is dwelt upon, as it surely is, it is that the character and grace of the God who thus blesses may be known. The effect of a right understanding of the truths of this epistle is not that we should say, "What blessings has God bestowed upon us poor sinners!"—though that is true—but, "How blessed is that God of goodness—*our God*—who could counsel and frame and execute such counsels of grace, and unfold such surpassing depths of love and mercy!"

Thus then, and with this intent, the blessings are declared. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Never can our hearts know the fullness and the power of this statement, unless we look at it from God's point, *in heaven*; and not our own, *on earth*. But how often does the mind fail of reaching the height and power of divine truth, in the word, through bringing down its blessed statements to the point of human admeasurement, or to the apprehension of what our need requires! How often do Christians, in their estimate of "all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places," turn to their past or present *experience*, and think of pardon, and peace, and restoring grace and communion with God and the comfort of the word, and the hope of heaven, and thus imagine they have reached the idea. But no. This is not the sum of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

We must be introduced to the place where Christ is, and think of his rewards of obedience, and of all that characterizes God's blessed presence in

closure of those thoughts of grace which had been revolving in the heart of God; through eternal ages, but which could not be disclosed until He who was the centre of them all had been manifested, and who by His worth, and obedience, and accomplished righteousness—by his relation to God and His association with us—became the eternal ground of their display.

But He who has designed this place for us, and has effected this relationship to Himself in us, also fits us, in His infinite grace, for the place in which He has set us in Christ. He has chosen us "IN HIM," "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." That is, His counsels of grace have so wrought that we should be in His presence, in accordance with His own blessed character and nature. He is holy in His character, (as has been observed,) blameless in His ways, and His nature is love. And thus He will have His children before Him! For He has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."

heaven, and of His infinite love to Christ—for "he has made us accepted in the beloved"—if we would estimate aright the portion He has made ours. It is not Israel's portion in which He has set His Church. I do not mean Israel's former portion, which was marred and forfeited by the people's disobedience; but their future portion, in the land, with all the blessings of earth and under Messiah's unfailing righteous rule. Even now we have our life, our portion, and our place with Christ. He is risen and ascended, and entered into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and there, if you are Christ's, is your portion and nowhere else. There, and in no lower place. There, with no more limited range of blessing, and with no less a heavenly character.

And this portion is in accordance with God's eternal thoughts and counsels: it is "according as he hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world."

The time was now come for the dis-

His ways of grace, how bright they shine;
How deep His counsels, how divine.

But such grace as this excludes, of necessity, man's thought and man's desert. It is "according to the good pleasure of his will." There could be no other rule than this, for our blessed God to work by. Hence, when speaking in John of those to whom God gave authority, through receiving Christ, "to become the sons of God," it is added, "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is God's good pleasure. It is the will of God. God wills according to His pleasure; and He accomplishes what He wills.

Now if God thus works "according to the good pleasure of His will," the *issue* of this grace, in which He has set us in Christ, is in perfect accordance with this counsel. Our relationship to God and our place before Him, of which Christ's work is the basis, and the infinite goodness of God the eternal spring, is declared "to be to the praise of the glory of his grace." It will

issue in the illustration of that grace, making it shine out in glory.

How different are the results of man's desert and the issues of God's grace! "The wages of sin is *death*; the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The measure of God's grace is according to the measure of the worth of Christ; for it is added, "wherein," or in which grace "he hath made us accepted," or graced us, (if the term might be used,) set us in the same grace, "in the beloved." It is *Christ's* place by title, and excellency, and reward; it is *ours* through Christ's work and God's eternal favour. Still, *it is the place* of God's children to be "made accepted in the beloved." But this is not to be limited by the thought that whatever measure of acceptance with God I have, I have it through Christ. This is so far true; but it is not the truth of this passage. The truth presented here relates to the *character* of the acceptance, more than to the *grounds* of it: and this is an important distinc-

portion on high. Both are in display of "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ."

This question having been thus met, the river and overflowings of divine grace are pursued still further. It is now to be shown that God has set his people in the place which most of all manifests assured favour, that is, the place of confidence. "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

He here speaks of what goes beyond the believer's individual place and portion. For this "mystery of his will" which he has made known to us, reaches out to Christ's destined place, in manifested power and glory, as "head over all things;" the centre and uniting link

tion. Important thus, because it sets me to inquire what is Christ's acceptance and place before God, in order to find the character of my own."

But, then, because it is the contemplated portion of persons that were sinners, and sin unfits for God's presence, it is said, (ver. 7) "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." This takes up the point of God's grace lower down. There could never, it is assumed, be this portion for those who were still under sin, or with regard to whom the charge of sin had not been met. Hence the question of sin is introduced at this point, and is shown to have been met by the death of Christ; and the result to believers is, that *in Him* they have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," and that "according to the riches of His (God's) grace." Redemption is here looked at as the door, the necessary door, of introduction to the higher display of God's grace, in our association with Christ in His place and

of heavenly and earthly power and glory. It is what God will do for Christ "in the dispensation of the fulness of times." The creation which has been scattered and separated from God by sin and Adam's fall, is to be gathered again under one head in Christ. And this mystery, or secret of His will, is a new and special revelation on the part of God to His Church, as interested by her place and relationship to Christ, in all that concerns His glory. God treats us with confidence as His children; and, wonderful to think of, makes us the depositaries of the secrets of His will.

If this wide domain of heaven and earth be Christ's inheritance, who is "heir of all things," it is added, "*In whom* we have obtained an inheritance." It is not *through* whom; though that also might be true, as Peter speaks, "he hath begotten us again to an inheritance." But it is here Christ's inheritance, and the Church has her title to this only as a part of *himself*; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." The inherit-

ance is Christ's, and we have our inheritance in Him. And we are predestinated to this, "according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." For God accomplishes by His power what He purposes in the sovereignty of His will. And being thus heirs with Christ it will be "to the praise of his glory." The relationship in which we are set to God, in Christ, is to "the praise of the glory of his grace;" but the inheritance that He gives us in Christ will be "to the praise of his glory;" because it is in the inheritance that the glory will be displayed. God gives grace and glory. The glory is but the result and fruit of grace. But the grace is deeper, because it looks at us in our sins and distance from God, and forgives and brings us nigh. Whereas the inheritance is the bestowment of God on those who are brought nigh to him, and whom His grace has brought nigh.

The expression (ver. 12) who "first trusted in Christ," refers to those believers from amongst the Jews who are

mise," as "the earnest of the inheritance." None but the Holy Ghost could be this, since He alone knows what the glory is, or can adequately bear witness to the glory of Christ's place on high. But this is essential, as the earnest of the inheritance.

The sealing with the Holy Spirit is God's part and act, as thus marking those whom He owns. But then it is a living seal. A seal, and, at the same time, an earnest, or foretaste, of the glory of that inheritance to which we are predestinated in Christ. The Church is under the guardianship of the Spirit, whose delight is to make known to the heirs the riches and glory of their inheritance in Christ.

Nothing can be more wonderful than these revelations of God, as they are presented in their unmixed character, and uninterfered with by man's low and narrow thoughts. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings"—chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world—holy and without blame before God in love—sonship with the Father—union

presented as hoping or trusting in Christ before the nation receives him, which it will do in the latter day, after they have been chastened for their sins, and for their rejection of Christ.

But these trusted in Christ beforehand. It is not said that the *Gentiles* first trusted in Christ, or fore-trusted in Him; but only, "in whom ye also trusted, or hoped, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:" and then it is added, which presents a wondrous truth, "in whom also ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

As Gentiles, in dispensation, they had been put in the same place and standing with those on the day of Pentecost who were Jews, and who first received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was given independently to the *Gentiles* at the conversion of Cornelius, as may be seen in Acts x. and xi. And here it is said, in Christ, they were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of pro-

with Christ, as set in Him—heirs with Him who is Heir of all—treated with confidence by God, and made the depositaries of the counsels of His love—and, to crown all, the Holy Ghost sent down to be the earnest of the inheritance of glory, until it is redeemed out of the hand of every enemy, to the praise of His glory.

O when shall the day dawn, and the shadows flee away? How should our souls be captivated by this love, and our course bear the stamp of this wondrous grace!

THE BASKET OF FIRST-FRUITS.

Deuteronomy xxvi. 1—11.

In this offering of the basket of first-fruits the individual Israelite is presented in the special aspect of a worshipper before the Lord, whose goodness had redeemed His people out of Egypt and planted them in the land of Canaan. It is a constitution which the Israelite was to observe when he had come unto the land which the Lord his God had

given him for a possession; and where, in the full enjoyment of the blessing, he could, in act and confession, bear witness to the delivering mercy and faithfulness of the God before whom he was to stand and worship.

He is here the joyful witness of this goodness, and in the full effect of the faithfulness of Jehovah in the accomplishment of all His promises; promises, it may be observed, which, with regard to Israel, related to their establishment by the Lord, in Canaan, as their earthly inheritance.

The basket of first-fruits is a special constitution amidst the ordinances of Israel. Its character and import are distinct. The feasts of the Lord, which presented Israel in their nationality, unfolded, in type, at least, the means of redemption and the grounds of that relationship into which the people were thus brought to Jehovah; while the offerings and priesthood presented the grounds of approach to a God of holiness, in consonance with the character He bears. But it is not *redemption* that

which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there." "And thou shalt set it (the basket) before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God."

What elements of worship are here brought together! How simple and yet how perfect! It is only, in truth, the appropriate owning of God in the actings of His goodness, in the results of which the worshipper has been placed. He comes not as an alien in the land, but as its possessor, planted in it by the Lord, whose gift it was. His own hand had gathered these first-fruits—the proof of the fruitfulness of His inheritance—and had stored them in the basket to present them as a witness before the Lord. They are the first-fruits of the land which the Lord *His* God had given him, and which he *possessed* and *dwelt* in. They are brought to the place which God has chosen to place His name there: to the appointed meeting place of the worshipper and the Lord, as He had said, "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto thee, and I will

the basket of first-fruits presents; it is *inheritance*. And the worship connected with it is individual, and not corporate. The worshipper stands here in the full and unequivocal enjoyment of all that the faithfulness of God had promised; and the offering which he brings, the confession he makes, and the joy of heart by which it is accompanied, all bear the special impress of accomplished blessing. It is an offering of thanksgiving—a sacrifice of praise.

Misery and helplessness are owned, and mercy and redemption are acknowledged; but these are only steps in the pathway to the possession of the inheritance of the Lord. They were necessary steps, indeed; but they were only steps by which the faithfulness of Jehovah had brought His people to the inheritance of the "land that flowed with milk and honey."

The worshipper is here *in possession* of that inheritance; and he comes with his basket to the place where Jehovah had set His name. "Thou shalt go (says the ordinance) unto the place

bless thee." The priest, too, the necessary medium of approach, is there, and has his appropriate part. "The priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God," the place where atonement has been made. Thus, then, we have the inheritance, the worshipper, the offering, the priest, the altar, and the assured presence of God. Now comes the confession. "Thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terrible-ness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he hath brought us into this place,

and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey."

The helplessness and miserable condition of the people whom God had redeemed is fully owned. Egypt is recalled to view as the place of their bondage, with the pity of the Lord in answer to their cry of anguish and oppression. Redemption is acknowledged in all its characteristic power as the work of the Lord. And, lastly, the land, as the inheritance which the Lord had given to His people, is characterized according to the terms in which it was described, when it was yet but *the land of promise*, "a land that floweth with milk and honey."

At this point, there is a touching and instructive change of address. It is no longer the blessed rehearsal of the acts of the Lord; but the worshipper speaks directly to the Lord. And how simply! But this is always so, when the consciousness of His presence possesses the heart. "And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me!"

from Himself, and God may be forgotten in the very enjoyment which His goodness has bestowed.

This is true, not of temporal blessings only, but it is often true of the blessings of redemption and grace also. How many hearts are dwelling more on their security in Christ than on Christ Himself—resting in the effect of redemption as relating to their own happiness and hopes, instead of being brought by it into the eternal blessedness of communion with God. And how many, who have gone a step further, rest, practically, in the knowledge of their position in Christ, instead of using it to enjoy and to know God, the source of all their blessing, and to whom in thanksgiving and praise it should all return. "Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The first-fruits of the inheritance which God has given us in Christ should be brought in the fulness of our hearts to God. In the enjoyment of every blessing, God should be the *first* in our thoughts. It is by His actings

Then comes the final element of *joy*, which is the appropriate expression and fruit of the heart, arising from the conscious enjoyment of all that God had thus accomplished for him, and had given him to possess, and of the relationship in which God stood toward him. For there is the constantly-recurring expression, "the Lord thy God." And here "the Levite and the stranger" are brought in, as those who had a claim to participate in the joy which was flowing from the source of the grace and goodness of the Lord.

If this offering be looked at simply, it is the presentation of the *first-fruits* of his land by the Israelite to the Lord. God is *first* acknowledged and enjoyed in the blessings and in the inheritance His goodness has bestowed. It is not the blessing apart from God, but God owned and enjoyed in the blessing. So all the blessings of God's hand should bring us to God Himself; and should bring us to God *first*, with the *first-fruits* of thanksgiving to Him. Otherwise, His blessing may lead the heart away

in grace that He makes Himself known to His people; and hence the character of the Giver, and the affections of His heart, become the prime element in their blessing. "God is love;" and love, to be known, must be *enjoyed*. And here it is infinite enjoyment.

God makes Himself known to His people by His own actings; and by these alone is He adequately revealed, whether in regard to the redemption of an earthly people, or in that redemption and grace and eternal inheritance which are the fruit of this love, through the death and resurrection and ascension and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God acting in the supremacy of His love; and thus making His very nature to be known by our hearts. And these actings of our God are the only suited mouldings of His people's thoughts, and are designed to inspire and guide the worship they present. But how far, how very far, from this, is the mere wordy recapitulation of known truths before the Lord; in which *memory*, and not the heart, too often, takes the lead.

The basket of first-fruits, on the part of the Israelite, was the real witness, in the presence of God, of the portion which He had given His people; however suited might be the character of the confession by which the offering was accompanied. Alas! if we have nothing in our hearts, gathered, by faith, from our inheritance in Christ—if we have nothing when we come, as worshippers, before the Lord, but the confession of our lost estate, however true; or the acknowledgment of redemption, however certain—if there be no joyous affections kindled in our hearts by their having “tasted that the Lord is gracious;”—fruits of His love stored up in our souls, to be presented in praises and thanksgiving—we are like the Israelite coming *without* his basket, or with his basket *empty*—an insult instead of an honour to the Lord. The basket of first-fruits must be brought; for it is written, “Thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God.” If he had not been *dwelling* in the inheritance, he could

for our adversaries?” In the contests of Canaan there could be only *for* and *against*. So we have spiritual enemies to contend with; and Joshua leading the people on in conflict, is a figure of the Spirit’s leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. In this conflict, whosoever is not with me *must* be against me. I must be acting either with Christ and the Holy Spirit, or else with the world and the devil.

Christ has become the centre of all God’s thoughts, and of all that God owns, and we have consequently to judge our hearts in detail as to whether He is in everything our centre and aim. We may be occupied even in gathering Christians together; yet if it is not *Christ* in our own spirit it is but scattering. If Christ be not the centre it is not God’s gathering, but man’s scattering; for God knows no centre of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ then must be the object; Christ the centre; and nothing but Christ the end; for whatever is not gathering *round* that centre, and *for* that centre, and *from* that centre, is only scattering.

not have brought of its fruits. “Now he which stablisheth us with you *in Christ*, and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” May we dwell where we are thus stablished by God, and gather constant fruit from our inheritance, so that we may say, “And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me.”

A TEST OF THE HEART.

A FRAGMENT.

“He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”—Luke xi. 23.

When Christ is manifested, people must take their stand either for Him or against Him. There may be natural claims and natural affections; but they must not come in when Christ is in question. “Let the dead bury their dead,” is then the word; and “he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.”

I must be either on the side of Christ or Satan; there is no neutral ground. As Joshua said, “Art thou for us, or

POWER AND NEARNESS.

1 Kings xix.

Demonstration of power never invigorates the soul, unless it is connected with private communion with the Lord, and then, it is the communion and not the power which confers the blessing. The power is to give effect to service, but is always followed by depression and disheartenment unless the soul is kept in secret nearness to the Lord. We learn this from the chapter before us. Here was Elijah after witnessing one of the most marvellous demonstrations of the Lord’s power on earth: “The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench:” besides this, there was also a great rain in answer to Elijah’s prayer. So that there had been a double manifestation of God’s power; one to corroborate the mission of His servant, the other to bless His people. Yet, after all, we find in the next para-

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graph, that Elijah is so disheartened and fearful, that he fled for his life a day's journey into the wilderness, and requested for himself that he might die ! In this state, the angel of the Lord comes to him to prepare him for a journey to the Mount Horeb; and then, having eaten nothing for forty days and forty nights, he is instructed that the Lord (as for him) is not in the great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in "the still small voice." He is in that secret, invisible, noiseless communication which "no man knoweth but he which receiveth it." When Elijah *heard* the latter, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. His soul responds to the unmistakable voice of the Lord; the sheep knows His voice. The manifestations of His mighty power had no such effect on him. And this is our experience if we have but *retirement* and abstraction enough from nature to ob-

event could not avail them now. If it had enlarged their faith in the Lord they would have had a gain from it now; but then it would have been from the Lord, and not from the evidence of His power. The Lord wished to establish the value of Himself to them, and to teach them, that the acts of His power were only proofs of His own value; but that proofs could never suit in emergency without Himself. Miracles were to prove the value of His interest in His people, but in no wise to supersede the greater gain of nearness to Himself. After the miracle His disciples are placed in such an exigence that, unless He *draws near*, there is no hope of escape, but, when he *does*, "immediately the wind ceased;" and at this they are amazed, evidently not having learned from the miracle what they ought; even, that He who wrought it was not merely displaying His power on one occasion, but thereby expressing His interest in those for whom His power would at any time be in operation. In the histories of God's people in the Scriptures we

serve it. The soul must be in a listening attitude in order to distinguish (if I may so say) the peculiar notes of the voice of the Lord. The listening attitude is morally typified by Elijah's position at the mount of God; alone, and without food; subsisting only on God's provision for him. When nature clogs, and the world confuses, we shall not easily distinguish the "still small voice" from the voice of His wonders; nor, on the other hand, will mere solitude, miserable solitude, under a juniper tree in the wilderness, adapt us for spiritual apprehension. It is solitude *with God at Horeb, unsustained by nature*, that is the true preparation for spiritual judgment and instruction. We find after performing a great miracle that the Lord constrained His disciples to get into a ship. (Matt. xiv.) There they were toiling in rowing, and He saw them, and yet He came not to them until about the fourth watch of the night, and then would have passed by them. The effect of the demonstration of His power in the miracle had passed away, and that

find that continually humiliation and disaster immediately succeed some signal mark or demonstration of God's power in their behalf. Why is this? Simply because to be signalized is always dangerous, unless the soul is simultaneously kept conscious of the necessity of dependence on God. When the disciples told the Lord that even the devils were subject unto them, He replied, "Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." What God is to me is greater than anything God does before me.

No sooner is the song for the marvellous deliverance from Egypt ended, than the children of Israel are murmuring on account of Marah. What does the great demonstration of power in the passing through the Red Sea avail them now? They must realize their dependance on God as a very present help in time of trouble. The great deliverance proved to them His value, but Himself and not the proof is the only sure blessing in every time of need; and therefore the needs-be that we

should be brought into such trying circumstances.

When David reaches the summit of regal consequence, he numbers the people; but in his humiliation he learns God in a way and manner that he had never known before; just as in his fall respecting Bathsheba he had learned the depth and magnitude of God's restoration; so now he learns in the hour of humiliation a fuller revelation of His mind than ever before made known to any one. Not that it is good to fall, but God's grace is a greater thing to my soul than the acts of His power, and therefore David advanced more in moments of repentance than he ever did in any season of honour and glory. Paul found more strength to his soul from the communication, "My grace is sufficient for thee," than from all the evidence of the glory of which he was a wondering spectator.

The source of strength and blessing to man is in dependence on God. The tendency of a manifestation of power is to make me independent of God, as

beside me, is the true invigoration of the soul. When Elijah heard the "still small voice," he returned to his work like an omnipotent man. When David was at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he was in spirit and intelligence more advanced than ever he had been before; and when Paul said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, &c., that the power of Christ may rest upon me," he had reached the summit of moral glory.

I like to see the power of God that I may magnify His name; but the more I do so, the more do I desire in my own soul to realize, in an unseen, unmistakable nearness, that He is *my* God; and the latter is always dearer to me than the former, because the more distinctly I know Him, the more sincerely can I join in magnifying Him. Have we not seen gifts and distinct powers from God become a snare to the church, and the possessors of them, over and over again? The soul is more occupied with the expression than with the heart of Him from whom it came. Powerful teaching blesses me just in proportion as I can

having power on my side. There is ever a craving for power in the natural mind because the thought of man since the fall is, that if he had power he could do better for himself than God would do for him. Man did not primarily in his nature deny the power of God; he distrusted His love, and as His power without love could not be trusted, the power was distrusted too, but at the same time it was always desired.

Men may own God's *power* abstractedly, but His love—never. They, therefore, seek the one to accomplish what their own love for themselves, not what God's love for them, would seek for in it. They have no faith. Man would use any borrowed power, and personally glory in it; consequently, the moment man is engaged by the power of God, apart from communion with Himself, it must be a snare to him, and must leave his soul barren and unfruitful. It is God Himself who strengthens the soul. "The Lord *stood by me* and strengthened me." The consciousness that the Powerful One *LOVES me* and is

realize the love of Christ, of which the teaching is the exposition. If I am engaged with the exposition, as I might be by a poem, then it is mental and not spiritual. It is, in fact, beyond me, and if my conscience demand at some time hence my accordance with the results of the exposition, I discover that I received the exposition, and felt the power of it, without appropriating it to myself as the very sentiments of God's heart toward me. The consequence is, I am worse off than if I never heard, for I am humbled when I reckoned on gain. Real power, after all, consists in the inward sense it produces, not in the outward demonstration of itself. Paul would rather speak five intelligible words than possess the gift of tongues as a mere demonstration of power. People sometimes wonder at the manifestations of God's power, as if they were total strangers to the manner and greatness of it in their own souls. An undue place is given to that which nature can more readily apprehend, for with nature it is always from the outward to the inward, instead of *vice versa*.

May we be spiritual enough to own every gift and power from God *as given to the church, from the church, and for the church*; but also may we know the "still small voice," the secret communion, the unseen link which should be our real resource rather than and beyond any demonstration of power.

THE PRESENT WORK OF GOD.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."—Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8.

At a time when the Lord is so manifestly gathering souls to Himself, and when the minds of His people generally are either filled with the joy of that blessed work, [or the longing desire to see it, it is exceedingly important that the due balance of truth and scriptural

expectation be maintained. As to the first, there is the greatest danger of this balance of things indicated in this and other passages of the word of God being disturbed. He who is used of the Lord in conversion will be in danger of viewing that as the end of all ministry, and will be prone to undervalue what in its exercise is not accompanied with the demonstrations of the same power; and, on the other hand, where the soul is rejoicing in the grace displayed, there will be the temptation, unconsciously, perhaps, to leave the quieter path of teaching and exhorting, &c., for the more exciting one of being used in conversion.

The question, whether the conversion of souls to Christ, or the edification of believers, be the more important ministry, ought never to be raised. The same Lord that said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," has also said, "Feed my sheep"—"Feed my lambs:" and where evangelizing is not in question, "Take heed unto all the flock," &c.

The more the Spirit of God is using the evangelist, or converting souls to Christ, the more imperative does the word become, "Let him that teacheth wait on his teaching,"—the more important the care for all the flock. But this, unless the supremacy of Christ be owned in the soul, will not be the the natural tendency; nor will ministry tend to this where self is not put aside by the sense of the infinite grace of Christ. Doubtless, where Christ is more to the heart than self, the grace flowing to others, and by means of others too, will soften the heart and draw out the affections in care and service for those whom Christ has thus loved. No matter what channel grace may be flowing in, it makes the heart esteem Christ the more, and all on which Christ sets His stamp and name the more precious. The soul that practically feels the flowing stream of Christ's grace will neither envy others, nor leave its own path to *imitate* others; or pine to follow in a field to *glean*, because others have gathered there

abundant sheaves for the Master's garner.

The expectations awakened by this wonderful and extending work of God, and in what it will issue, will differ according as the mind has been formed by habitual subjection to the divine word, or has merely yielded its assent to generally-received notions of the world's progress and a spiritual millennium.

To the mind of the writer, this work is the bright precursory indication of the speedy coming of the Lord for His saints, and the foretoken of the world's approaching judgment. That the wave of triumphant grace, which he has himself seen, in one place, and in one short month, carrying forward to certain and expected glory with Christ such multitudes of souls, which up to that time had been "without hope and without God in the world," will roll on, he has the most certain conviction. It is written, "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then *all* those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

And then, "the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." And then, "*the door was shut.*"

The dispensation was ushered in, or rather the Spirit's bright witness to a risen Christ was marked, by the fruits of triumphant grace—taking the Jew from his formalism, and the Gentile from his moral degradation and his philosophic pride, and setting both outside the world where they had been living, in the certain hope of resurrection, and in the practical "waiting for God's Son from heaven." And now, after long ages of darkness, with here and there, and at distant intervals, a gleam of light and a transient testimony for Christ, and then sinking back into the general gloom, the dispensation is about to close with a final living testimony to the same triumphant grace. I mean not as to doctrine only—though to the observant mind there is something pregnant in the thought of the millions in this country that are just now being impelled to listen in theatres and public

the want of gifts have often proved to be vain and fruitless speculations, but the humble and patient exercise of whatever power the Lord has given for edification is always owned of Him, and results in the blessing of souls. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is, "do the work of an evangelist, *make full proof of thy ministry*;" and the direction of the passage before us is, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering, or he that teacheth on teaching."

The source of the gift is to be acknowledged, and its verity is to be proved, where alone it can be proved—in its *exercise*. Subjection of heart to the Lord is the most acceptable sacrifice to Him; and it is the essential condition of soul for being used by Him. "To obey is better than sacrifice." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

In all it should be the first concern to

places of amusement to the testimony, more or less clear, of that same grace, which in so many places is gathering its fruits, and presenting its witness, in quickened, joyous souls from amongst the most careless and ignorant and godless, as well as making worldly professors, by the very power of the blessing around them, and which has come into their own families, suddenly to awake up to the consciousness—and to bear witness to it too—that "all things are loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord," and to feel that His coming is about presently to put everything to the test.

Instruments for this work God knows where to find; and where there are none He can create them. Oftentimes they may be such as *we* should not look to be used by Him, and, beyond their own sphere, are plainly to be distrusted. But the work must go forward, for "He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

Discussions about the possession or

have the inward spiritual life keeping up with the outward exercise of power or service. Another thing to be remembered is, that prayer is the secret spring of all revivals. Not that prayer which is in the hearing of the persons sought to be affected by it, though God may use this where the heart is simple, but prayer in the secret ear of the Lord, in which all may effectually—most effectually help on this work of the Lord.

To many, perhaps, this work of the Lord is altogether a matter of surprise; while others, in the quiet study of the word, have seen the doctrine, which is now asserting its triumphant power, being silently prepared, and as widely diffused, and have long contemplated the final issue of God's present working. Nothing in the portents of the times is unlooked for, because they have given heed to the word, which shews "before-hand" what the end will be; what the end of the church's hope, and the end, alas! of the world's glory! That a night of judgment is approaching for the world, brought on by the increasing

corruption of the outward profession of Christianity, has been long seen; but that which, perhaps, has been to most a surprise is, this sudden gleam of brightness before the sun of heavenly grace sets in darkness upon this poor world.

Many, who are rightly rejoicing in this grace, and are being carried forward by it, see nothing beside it, and nothing beyond it; and imagine that the stream as it flows on, may without harm obliterate all the landmarks of distinctive truth. This is human infirmity. Grace does not destroy truth, nor does the multitudinous conversion of souls destroy the privileges and character of the church of God. The blessing is of God, and should be so owned wherever the tide is flowing, and with whatever it may be externally associated; but it can never be of God to use the blessing to neutralize the truth and will of Him who gives the blessing.

When Barnabas visited Antioch, and saw the grace of God in "the great number that believed, and turned unto the Lord," "he was glad, and exhorted

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

Psalm xlv.

The true force of Scripture is never found except in its ascertained meaning, though, apart from this, piety may be taught from Scripture, and a great deal of truth presented to the mind; though, necessarily, failing in its power from this consideration,—that it is not the living, and perfect, and energetic thought of God in the definiteness of the language and designed application of the Holy Spirit.

Very much that is taught from Scripture is not the meaning of Scripture, even assuming that which is taught is truth, so far as it goes. This in itself may account for the little progress in the knowledge of the divine counsels, of the people of God, and also for the want of divine certainty in what is held as truth. Truth not held direct from the word of God, and based upon its ascertained meaning, can never give the

them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." And when Paul addresses the elders of Ephesus, at the close of his ministry, referring to the evils and sorrows that crowded around the scene of his labours, seeking to gain an entrance in order to corrupt and destroy, he says emphatically, "Therefore *watch*, and remember that, by the space of three years I, ceased not to *warn every one* night and day with tears."

"The time is short." "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Rom. xiii. 11, 12.)

* * * For some very valuable and timely observations on the revival, (in Ireland especially,) see "A Few Words on the Present Revival."—ED.

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ground of that certainty, the general lack of which, even amongst Christians, is to be deplored. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

Where Scripture is not known it cannot be taught; but where it is known it is both infinite joy and profit to the soul. The strength, the richness, the beauty, as well as the immutability of truth, come thus to have their place in the heart, and God is known—known by the revelation He makes of Himself, His counsels, and His ways. These thoughts have been awakened by meditation on this most rich and precious psalm. The beauty of which, and in great degree its preciousness, is only to be rightly apprehended by seeing its direct bearing and application apart from all the sentiment and imagination, or even doctrine, that may be drafted from other parts of Scripture and incorporated with it.

The subject of the psalm is obvious from its application to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Thy throne,

O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. i. 8, 9.) But how vague and general must be any interpretation of the psalm as a whole, if the place which Christ, as the Messiah of Israel, holds in the counsels of God, and the connexion of His future glory as King in Zion and on earth be not seen.

It is "Maschil," or a psalm of instruction, and "a song of loves," as we see by the title it bears.

In the first verse the writer announces his subject to be, "things which he has made touching the KING." For the subject of the psalm is the triumph, reign, and union of Christ with the godly Jews in Jerusalem in the latter day. It is Christ, as the Jehovah of Israel, celebrated in His character of King. "The queen" may appear in the psalm, and "the virgins that follow her;" but they are prominent only as

glory is next marked, and the righteousness of His reign declared—"the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." For His love of righteousness, when He stood on earth for God as the witness of righteousness, and testified of the world that its works were evil, He is now anointed by God with the oil of gladness above His fellows. (See Phil. ii. 6—11, as to His heavenly glory.)* Next, He comes forth to the marriage with Israel, with all the fragrance of the heavenly courts—His garments

* "It is very touching to see the divine glory of the Lord celebrated at the same time that—coming down to His faithfulness as man—the saints are acknowledged as His "fellows," when He is anointed with the oil of gladness as chief over them. But further remarks on this subject belong rather to the Epistle to the Hebrews. We will only quote the remarkable verse in Zechariah, the inverse of that referred to in the Psalm. When He is presented as the man smitten of Jehovah, He is named *His* fellow. Celebrated as God, the saints are acknowledged His fellows in His divine joy as man. Smitten as man, He is Himself the fellow of Jehovah." See "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Psalms."—EDITOR.

connected with the installation and glory of the King. "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer," indicates the sense of divine guidance in what is uttered in the psalm; as the pen of a ready writer is guided in every movement by the hand of him by whom it is grasped.

The prophets testify that it is *Jehovah* who will appear in power for the deliverance of His people, as may be seen in Isaiah lxvi. compared with Zech. ix. 1—8, 12—16; x. 3; xii. 7, 8; xiv. 3—4. But Zech. ix. 9, and even xiv. 4, with this psalm, show that if it is *Jehovah*, it is also the man Christ. Compare Dan. vii. 22; Micah i. 5.

Christ, in the beauty of His Person, as "fairer than the children of men"—though man—with "grace poured into his lips," as His gracious words on earth declared, and now blessed of God for ever, give the subject of the second verse. His might, and glory, and majesty, and subduing power, for the establishment of "truth, meekness, and righteousness" in the earth, are the subjects of verses 3—5. His Godhead

smelling of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.

The daughter, the queen in gold of Ophir, is the earthly Jerusalem, seen as restored by grace. No longer, as in the days of Messiah's humiliation, claiming descent from Abraham; but saying, as in Isaiah, "Doubtless, thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." "The virgins her companions" are the other cities of Judah; for it is *Jerusalem* to whom the Lord is married, and over whom He rejoices as the bridegroom rejoicing over the bride; as it is *Jerusalem* that will be called *Jehovah-Shammah*—the Lord is there. But the other cities of Judah will be round about her, and share in her nuptial joy and glory. The border nations too will be there "as the daughter of Tyre," &c.

And "the rich amongst the people will entreat her favour." (See Isaiah lx. throughout.)

It is well to have the heart attracted by the beauty of the Lord Jesus, but then it should be by His real beauty;

but how can this be known except in the expression of it which the Spirit gives?

It is not good to stay at the thought of His grace in adaptation to our necessities, essential as it is to know this. We must go a step farther; for Christ so known is not Christ in His beauty, and power, and glory. It is Christ as the remedy of our wretchedness, in a certain sense it is a *selfish* view of Christ, blessed as it is thus to know Him. Hence the necessity of some farther development of truth for the feeding of God's people than many, who are rightly set on the conversion of souls, would be contented with. All of Christ is precious; and it is well to have the heart filled with Him, that so we may delight in the thought of so soon seeing Him as He is, and being made like Him. For this is the Church's place and hope, in contrast with the hope of Israel, which will be realized in their association with the earthly glory of their Messiah and King.

it is equally certain that I shall not make Christ the centre of all around me, if he is not practically the centre of my own heart.

It is a great thing for a man to say, I have no object but Christ; that He is everything to me. And everything in me is so judged by this one object, that the whole activity of my heart is for Christ, and only for Christ. It is not enough to have Christ only at bottom as our object—every Christian has that; for if Christ be not at the bottom of the heart, the man is no Christian at all.

The truth is simply this, that between Christ, who is the root at the bottom of the heart, and that which comes out, there are ordinarily a great quantity of middle things that are not judged, and which certainly are not Christ, nor like Christ; for only touch them, and nature is directly up in arms. Besides love to Christ, there is often love of money, love of worldly company, love of power, love of influence, under the pretext of using it for Christ: all of which, if

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth."

There may be gathering, as we see, in looking round at what is called the church; but if it is not *with Christ*, the whole thing, vast as it is, is but scattering. One may be very ignorant about Christ, but it must be Himself around whom we gather.

But, on the other side, so sectarian are our hearts, that we have need to watch, lest, when Christ is owned as the centre, we be like the disciples, who said, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not *with us*." Here *self* had sprung up; for the man whom they forbid was glorifying God in casting out devils in Christ's name. There is no possibility of detecting the subtlety of self, except as Christ is the centre of the soul. And it is certain that Christ will not be the centre of my efforts if He is not the centre of my thoughts. And

unjudged, must hinder communion, and will prevent Christ being the simple and only object and centre of the soul.

There is nothing that the hearts of God's children should more sedulously cultivate than the thought that we have to do with God. "Jesus has suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It is with God "we have to do." And if this truth be not practically maintained in the soul, our strength will be weakness, our walk our disgrace, and our worship but form.

This is the thought we are to cherish, that through redemption "we are brought *nigh* to God," "we have to do with God."

I need hardly say that in every age the whole power and blessing to man has arisen from his having to do with God. God is the source of all life and blessing. But the way in which the displays of God's presence, and power,

and help are manifested, are modified by the relations in which He is manifesting Himself to His people, and according to His purposes in dealing with His people.

In a former dispensation, and in the present, there is a contrast in the mode in which God's presence and power are manifested. God's presence with Israel was for a manifestation of His power and goodness upon earth before the nations, and hence the discomfiture of outward enemies, and the enjoyment of earthly blessings. In the church God's presence is for the manifestations of His power in sustaining upon heavenly principles a people whom He has gathered to Himself. And hence His power will be *mainly* displayed to faith, in the victory over spiritual enemies in a triumph over the world, and in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.



Lord's presence was with us, and the new converts were blest.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

I own the name of Jesus,
Let others it despise;
The blessed name of Jesus
Above all else I prize.

I bear the name of Jesus—
Profess Him as my Lord;
Acknowledge Him my Saviour—
Alone beloved, adored.

I love the name of Jesus,
Whate'er the cross I bear;
I find my joy and solace,
And all I wish for, there.

I prize the name of Jesus,
The treasure of my soul;
The sum of all my riches,
My joy unspeakable.

Yes, blessed, precious Jesus,
My heart e'er turns to thee;
Come whatsoe'er thou wilt,
Thy name my all shall be!

And, O! the name of Jesus,
Shall be my deathless song,
When in the realms of glory
I join the ransomed throng.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.

It is quite right to humble *ourselves* to the very dust, if called to it. But I must not magnify my grace and humility to the shame of my precious Lord and Saviour. He has a claim in this matter, which I feel I can never give up. All my hard thoughts, and narrow feelings, and ungracious speeches, I will freely confess, but we must be faithful to Christ. We must have a *true Christ*, the centre of all our affections, the true basis of union and fellowship. In these times of much blessing there is great need of watchfulness and close walk with God. Pray for me that I may be kept. Thank the Lord He is enlarging my heart, but still telling me to *walk* in the *narrow path*. The work is going on here very blessedly in a quiet way. Conversions each night this week, except Wednesday and Thursday, at the room: on these two nights there was not gospel testimony. I think only one unconverted person in the room on one of the nights, and none on the other, but the

GOD'S GREAT ORDINANCE.

We may have observed in John's Gospel the zealous and decided way in which the Lord Jesus sets aside all honour which man might bring to Him, in order that He may establish the grace of God, or the love of the Father, to poor sinners. In that Gospel, He shines in the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, as full of grace; and He will not shine in any other glory. Men may propose to honour Him as a Teacher of heavenly secrets, as a Doer of wonders, as One suited to be great in the world, as a Judge or as a King; but He sets all aside with marked and indignant earnestness, and will be received only as the witness of the Father, the minister of grace to sinners.

This gives character to the Lord's way in the Gospel by John.

In a corresponding way, we may see how zealously, so to speak, all through Scripture, God sets aside all that would stand as in company with Christ to share His place with Him, (and, still

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more, all that would dare or affect to *displace* Him,) that He may fix and establish Him as His one great ordinance.

There is, let me say, a very blessed correspondency between these two things. In John's Gospel, or during His ministry here among us, Christ the Son is zealous in hiding Himself, that the grace of God, the secret of the bosom of the Father, may appear: and God, at all times, during the different dispensations, is zealous that CHRIST, and CHRIST ONLY, should be accepted and honoured as His own one great ordinance.

Of this latter truth, I would notice some striking pledges and witnesses, as we pass down the current of Scripture.

Nadab and Abihu, with bold and infidel daring, set aside the fire which had come down from heaven. That fire, symbolically, expressed the acceptance of the services of Aaron, and was, in this way, the seal which God was putting upon Christ and His work; for He is the true Aaron and the true

shall not bring the people into the land—a judgment which is never repented of. God is not to be moved from avenging the wrongs of Christ upon His choicest servants, be they who they may, even a Moses and an Aaron. The judgment was pronounced on the spot, and maintained till it was executed to the very letter. There was a great moral distance, I know, and, as I have already said, between the offence of Nadab and his brother, and that of Moses and his brother. The haste and unadvisedness of the latter are surely not to be condemned, as the bold, infidel insult of the former. But still, God avenged the controversy of Christ upon each and all of them. (See Num. xx.)

When we come to New Testament times, we find the same jealousy touching the honours of the Christ in the mind of God. In ignorance, as not knowing what he said, or not knowing any better, Peter, on the holy hill, proposed to give equal place to Moses, Elias, and Jesus. But “the excellent glory” could not be silent then. The

Victim, the Priest and the Sacrifice for God.

The hand of God awfully and peremptorily judges this sin, by slaying them on the spot. Penal fire avenged the strange fire which had displaced the fire which had borne witness to Christ. This is full of meaning. (See Lev. x.)

Moses and Aaron exposed themselves in like manner, though not indeed in like measure. They trespassed against the Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. It was not in the spirit of infidel daring, like Nadab and Abihu. No indeed. Far otherwise. It was, through sudden temptation, under the provoking of the people. But still they did dishonour God's great ordinance at the water of Meribah. They did not sanctify God in using the rod with the Rock, according to the divine word. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. He trespassed against the Rock which followed Israel, and that Rock was Christ; and that is enough. He and Aaron are judged for this sin. They are told that they

honour of Christ is not to suffer at the hand of any one. It may be but ignorance, and not unadvisedness, as with Moses; or infidel presumption, as with Nadab—it may be neither scorn nor temper, but only from want of knowing better. Still, God's hand or God's voice will be ready to avenge the dishonour of His Christ. The voice from the excellent glory lets Peter know that “the Beloved Son” alone is to be heard. (See Luke ix.)

Then, what God thus, by hand or voice, began to do in this matter, the Spirit in His vessels continues to do. God in the excellent glory, the Holy Ghost in His vessels, and, I may add, every saint, are one in this zeal and jealousy.

The disciples of John Baptist were somewhat moved by the multitude seeming to pass by their master for the younger Jesus. They resent this—as Joshua, ages before, had done in the cause of his master Moses, when Eldad and Medad began their prophesying. But John, in all gentleness, and yet in all decisiveness, answers this. As in

the name of all the prophets, as standing at the end of the line of them, and uttering their mind, he hides himself, that Christ alone may be seen and heard. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above"—"He must increase, I decrease," he says, replying to the words of His disciples. Though but a vessel of the Spirit, though but an Elias, he speaks the language of the excellent glory on the holy hill. The voice of God there called away Moses and the prophets from the eye and from the ear of Peter; so here, John's word withdraws himself and all his fellow-servants, the Bridegroom's friends, from the eye and ear of his disciples, (and indeed from all beside,) that the same "Beloved Son" may alone be known or thought of. "John" and "the excellent glory" have, in this way, the same mind about Jesus the Christ, God's great ordinance. (See John iii.) This is all consistent, and all blessed. The glory as on high, and the Spirit in His vessels here, are agreeing together to give all honour to the Son.

Joshua is to give place, as one who gave Israel no rest, while Jesus, the true Joshua, is revealed as giving God's own rest to us. (Chap. iv.)

Aaron, the priest, is then shown as yielding to Christ, the true Melchisedek, the Priest in the power of an endless life. (Chap. v.—vii.)

The old covenant vanishes before that covenant of which Christ is the Mediator, and which abides now for ever. (Chap. viii.)

The sanctuary under the law is taken down, and the better and more perfect one, where Christ serves, is raised in the stead of it. (Chap. ix.)

The victim provided for the altar by the law is slain no more, and the one sacrifice of Christ is established in its efficacy for ever. (Chap. x.)

Thus, God's great ordinance is set in its place. Christ is brought in, and all, one after another, have to go out. Angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, the old covenant, the first tabernacle, the legal sacrifices, are made to leave the scene, that He and He alone may fill it, and

After John, we listen to the epistles; each of them, in its way, does this same service. It is jealous over Christ, careful to maintain His place and honours for Him alone. But in that to the Hebrews, we see this purpose prevailing in the mind of the Spirit throughout; I may say, it gives its character to that epistle.

That epistle is a setting aside one thing after another, in order to leave the Lord Jesus, the Christ, God's great ordinance, only before us; and having brought Him in, to keep Him there; and each thing, as it comes up, is set aside with a *strong, decided hand*, as in ancient days, the days of Nadab and Abihu, or of Moses and Aaron.

Angels are first withdrawn from our sight, and He, who has obtained a more excellent name than they, is brought in; and this, too, upon the authority of scripture after scripture. (Chap. i., ii.)

Moses is then set aside, as but a servant in the house of another, and He, Jesus the Christ, the Son, is brought in as lord over His own house. (Chap. iii.)

being brought in, after this manner, by the Spirit, Christ is set before us for ever—as we read just at the end of the epistle, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

All is thus in earnest and consistent jealousy around Jesus, from first to last. The hand of God avenging, the voice of the Father rebuking, the Spirit in His living vessels or in His written oracles renouncing, all slight upon Him, the Christ of God, God's one great ordinance.

And what has thus been done by the divine hand and voice, and by the Holy Ghost in His authorized authoritative ministers, is still done, and that every day and all the earth over, by all elect, and ransomed sinners. The faith of the saint is one, with all beside, in this jealousy.

Paul, as a saint, will say, as Paul, as an inspired teacher, will teach, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, "Christ is all." John will say,

with intense jealousy watching over the name of Jesus, "if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." This jealousy touching Him, this glorying only in Him, is the common instinctive property of every renewed mind, the inwrought, and thus, indeed, the natural sense and judgment of every saved soul.

What harmonies are these! Harmonies of heaven and of earth, of all times and dispensations, of the excellent glory and of poor earthen vessels! And the harmonies that utter the song or form the music, take for their subject a theme of loftiest conception, and of most precious and joyous meaning—the glory and worth of the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, who is to know no one to emulate Him throughout the eternal ages.

that, until the point is reached in which the words "take hold," "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still," it is "the accepted time," it is "the day of salvation." As long as ever it can be called "*to-day*," we are to hear His voice. Moreover, when the Church's affections are represented as turned with the greatest earnestness toward Christ and she is answering most truly to her relationship to Him, and "the Spirit and the bride," in anticipation of His return, are saying, "Come," the invitation of the gospel, in its widest sense, is expressed in the words, "Let him that is athirst, come; and *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely."

And in the application of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew xxv., there seems to be a positive declaration that at last there will be a *universal awakening*: "then *all* those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps."

"RAIN IN THE TIME OF THE LATTER RAIN."

"Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain."—Zech. x. 1.

Mere speculations as to the probable extent and course of the present work of the Lord in gathering souls to Christ would be fruitless and vain; but enquiries from the Word of God, as to whether there are Scriptural grounds to guide our expectations in this respect, must be naturally awakened in every thoughtful mind.

That the present dispensation will end in judgment and not in universal, or millennial blessing, is assumed to be incontrovertibly settled by the Word of God. Still there is room for the enquiry whether there is anything in Scripture to bar the expectation of a general revival—a brief, rapid, wide-extended and final gathering of souls to Christ by the testimony of His grace before the Church is taken out of this scene, and judgments on the world set in.

One thing must be borne in mind,

So that there does not seem to be in the word any bar to the expectation of a work of God, in connexion with the triumphant testimony of His grace, to any extent the Lord may please; or to any display, at the close of the dispensation, of the energy of the Holy Ghost in drawing souls to Christ that shall answer in character and degree to that which was witnessed at the beginning: and thus a practical exemplification be given, in God's ways, of the principle, "the last shall be first and the first last."

To Christians who are looking for a *spiritual reign*, or a millennium brought in by the energy of the Spirit, and not by previous judgments, of course such reasoning as this can only be viewed as supererogatory; for the question has already been pre-judged on the basis of Old-Testament prediction. To others it may not be without its profit in directing their thoughts; though, if we think of what He has already accomplished in Sweden, and in America, and Ireland, and various parts of the continent, besides our own country, it must be con-

fessed that God has, in His grace, already almost taken it out of the region of expectation and made it matter of fact.

God is sovereign in His actings; but then He is acting in the present age in the supremacy of His grace. How much therefore may we not count upon in farther mercy even where His grace has wrought so much; and in places that have not been visited thus at all how much may we not expect from the love of His heart! Not that it is expected there will be a permanent state of things issuing from this work; or even a long-continued work. Outward events, to those who have studied the prophetic word, are such as to indicate a speedy close, and now the moral signs are in correspondence. As to the day of labour, it may be said, "The night cometh when no man can work;" but as to the position of the believer, it may with emphasis, be added, "the night is far spent and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

I may not be able to connect myself

souls to Himself, none who have at all witnessed His power in this respect will be disposed to doubt. And it seems to be of immense importance that the hearts of all His people should be awakened to it—that by prayer and hearty desire it may be helped forward. It is not asked nor sought that the truth received from the study of the word should be given up, or that the conclusions which have been come to from the quiet study of the Scriptures should be weakened.

But if God is doing a work, who are those that ought to be interested in it, and actively associated with it? "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? . . . Surely the Lord God will do nothing; but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos iii. 6, 7.)

It is but little matter to any who have been brought into contact with this work how it is received by others, i.e., whether the report of it be received with credence or unbelief. It so brings its own credentials with it, that as soon

with all that has accompanied this work of the Lord, which has been so markedly begun, and which our souls should be stirred up most earnestly to pray may be carried on; but in the work itself every soul that is attached to the Lord Jesus must sincerely rejoice. The means, it is true, that are used by some to produce an *immediate effect* in connexion with the preaching of the word—perhaps used in faith by those whom the Lord has owned in this work—I might not be able to adopt, though earnestly praying to the Lord for the result. Want of faith might possibly hinder me, if the dread of imitation and excitement did not; while from the efforts of others I might be obliged to stand aloof altogether, from the manifest indications of the flesh and of a mind not subject to God. But even here, in *the result* we ought to be able to rejoice as Paul rejoiced that *Christ* was preached, though some preached Him of "envy and contention."

That God is doing a wonderful work in this day in the rapid conversion of

might there be a question about the sun's light when it is shining all around, as a question raised in the hearts of such, whether the Lord is doing a wonderful work on souls or not.

Christians, especially, who have the coming of the Lord as their hope, of all others, should be prepared to expect and to welcome this work; because the Lord to them (if I might so speak) assigns the reason of His delay and of the prolongation of their hope. They are to "account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation."

So that, while this sudden and unlooked-for work (blessed in itself) is going on and gathering souls for Christ's appearing, it declares emphatically that His coming is at hand; because *the very cause of the delay* is being removed by Him who has taught us that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness."

Moreover, there is a special need of prayer, that the enemy may not profit by imitations of this work, and so cast discredit upon it; and that souls may

have an adequate care, through the Lord's grace, that are thus suddenly brought "out of darkness into his marvellous light." God's counsels of grace will surely be accomplished; but then He loves to associate the desires of His people with His own work; as He says of Israel, "Yet for all these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them." And as in the passage before us, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

While doing all honour to those whose preaching has been owned of the Lord in the gathering of souls to Christ, it would be folly to suppose that nothing more than this is needed. It would, in truth, be like ignoring the use of the epistles of the New Testament—which it will be remembered were *all* written for the use of persons already brought by the gospel home to Christ. There is, and will be, the immensely-increased need of teaching and exhorting and

wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, *the bridegroom came*; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: *and the door was shut!*"

JOHN I. 1—14.

BRIEF NOTES OF A LECTURE.

This is a part of the truth connected with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which must always be associated with whatever else we learn of Him. We may think about His sympathy, His love, His humiliation, His sufferings, and His death, but we must always associate with it what is declared here. The mystery of godliness is, that "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." The basis of all this is presented here.

pastoral care. For however lightly we may think of mere official pastorship, nothing can be more important than, for Christ's sake, to care for the sheep of Christ. In this view, how earnestly should each one pray that, in all humility of mind, he may be used as an instrument to warn, or teach, or comfort, or guard, those souls whom God is gathering for Himself out of the midst of this evil world! Not that there is the least thought of building up a permanent state of things; or that there will be time for the development of the ordinary phases of revival, of decline, and of ultimate indifference; but rather the bright and blessed expectation of a people being prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And *at midnight* there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then *all those virgins arose*, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the

It is this which stamps its value on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus—on His blood. "*He was in the beginning with God,*" though He hung upon the cross. Looking at His various offices we must still connect with them this great truth. As our Saviour, our Intercessor, our High Priest, "He was in the beginning with God." HE WAS GOD: no less the Creator than the Redeemer, the ever-living God. In His coming again, too, He will be "*God manifest in the flesh.*" While our hearts are often drawn to the truth of God's word, and to Him as God's centre, let us remember that He has an existence *now*—we have to do with Christ *now*. He *was* down here in the world, manifest in the flesh; he is taken up into glory. He now exists in the presence of God. All that He ever was, all the glory in which He will appear, are centred in Him now.

We have to do with Him in all the power which was displayed when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." One reason why Christians are so lacking in vital power is, that

the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is so little the object of their intimacy. I am called to learn *God* in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should I be impoverished when I am told that the apostle was called to preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches of Christ*? Why should I lack when He is mine, and when all fulness is in Him? Do I scan this subject with an indolent mind? Do I say I have learned this? I can never understand God but by *faith*. The moment I reason I limit.

Look at the subject before us, the first verse; will reason help us there? Can I travel into that void of ages before ever the stars were created? Can my *mind* help me in thinking about Him who never had a beginning. The Scriptures begin to unfold by a description of the works of God; but here is One who was *before* all His works. God *is* before He acts. He formed all things by the word of His power. He created man able to contemplate His works, but *He was* before He began to create.

This is a subject beyond the reach of

man. It is not a human apprehension of Christ that will save a man. But faith is simple. God gives the Spirit that we may understand the things of God.

Verse 2. Here I learn the history of Him who tabernacled with us. "He was in the beginning with God." Is it ordinary with our souls to think of God manifest in the flesh being engaged in creation? Are our souls habitually resting on this—He is almighty to save? All the manifestations of God have been through the Son. He is the "Wisdom" of Proverbs viii.; and I find here, that if His generation is to be declared it goes back into eternity. Creation is the work of Christ: may I not trust Him then? The soul needs to be established in this truth. He is the centre of all God's actings. Faith never will have its true bearing unless seeing that Jesus hanging on the cross was truly God. (Col. i. 15—19.) When we read such statements as these where do they carry the soul? He who hung upon the cross fills all things—is the eternal God.

When the heaven and earth are no more His existence remains unchanged, He is the Alpha and the Omega. "I am He that was dead and am alive for evermore." But with whom am I associated when I receive Christ? I receive Him of whom it is said, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." In any intercourse with Jesus that is what He is. If I rest upon the blood of Him who is all this, in the accomplished work of Him who is all this, what can shake me? When heart and flesh fail, when all will be shaken, I may say—yes, but *Christ never can be shaken*. He not only creates all things but upholds all things by the

word of His power. He was the full divine wisdom and divine power veiled in humanity, but never laying aside His Godhead. I can be satisfied with a very little knowledge of Christ when I have a thousand props to lean upon; but when everything fails then Jesus becomes the only and essential stay of the soul.

The apostle trusted in God that raiseth the dead, because he was always delivered to death for Jesus' sake; and it was his trust in God, I might say his companionship with God, which enabled him to say, "thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." But, alas! how little is He known to us in all the depths of His love! What has God given us? the riches of the universe? *He has given me Him who formed the universe*, as well as the untraceable riches of Christ. What are men doing in rejecting Christ? How *can* they get on in the world without Christ?

Ver. 4, 5. The world as one common mass is darkness; light is that which

belongs to God. There are only two things which God is—*God is light and God is love*. So Jesus here is light. But, then, mark His reception. What is the world's darkness? It did not receive Him, who was the light. Was Jesus known as God? Was there not always a conflict in men's minds about Him, when here in the world? Is it not so now? Don't talk about light; there is the light of science, the light of reason, the light of nature, and a thousand other kinds of light; but *the life* was the light of men. There is no understanding, no holiness, no likeness to God, but by the reception of Him who is *the light*. But then so received He is *the life* as well as *the light*. Connected with God's display of grace by Jesus Christ, He was the sacrifice for sin, to give efficacy to that grace. He was that, but man knew Him not.

Ver. 10, 11. We know the truth of this; but would any one imagine that men could be so bad, that when God came,—not by law, not as John the Baptist did, but in the full display of

grace—that they would reject Him? In Himself He carried the secret of divine love. He came to *accomplish* redemption as well as to proclaim it. Beforehand we never could have judged so badly of men as that; but the death of Christ brings out the plain truth. If I have received Christ I have received Him plainly as the crucified One. For He is unfolded in all His character to us, though not to them. He was a living person in the midst of Israel, and so He was rejected, though come there; it was true, where any received Him, it was as what He was.

It is not enough for me to have Christ for my salvation, I want Him for my everyday necessities. If I am to be happy, if I am to enter into the joy which belongs to me, Christ in His glory must be the subject of my thoughts. We do not make a business of our religion. But is it an unhappy business to be always thinking about Christ, who laid aside all His riches to die for me? Who says, "all things are yours, for ye are Christ's?" But, "all

men have not faith." One thing is needful. Men are not enough *with Christ* to tell of Christ. They do not come forth from their ivory palaces, their garments smelling of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. May the Lord stir up our hearts. We shall not be long here to study Christ or to witness for Him. We are passing on. It becomes us to remember that the time is short. We ought not to be satisfied with knowing Christ; we ought to serve Christ. But to serve Him we must know Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." You would say it was a terrible thing to see a king coming to his dominions and his subjects all refusing him. It was this which led Christ to say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" You say, no, Christ only *once* could have gathered; but you must not forget that Christ was acting before He

appeared in the flesh. In Israel He was acting as much in reality before He came in the flesh as afterwards. It was only their final crowning act of refusal when they rejected Him. God's counsels of mercy and man's evil run on in parallel lines.

Ver. 12. He was here, but was rejected. Who could have said, prior to the fact, that the few disciples who admitted His claims, were the only people whom God acknowledged? And yet it was so. When reason takes the lead it may often induce the heart to question—"is it possible that all men should be going the wrong way?" So reasons the natural mind. Can all be wrong, except the few who receive Christ? Let God settle that.

Beloved friends, remember Scripture speaks thus: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The majority are on the part of Satan in this dispensation. "Fear not, little flock," says Christ; because, compared with the mass, it is a little flock. How wonderful is the unfolding of this truth of "sons of

God!" They became altered in their positive relationship to God. Do not let me think it a light thing to be a *child of God*. Who is it that talks thus—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Who can compensate me if I give up the world for Christ? What, talk of *giving up for Christ*! The heart that knows Him never talks thus. There is something far beyond the world. We are called to inherit *all things*. The things of faith are the only *realities*. With Moses the future was pregnant with eternal riches.

“Sons of God”—what does this unfold to our heart? I have a Father above—my eternal hopes are in His hands—Jesus is the One with whom I am associated. Are our hearts resting on these things—associated with God as a father? “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Christ is coming again. He came once to accomplish redemption—He will come again to gather in the fruits of redemption, “even to them that

could not impart, which blood could not communicate. It is a life which is associated with Him *who is life*. It is a real thing. I am created anew in Christ Jesus. (ver. 14.) If this is God's description of His own Son—this He who was engaged in redemption, who on the cross said, "it is finished"—is it not a sure resting place for the soul? All I have to do now is to glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are His." Should it not be my study continually that I may know Him? Let me be found searching where my desires will never return barren. We stop short of delighting ourselves in the Lord. *God is our joy*. Should not the heart be resting continually on Him? There is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of us know this?

believe on his name." I may question whether I have received Christ, but it is those *who have believed on His name* that have received Him. If I know that Jesus is the Son of God—if I believe God's testimony about Him—that is *receiving Christ*. I do not speak of the assent of the judgment merely. "The whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." When a person finds out that he is lost, then he enquires, "What must I do to be saved?" That which links any one to Christ is the reception of Him by faith. We know that He came to sinners. If I am looking at myself, it will blot my title. (ver. 13.) Redemption is by faith. But then he traces here what is accomplished when Christ is received. There is a hand behind that which is seen. It is God working with the Word, either by the preaching of the Word or the reception of it. "Born of God" is a vital thing. That which is born of a corrupt stock is corrupt—no good in it; but that which is born of God has what flesh

REVELATION II., III.

In days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul of the saint is the more sent into its sure hiding-place or up to its Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets more firmly fixed to meditate on the strength and solid foundations which God has put under our feet, the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts, and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes. In connexion with this last thing I would listen to the voices of the Spirit to the churches in Revelation ii., iii.

These words may be read with two intents; either to see what the moral standing of those churches was and then to get *admonition* for our souls, or to see what the promises of Christ to them were, that we get *joy and consolation*. It is only in this respect that I am now reading them, listening simply to those several promises which the Lord makes to His faithful ones, and which will be

found, I believe, to unfold before us in order the joys and glories which await the saints in coming days.

Ephesus.—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." This is the simplest form of promise. It tells the saint that he feed on the very kernels, or fat kernels of eternal life, so to speak. Those who are on the side shall have the leaves of this same tree for healing, (Rev. xxii.) but the saints of the heavens shall have more. The very fruit of the tree itself, gathered, as it were, immediately from it, where it grows in the midst of God's garden—not the fruit brought to them, but gathered by their own hands off the very tree. Strong intimation of the freshness, the constant freshness, of that life that is theirs. The Lamb shall lead them to the fountains of living water—not to streams or channels, but to the spring-head of the river of life. (vii.) All this again telling the undiluted vigour of our life; as Jesus says, (and what can pass beyond such words,)

the Lord hath promised to them who endure trial:" and this is beautiful in its season. The Lord delights to own the faith of His saints, and if they have shown that they loved not their life in this world unto death, it shall be as though they had gained it in the world to come. Life shall be as a crown to them *there*, as the glorious reward of not having cared for it *here*.

Pergamos.—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." We have another source of joy disclosed here. Life is possessed, and that abundantly and honourably, as we saw at Ephesus and Smyrna; but there is here the promise of another joy—the sense of the Lord's personal favour and affection—communion with Him of such kind as is known only by hearts closely knit together in those delights and remembrances with which a stranger could not intermeddle. This is here spoken of to the faithful remnant in Pergamos.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." Here in this promise to Ephesus is the tree of life partaken of immediately by the heavenly saints. For this is their portion in life, to receive it from, and to nourish it at, the very fountains and roots themselves.

Smyrna.—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." This is something beyond what had been previously said to Ephesus. Here life is regarded rather as a thing *gained* than *imparted*. It was imparted in its richest form to Ephesus, but here we see it gained by Smyrna; for Smyrna was sorely tried: some were cast into prison, and all of them were in tribulation. They were to suffer many things; but they are promised, on being faithful unto death, a crown of life, and life is thus spoken of as what they had *earned* or *gained*; as James in like manner speaks, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which

They had held His faith in the midst of difficulties, and clung to His name, and this should be rewarded with that which is ever most precious—tokens of personal affection, waking the delighted sense and assurance of the heart of the Lord being knit to their heart. If the heart in this wilderness know its own bitterness, from the waters of Marah that flow here, there it shall know its own delights from the enjoyment and conscious smile of Jesus. He will kiss His saint "with the kisses of his mouth," he will retire as from the scene of the public glory to do this; or, in the midst of it all, give that pledge which shall speak it. It is the *hidden* manna which is here fed upon, and the stone here received has a name on it which *none know but he who receives it*. This, as another has said, all expresses this individual affection. It is not public joy, but delight in the conscious possession of the Lord's love. How blessed a character of joy in the coming day is this! Life possessed in abundance and in honour we have already seen, as at Ephesus and Smyrna; but here at

Pergamos we advance to another possession, not glory in any form of it as yet, but the blessed certainty and consciousness of the Lord's personal affection.

Thyatira.—"He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star." Now we read *public scenes, scenes of power and glory*. This is not merely life, though enjoyed never so blessedly; nor simple personal affection and individual joy therein, but here is something displayed in honour and strength abroad; here is power and glory in the first character in which the glories of the saints are destined hereafter to be unfolded,—that is, in their being the companions of the Lord in the day when He comes forth to make His enemies His footstool; or, according to the decree of the second Psalm, to break them with a rod of iron, to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be His

power just before He takes His kingdom. This will be His ridding out all that would have been inconsistent with the kingdom. This will be the girding of the sword on the thigh, like David, ere the throne be ascended, like Solomon, (Psalm xlv.,) it will be the rider's action ere the reign of the thousand years be begun. Rev. xix. xx. This is glory, this is manifested power; the first exercise of it in the hand of Christ, the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; and in that act of power and display of glory the saints (as we are here instructed and promised) shall be with Him, they outliving, gloriously outliving, all that night of horrible storm and dread judicial darkness, as the star which "flames in the forehead of the morning sky," outlives the gloomiest night. This is blessed in its place, and here given to us in due season; for after the *life* and the *personal hidden joy*, the *public glories* thus begin to be ushered forth; for we shall find that this one, here spoken of to Thyatira, is but the first of a long and brilliant train of them.

Sardis.—"They shall walk with me in white,* for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." This is a stage onward in the scenes of the glory. The vengeance has been taken; the sword of

* I would observe that the use of white garments is variously shown in the progress of this Book of the Revelation; and there are different *suits*, as it were—the *στολη*, or robe—the *ματιον*, or raiment—the *βυσσινον*, or linen—the last is either "shining," or simply "white."

1. They are used by the redeemed, simply as *before the throne*. This expresses their full cleansing through the blood of the Lamb, so as to entitle, or enable, them to stand in God's very presence without fear. (Rev. iii.)

2. They are used as the only adorning or clothing of the Lord's beautiful bride. (Rev. xix.)

3. They are used by them also as *following the rider on the white horse*. This expresses their ability to join Christ in the exercise of judgment, so fully are they delivered from all judgment themselves. (Rev. xix.)

4. They are used by them also as *they walk with Christ in the kingdom*. This expresses their worthiness to be companions of the king under

him who sits on the white horse has done its righteous service, and the vessels of the potter have been broken, and the kingdom has come. Jesus here promises to His faithful ones, that He will confess them before His Father and His angels. This is not redeeming them from judgment, or saving their souls, (as we speak,) but owning them, *publicly owning them, before the assembled dignities of*

the bright and peaceful shining, and along the paths of the glory. (Rev. iii.)

5. Finally, they are used by them also as *they sit on their own thrones*. This expresses their priestly purity, combined with their royal dignity. (Rev. iv.)

Thus, in each condition and action in which the glorified saints appear, they are seen as spotless ones, pure and unsullied, because of that righteousness in which, through grace, they stand. They appear before God—they judge the world—they walk in the dominions of the great King of glory, in immediate company with Himself—they sit on their own thrones, all in white, in owned and *conscious* righteousness. A white-robed people indeed; not a blot on them; but all consistent with the divine light around. And the whore, or apostate woman, has, in contradiction of this, her purple and scarlet. (Rev. xvii. 4.)

the kingdom. For He promises them that they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. This is not that they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That they have done, it is true, but that enables them to appear without reserve or blot *before the throne*; (vii. 9;) but here it is not as before the throne, but as *walking in white with Jesus in the kingdom.* That hand, which now in grace washes their feet, will then take them into it, as it were, and own full companionship then in the realms of glory with Him. What a character of joy is this! To be *publicly* owned thus, as before (as we read to Pergamos) privately personally caressed. In how many ways does the Spirit of God here trace the coming joys of His saints! The life, the love, the glory, that are reserved for them! The tree of life and its crown, too, the white stone, carrying to the deepest senses of the heart the pledge of love; and then companionship with the King of Glory in His walks through His bright and happy dominions. But even

like the members of the body, each being needed to the general completeness; so in the glory, shall each of the faithful ones to Jesus fill his place in the temple and city, a needed member of that royal priesthood then established in their holy government in the heavens, where the new Jerusalem dwells and shines. What honour is put on them here! Owned *abroad*, in his companionship with the Lord, walking, as hand in hand, through the rich and wide scene of glory, confessed before all; and also owned *within*, as bearing each in himself a part of the glory, every vessel needed to the full expression of the light of the new Jerusalem, and formed as a vital part of the fulness of Him who is to fill all in all, a king and a priest; each of them occupying his several rank and station in the temple and the city, the Salem of the true Melchizedec. What a place of dignity! Surely, love delights to show what it can do and will do for its object! O if we had but hearts to prize all these things, and to prize them because of their telling us of this love which has

more than this the same Spirit has to tell.

Philadelphia.—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, that cometh out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." We have just seen the heir of the kingdom as the companion of the Lord of the kingdom, abroad in the light of the glory, walking in white with Him, owned before the Father and the angels. Here the promise is, that *the faithful one shall have his place in the system of the glory itself.* That he shall be of that glorious order of kings and priests who shall then form the character of the scene. Each of them being a pillar in the temple, and each enrolled as of the city. High and holy dignities! The saints integral parts of that glorious economy, as in the church on earth, they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, and grow together, all compacted, and fitly formed,

counselled these things for us! For what higher, happier thought can we have even of glory itself, than that it is the manner in which love lets us know what it will do for its elect one. Poor, poor heart that moves so little at these things, while the mind stirs the conceptions of them.

Laodicea.—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Here *the highest point of glory is reached.* This is the bright and sunny elevation to which this passage, through the joys and honours of the kingdom and presence of Jesus, has conducted us. Here the faithful one enters into "the joy of his Lord"—sharing His throne. Not only owned by Him abroad, and established with Him within—walking in white with Him, or fixed as a needed and honoured portion of the great system of royal priesthood; but with Him seated in the supreme place. What could be done more than is done? But from this elevation can our souls look

back and trace the journey? or rather, while they do so, can they value what thus they gaze at, and long for a draught of these joys, and for a sight of these glories, as the hart pants after the water-brooks, and the watchman waits for the morning? This is what—we want—a heart to prize our portion. The joys are rich, and the glories are bright, but the heart is feebly responsive.

Exceeding great and precious things surely have now passed before us. The tree and crown of life—the white stone—the morning star—the walk in white abroad through the paths of glory, and residence at home in the temple and city of glory—with a place on the throne itself—these are ours, as faithful to Jesus. Life enjoyed in abundance—and honour, friendship, and love, tasted in their deepest personal intimacies—and glory shared in all the displays of it, whether in the power of judgment on the enemy, or in all the honours and dignities of the kingdom. If Jesus Himself be prized, those things will be welcomed by us. If He Himself be

with the manna, the food given to them by God; (chap. xi.) they had slighted the promises of God concerning the good land, though an earnest was brought to them by the spies; (chap. xiii., xiv.) and in chap. xvi. we find them in open rebellion and apostacy, falling away in the gainsaying of Korah. This was not merely failure, which brought on chastisement, but open rebellion, and God cut them off in their sins. It is between these two things this fifteenth chapter comes in.

The Book of Numbers is the putting God's people in their place and the order of their journeys. They had departed from the mount of the Lord a three days' journey. (Chap. x. 33.) This was the first time of their starting, and then we find the Lord goes out of His place in grace. The people ought have been round about taking care of the Lord, but "the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them." Moses wished Hobab to be to them "instead of eyes;" but God says, I will be as eyes to you; and "the ark of the cove-

loved, all this nearness to Him in life, affection, and glory, will be the heaven we desire. But is He our object? Do we make Jesus such? Can we send the message of the loving, longing soul after Him, and say, "Tell him that I am sick of love." This is the point to start from, or rather this is the mind both to start and to travel with, and then all will be well, and all welcome, as we pass along through that scene of varied joy and glory which these chapters thus in due order so open and spread out before us. And these joys and glories tell us that we are Christ's object, for they surely can be the portion only of those whom He delights to honour and to bless.

NUMBERS XV.

NOTES OF A LECTURE.

This chapter comes in in a very peculiar manner.

The children of Israel had despised the pleasant land; they had quarrelled

nant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them." In this we see the actings of extraordinary grace. "It came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

The next step, as we see in chap. xi., is the working of unbelief. While God is going before them the people complain; and then come out all the various forms and progress of unbelief. In chap. xiv. we see they had to wander in the wilderness forty years. Chap. xv. gives what they were to do in the land. And chap. xvi. the open rebellion and apostacy closing in the forms of unbelief. But before this apostate character is developed, chap. xv. comes in, full of loveliness. Rebellion had arisen to a great height, for not only had they despised the pleasant land, but the spies had brought up an evil report of the land. Caleb and Joshua proved their

faithfulness in remonstrating with the people, telling them that the Lord could bring them in, when this awful rebellion broke out, and "all the congregation bade stone them with stones." Then, consequently, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." God interfered immediately, and tells Moses, "I will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Then Moses interferes, and here we see the devotedness of his character coming out in intercession. And then God says, "I have pardoned according to thy word," but yet I will chastise them; and to the people he says, "as ye have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you." You shall get the thing your wretched flesh desired, for you shall die in this wilderness. (Chap. xiv. 28, 29.)

But in the midst of all this comes in chap. xv., in which we learn that God goes on in His purpose as calmly and quietly as if there never had been the despising of the land. For, in the second verse, He says, "When ye be

come into the land of your habitations, which *I give unto you.*" His purpose is as settled as if there had been no rebellion at all. He speaks in the calmness of His own purpose. After telling them of chastisement, He says, Ye shall come into the land; it is settled with me; I go on in the steadfastness of my own counsels. "I am the Lord your God." It is blessed to see, not that the Lord will not chastise in the way of government, for He says, "As truly as I live, as ye have spoken in mine ears so will I do to you." But that He never relinquishes His purpose, though He deals with the heart according to its unbelief. We see this in verse 45. The Amalekites and Canaanites discomfited them to Hormah, and Hormah means destruction; but then the heart can always return to the steadfastness of His purpose, which remains in its very nature the same. We see joy shining out in this chapter; a provision for grace and warning. He tells them what to do in the land. "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give

unto you, and will make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savour unto the Lord, of the herd, or of the flock: then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil. And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb. Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third part of an hin of oil. And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of an hin of wine, for a sweet savour unto the Lord. And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord: then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil. And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering

made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." "Your rebellions would have sinned away the land, but I have given it you. It is not a sin-offering you are to bring but a burnt-offering. You are accepted, and are going to worship me there."

Christ is represented by the burnt-offering—the voluntary offering up of His life to God as a sweet savour. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smellingsavour." When divine love comes down here it always returns up in the character of self-sacrifice. God acts in love; Christ walked in love; and divine love acting in man offers itself a sweet savour unto God.

Then they were to bring oil and wine. The oil showing the joy and gladness, and wine the fellowship in communion. When you have got rest in God, and worship comes out, it must be in joy and gladness of heart and fellowship

with God. And He would have us return to Him thus. But we shall not be able to be "followers of God" unless we dwell in this comfort and joy of His thoughts about us.

And further, observe God's actings and givings. "According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number. All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." See how "the branches run over the wall," in God's heart running out,

presumptuous sinner under the law was to be treated with the rigour of the law. No mercy; but "stone him with stones without the camp." Being brought into this condition, provision is made for keeping them mindful of where they were brought. Upon the fringes was to be "a riband of blue," signifying a heavenly character. (Ver. 38.) The fringes of the garments reached to the earth, and might come in contact with defilement. God's precepts and directions alone can keep us walking after Him. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." The precepts of the gospel are like fringes to our garments, attached to those things where sin can touch us. And in this way man does not live by bread alone, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God:" living every instant so as not to be touched by Satan. The "riband of blue," the heavenly mind that calls the precepts and words of the Lord to remembrance. If I were spiritual, and walking in fellowship with God, I should not need precepts; but,

as in verse 14, to the stranger. Christ said He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but when the poor Gentile woman appealed to the nature of God as a *giver*, he could not deny her, because He could not deny what He was. Here God is saying, I cannot have a person in my land, and not a worshipper, not enjoying God. All must be happy there. If any person is in the land of God, he must know the mind and temper of the God of the land. There is one law for all. God will be Himself, and make Himself known. While this is the case in the land, there would be offering connected with evil and failure, as in ver. 22. God says, There may be failure, therefore I will make provision for sin in grace. And here comes in the sin-offering—that when man fails, God may still maintain and keep him in the place of blessing.

Verse 30. The soul that sinneth presumptuously, (the case of one who has no life in him,) he shall be cut off—"his iniquity shall be upon him." The

in my folly and fleshliness, I need God's precepts to keep my soul mindful of Him. Satan said, "Command that these stones be made bread." There was no harm in satisfying hunger; but Jesus came to do the will of His Father; and this would have been doing His own will. If we walk in a godly manner in the details of life, in the character of *blue*, that is, heavenly, we shall remember the words of our Lord, and not do our own wills. All this is the provision of grace in the land. It is sweet to find at the close of all this failure, God returning to bless—giving out His own thoughts of peace, and not of evil, as nothing can weaken or enfeeble the blessedness of God's thoughts concerning us: and therefore closes it by saying; "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

There is a divine wisdom stamped upon every part of the word of God, which needs only the key to its understanding and a heart subject to God, in order to the perception and the precious enjoyment of it.

In this Epistle that wisdom shines with peculiar brightness; while the importance of the subjects upon which its rays are concentrated gives it a special claim upon the mind.

Sacrifice, priesthood, and religious ordinances—the subjects of this Epistle—are elements, one might almost say, for which there is a natural affinity in the human mind, almost independently of the adventitious circumstances of rudeness or intellectual culture, the possession of a divine revelation, or what men call natural religion. They are elements which make their appeal to the conscious necessity of man, whether that necessity is measured by the scattered notices of traditionary truth or by the perfect revelation of the word of God.

Thus the immense practical import-

ance of this Epistle will at once be seen, since its object is to define the character of these elements, and to give them their just place and force according to the light of the gospel of the grace of God. Everything of the character of divinely-appointed ordinances, that ever had a claim upon the conscience, is here taken up and treated of with a wisdom essentially divine.

The circumstances of the persons to whom this Epistle was addressed gave the natural occasion (so to speak) for the application of this divine wisdom given to the Apostle. These circumstances are forcibly expressed in Rom. ix. 4, 5. "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

The manner in which this wisdom is applied can however be only understood by a consideration of the Epistle itself.

220 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Generally, it may be said, that its design is to prove an entire abrogation of the whole range of religious ordinances—*divine* ordinances, be it remembered. But the way in which it is shown they are abrogated is that in which this wisdom is conspicuous, and reflects the most wonderful light on the person and work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is striking to notice by what terms the Spirit of God characterizes everything connected with a divinely-appointed ritual, after the work of Christ, by which it was abrogated, is accomplished.

In its first constitution there was no latitude permitted, as it was said to Moses, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount:" and this on the very ground that "the law was a shadow of good things to come." But now, since the work of Christ is accomplished, they are characterized as "meats and drinks and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation."

Now these are superseded, as the

Epistle shows, not by an array of more spiritual ordinances, but by showing that their whole meaning, and harmony, and force are concentrated in the person and work, the position and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when it is considered that all which is called religion, (in these days,) apart from the blood of Christ and a conscience purged by His sacrifice, is composed of these ordinances, it will readily be conceived how important is the bearing of our Epistle; for its express object is to take up the whole means (of God's appointment) by which man could have to do with God, and to show that in their abrogation the believer, *through the means of their putting away*, is brought into the nearest possible connexion with God, and into an entire dissociation from the world in which these ordinances had their place. So entirely is this so, that the position of the Christian is only to be expressed, according to the typical language of the Epistle, as that of "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, the most unquestioned right of immediate access to God, on the one side, and on the other, as to the world, whether Jewish or heathen, religious or profane, it is but the "going forth therefore *unto him*, without the camp, bearing his reproach."

In the first two chapters of the Epistle we have everything on which this hinges. As plainly the glory of the person of Christ is essentially connected with His sacrifice, which is the foundation of all. But then it is *Christ* which is presented to us, and not merely a doctrine. But it is Christ as filling out these types, bringing the heart to see their meaning in Him, and in His work, which draws us naturally to Him, *where He is*, and thus sustains us, instead of those ordinances which are but the shadows of that which in its reality is seen in Christ.

The principle thus indicated, the study of the Epistle will supply the rest.

224 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Fill full my soul with thy sweet love,
My eyes keep fixed upon
The wonders thou hast wrought above
For me, when time is gone.

So shall I run, nor turn aside
To one allurement here;
Unswerving as the stars which ride
Our darken'd hemisphere.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

If I despond, 'tis not for long;
If weakness bows me, strength again
Soon lifts me up and makes me strong;
Death strives with me in vain.
For Christ's unbounded love to me
Gives hope, strength, immortality.

And Christ's vast love's for ever mine;
From it I never can be torn:
Things present, things in coming time,
By it are overborne.
Angels nor principalities
Can sever us in anywise.

O glorious strength of love divine!
Since thou art with me in the way,
All things may like one wave combine
To make my life their prey.
Thou wilt but laugh to see it rise,
And take me to thy paradise.

"I AM CRUCIFIED TO THE WORLD."

Let me not love the world again,
And seek my pleasure there;
For Christ received His death from men,
And woe they made Him bear.

But let my love to Jesus be
So constant and so strong,
That my weak heart may ne'er be free
To do the Saviour wrong.

What is there in the world, I ask,
So irresistible?
Themselves say 'tis a gilded mask,
Who looks shall know it well.

Has it a love like Jesus has,
A constancy like His?
Its love is no true love, alas!
Its constancy nought is.

Has it a beauty to compare
With our Lord's blessed home?
A native purity as rare
As fills the "world to come?"

None, none; 'tis but a withered thing,
Loveless and full of change,
Its beauty long has taken wing,
A taint doth in it range.

For such a wreck 'twere sad indeed
That I from Christ should turn.
O Christ! from out my bosom weed
All thoughts that for it yearn,

GALILEE AND BETHANY.

There were two distinct parties of women, which severally had communion with the Lord Jesus, but who are never seen in communion with each other. The character of their relationship to Him differed very much—though they were entirely one in the common love of His person, and in the zeal that would serve Him earnestly.

I allude to the Galilean women, and the sisters at Bethany.

The Galilean women were with the Lord in the scenes of His ordinary activities. They had not much knowledge of Him, but they loved Him dearly. When we are first introduced to them, we see them serving and following Him. (Luke viii.) And at the end we find them still with Him and serving Him, having followed Him from the distant north to Jerusalem, when He went there for the last time. And there we find them after His death and resurrec-

tion; and waiting also, as for His promise, after He had left them for the heavens. (Mark xvi. 1; Acts i. 14.)

The sisters at Bethany were not commonly with Him; but what they wanted in familiarity was more than made up to them in intimacy. With less intercourse, they had more knowledge. When we are first introduced to them, we see them learning as well as serving—and not following Him, but receiving Him into their house. (Luke x.) And in a further scene of their history, we see them still learning lessons on the secrets and glories that belonged to Him. (John xi. xii.)

Here are characteristic differences between these two families, as I may call them—though each of them precious to the Lord, and precious in the recollections of the saints. Those of Galilee were serving and following Him—those of Bethany were learning of Him, and receiving Him. He accepted services from the one, and with all confidence gave Himself to their company; but He was at home with the other.

dead. Lazarus their brother comes forth at the voice of the Son of God.

And then, having *learnt* this lesson, this secret among the glories of Christ, they *enjoy* it. It was learnt, as it ever is when learnt from God, to be used and enjoyed—poorly indeed by some of us; but so we own it, that we are to use in living, practical virtue in our souls, that which we have received as a divine lesson. And thus, as a family in the light of resurrection, Lazarus and Martha and Mary are seen in the Lord's company, serving, sitting, worshipping. They either wait on Him, listen to Him, or make their offerings to Him. (John xii. 1.)

And in all this, we see a very advanced character, as I may observe. Martha, though still serving, as in Luke x., does not complain of her sister, as she did there. Mary, still at His feet, is there, not listening to some more elementary lessons, as we may say she was doing in Luke x., but in worship—filling the house with the odour of the ointment, greeting Him as with the

But I would pause here for a little.

There is a great deal for faith to do in such a scene as this world, and in such circumstances as human life furnishes every day. It has to reach its own world through many veils, and to dwell there in spite of many hindrances. It is "the things not seen" and "the things hoped for" that faith deals with: and such things lie at a distance, or under cover; and faith has therefore to reach them through veils, and beyond intervals.

In John xi. we look on a scene of death. Every eye there, but one, saw nothing else. The disciples, Martha, and her friends, and even Mary, were full of thoughts of it. But Jesus, in the midst of all this, eyed life and talked of life. He moved onward through the scene, in the consciousness of it. He carried light through the darkness that was overspreading that hour.

The end, however, instructs them all. It lets the sisters at Bethany know that Jesus was "the life," and that under His hand there is resurrection *from* the

honours that were to be His in His place of victory over death and the grave. And Lazarus, not seen before save in the grave, now taking an honoured place at the table with his Lord, as one seated in heavenly places, a witness of resurrection from the dead.

Here, indeed, is *Bethany*. Light in the knowledge of the glory of Christ fills this dwelling there.

And this light separates them. They are not seen, after this, at the empty sepulchre, with the women from Galilee. Magdalene and her companions are there, to learn certain lessons about the glories of the common Lord, which these sisters had thus learnt already.

Faith *acts* on the instruction it receives as well as *enjoys* it. If the sisters enjoyed at the supper-table in John xii. the lesson they had learnt at their brother's grave in John xi., they act on the instruction in John xx., by not being at the sepulchre of Jesus with Mary of Galilee. They could not go to seek the body of Jesus, since they had already received at the hand of Jesus the body,

the raised body, of their lately dead brother. The grave, they knew, could not hold Him who had already bidden it to give up their brother. His own sepulchre must surely be empty, since He had Himself already emptied the sepulchre of a poor sinner whom He loved. They cannot, therefore, go to the garden, and look for the body of Jesus. Love would have had them there, but faith kept them away. Their thoughts had been regulated according to the light and mysteries of God; and they could not seek the living among the dead. This would have been surrendering the truth they had already learnt; and well did they know from whom they had learnt it. It would be worse than the disciples forgetting the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and how many baskets of fragments they had taken up. A brother had been restored to life—something more even than a multitude fed in a wilderness.

But further. Having learnt this lesson, Bethany was the place which the Lord sought, when Israel had fully,

ter in this separation. It arose, as we have now seen, from different measures of knowledge, from a different character of relationship to the Lord, or of communion with Him. It does not cause any uneasiness or pain, when we think of it. Other separations among the saints of God, which we see in Scripture, arose from something moral, and it is humbling and painful to look at them. But this is not of that class.

The separation between Abraham and Lot, unlike this of the Galilean women, and the women of Bethany, was *moral*. It was the love of the world that did that mischief. Lot eyed with desire the well-watered plains of Sodom; and there he dwelt in the midst of a people that were sinners before the Lord continually, while Abraham was sojourning where best he might find a place to pitch his tent in. And the breach was never healed in this world. He who looked towards Sodom sinks at last behind the still more distant mountains of Moab ingloriously, leaving another pillar of salt to warn us all of what may be the

finally, and formally rejected Him. See Matt. xxi. 17; Mark xi. 11.

In this way, or at such a moment, Bethany was a kind of heaven to Him. He retired to it, when the earth, represented by the Jew or in the Jew, had refused Him.

They were, as I may say, a kind of Kenite family in the midst of the Israel of the Evangelists, the disciples of the Lord Jesus in the day of His sojourn here. They were separated; not however from any unsocial or self-righteous temper, but from a peculiar order of Nazaritism or sanctification arising from the light which they had in the knowledge of the glory of Christ.

But I must add this, that though these two companies of women are thus distinguished, and actually kept asunder all through their christian walk, yet are they essentially, eternally one. And sweet indeed it is to know their real, intrinsic, personal oneness, in the very face of this temporary, present, and necessary separation.

There was nothing of a *moral* charac-

sad issue of learning not to be content with such things as we have.

It was much the same in the case of Elijah and Obadiah. The stranger who had denounced and left the kingdom of Ahab, could scarcely admit of companionship with him who was still a chief officer there. But these two did meet on a very solemn, striking occasion; and Obadiah, Ahab's officer, sought, all he could, to reconcile Elijah, and to share the privilege of communion with that man who walked as a stranger to the corruptions around him. But it would not do. Elijah could not admit this. The world had already separated these men of God, and nothing but the victory that overcometh the world could put them together again. The efforts of an uneasy mind are not allowed to succeed. (See 1 Kings xviii. 1—16.)

In apostolic days there was another separation: I mean between Barnabas and Paul. The cause of it was *moral* also, but not of so sad and humbling a kind. It was not the well-watered plains of Sodom, nor the palace of King

Ahab that threw up the partition-wall in this case. It was not the world, but natural affection, the strength or claim of human relationship unduly admitted in the midst of the service of Christ. Barnabas would fain take his sister's son to the work; Paul judged his fitness to be in it not by nature or relationship, but by Christ; and they walked no more together. (Acts xv.)

In the case of these two companies of christian women, which I am now considering, we see not this painful, humbling, *moral secret*. It was neither the love of the world, nor the undue force of natural partialities, that are called to account for the distance between them, and for the fact that they are never seen together. It was different measures of light in the knowledge of the Lord, and a different character of relationship to Him, as I may say, accordingly.

They did not combine, and yet I will answer for it, they loved each other. But Galilee was not Bethany; Mary Magdalene was not a sister of Lazarus. And though Martha and Mary would

have delighted personally to company with her, they could not go with her to the sepulchre.

But, I must ask this, Did Bethany take no interest in Galilee? When it was told the house of Lazarus what had passed between the risen Lord and the Galilean women, was that household unmoved by the tidings? Did Mary and her sister grudge Magdalene, because she had been the more active one, and had the joy and service committed to her of bearing the good tidings of the resurrection back to the city, to Peter, to John, and to others? Let our common christian sympathies and charities answer these questions. One thing I know and am assured of, we ought to be able to answer them. And it is this ability we all of us want more abundantly—ability in the Spirit to rise above the jealousies and self-seekings which nature inspires. I believe the family at Bethany had it, and I believe we all need to cultivate it.

I would, however, add this, that the ignorance about the resurrection which

the Galilean women betrayed was not an *unguilty* ignorance. The Lord had often rebuked His disciples in earlier days, while He was yet with them, for their not knowing the Scriptures. And now the angel says to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" It was therefore a rebukable condition of heart, which brought them to the sepulchre, and thus separated them from their sisters of Bethany, though, as we said before, the secret of this separation was not of that *moral* character which kept Abraham and Lot, or Elijah and Obadiah, apart.

O the various lessons which the soul may gather from God's most perfect Word!

NOTES ON COLOSSIANS.

Chap. i. 1—5.

I desire to send you a few remarks from time to time, as the Lord may enable me, on the Epistle to the Colossians;

chiefly for the help of the young who have recently been brought, in His great mercy, to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two things in this Epistle make it especially precious to such. The first is the way in which it so fully reveals the glory of His Person, whether as Son of the Father's love, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, or as Creator, and Redeemer, and Head of His body, the Church. The Second thing is the way in which it unfolds "the mystery" for the joy and consolation of the saints—even Christ in them the hope of glory.

These are the two great subjects set before our hearts by the Holy Ghost in this precious Epistle; and what can be more strengthening or gladdening than to have the eye and heart filled with the glory of Jesus and to have the joy and assurance of our intimate union with Him made good in our souls by the Holy Ghost. To walk in the light of His risen glory and in the consciousness of our individual interest in His

love is the great requirement in these evil days. Nothing else will give courage to confess Him before men; and this alone will deliver from all the snares of Satan, whether of worldliness on the one hand, or of religion on the other, which is not after Christ.

These things will come before us, if the Lord will, by and by: meantime, let us follow the course of the Epistle from the beginning.

In the first two verses we have the salutation of the Apostle, and in the next three his thanksgiving on their behalf. He addresses them as Christ's apostle, clothed with the authority of His name, and charged with the communication of His grace. Moreover, God had set him apart to this service. In the end of the chapter the Apostle tells of a double ministry entrusted to him as the vessel of the grace of God; first, a ministry for the proclamation of the gospel to sinners; and second, a ministry for the Church, to make known to the saints the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is in the exercise of this

latter ministry that he writes this Epistle. It is to bring the hearts of the saints into the assured knowledge and enjoyment of their place and portion in Christ so as to walk in peaceful communion with Him until He shall appear. This ministry he fulfils in the name, and as the Apostle of, Jesus Christ. Thus the whole Epistle flows directly from Christ through His chosen Apostle.

It is to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ he writes, and, as we have seen, on the part of Christ. They were "in Christ," the grand centre of the new creation; holy and brethren in Him. Then he ministers the sweet stream of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was parted from His disciples in the act of blessing them, so here the apostle of Christ *begins* his epistle to the Colossians, before entering on anything else, by saluting them with the grace or unmingled favour of the Father and the Son, of which they were ever the objects, being in Christ, and with the peace which is the fruit of this favour.

Next we get his thanksgiving. He thanked God, even the Father of "Our Lord Jesus Christ," praying always for them, for the hope laid up for them in Heaven. Here we see how Paul identified himself with the interests of Heaven. He had heard of the faith and love of these Colossians, and his heart at once turned to God in thanksgiving and prayers; thanksgiving that He had linked with *heaven* this fresh company of believers, and that *He* had done it. And note well, that it was not what they were delivered *from* that here occupies him, though he does not forget that, as we see lower down; nor is it what was wrought *in* them, blessed as that was; but it is what they were called *to*—that bright and blessed portion in heaven—the hope laid up for them there. Thus he would evidently fill their minds with what they were going to; and in his own sense of its exceeding excellency and glory, he thanks God on their behalf as heirs of such an inheritance.

This is a very important point. For there is a great tendency, in the first

joy of faith and fervour of feeling, to be occupied with the joy and with the feeling; and when afterwards trials and exercises of heart and conscience have to be passed through, to be occupied with them, or with what will give present deliverance and help, and to forget the bright and blessed hope laid up for us in heaven—the place of rest and glory with Himself, which Jesus is gone to prepare. But how can I journey on to Canaan through the trials and exercises of the wilderness if my heart has lost the sense of the blessedness of the Canaan I am going to? We are redeemed, not for the wilderness, but for Canaan; we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And when the glory of God is indeed our joy, we can add, "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." For then we know and experience that these very tribulations are all made to work for our good, and to further us on our way. For tribulation worketh patience. It frees us from the restlessness of our own will, which would turn aside, and delivers us, besides, from

the fear of what man can do to us. We learn to trust in God. We learn, moreover, how little we can be the authors of our own blessing, and we count more and more on the constant watchfulness and love, and care of a Father in heaven. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. We know that we are in these tribulations *because* the objects of His love, the ransomed ones of His grace from the fire that shall never be quenched. And then, besides, we are on our way to God. Thus having the end in view enables us to confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and it brightens with hope every step of the way. Otherwise we get weary, becoming faint in our minds. But if living by faith in the midst of things that are unseen and eternal the inward man is renewed *day by day*, and that, too, at the very time that the outward man is perishing and falling into decay.

But we now come to a third point, and that is—the ground of this thanksgiving on the behalf of these Colossians.

ing seen the saints as the precious ones of His heart, enfolds them for ever in its bosom with a most tender affection. They are dear to Him. This is the motive of love, and it never faileth. It clothes with divine comeliness all the objects of His grace. And what it does to them it does as unto Him; and great is its reward.

(To be continued.)

JESUS RECEIVING A SINNER.

Luke vii. 36—50.

In this seventh of Luke we have a most lovely picture of the grace and the glory of the Lord Jesus in the scene in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon had bidden Jesus to a feast, thinking He was a prophet; but, to his great offence, He suffers a woman of the city, a *sinner*, to embrace His feet and, washing them with her tears, to wipe them with the hairs of her head. Simon thought that if Jesus had been a prophet He would have known *who* and *what sort*

How could the apostle give thanks so assuredly on their behalf, having never seen them? Verse 4 tells us. It was because he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and of their love to all the saints. These were the grand distinguishing features and characteristics of the divine life in man. And these being of God, he well knew that all who possessed them were bound up for ever in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus Christ, and that where He was there should they be also. These were the grand essentials. In Christ Jesus nothing avails but “faith which worketh by love.” First, faith, which came to Jesus with all its load of sin and unworthiness because it had no where else to go, and because it saw a love and a holiness in Him which received sinners and made Him their companion and their friend. And then love which, having Him for its object, necessarily had all who were His. Faith not only thus comes to Jesus at the first, but it binds the soul to Him as risen, and is ever receiving of His fulness. And love, hav-

of a woman this was who *touched* Him, “for,” said he, “she is a sinner.” But now the Lord’s turn comes, and He lets Simon know that He knew both him and the woman; and out of the mouth of the Pharisee himself, He brings the explanation of her conduct, so strange in his eyes; and his own condemnation because he had not done likewise. For *truth* came by Jesus Christ. He was the true light, which made every man manifest. Simon is laid bare to his own eyes in the presence of the Son of God, whilst the woman is set forth in all the fragrance of her sacrifice.

Jesus relates the parable of the two debtors, the one owing five hundred pence and the other fifty; and the grace of the creditor, who, seeing they had nothing to pay, frankly forgave them both. And then He gets from Simon the acknowledgment that *love* was due on the part of both for such royal grace; but most love from him to whom most was forgiven. And then at once, as so often in the gospels, the Lord takes His own place of preeminence and glory, and

places Simon at His bar. Turning to the woman, He said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The Lord reveals to Simon that He was the creditor, and that the Pharisee was His debtor as well as the woman; but alas! for him, he thought little of his debt, and cared nothing for the grace that was there to forgive. *There was no love.* But the woman *loved much.* She knew the greatness of her debt, and that she had nothing to pay; but, O! the love of that blessed One, whose feet she could not cease to kiss. He had freely forgiven her *all*. What could she do but

She wanted a *Saviour*. The sinner touches the Holy One, and through Him she becomes holy too. Thenceforth she belongs to God. Her faith had saved her. She loved much because she had much forgiven; and she had *all* forgiven because she believed. She expected such a welcome as this from such an one as Jesus, and she got it because she expected it. *She* wanted it; He had it to give. He had love enough to give it. She believed He would give it to her. She gave Him credit for what He professed to be—a Saviour; for what God had set Him forth as being—Jesus; who *came into the world to save sinners*, and who came to them because He *LOVED* them. This the woman *believed*. She believed *that He loved her*, and that He loved her just *because she was a sinner*. Did He disappoint her confidence? Did He ever disappoint *confidence in His love*? Never. And mark again, the woman had *nothing* to commend her. She was but a sinner—a woman of the city. Yes; let me say it—a *harlot*! Will Jesus receive such a

love Him? And O! the grace of Jesus, He accepts that woman's tears. Tears contrition, joy, and affection were there all centering on Him. And heaven was gazing with interest on this scene which offended the cold heart of the Pharisee. Yes, with joy; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth. And, O! what joy to Jesus! He had found His sheep which was lost; and, having found it, He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing. *His* love had reached this poor woman's heart, and He knew how to accept and to justify hers. In Simon's eyes she was but a sinner, whom he would not *touch*; in the eyes of Jesus she is one of His ransomed ones, drawn to Him of the Father in the faith of His perfect grace. She *believed* He would receive her; she believed that He would, although no one else would. Ah! her eye had been opened of the Father to see in Jesus the *friend* of sinners. She was a sinner and she wanted the friend of sinners. One who could receive her in all her sins and yet deliver her from them.

Will the Son of God let her *touch* Him? Will not that Holy One retire from the presence of such a polluted one? Ah! He *came* to meet her: He was there to receive her, and to assure her of His grace.

He came, *not to call the righteous*, but sinners; and sinners He called *because He loved them*. And, blessed be His name, *He loves such still*. He has a place in His heart for such. O, what a large place! And more, He lets them know it. He *calls* them to His bosom. He lets them know that if others reject them, *He* receives sinners—that He plucks *brands* from the burning. He takes away their filthy garments, and clothes them with change of raiment. And what is more, He makes them His friends. There was the interchange of divine affections between Jesus and this woman of the city. *He accepted her love*. O wondrous grace! And this tie is an eternal one; for He saves us for eternal glory with Himself. Blessed and adorable Saviour!

Jesus, thine everlasting grace
 Our scanty thought surpasses far.
 Thy heart still melts with tenderness—
 Thine arms of love still open are,
 Repenting sinners to receive,
 That MERCY they may taste and live.

“Whosoever will, let him come and
 take of the water of life freely.”

A FATHER IN HEAVEN.

Matt. vi.

How many souls are in constant anxiety and unsettledness as to their whole path on earth, because they do not believe that they have a Father in heaven who cares for them and for every little detail in their daily walk. O if they only believed in the love of God—the real LOVE of God to them—a love which *spared* not His beloved Son when the sacrifice was needful for their good; if they only believed that they, in all the special circumstances of their lot on earth, were the objects of His *love* in heaven, what a load of anxiety and care

it would remove; and what brightness it would give to their faces and to their path too. For then they would expect the guidance of a Father and their eyes would be up to Him, who most certainly never would disappoint their trust. (See 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Psalm xxxiii. 18.) And what would be far better than the guidance even, they would have the peace of His presence and the consciousness of His love every step of their way. This is the portion of every Christian. For we are all the *children* of God by *faith in Christ Jesus*. O what a Father we have in heaven! He is such an one as to concern Himself with my little mind, and little ways, and little trials and exercises, and that too to be my helper in them all and my refuge. He is such an one as to associate His glory with all these things, so that whether I eat or drink I may do it to His glory (see, also, 1 Peter iv. 11) in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the grace which He supplies. Ah! He *has* concerned Himself with my sins, and these He put away by judgment of

the cross. Me He has brought nigh by the same cross, or rather by the Blessed One who bore it for me, and who now lives to care for me and bless me, and even to make intercession for me as often as my failings or necessities require it. He can put in a good word for me when I can only hide my face. What a fellowship of love and interest this reveals between the Father and the Son of which we, in all the littleness of our interests, are the objects; for, O wondrous grace, *these* are all bound up with the ends and interests of heaven. But, in truth, when a soul has the glory of God before it as the great thing in its ways; and when the object of the heart is, that Christ may be magnified in it, whether by life or by death, it is able to reckon on God for all the means for the accomplishment of these blessed ends. It then knows that He cannot deny Himself.

I would refer any tried one about the earthly path to the sixth of Matthew, where the Lord Jesus, in the most tender and loving way, and by the most

assuring declarations, seeks to put thorough confidence in God into the hearts of His disciples as to the morrow, and all that would bring care, whilst they were doing His will moment by moment. “Go, work *to-day* in my vineyard;” to-morrow is not mine. And verse 33 assures us that our interests and needs are God’s concern and care, and will most certainly be attended to by Him whilst we are doing His *present* will. *Our* heavenly Father *feeds* the fowls of the air, who neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns. He *thinks* of them and cares for their necessities: not a sparrow falls to the ground without *our* Father.

NOTES ON PSALM I.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;

his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

This psalm describes a man blessed of the Lord—a happy man—a man whom *God* can approve. He is distinguished by an entire freedom from the taint of evil in every form. He has not *walked* in the *counsel* of the ungodly, nor *stood* in the way of sinners, nor has he sat down in the seat of the scornful. "But his *delight* is in the *law* of the Lord; and in his *law* doth he meditate day and night."

The purity of the law meets a perfect reflection in his heart; its unbending strictness brings no cloud of condemnation over his soul—it is his *delight*; his unwearying study; his constant solace; his meditation day and night.

It is *personal* righteousness which is here described; *personal*, absolute freedom from evil or sin, and *personal* de-

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symptom of decay is ever to touch his beauteous form—"his leaf shall not fade;" and perfection is to mark his every purpose and act—"whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The *reverse* of all this has hitherto been manifested, in Christ, to the eye of man; but His resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of God, give the sure pledge to faith that all the blessedness that belongs to righteousness shall one day be seen to be His. Blessed is it to think that this Man of Sorrows shall be the inheritor of all this joy, and that the principles of God's righteousness will assuredly at last be universally applied.

How melancholy, in the contrast, is the portion of the ungodly! "The ungodly are *not so*." In the judgment they will not stand; and in the congregation of the righteous—for there will be a congregation of the righteous—sinners will not be gathered; but the very "WAY of the wicked shall perish."

light in righteousness or holiness. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness:" and this psalm describes the man whom *He* can approve. It is quite true, that a believer standing in the power of the Lord's grace might, in a very qualified degree, answer to the description of this psalm; and David, or an Old Testament saint, might, in a very qualified sense, appropriate the language;* but the psalm goes much further than this, and contemplates the man, who in Psalm xl. says, "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."

Verse 3 presents a picture of the unclouded prosperity that belongs to this man. He is planted by the unfailing springs of life and joy; his actings and ways are like the perfected fruit of a tree in its proper season; no blight nor

* The only righteousness which gives acceptance with God, since the fall, is an acquired righteousness; not personal and inherent. See the testimony to Abel in Hebrews xi. 4; and also Psalm xxxii.

GOD'S MERCY REVEALING AND MEETING MAN'S MISERY.

NOTES OF A GOSPEL LECTURE.

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 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; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and 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."—Acts xxvi. 15—18.

Many an estimate may be formed of the ruin which sin has brought upon man; but the only real gauge of his misery is presented in the mercy by which, on the part of God, that misery is remedied. In this picture of man's condition, presented in the words of Christ's commission to Paul, there are no hard words of condemnation, nor threats of hell and judgment, nor exaggerated descriptions of present cor-

ruption or of future sorrow, but only the calm, heaven-pronounced declaration of a sinner's moral distance from God. But in this how does feature after feature of his moral ruin start into view, as the words in succession fall from the lips of his deliverer, while He tells of the varied application of His blood-bought cure! "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," was the gracious answer to His fallen persecutor, as, trembling and confounded, he asked the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the commission follows, by which Saul of Tarsus is empowered to tell, as wide as the world, of the mercy which grace has provided to meet a sinner's need. "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; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, *to open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God; that*

they may receive the forgiveness of sins; and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Blindness — darkness — Satan's power—distance from God—sins unforgiven—portionless as to eternity—no meetness for heaven—no fitness to dwell in the holiness of God's eternal presence; these are the sad features of man's condition, as a sinner, discovered to us, not in the way of denunciation, but in the declaration of the mercy which it cost Christ His life, and sufferings, and blood in order to display.

Now, if our minds, familiarized as they are to a condition of sin in ourselves and others, have thought little of the state to which it has actually reduced us, let us seek the correction of these thoughts by looking at the picture now presented to us. For dark as it is, there is mercy in it, because it is the estimate of our condition by Him whose mercy presents the full and adequate and only remedy.

But it may be thought, perhaps, that this description hardly now applies, since civilization, and education, and christian

institutions have so altered things. Consider, then, for a moment, whether it is so or not.

Civilization, and education, and what are called christian institutions, may change the outward condition of society, but can they reach the blindness of men's hearts, or rescue from the darkness of this world, or deliver from Satan's power, or give to the conscience the sense of the forgiveness of sins, or open the door of heaven to sinners in such a way as that their presence shall not tarnish the holiness of God's presence? If not, the whole condition of your moral being before God remains unchanged, and will remain unchanged, until you learn the force of that simple expression, "*By faith that is in me.*"

Sin, then, as viewed by Christ, who is the "faithful witness," has the effect of blinding men's hearts to all true apprehensions of God's character, and to all sense of their own condition, and to all just perception of the eternal distinction between pollution and holiness. Hence the first thing named by Christ to

be effected by Paul's testimony, is "To open their eyes;" because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not;" and Christ well knew that their eyes could not be opened to Satan's blinding power except, as He says, "*By faith that is in me.*"

But do we seek for proofs of men's blindness of heart? What greater proof can be presented than their ignorance of the excellency of Christ, and their indifference to the proclaimed grace of God, without which they never can be saved? What greater proof of blindness than their fearlessness in traversing their pathway through this world, where every step is beset with danger, and every moment may plunge them in eternal ruin? What else but blindness can account for their intentness in pursuing the things of time, and their neglect of the things of eternity; and their fondly-cherished hopes of being right at the *end*, though wrong in every step of the *way*? What else but blindness can account for their vague hopes of reaching heaven at last, though re-

fusing the work of Christ which alone can bring them there?

Natural blindness discovers itself by insensibility to all the objects of nature which make their appeal to our senses through the medium of sight. There may be present the beauty of spring or the glow of autumn—the birds of the air or the lilies of the field—the mountain ranges or the forest shade—the majestic sea or the placid lake—the frightful precipice or the level plain—the lowering tempest or the bright sunshine; but he who is blind sees nothing of them all. He is alike unmoved by the danger and unattracted by the beauty of all in the midst of which he stands.

And are men attracted by the beauty of holiness—or do they tremble at the thought of dying in their sins? Are they won by the attractions of the cross—or do they live in dread of a judgment to come? Does not the apostle give this as a proof of men's blindness, that God's glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and men do not see it? He

on a scene enveloped in pitchy darkness. For every practical purpose he might as well be blind, or have his eyes closed, as to be destitute of light to guide his steps, or to enable him to distinguish objects one from another. Hence it is said, (1 Pet. ii. 9,) "God has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." If Christ sends the power of His grace through the gospel "to open our eyes," in the same grace He causes the light of God, which shines in our hearts, to shine also on everything around us. "I," says Christ, "am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." But mark, *Christ* is the light that must be followed. Where *He* is not, light is not. Where His example and His grace are not discerned, all is darkness. Alas! it is too little considered that Christ's presence in this world proved it to be a definite sphere of darkness; as it is said, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Hence the power of Satan, who is

says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath *blinded the minds of them that believe not*, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." In other words, so clearly is God's glory presented in the person of Christ, and in the salvation accomplished by the cross, that if a man does not see it, it is as palpable a proof of his spiritual blindness as in natural things for a man not to see a single ray of light when the sun is shining direct before him. But Christ says, "I send thee to open their eyes!" Do not, beloved friends, say as the Pharisees did, when Christ had opened the eyes of the man who was born blind, "*Are we blind also?*" Rather may you exclaim, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!"

But we must be "turned from darkness to light," as well as have our eyes opened; otherwise it would be but to make the darkness visible. It would avail but little for a man to open his eyes

called "the ruler of the darkness of this world;" and hence the tricks and traverses which he plays with men, and they have no light to detect his wiles. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not; because he hath the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth; because *there is no light in him.*" But, then, this testimony of Jesus in the glory brings in the light of God upon everything. It "turns them from darkness" where people can see nothing clearly; "to light" where everything is discerned in its true character. For all things are made manifest by the light.

"From the power of Satan unto God." It is said of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica that the people were turned by it to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God. Because these idols which were worshipped as gods, were, as the Scripture shows, but the representatives of Satan. "I say," says the apostle, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." In truth, the world

is the place of Satan's power. It is his public house, where he presents his entertainment according to the tastes of the guests whom he receives. He has wine for the drunkard and oaths for the profane; wit for the witty and pleasures for the gay. He has gold for the miser, business for the thrifty, honours for the ambitious, admirers for the vain, science for the learned, religion for the serious—everything but a crucified and risen Jesus, one look at whom would spoil it all. For He said to Paul, "to whom I now send thee, to turn them from Satan UNTO GOD."

Sin has separated from God; and under its power men can do nothing else but wander farther and farther from God. But "Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God*." The sense of guilt drives away from the presence of God; as we see in Adam, who, before any sentence of condemnation was pronounced upon him, hid himself amongst the trees of the garden, from the presence of God. But grace restores, not to

His very enemies said of Him, "with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Satan can hold his own against any power but a dead and risen Christ; who, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil."

"That they may receive the forgiveness of sins." Nothing gives the certain indication of faith in the soul and the working of God's Spirit but this. As Christ said to the Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins." There are many workings of the human mind, many attempts to satisfy the conscience, many efforts to meet the claims of the law, many hopes of heaven and fears of hell; but there is only one thing that can bring into the soul the knowledge of "the forgiveness of sins." But until this is known, there is no sure token that God is at work there, or that Christ has been received by faith. "Blessed is the man *whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*." "Through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins*, and by

paradise, but *to God*. It brings back into His presence in all the acceptance which Christ, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, has there. Men in their sins can only be happy with such happiness as the world affords, *at a distance from God*. It only lasts as long as the thought of God's presence is shut out. Let that be introduced into the gayest company that ever met together, and at once their gaiety is spoiled, as by the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.

But *how*, it may be asked, if it be so, is a man to be delivered from Satan's power? I answer, who was it that said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and *divideth his spoils*?" Who was it that met the man amongst the tombs, who was so fierce that no man durst pass by that way, and, in a word, commanded the *legion of devils*, by whom he was possessed, to come out of him? So that

him all that believe are *justified from all things*." Now, have none of you ever repeated, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins?" But, in doing so, whose sins did you believe in the forgiveness of? Peter's, Paul's, Mary Magdalene's, the thief's on the cross—and not your own? Then, they will be in heaven, and you will not if your belief goes no further than this. It is right to *believe* in the forgiveness of sins; but then it is necessary individually *to receive* the forgiveness of sins. Do you think God's Son suffered all He did to put away sin that you might go on in sin, and still reach heaven at last? Or do you think there is any means besides of getting rid of your sins? No; it is only "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified."

Whatever the world and time may give to their votaries, it must be allowed on all hands that they leave a man portionless for eternity. "When he dieth

he shall carry nothing away : his glory shall not descend after him." But, most certainly, God is gathering to Himself out of this world those who are to be with Him through a long and blessed eternity, to be His heirs in glory. The apostle Peter speaks of this, when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

This living hope of this heavenly inheritance springs from faith in the resurrection of Christ. It is by this that God begets it in the soul. As Christ says, "by faith that is in me;" and He was then speaking from the heavenly glory. Now, God is sanctifying or setting apart the heirs of this inheritance. It is by the blood of Christ that this is

accomplished ; as the blood of the pass-over was the means of the redemption of Israel as the heirs of Canaan. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." It is this blood that sets apart from the world's judgment, because it meets the judgment due to sin. And if God saves sinners by the blood of Christ it is because that blood so puts away their sins that not a single stain remains to be brought into heaven, either to trouble their own consciences or to pollute the holiness of God's eternal presence.

But how am I to be assured of this inheritance? Christ says, "*By faith that is in me.*" For however the apostle might amplify this ground of confidence, by showing the divine power and glory of Him who wrought this redemption, or the efficacy of the sacrifice by which it was accomplished, or the present position in glory of Him who humbled Himself to death for us; still, the title to eternal inheritance, as well as the reversal of all that marked our moral

distance from God, is found in the single sentence, "By FAITH that is in me." For we must not fail here to mark that all this picture of man's misery comes to light through the remedy that was to be applied. It is not the detail (however we may have dwelt upon it) of blindness and darkness and Satan's power, and sin's bondage and final hopelessness, that is prominent in this wondrous commission given by Christ to the apostle of the Gentiles; but it is the simple, energetic means by which this condition of ruin could alone be reversed. It is the sending a testimony through one who had gone as far as ever man's enmity could go in opposition to Christ, that all had been accomplished in order to put away sin—the certain efficacy of which the messenger in his own person was to be an example. Christ says in effect to Paul, I am going to send you to the Gentiles, who are blind, and in the dark, under the power of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope, and without God in the world, that they may know that I have laboured

and suffered, and agonized and sweat blood, and met Satan's power and God's judgment in death, and I have conquered! And now bid them look to me for the fruit and power of that victory I have so hardly won!

Christ as the True Physician saw man's desperate condition, and provided the only remedy; though the victim Himself might be an utter stranger to His need.

Christ says, I send you to do this. But by what instruments or application was He to open their eyes? By what light was He to chase away their darkness? By what power was He to deliver souls from Satan's grasp? How could they receive forgiveness of sins when God had declared that the wages of sin was death? How could they get their title and meetness for a place amongst those who were sanctified? How "read their title clear to mansions in the skies," when they were "by nature children of wrath?" The whole is summed up in this, "*by faith that is in me.*"

Paul was to tell of the grace of that heart, to others, that had met, and melted, and, in sovereign mercy, had delivered his own. He was to tell of the love and power of One who had taken the sinner's place under death and judgment, that the sinner through faith in Him might find a place before God in righteousness and heavenly glory. There was power enough in a risen Christ "to open their eyes," who so often, when here on earth, opened the eyes of the blind. There was power in Christ to bring in light amidst the darkest scenes of human depravity, for He is "the light of the world," and will soon appear as "the Sun of righteousness," to chase away all the darkness that broods over this world. But, now, the gospel is "God's power to salvation." When it is received by faith, it is God's instrument of deliverance. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There was, and is, power enough in

GOD'S LOVE.

In Romans v., after the first few verses, we have two points most blessedly brought out; the first is the nature of the love of God, and the second the sort of deliverance it works out for its objects. The former we have in verses 6—8, pursued in verses 9—11 to its happy result in our joying in God; the latter in the remaining part of the chapter. It is on the former that I would now dwell for a little.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Well, but what love? A love to good people, to those who love Him? O no, not that by any means. Not that it fails of this result, as we have already seen, for "we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." But before ever we joyed in God, or had one pulse of affection beating in our hearts towards Him, *He loved us*. When our hearts were cold as the nether millstone, His heart yearned with love over us. "When we were yet without

Christ to deliver from Satan's power, whom he conquered in death, "that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death." For even when on earth, the wondering multitudes exclaimed, "with authority he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." He could forgive sins on earth, because He came to bear sin; and now that "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," the testimony, far and wide, is borne, "through this man is preached to you *the forgiveness of sins*." He can bring into heaven "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*." And let none of us forget that the objects of this redemption are viewed as "the fruit of the travail of His soul," who in death and sorrow, and in the infinitude of love, wrought this redemption.

strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This was the fruit of God's love. He loved ungodly persons, who had no power to be anything else; and loved them so much as to give His own Son, out of His bosom, of His own free accord, to stand in their stead, and to suffer their deserts, that righteousness might have its way on Him the Holy One in their stead, and that love might have its way on them and towards them in bringing them back through this wondrous reconciliation into its own everlasting embrace.

This precious truth is presented to us in these verses by way of contrast with "the manner of man." Man needs something in the object to move him to love; he would scarcely die for a miser, let him be ever so just—there would be no motive; but for a benevolent man some would even dare to die. But who would die for his enemy? But that is precisely what Jesus did for us. It is when we were enemies that the Son of God died for us. Nay, more, it is by this wondrous fact that God is com-

mending His love to us. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, (and sin is the expression of enmity—see Col. i.,) Christ died for us." Christ *died* for us before ever we were reconciled; for it is by His death that we are reconciled. He died for us when we were nothing but ungodly ones, sinners, and enemies. That is indeed love. No motive in the sinner—it found all its motives in itself. This is the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. It begins in God. It is the activity of God on the behalf of those who are active only in evil, and who say in their hearts, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But it will not depart, for it must make these very enemies know its wondrous ways. Love does for them what love sees they need, and all of its own accord; yea more, love does for them what only love could imagine: it sacrifices itself that it may save them, and have them with it to enjoy it for ever. But first of all, *it gives them a*

place in its heart. This God does, for He is love; and this He does for sinners. This is the first grand thing: before any work is done *in* them, before any work is done *for* them even, God *loves* them. The *gift* of Jesus for them whilst *they* are yet sinners is the demonstration of this love. Righteousness demanded their death, love provides a ransom. Righteousness could not receive them in their sins; love dies to put them away. And after love has accomplished its work on their behalf, it comes to tell of it and to win their hearts by this revelation of itself. And this it does; for when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. He hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

Having established this point, the Apostle goes on to expatiate on the confidence we may have in such love as to all the rest. Everything that love can do for its friends we may now reckon on from what it has already done for its enemies. Every further manifestation of love lies imbedded in this first One, and if we have rightly estimated it we

can count on all the rest. "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up freely to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." "If we have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." He is our strength and song, for He has become our salvation. The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

MAN'S UPRIGHTNESS AND GOD'S SALVATION.

Job xxxiii.

It is often a long time before a soul that has known something of the graciousness of God is brought, thoroughly and practically in conscience, to bow to the truth of its condition before Him as He reveals it, and so to be cast over,

simply and entirely, on grace. But to this, sooner or later, God does bring every soul that has to do with Him. This chapter reveals to us the way in which God brings about this blessed result for man, till then ignorant of Him and of himself. He speaks once and again, but man heeds it not. Then He makes His hand to be felt, as in Ps. xxxii., and for the same reason—because the soul is keeping silence and refusing to own sin. He lets the light of His holiness shine in and reach the conscience, and the life draws near the grave. But all this is God's own work in grace, to give man the consciousness of what he is before Him, and to put the truth into him; to bring him to be in the true knowledge and acknowledgment of what he, a sinner and a creature, is in the presence of a God of holiness and grace, whom he has despised and neglected. This is the first thing.

Then, secondly, a *messenger* comes; not to speak of *grace* in this instance, but of *truth*. And O, how rare is such

an one—"one of a thousand"—to declare unto man his uprightness. And what is man's uprightness but confession?—the only *true* place a sinner can take before God. But there is uprightness for a sinner even before God; and that is self-judgment in the justifying of God's verdict against him—taking God's part against himself. This the Interpreter of God's ways explains. He explains that the hand of God is on the sinner just in order to this; and that the moment the soul comes to this—the moment it says with David, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," there is forgiveness. So here, "he will be *gracious* to him;" for the controversy is at an end. The sinner leaves himself *self-condemned* at the *mercy of God*. And O, what wondrous mercy is now revealed. "I have found a *ransom*." "*Save*," says God. *He* becomes the soul's salvation; and this, too, through a ransom. *He finds* the ransom; and He says, "*Save*." He becomes the Redeemer Himself of the soul that repents—that owns His righteousness

is none; though man, alas! goes about to establish one of his own. But in God's presence it all turns into filthy rags: his comeliness turns in him to corruption; and he can only lay his hand on his mouth, and say, "Unclean, unclean!" Thus does God strip off what is of man, that He may clothe him with what is of Himself, even Christ, His Righteousness for sinners.

But we must not forget another point—viz., that if the sinner needs a righteousness, if he needs to be clothed before God, he also, and first, needs a *ransom*. He is an heir of *the pit*. He is drawing *nigh to the pit*. Ah! that is the deepest part. Here, again, Christ comes in. How possibly spare such a vessel of wrath? How let him escape? Here is the answer—"I have found a ransom." "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." God now frees the man from all that he did and was

in the confession of its own utter want of it.

Now mark the blessed result of it all. "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy." He is brought to God—to God as his Saviour, his Friend. The whole state of his soul has been up in question before God in judgment. All has come out. He is *in the truth*—upright in the unpalliating confession of his utter want of uprightness. And, then, *God is active*. He it is who delivers. He says, "*Save*:" for He had found the *ransom*; and that, too, ere ever He began this process and exercise. He expected *nothing from the sinner* to give him a place with Himself: He had found all. But He must strip the sinner of himself. He must stain his fancied self-goodness, that He may fit him for the valuing and accepting—and of grace, too—that which is divine. God wants to have man with Himself in righteousness, so as to enjoy Him in love. But only a divine righteousness can suffice. Creature-righteousness there

because of the ransom which He Himself provided, even Jesus, "the propitiation for our sins." The sinner is saved from death because another passes under it in his stead. Herein is love. God provides the Lamb for the sacrifice. Oh! precious ransom! God's own provision for condemned and guilty man drawing nigh to the pit. But now He takes away the filthy garments and clothes him with change of raiment. Now all is changed, and *for ever*. He has come to God, and in His presence all has been out and judged in the conscience; and, Oh, how welcome the pardon in the name of the Blessed One who gave Himself a ransom for our sins! Ah! *we* have but to own our deserving the judgment; *He* bore it for us on the tree. How sweet such a reprieve; the witness of such divine love, and based on divine holiness and justice. The soul is brought to God: it sees His face with joy: and this is for ever. He is to be with Him. He gets a place in and with Jesus. "Being justified by faith we have *peace* with God *through* our Lord

Jesus Christ, *by whom also* we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." God grant each of my readers to stand clean and clear in the consciousness by faith of having had the whole question of his everlasting condition all settled by God and before Him; and in the assurance that all his salvation is *Jesus*: nothing that ever will be in himself or of himself; but that he starts with this divine settlement, which is the foundation of all progress, and which no progress ever can make more perfect; though we shall know its perfection and blessedness increasingly, and be growing in the knowledge of grace and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

First, a ransom—the real actual bearing of our sins on the tree; then, the true place with God *in Christ* as our righteousness and our beauty. O, how dear and lovely God becomes then!

And "how our hearts delight to hear Him,
Bid us dwell in safety near Him."

One more remark: the exercises are needful, but they do not deliver; they

and with His Son Jesus Christ. And then, in other words, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. And the first essential of all holiness is to *abide* in Christ, in the communion of the Father and the Son—in the light: and if another admits darkness into his soul, I am to seek that he be restored to where I am; but on no account am I to go to where he is, which will be the effort of Satan, who will try to make me appear as unloving, if I do not. "But we know that we are of God; and he that is born of God *keepeth* himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." To grace be all the praise, through Him that hath loved us.

FRAGMENT.

Note how grace throws the virgins who all slept—not back on themselves and their failure, but forward to the coming Bridegroom. The Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to *meet Him*. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

bring unto the truth; but nothing that goes on in us, or that comes out of us, can be a ground of deliverance. God delivers through Jesus Christ. He has found a *ransom*. Faith now welcomes salvation *by grace*; and says, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," be all the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

FELLOWSHIP.

Fellowship being only in the light, we are never to go out of the light for any fellowship—never to leave God's presence in order to have fellowship with others. If they have fellowship with darkness—if any defilement has come over their spirit, God will purge and restore; but it is to His presence He restores. He will not admit darkness in any measure. I am to keep in His presence. There only is fellowship. There may be associations outside, but there is no fellowship. Fellowship is with the Father, our alone blessing,

THE RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv.

The resurrection, after all, is that which is the full and perfect deliverance from the whole effect and consequence of sin. At the same time it shows that what God has predestinated us to is an entire new state and condition of things altogether. Nothing is more important than that we should clearly apprehend what it is God is about; whether he is correcting the *old* thing, or setting up an entirely *new* thing. Now the resurrection shows that God is not bringing about a modification of the scene in which we are, but that He is bringing in a totally *new power*. The discernment of this has the most important effect upon the way of life, the modes of seeking to do good, the objects and efforts of Christians. Christ went about doing good, and we are of course to follow His example; but what of the state of things around did Christ correct or set right when down here? Nothing! The very result of the Lord's coming into the

midst of the Jewish nation was just this, that they rejected, hated, and crucified the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory. The Lord Jesus went about doing good, but seemingly in vain. Still none of God's counsels have failed; but as to the outward result, the Lord said, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." (Isa. xlix. 5.) And so far as the outward scene went in which He laboured, there was no kind of restoration; for the more love Christ manifested, it only brought out more fully man's hatred to Him. "For my love they are mine enemies."

The resurrection introduces an entirely new scene, so that Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." Now it is a very difficult thing for men to submit their minds to this truth, because it plainly tells man that, in himself as man, he is totally and utterly ruined. It is quite true, and I fully admit, that naturally man has great and wonderful faculties; and faculties which

adoption from a state of sin to that of sons, the Holy Ghost is given to us as the power of our enjoyment of it. Such is the marvellous place into which we are brought, even that of everlasting companionship with Christ, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Man down here on the earth "disquieteth himself in vain;" for wonderful as his natural faculties may be, as soon as "his breath goeth forth he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." What then becomes of his wondrous faculties? All is gone! for there is no fruit whatever reaped by himself. The man may have directed the world, but what of that, if death comes in and writes nothingness on all his powers. Another may come after him and improve upon what he has done, but it is all gone as regards himself for ever, although the man has a moral responsibility in connexion with it all.

In this chapter the apostle was meeting the minds of those who had cast doubts on the resurrection, but not on

it may be will be much more developed than they now are. But still, with all this, man morally is utterly ruined and lost. Paul opens out in this chapter what the character and power of resurrection is, the resurrection of the just being the subject of it, although that of the unjust is also glanced at. It is not merely God acting in sovereign power, which can take a dead thing out of the state of death; but by virtue of association with the life of Christ we have participation in Christ's resurrection. It is not only that we are blessed, but *blessed with Christ*. If He lives, we also live together with Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also." If He is the righteousness of God, "we are made the righteousness of God in him." If He is the Heir of Glory, we are "joint heirs together with him," and "where he is, there shall we also be." If He is the Son, we are sons also. "I ascend to my Father and your Father." We are put, through grace, into this wonderful place of sons; so that it is a real thing; and having thus been brought by

immortality. A man will cast doubts on the resurrection, while he will speak of his immortality and magnify himself in it, because it is *me*. It is *I* that am immortal. But if I am the dead thing God raises from the dead, what then—where am *I*? Why my pride is brought down, and God's power is brought in and exalted. Therefore if I am talking of immortality, I am talking of myself; but if talking of resurrection, I am wholly cast on God.

Resurrection is connected with death, (I now speak of believers,) but it is the coming in of God's power to deliver from the power of death; not merely an escape from my sins, but a full and perfect deliverance from all the consequences of my sins, so that even the very dust of my body will be raised in divine glory. In Christ's death I also get another truth, which is, that my resurrection is consequent on Christ's death and resurrection. I share in it as forgiven; for Christ quickens me, in virtue of having put away my sins. "And you being dead in your sins hath he quickened

together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. ii. 13.) We are partakers of the life in which Christ is risen; so that I have a life totally discharged from all question of sin; for I cannot have life without having forgiveness, and hence rest and peace.

Christ had an unchangeable life as Son of God; but He died as a man; for there was complete evidence given through many incontrovertible proofs that He was really a dead man, and that He was raised from the dead and seen of "witnesses chosen before of God." How entirely Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man is seen by His being raised from the dead. All the gospel rests on the resurrection of Christ. There is no gospel at all, unless there is the resurrection. This is a point of the deepest interest, showing how really Christ entered into the case. So truly was Christ dead in consequence of our sins, that if He did not rise from the dead, then all is utterly gone for ever. But so completely was Christ a dead man for us,

put away the sin that took Him there, having risen without them. What can there then be between me and God which Christ has not entirely put away? Nothing. Seeing then that Christ has so completely acted out this condition before God, death is no longer death to me; it has lost its power and its terror too; for now death to me is simply "departing to be with Christ." It is to be "absent from the body, present with the Lord;" it is but the getting rid of a mortal body.

The power of the resurrection is distinctive; and it is of great importance to see this. God's eye rested on the one blessed One who had glorified Him about man's sin; so that He takes Him from amongst the dead up to Himself. We see a whole course of sin had gone on to the full accomplishment even of putting God's Son to death on the cross. But over all this evil Christ gained so complete a victory, and so thoroughly glorified every attribute of God about man's sin, that God's eye rested on this one blessed and righteous One with

that if He is not raised from the dead, no man can ever be raised. And if dead people are not raised, then is Christ not raised. Yet we know He could not be holden of death; that were impossible. It is most important for us clearly to see and understand this, that our faith and hope may be "in God which raiseth the dead." Thus everything that could possibly come between the sinner and God has been entirely removed—the burden of sin on the soul—God's wrath against sin—Satan's power—the weakness of man in death. Christ put Himself under ALL THIS. "He bore our sins," for He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" By grace Christ put Himself entirely in our place. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us." All my sins are therefore entirely gone: He bore them all on the cross, and went down under the power of death, and rose again without them. Has death any more power over Him? No, for He is risen in the power of an endless life. But still He has been there on account of our sins, and has entirely

complete satisfaction. And thus, as He said, was the world convinced of righteousness, "because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." But now, we who believe see Him—that is, by faith; being quickened together with Him, having all trespasses forgiven us. For God does not raise a saint to condemn him,—no; but to make him a partaker of all Christ is. For Christ has accomplished a righteousness on which God has set His seal, in that He raised Him from the dead. God's eye being fixed on this accomplished righteousness, this object of His love, He took Him up to Himself; and having quickened us together with Christ, we are made partakers of it. Were there no resurrection, it would be complete abandonment by God; for He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." For if Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain; we have not been preaching the truth of the gospel, but preaching a lie: and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

But now comes a full burst of testimony to this accomplished work: "Now is Christ risen from the dead." Thus this righteous and beloved One is raised out of this scene into an entirely new one, even that of becoming the first-fruits of them that slept. For if Christ be raised, His saints must be raised, as a Head cannot be raised without a body, it would be monstrous. "There is, then, the broad statement in John xvii., "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The resurrection comes in, not by the power of God only, but also by man. "For since by man came death, by man also came resurrection from the dead." It is the Man Christ Jesus coming in in power. Every created thing, the whole universe, is to be wholly put under this Righteous Man—this new Glorified Man—the Second Adam. He only is excepted which did put all things under Him—that is, God the Father.

As spiritual men, we now belong to this Second Adam, being content now

to suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Christ had the heart to *come* down to us. He did not throw down the blessing to us from heaven; but He came Himself to bring it. Such was His wondrous love—a love which was stronger than death. Now He is set down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. Meanwhile, He is gathering out His joint-heirs—His friends. Christ came in grace, and took our place as sinners; and now takes us up to His place of righteousness: for to sit with Him on His throne is to be our place; and this, through a real, living association with Himself. He is the first-born among *many* brethren. He wrought the work alone, but He takes His power with the many. We may be burdened, groaning in conflict, still we have certainty. The Holy Ghost is the witness of what Christ has done for us: we are "made the righteousness of God in him." What

a thought, that I have this standing before God, though vile in myself! In virtue of this, I hate sin, because it is so different from what I actually am there.

All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ. All are to be brought under His power. Not only will His saints bow before Him—who do it now with delight, in the power of a new life; but His enemies must bow before Him. He is gathering His friends now, but His enemies will be dealt with by and by. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. The wicked dead are glanced at here; for when death's power is destroyed, the wicked dead will all rise, as being no longer holden of it. What a different resurrection will this be to the resurrection of the saints, in virtue of their association with Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost! (Rom. viii. 11.) Then, when all things are made subject, and Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, the mediatorial reign will be at an end, because God will be all in

all. Therefore Christ will not be ruling as the mediatorial man then; but Christ the man will never cease to be "the first-born among many brethren." *Subjection* is man's *perfection*. Therefore Christ's subjection as man results from His perfection. "Then also shall the Son himself be subject." This is most blessed, that for ever and for ever He will be in our midst—He whose heart is love—He who, as the Man of sorrows here, brought down God's love to us! He will take His place in our midst as the Second Adam—as the Head and Source and Channel of every blessing.

If I am now joying in God, it is in virtue of being risen with Jesus, God's perfect delight. Why is it that God has given us so full a revelation of these things as He has by His word and Spirit, but that we might know and enjoy them *now* in our souls; as David says, "For thy word's sake and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things to make thy servant know them." 2 Sam. vii. 21. God has given us intelligence of these things,

that knowing and enjoying them we may be sanctified by them. The simple child who loves his father knows more about the relationship than the philosopher who might write volumes on the subject. The child would be astonished that one should be unable to understand that love of the father which he as an affectionate child was living in the enjoyment of, but still he might not be able to explain it. Unless we are in the relationship we can never enter into the feelings which result from it. The relationship is not formed in heaven. The fruits of it will be enjoyed there, but the relationship is formed here on the earth; while the one who is known and loved as a father, being in heaven, the child wishes to be there, as it is very natural for the child to be with the father. Fellowship is more than inheritance. It is most blessed to have the inheritance beneath our feet, but it is much more blessed to have fellowship with God as our Father above us. We have poor foolish hearts needing to be exercised; but still we have accomplished

which Christ lives. The Lord give us thankful hearts for His unspeakable mercy.

NOTES ON COLOSSIANS.

(Continued from page 244.)

Chap. i. 5.

In the previous verses we had three points brought before us; first, the apostle's salutation, in which he regards the saints as the objects of the present favour of the Father, and of the peace which He gives. Happy position! secured to us for ever in Christ. And sweet it is thus to be able to view the saints at all times, whatever their practical condition, may be, as dear to God, the excellent of the earth, whose present peace and blessing He seeks, even as He has secured it for us for ever in Christ. In fellowship with these thoughts of God, the apostle greets them with grace and peace from God their *Father* and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, secondly, we had his thanks-

glory, accomplished righteousness, and all in virtue of the accomplished work of Christ, so that our hearts bow before Him. The reason of all this blessedness is—"That in the ages to come he might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." The more faithfulness there is in us, the more sorrow, doubtless; but then there will be consolations abounding. Only let us take up the cross, and if it be really the cross, we shall find Jesus with it, and the earnest and spring of glory in our hearts.

The power, then, which delivers us from wrath, from sin, and from Satan, is the resurrection of Christ in virtue of His accomplished righteousness, and thus we are brought into fellowship with Him. Our portion, whether in suffering down here or in glory up there, is all in Christ, as the One risen from the dead. The Lord keep our hearts full of rejoicing, crucifying the flesh, and as being dead to law, sin and the world. I live to God in the same power in

giving for the hope laid up for them in heaven. Heaven was near to his thoughts. Jesus was there. He had entered in, and He was preparing a place for them. He is to come again to take us to Himself, that we may be for ever with Him. And when He shall be manifested then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory. This latter, perhaps, was more especially the hope here before him; Christ in them "the hope of glory." What rest of heart the apostle had in contemplating this issue of Christ's travail on their behalf, their being with Him for ever in heaven! Many an exercise he had on their behalf even as to the very condition they were in at the time he was writing to them; they had lost the sense of their place with their risen Head; at any rate it had become much enfeebled, and with the enfeebling of this all else became enfeebled too. He had great agony for them; and this was Christ's Spirit yearning in him over them for their deliverance, and for their entrance in living power into the joy and comfort of

the mystery. But when he turned to heaven all was peace; he could give thanks to the Father for the portion He had laid up for them there. Christ was there. The Head was there, and with Him every one of the members should appear in glory.

Then, thirdly, in the 4th verse, we had the ground of this thanksgiving as far as they were concerned—even their faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints. Grace had wrought in them already, and he at once connects it with glory.

In the close of this 5th verse and in the next, a new subject comes before him; the gospel, “the word of the truth of the gospel.” In connexion with this he makes three statements, each of them weighty and important, as indeed every word of God is.

First, he connects the hope laid up for them in heaven with the word of the truth of the gospel. The gospel, the good tidings of grace, had wrapped up in it also good tidings of glory. It was in the word of the truth of the gospel

One discovering the true condition of this one—far from God and in bondage to Satan, and under wrath because having rejected Jesus. The word of the *truth* of the gospel reveals all this—the true condition of man and his world; the perfect *grace of God* which has wrought in the cross for us, and which had wrought in them, by the gospel, giving them a place even now with Him who bore it for them, and the hope of being with Him for ever in heaven. It was the word of the *truth* of the gospel, and on it they might *rely* with confidence. Man and his glory was passing away, but the word of the Lord should endure for ever. And this was the word which by the gospel was preached unto them.

What firmness of step, and what buoyancy of spirit this heavenly hope gives to him who has it in passing through this world! Then we realize that we are not of it, and that we are on our way to God.

A second characteristic of the gospel was its universality. It had reached

that they had heard of the hope laid up for them in heaven. Such was the range and scope of the gospel at least which they had heard: it was *God's* good news not only of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of His Son, but of eternal blessedness with Him in heaven.

How could it be otherwise? Christ was in heaven, and we are redeemed to be with Him. The cross put Him in glory, and it puts all who trust in Him, too. Blessed is it to know what we are delivered from—the wages of sin—eternal separation from God, who is love, the fountain of all goodness and joy; and this, too, as the expression of His everlasting displeasure. But how much more blessed to know that His perfect love did not spare His own Son, not only that I might not perish, but that I might know Him and be with Himself for ever. Jesus was forsaken for us, that we might be for ever brought nigh. This gives the heart an object as well as perfect peace to the conscience. It delivers also from this present evil world; the brightness and blessedness of that

them, and was amongst them, as, indeed, it was in all the world. It was no mere Jewish good tidings; it was for man. Offences abounded among the Jews; but where *sin* abounded, a far wider thing, there *grace* did much more abound.

Then, thirdly, it was bringing forth fruit in all the world and amongst them, too. It was gathering souls to God through Christ wherever it went; but besides, it was bringing forth fruit in those who were gathered. This last point is plainly implied in the clause which follows: “since the day ye heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” *Ever since* it was the power of fruit-bearing, as at the first it was the seed of eternal life. This is a very important point, and one we are apt often to forget. The seed that fell into the good ground brought forth fruit; some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. We have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, *that we might bring forth fruit unto God*. This is the sim-

ple natural result of union with Jesus risen. And the grace of God, when known in truth, sets us thus before God *in Christ*, the fruits of which union we are to manifest down here upon the earth. We are to walk in newness of life, i.e., of existence. In order to this we must abide in Him. But when simply holding the Head every thing is fruit, fruit unto God.

What a place of honour and glory this is—of being the living channels of the affections and virtues of Christ hid in God here in this world! (O, that we esteemed it more.) Thus it is we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by manifesting in this world of sin and in the trying circumstances of daily life, not what flesh is, but what *Christ* is; our heart feeding upon His love, whilst we lean upon His arm and are guided by His eye. What interest He takes in our being fruitful, that His Father may be glorified! Will He fail us in the hour of need? He lets us come into it just that we may prove how abundant are His resources to

“Bless the Lord, O, my soul.” When we can speak of nothing else, we can speak of *God*.

Is not this the thought running through this psalm, that the poor sinner, entirely ruined, has found God as the God of *mercy*; that a man who had done every evil, even murder, has so tasted of the springs that are in the God of mercy, that he can rejoice in it as the blessing rushes into his soul? And cannot each of us say, This God of mercy, this mercy in God suits me?

There have been many dispensations, but never did God give blessing under any of them save by mercy. No power but by the Spirit of God, no way of mercy but this, “the Seed of the woman.” [But mark the contrast in the character of the blessing of the saints in the heavenlies.]

In Ephesians the 1st, the apostle begins with God. It is a great thing to say my sins are forgiven me, but it is more to say, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has planned such a scheme of mercy, as that He is *glorified* by His

make us victors over all the power of the enemy.

May He keep us near to Himself that we may be happy in His love, and so be strong to live for Him.

(*To be continued.*)

MERCY.

Psalm ciii. and Eph. i.

God is steady, unmovable, in His purposes of mercy. Blessing He *will* give, and give so as to lay the blessing on the heart, and so lay it as that the heart shall enjoy it and give it back to Him in praise.

In this and the two following psalms we get millennial blessedness, and then the burst of praise from the earth which follows. When God has done it, there is nothing to do but to light the censer of praise, and waft it back to the God who has done it. David could praise, not of David, but of God. I have done nothing, he would say, nothing but failure; but *THOU* hast done it all.

pardon. In Psalm ciii., I get mercy dropping down from above. In Eph., I get the source and beginning of it. Let me ask you, where does your gospel begin? This is in heaven. It is a different thing to be like David, knowing how mercy suits *me* when I have failed in every thing, from being like Paul, who knew that he was just the person suited for *God*. “I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering,” &c. The reason why saints are not more happy and settled in soul, is because they look upon God as dealing out His mercy to them on earth, instead of seeing God is in heaven seeking those in whom He can display His mercy. I have not only found mercy as a ruined sinner, but I have found God, who is rich in mercy, and who says that I as a sinner suit Him. God wants sinners, and I am one in whom He may shew forth His mercy.

How comes it that you cannot speak well of God? A worldly man cannot; the christian can. But the disciple says, Alas! how sadly I fail in doing it. The

reason of this is that you have not got to the end of yourself. You have not come to this point, to know that God does not think you worth speaking about. That is what you want to make you speak well of God.

We want to be grounded in God's mercy. The leading thought in scripture is mercy. It is in mercy He has plucked brands out of the burning; and when He wanted one to send among the Gentiles to take his special revelation, He chose one who had been a blasphemer and injurious; and when He would send to the hard and stiff-necked Jews, He took the one who was ever dashing on in his impetuosity—blundering, cursing, and then denying his Lord. What a school had these two passed through to fit them to set forth the suitability of poor lost ones to display God's mercy!

I do hold that the saints are bound to sing. A man in the temple of Jerusalem set as a singer, what else had he to do but to sing? He might get out of tune, but he was bound to sing. If you will let self and circumstances come in, you

ant aboundings of iniquity, that they had assumed the character of a rod upon Christ, when the cry of Christ brought out God in the fullest power of deliverance. When God came out of His place, He delivered Christ and set Him at His right hand. And here I would notice that God did come out of His place: for it was impossible for Him to keep in His place any longer. God rode upon the Cherubim. The Cherub here marks the circumstances of that throne of God in judgment, as the Cherub kept the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. When He rides on the Cherub, He comes to judge everything evil. God could no longer keep His place, for He could no longer leave His blessed One to the consequences attendant on iniquity. The Cherub that kept man out of Eden now brought God in. Mark the extent of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, for He was subject to the whole power of evil and man's wretchedness. The sorrows of death compassed Him about, the pains of hell gat hold on Him, and it was out of these deep waters God drew

will never sing; but if occupied with God and Christ, you will never be out of tune. The more broken in heart and spirit I am, the more deep cause I have to sing of Him. Of course we must not express feelings we have not; that would be hypocrisy; but if I sing of what Christ has done, I may sing from the bottom of the pit.

FRAGMENTS.

2 Samuel xxii.

It is evident here, while the occasion was David's deliverances from Saul, yet the Spirit who spake by the mouth of David goes far beyond the circumstances of David, and brings in Christ; therefore seeing what it is the Spirit speaks of here, it draws our attention to the position Christ took, and what the circumstances of His death and resurrection were, and what His deliverances out of them. Christ came down into the very depth of the ruin in which His people were lying. And such were the intoler-

Him when He raised Him from the dead. The darkness and power of Satan was not in the least relieved by the coming in of God. The sanction of God's judgment was upon it. Yes, the power of darkness in His soul had the sanction of God's judgment upon it, and why? Because of our sins, and then see the place in which He sets us. God comes out of His place intolerant when iniquity is at its height. All men acted on by Satan rising up against God's Son, God must therefore come out of His place to relieve His Son. He comes forth unable to bear the great power of wickedness any longer. He comes out as the destroying angel, intolerant because of the great power of evil. But if God rides upon the Cherub that guards the tree of life, where shall any appear? But, blessed be God, when He comes in glorious power, when He rides upon the Cherubim to execute judgment, He finds His people under the protection of the blood. When the destroying angel went forth in the land of Egypt, the blood was upon the door-

posts of Israel's houses *before He came out*, and therefore when God came out to judge, He found Israel under the protection of His righteousness, for God must have judged Israel when He did the Egyptians, if the *blood had not been there*; but God said, "when *I see the blood*, I will pass over." Therefore the blood being upon the door-posts, Israel was perfectly safe, in virtue of the holiness of that judgment which was going forth to destroy the Egyptians. And here mark the reality of the place in which Jesus put Himself *for us*; for if Jesus had *not been under the wrath* for our sins, when God came out of His place and rode upon the Cherubim, we must be judged there and then. But when the bitter cry of Jesus upon the cross (for us) entered into the ear of God, He had then drained the cup to the very last drop *for us*, that our souls might find safety, and not only safety, but that when God came out of His place, riding upon the Cherubim, intolerant of the evil which He could no longer bear, our souls might rejoice in the power of that

320 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

Now everything is slipping from its place. Everything that is not founded on Christ and His word, and to the exclusion of everything else, will soon be in the enemy's camp. Take with you a single eye, and your whole body will be full of light; otherwise you will slip away into the dominion of evil, and at last of Satan. Do not be deceived by the name of religion. The weak, the crucified One, is the power of God unto salvation. It is matter of faith and of holding fast. Disbelieve the false prophets. Believe God, and the devil will flee from you, and you will be left to the rejoicing of hope, and *rest* will be recompensed to you when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

We ought to know that this is a time when allegiance to the Lord Jesus will be put to the test.

holiness which had made Christ "SIN FOR US."

Consider, then, the *reality* of the sufferings Christ endured *for us*—going down into the very depths of sin, and under all the power of evil that *Satan* himself was master of: and then think of what a character our sins must be to call for such judgment as this, for it was truly a *RIGHTEOUS judgment*.

The possibility of God ever standing before him otherwise than as an exactor cannot enter into the heart of a well-instructed Papist; the moment, therefore, he sees God's love towards him in having Himself provided the sacrifice His own holiness needed; and that the sacrifice has been offered and continues its efficacy unto this very moment; and that there remaineth no more offering for sin, because that by the will of God those who believe are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, he is set free. He can come near to God in full assurance of faith.

TITUS II. 11—14.

NOTES OF A LECTURE.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

It is very striking to notice the connexion in which the summary of divine truth, contained in these verses, is introduced. The chapter is occupied with teaching what sort of conduct christianity demands from those who profess it according to the relative position in life in which they may be found. It teaches what is becoming in aged men and in aged women. It tells us, also, how young women should behave; and what should be characteristic of young men. It then takes up the common, every-day, conduct which is due from servants to their masters; and while teaching them

to be obedient, and to seek to please them in everything—guarding against insolence and dishonesty—"that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;"—it adds, "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*"

Now there is a reason for the introduction of this passage here; it is simply this: that, while men are satisfied—and must be satisfied, for they can go no further—with the expression of the mere outward behaviour, the word of God occupies itself with the creation and correction of the *motives* and springs from whence all conduct flows. More than this—no conduct can ever be acceptable in the sight of God that does

not flow from a heart subjected to His grace, which brings salvation; and that is not swayed by its daily powers. Rules of conduct are not given, cannot be given, to those whose hearts have not been subjected to "the obedience of faith."

But even here, amongst christians, there is a very frequent mistake. While the world values christianity merely for its collateral results, such as the reformation of manners and its conservative effect on society, &c., christians too often are occupied with the working and effect of God's grace, in the subjects of it—whether themselves or others—to the exclusion of the contemplation of that grace in its divine and absolute character, and in its first and grand effect. I mean this: ordinarily the christian's mind is more occupied, as expressed in the passage before us, with what the grace of God *teaches*, than with what it *brings*. It *teaches us to deny ungodliness*, &c., but before it teaches, it *brings salvation*. How many may be found most anxious to discover, what men now call the *subjective* power of

this grace, who at the same time are utterly at sea as to what is meant, in corresponding phrase, by its *objective* power! Surely it is well, and necessary, in its place, to see to it that we yield ourselves to the *teaching* of God's grace, when its lesson is, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." But it is *not well* to overlook or underestimate, the absolute power of that grace in what it *brings*. The grace of God brings salvation, or is *salvation-bringing*, to the lost and ruined, before it is *teaching* in those whom it saves.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared," is but the succinct description of God's intervention in infinite love by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the accomplishment of redemption.

Apart from all the effects and fruits of grace in those who are the subjects of it, there is God's intervention in perfect absolute goodness, in the scene of ruin and death, which sin has intro-

duced, for the perfect and entire deliverance out of it. The grace of God *brings* salvation into this world, where sin and death and Satan's power mark the condition of man's existence; and that apart from all effects of that grace, in peace of conscience, or holiness and happiness, on the part of those that believe. There is the *grace itself*, as well as the blessed fruits which it produces. The salvation which it brings has its own proper character, as the intervention of God in divine love and power, as well as its own blessed results in the position, Godward, to which it brings its objects.

The two termini of a Christian's course are here marked as the results of this interposition of God in grace: viz., *salvation* and *glory*. The Christian's path, I repeat it, is here shown to lie between the starting-point, which is salvation, and the goal, which is glory. Grace and glory are inseparable. Conduct, exercise of heart, trial, conflict, service, lie between these two points, and in God's estimate take their character from them; but the *salvation* was accomplished alone

by Christ's appearing in grace—for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And the glory will be accomplished, alone, by Christ's appearing in glory. This is what the passage states. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It then adds, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Immediately it tells us that the grace, which brings salvation, teaches us "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" while in verse 14, we have the constraining motive to holiness in the end for which Christ gave Himself for us. "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is plainly practical as the end, in us, in this world, of Christ's infinite love.

Let us look, then, first, at the character of the deliverance, or salvation, which

rest on the ground of every claim of God in His righteous holiness having been met, and every possible consequence of sin set aside. And this is the salvation which the grace of God brings. It brings eternal life into this region of death; for "God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." It brings in divine righteousness into the midst of condemnation. For "he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the *righteousness of God* in him." It brings deliverance from Satan's power; for "through death (Christ) destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil." Nay more, the salvation which the grace of God brings puts us in the very place, and position, and acceptance before God, and makes us partakers of the very life and glory of Him by whom the salvation has been wrought. It has no other measure. It has no lower character. Was ever love like this!

There is, indeed, the *teaching* of this grace, which is all-important in its place; but what the heart must know

this wondrous intervention of God in grace brings.

This cannot be learnt by going over the heads of systematic divinity, but by a reference to the character of man's condition through sin, as unfolded in the word of God, and manifested by the suffering and death of Christ. Whatever there is of moral distance from God through sin, this salvation, which "the grace of God" brings, meets, and sets aside. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might *bring us to God*." Sin in its very nature separates from God; for light cannot have fellowship with darkness; but then it is said, "Ye who sometimes were far off are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ." Sin, and death, and Satan's power, and the judgment of God—all marked man's condition of ruin, and all must be met before salvation, full and adequate, can be proclaimed. It is not enough to raise man from his degradation and moral pollution, if such a thing could be, and set him on his pathway to happiness. The conscience must be set at

first, as it is its first action, on the part of a God of goodness, is its salvation-bringing power; for without the knowledge of the salvation, its teaching will be misapprehended and in vain.

This grace of God, then, first *brings* a perfect absolute deliverance to the soul from the whole consequences of sin, and brings into God's presence in acceptance, according to the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the salvation lies in His obedience and sufferings for sin, in the acceptableness of His sacrifice, and in the power of His resurrection; and "as he is so are we in this world." This is all absolute; it is God's part in the grace which brings salvation.

And as it is absolute in its character so is it universal in its aspect and bearing. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared *to all men*." It is unrestricted in its character; as the sun shines for all, though some even hide themselves from its light. "God so loved the *world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him might not perish but have ever-

lasting life." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But the grace received becomes *teaching* in those who are the subjects of the salvation which it brings. It teaches us "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And here, I observe, it is "the *grace*" that teaches, and not something else. It is not man's wisdom, or man's morality, mixing itself with that which is divine in his salvation—and, I may add, divine in the nature which it imparts. It is the grace which brought the salvation still acting—but acting now in the subjects of it, and on the divine nature which it imparts. They are not *human* motives that form, and fashion, and produce the morality of a Christian, any more than it is human power that accomplishes his salvation. It is "*the grace of God*" that teaches him as well as saves him.

This is very remarkably shown in a passage in Timothy, (1Tim. iii. 16,) the force of which is very frequently over-

ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes its spring and character from the knowledge of His person as "*God manifest in the flesh*;" the perfectness of His obedience, "as justified in the Spirit;" the object of angelic contemplation, and the subject of testimony and faith in the world; and His present position as "received up into glory."

This is how God is known; and from abiding in this, godliness flows. And, as in the passage before us, between the salvation, which is the result of the appearing of the grace and the crowning of "that blessed hope" which the believer looks for in the appearing of the glory, is the *teaching* of the grace that has brought salvation. It teaches the denial of ungodliness and worldly desires, as at war with the ends of redemption, and contrary to the character and position in which salvation places us as "delivered from this present evil world." Certainly the cross and the glory alike forbid the allowance of ungodliness and the pursuit of worldly desires. It was the world that crucified

looked. The apostle would teach Timothy how he ought to behave himself "*in the house of God*;" and he then presents the formative power of all true godliness, in the words, "Without controversy great is the mystery of 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."

This is often quoted and interpreted as if it spoke of the mystery of the Godhead, or the mystery of Christ's person. But it is the mystery of *godliness*, or the secret by which all real godliness is produced—the Divine spring of all that can be called *piety* in man. "God manifest in the flesh," is the example and the power of godliness, its measure and its spring. Godliness is not now produced, as under the law, by Divine enactments; nor is it the result in the spirit of bondage in those (however godly) who only know God as worshipped behind a veil. Godliness now springs from the knowledge of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and

Christ; and in the appearing of the glory worldly desires can have no place. "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. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof." It will be all withered by the appearing of the glory. But sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are due from the believer towards the world, as a witness; and due towards God as a witness of the conforming power of His most precious grace.

Already I have noticed that this passage presents the believer's path as lying between the *salvation*, which was accomplished by Christ's appearing in grace, and the *glory*, which will be accomplished by Christ's appearing in glory. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (or epiphany of the glory; as it was the epiphany of grace) of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The salvation which the grace of God brings settles every question between God and the soul as

to sin and condemnation; and the appearing of the glory will bring those who are Christ's into the enjoyment of the presence of God and Christ, in the perfected victory of Christ, and in the possession of all that can fit us for His presence in glory. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28.) "We are saved by hope;" and nothing so moulds the affections for heaven as "waiting for God's Son from heaven, . . . even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." In possession, and in the enjoyment, as to the soul, of this divine and perfected salvation, the believer has that which is far brighter in hope. He who, in sorrow and

COMMUNION, AND THE GROUND OF IT.

Gen. xviii. 17—19.

I have been occupied lately with this word as being a very descriptive display of the ground of intimacy on which the Lord sets His people with Himself. In the case of Abraham, the condition of the revelation put him in that place, but the testimony to us is, that we have the place in which he stood, though in a much higher sense. He stood on the earth, the place of judgment, but we are altogether out of the place of judgment, enjoying the blessing itself.

The men rose up and looked toward Sodom. The Lord directed them in judgment; and Abraham went with them to shew them the way. The Lord makes His saints His companions; not invariably, but still He does. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? but we have the mind of Christ." Thus in the communications God has made to us, He has made us His own companions in

suffering, and in infinite love, wrought the salvation, is coming to receive us unto Himself; that where He is, there we may be also. We shall see Him as He is, and then we shall be made like Him.

All is divine and precious, infinite in love and goodness, in the way our God takes to act upon the soul. How touching is the motive to holiness which is presented in the closing verse of our passage! "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Ver. 14.) Here we have the end of redemption in the practical walk of the believer in this world. But what can equal the motive that is presented in the declaration, "Who gave himself for us?"

May our hearts more fully answer to its constraining power!

COMMUNION, ETC.

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the best way; for I do not know a better way in which any one can shew his love to another, than by communicating to him his thoughts and feelings. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." So we are to walk with Christ, until He comes and takes us up to Himself. The exercise and path of *faith* is down here.

Abraham went with the men to show them the way only. And mark, the Church is above judgment; I don't mean above discipline to do them good. Lot looked towards Sodom, but Abraham was out of it. Abraham being the Lord's companion is not only delivered out of the judgment, but when the Lord is going to judge He must tell Abraham about it. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, for I know him," &c. So it is with us. The ground of this communication is the thought the Lord has about us. He has centred His love in us, therefore He lets us into His confidence. He says, If I have brought Abraham into this place, I will introduce him into it. So God has made known

to us the mystery of His will, because of the place in which He has put the Church in Christ.

There is great blessing in this word, "I know him." The Lord does not talk about those He is going to judge in that way. When He talks about judgment, He talks about going down to see, and till He has fully investigated it, He won't touch them. It is not so with the saints. He has no need, so to speak, to go down to see about them, for *He fully knows them*. As He said of Abraham, "I know him." The cry of Sodom had come up before God; but before going to execute judgment, He will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it "which is come unto me."

"The men went towards Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." That is blessed. For if the Lord knows Abraham, so that he is able to get the blessing, he stays with the Lord Himself. He is going to bring judgment on the world, and He won't smite till He can't help it; but no judgment coming

self, though we may have to wrestle for ourselves and to get individual blessing. Here it is communion, and the knowledge of this communion produces peace and joy. There is reverence of course, "I am but dust to ashes," but perfect intimacy. And the Lord went His way "as soon as he had done communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place." Abraham's position was with the Lord, in perfect peace, in unquestioned confidence, having nothing to settle with God, but on the ground on which he can enjoy perfect communion with Him.

SUFFERING AND TRUSTING.

Dan. iii.

In the narrative of this chapter, we have a picture of the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not to the character of their trials, however, the outward difficulties and deliverances

on the world can separate Abraham from God. God's eye so rests upon Abraham, that he rests quiet in God. So it is with us. Whatever trial may be coming on the world, our place is to abide with the Lord Himself; and then, like Abraham, the effect of having drunk into this grace will be, we shall be calm, quiet, and happy. Our place is not to go down to search out the depths of iniquity, but to let the cry come up to us. *There will be Lots many, but let us be with God on the mountain, abiding in perfect peace with the Lord Himself.*

Abraham being in perfect peace had nothing to ask for himself, and was therefore free to intercede for others. So it was in the case of Abimelech. If Abraham be a prophet, if he has this intimacy with the mind of the Lord, let him pray for these. So it is with us. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." The possession of the Lord's mind gives the power of intercession for others, not like wrestling Jacob to get blessing for him-

here referred to, so much as to the spirit of the thing that I desire briefly to call attention. In Israel, God was showing forth His mighty power in *temporal* deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us, it is a different thing. Being *spiritually* delivered, we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those who are faithful to God have been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God characterize the seed all through.

We find here, that, besides the love of power, they use religion to unite and band together, to oblige conformity to the king's word. No matter whether king or pope if it is his religion; for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends. This we find here in full perfection. He who wielded God's power, and in whose hand God put it, never used it on God's part. For God having tried man under the *law*, and man having failed, He then put absolute *power* into the hands of one man; but

instead of using it in serving God, he sets up an image, and commands all men to worship it. What do we find as the result? God's people abstain from it in the character of the remnant. They will not submit, nor do they. Of course this is a great crime, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit.

However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power, or the exercise of it in grace towards His people. He may suffer them to be in trial—He may not always give outward deliverance; but *patience* is always the same, and the ground of confidence is the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances of trial are different, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same. Circumstances never hinder that a bit. The outward trial may conceal God's power from our eyes, but He is always the

What is the effect of these faithful ones being in the trial? The identification of their names with God! as He was called the God of Abraham. "Whoever shall speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego." What a blessed thing to be thus associated with God, having His name associated with theirs; and how blessed the identification of the saints with the God who is not ashamed to be called their God! It was by non-resistance that they reached this glory, by bowing to the power and will of God, although evil as regards the exercise of it in the king's hand. If we get into the humble low place of suffering under the power, we shall find God's power put forth to deliver. We see here what quietness and peace of heart they have, whether it be in refusing to worship, or suffering the furnace, or coming out with honour; and it is sure to bring the blessed reward of ever having God's name identified with ours; and the God whom we have known as our God, and whom we have cleaved to in trial down

same. I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged, and ready to say, "Who will show us any good?" The answer follows: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!" And what could you get more? What is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel that "Immanuel" was found among them; and however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem when a *false* god is set up, God remains the same.

Mark, now, the perfect power of the king, and the perfect patience of these faithful sufferers. If they had resisted the power, it would have been over with them in a moment, as they would then have taken it out of God's hand. But *now* they change the king's word by their patience. If they had opposed Nebuchadnezzar it would have been all over, for God gave the king his power; but they submitted, therefore God could deliver them.

here, and He to us, is the same whose name attaches itself to us in the glory.

SELECT SENTENCES.

1. Faith is present dependence upon a present God; it cannot live out of His presence.

2. When is faith most wanted to sustain the soul? When all visible evidence of power is removed.

3. The real amount of our faith is proved when there is nothing visible to cling to.

4. We are never so near failure as when we have acted faithfully. We can hardly trust God in two consecutive instances.

5. The great secret of all power and permanency now is faith in God—nothing visible, nothing tangible. The soul finds strength and encouragement as it reaches unto God.

6. You may be comforted by fellowship, and have your heart refreshed; but

you must work by your own individual faith and energy, without leaning on any one whatever; for if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant.

7. Service must ever be measured by faith and one's own communion with God. Saul even may be a prophet when he gets amongst the prophets; but David was always the same, in the cave or anywhere.

8. When there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of that inherent blessing "which tarrieth not for the sons of men." I do not tarry for man if I have faith in God.

9. The whole course of a Christian should be truthful. If we sin, the truthful place is confession.

10. We do not undo wrong by doing what appears to us to be right, but by justifying God in confession, and taking the place He assigns to us. He is ever able to come in when we are humble, and work for His own name's sake.

11. The love of the world will ever keep the conscience restless, and cast it

yourself. If you cannot purge yourself you cannot rise to the surface.

18. The door open for self is open for Satan too.

19. The sin-sanctioning saint's portion is a wounded conscience—for the grieved Spirit is a griever.

20. To honour God and retain an unspotted conscience are of more worth than intercourse with good men; communion of saints I will not say, for that can never be found apart from His honour and a pure conscience.

FRAGMENTS.

Note how the moment one's heart has got resurrection as a home, all mere earthly ties and associations lose their hold. We are freed so as to walk with God in the consciousness of the love of Christ wherever He leads. And then it is a small thing where the body lies, if our friends or ourselves should die, though our dust is precious in His sight. *Heaven* is our home, and our gathering together is unto *Him*.

into the bonds of the law, and turn it aside from the cross of Christ, which is the only power of God to purge the conscience. For in it there shines such a bright, self-sacrificing love, that the love of the world cannot stand before it. God's counsel by the cross is both to purge the conscience and to give victory over the world to the sinner that clings to it.

12. Real christian progress is characterized by our estimate of great essential truths—truths connected with, and flowing from, the person of Christ, "that I may know him."

13. The communion of saints did not spring from their agreement with one another, but from their union of heart about God.

14. Human amiability is often enmity with God.

15. We must learn that after all our progress, we are nothing better than sinners saved by grace.

16. Light does not guide until it has overcome darkness.

17. To be a servant you must purge

The Shepherd sought His sheep from the earnest care of His own heart for it.

As Jesus came from God and went to God, so does the Book that divinely reveals Him come from and elevate to Him. If received, *it has brought the soul to God*; for He has revealed Himself in it.

Holiness is not merely separation from evil, but separation to God from evil. The new nature has not merely a nature or intrinsic character, as being of God; it has an object, for it cannot live on itself—a positive object, and that is God. Now this changes everything; because it separates from evil, which it abhors therefore *when* it sees it, because it is filled with good. We are occupied with good, and hence holy, for that is holiness; and therefore easily and discerningly abhorrent of evil, without occupying ourselves with it. Sanctification is resting (by the enlightening of the Holy Ghost) on an object which by its nature purifies the affections by being their object.

We cannot walk out of darkness but

by walking in the light, that is, with God; and God is love, and were He not, we could not walk there.

The Lord knows how to deliver the godly, and to reserve the unjust for judgment:—till then! patience and godliness.

We have to pass through the wilderness as belonging to God. Separated to God as sons in the midst of this evil age, we have God's rest set before us; we rest in the atmosphere of death, when we rest anywhere else.

Present failure unfits for present sympathy with God and His people; and present sympathy with God and His people preserves from individual failure.

GOD'S CARE.

The Lord will keep His own:
Yes, when the clouds increase,
And the last light has flown,
His care will never cease.

This I'm persuaded's true,
That not the darkest night,
That not the dreariest view,
Will check His oversight.

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I am of price to Him,
Though my own nature's vile;
Brighter than seraphim,
On me there rests His smile.

From Christ my worth I draw,
By His blood turned to gold;
I'm kept in safety for
The crown which He doth hold.

I shall be worn by Him,
Help grace His snowy brow—
O bliss! and I so dim,
So seeming worthless now.

Thou hollow world and dark!
I am no child of thine;
In thee I toil—but hark!
I have a home of mine.

And I shall soon be claimed
By Him who died for me,
Whose hand my home has framed
In God's eternity.

Rather His care will grow
For His who wander here
The more their path below
Grows dangerous and drear.

For God will never let
The greedy darkness win
What He doth estimate,
That hopes His mercy in.

And dangers terrible
Alike must strive in vain
Against His flock—think well,
He's God, His power is plain.

For me, I'll raise my head;
To Him my song I'll raise,
And fearless I will tread
The darkness of time's ways.

And this shall be my song:
I am a stranger here,
A weakling 'mid the strong,
Wand'ring in lands austere.

The night would me deceive,
The darkness swallow soon;
The strong my death-blow give,
They give no other boon.

But God is with me here,
His care is over me,
To him my safety's dear,
My guardian died for me.

N I C O D E M U S .

John iii., vii., xix.

There was an interval between the bite of the fiery serpent and the death of its victim. That interval was granted in grace, that the Israelite who had been bitten might look on the serpent of brass and live.

This interval may have been longer in some cases than in others. We cannot say. But we know it is so in the analogy or allegory. Many sinners have their lives lengthened out in mercy, that if not in youth, yet in age, they may look to Jesus and live. The tower in Siloam did not fall on all who were then dwelling in Jerusalem; the survivors are warned to use the longer time in mercy afforded them.

So, some of the bitten Israelites may have looked more immediately and at once, after the bite, than others. Again, we cannot say. But we know it is so in the analogy. Some of us have been slow to look to Jesus, even after we have felt the venom of the old serpent's

bite: others make short work of it—as is the common case under the operation of God upon souls at this present time. As one has lately said, “What in ordinary cases is spread over months and years, is now compressed into an instant. Men comprehend at once that they are lost, and that the Lord is all they need. It is only a look—a cry—an act of reliance—and the day dawns upon them, and their peace begins to flow as a river.”

It is not, however, with Nicodemus after this manner. Nicodemus was long ere he looked. The Lord lets him know in the early time of John iii., that he had been bitten, and must look, but he does not look till the distant day of John xix.

According to cases more generally recorded in the Gospels, the entrance of souls into light and liberty was rapid. Zaccheus, and the dying thief, the Samaritan woman, Peter, and Matthew the publican took but little time to accomplish the journey from darkness to light. We have, however, instances of a slow and gradual progress also.

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have come to the Lord as an inquirer after knowledge merely. When conviction was the commanding thing in the soul of Peter, he fell down before Jesus. This did not Nicodemus. Still, I doubt not, light, which disturbs the easy sleep of nature, had penetrated his spirit. Two facts witness this to me—his taking a solitary journey to Christ, apart from the multitude who, like him, had been attracted by the miracles; and his lingering with the Lord, though He had answered him so strangely and so quickly; unlike the people in chap. vi., who leave Him when His words do not suit them; and unlike his brother Pharisees in chap. viii., who go out from Him at once when His words convict them.

Thus it begins with Nicodemus, I believe. Conviction has not become the commanding affection in his soul, again I grant. Perhaps some of us are scarcely aware that it has ever been so with us, though we doubt not the truth of our being quickened. But his conscience has been disturbed; and such an one as

The *spirit* of Nathanael may have been under the shade and over-casting of the fig-tree for years. Lydia may have resorted with a religious but unsettled soul to “the place where prayer was wont to be made,” again and again; and Cornelius may have had his fasts, and devotions, and prayers, in long succession. We cannot say; all this may have been so under pressure of soul-trouble. But we can say, (for it is marked under our eye,) that the journey which Nicodemus took was but tardy and lengthened.

He was among those in Jerusalem who had been attracted by the miracles which the Lord was working. (John ii. 23; iii. 2.) This attraction was felt by him. But there was, I am sure, another feeling known to him. He was uneasy in his soul. This separated him.* I do not say that this uneasiness was the *commanding* affection. I do not believe it was. Had it been so, he would not

* Chapter iii. should open with the word “but,” which, under the Spirit, distinguishes him.

this—an inquirer after truth—one attracted by the miracles, and one carrying some soul-trouble about with him, now comes into the presence of Christ.

And sure I also am, it was this uneasiness, and not his being attracted by the miracles, that interested the Lord. To the people of the city who had been alike attracted, Jesus would not commit Himself, as we read, ii. 24. For a miracle is not the proper, immediate ground of faith, such faith as the Spirit works, and as saves the soul. A miracle, like a book on the evidences, may draw attention, and thus be the remote cause of faith. But the faith that saves the soul makes such acquaintance with Christ as a convicted conscience leads to. The fragments of convicted hearts and the answer which grace makes to them, in other words, our need and Christ’s fulness, are the links of eternal fellowship.

And in this gospel by St. John, where only we get any notice of Nicodemus, we specially see this. The Lord refuses to be received save as the Friend of

sinners. This is strongly expressed, very strongly. The mother would have had Him display Himself, and so would His brethren. (Chap. ii.; vii.) The multitude would have made Him a king, the Pharisees a judge. (Chap. vi.; viii.) Nicodemus treated Him as a teacher, a revealer of heavenly secrets. But these apprehensions of Him were a trouble to Him. He was weary to bear them. He resents them earnestly. His reply to His mother, the shortness with which He turns upon Nicodemus, His quick retreat from the multitude who would have put the crown upon His head, His reply to His brethren, His action when challenged by the Pharisees to sit as judge upon the sinner; all these tell us of the entire alienation of His spirit from such apprehensions of Him, or such approaches to Him. So that we may indeed assure ourselves, it was none of these or such like, but uneasiness of soul, feeble as that may have been, which engaged the regard of the Lord at this time, and kept him in discourse with him.

There is again a long interval between the second and third sight we get of him, as there had been between the first and second. But now, when we see him for the third and last time, his soul has advanced indeed; as I judge, I may say, with all certainty.

The same evangelist, John, who alone notices Nicodemus, says in chap. xii., "among the rulers also many believed on Him, (Jesus,) but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Nicodemus may have been one of these rulers. He is called by the same name, *αρχερ*. (See chap. iii. 1; xii. 42.) But now, in chap. xix., he takes a place apart from his fellow-rulers, and does so openly—nay, from the whole body of the Jews, rulers, priests, Pharisees, multitude, all orders and estates of the nation. He allies himself with the Lord in a moment of some of His very deepest humiliation; nay, he and his companion, Joseph of Arimathea, stand, as with God Himself, in relation to the Crucified One. God will presently

But Nicodemus leaves the Lord on this occasion without looking where the Lord had guided his eye. He has not yet so felt the bite of the serpent as to look to the pole. That is most sure. Some good distance of time must have passed between the first and the second occasion on which we see Nicodemus. He had carried his uneasiness of soul with him all through this interval, I doubt not. But now, in chap. vii., he has made but little advance—he is still *of the Pharisees*, one, moreover, of that council of Pharisees who had sent officers to take the Lord by force. But, still, he who had before separated himself, as we saw, from the multitude in Jerusalem by seeking Jesus in solitude, soon separates himself from his brother Pharisees by pleading for the ends of justice in the behalf of Jesus.

This may, perhaps, be progress, but it is surely slow. The cords which were drawing him to the Lord were weak. We track the path of a lingering, slow-paced traveller, and most surely there has been no look at the uplifted serpent yet.

provide that blessed Sufferer with a triumphant, glorious resurrection, they provide Him now with a tomb and grave-clothes, and their spices now perfume that sepulchre which ere long divine power will rend asunder.

Surely we may say, Nicodemus has now, in spirit as well as in act, reached the cross. Is he not in the place at that moment chiefest in God's eye on the face of the whole earth? When I see him there, and all the disciples fled away and gone, I know not whether I cannot say, "the last are first;" the timid Joseph and the slow-paced Nicodemus are now before the earnest Peter and the loving John. I know not, I say, whether I have not warrant to say as much as that. But this I know and say again, Joseph and Nicodemus are at that moment occupying the spot of chiefest attraction with God, and doing the very highest and most honourable service which could then have been rendered to Him. They are at the cross, taking down the body of Jesus, and fulfilling that word of the prophet who

was anticipating their very act of that moment—"with the rich in his death." (Isaiah liii.) They were owning the Crucified One in the face of the whole world. They were in the place where a sinner first meets a Saviour. They were looking to Him whom sin had just pierced. Nicodemus now stands on the very spot to which the Lord, at the earliest moment, had pointed him. He has now, at last, gained that place. He is at the foot of the pole on which the true Brazen Serpent had been lifted. And he is, in spirit, one with all the other saved ones in this precious Gospel, to whom Jesus "committed Himself," Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and Nathanael, and the Samaritan, and the Adulteress, and the Blind Beggar. He has changed company, indeed, now. This is no longer a weak and partial separation; Nicodemus is in a new world, which redemption has formed and planted, and where sinners saved have their new being. He is now "born again," as his Lord told him at the first he must be. It is no longer the travail,

Ah, as once it bound and kept the *lingering* heart of this man of the Pharisees, this ruler of the Jews.

What wonderful moral variety, what lights and shades of character, not merely in broader outline, but in more minute and delicate touches, do the illustrations of Scripture afford us! There are moral *glories* in the Book, and that in abundance; but surely there are moral *wonders* also—paths which, for their elevation, none but the Spirit of God could reach; and others which, for their obscurity or intricacy, none but the same Spirit could discover and follow.

Surely we are invited by the evangelist to gather up those fragments which thus lie in the harvest-field of his gospel. They are but fragments, it is true; but they are not to be lost. There is something of bread-corn for the nourishment of the soul in them, though we may gather but one basketful.

Can we gather this one basketful? If we have delineated the path of this saint of God, can we read the moral of his story?

but the birth. It is indeed, I feel it, a happy thing to delineate the path of this elect one of God. He has now made the journey of all the elect, the journey from darkness to light. He has been a slow-paced traveller. That is true. But there is comfort in turning to this Israelite in the midst of the busy camp in the wilderness, and watch him thus for so long a time struggling, as it were, with the bite of the fiery serpent, and still not looking to the pole. There is comfort in tracking the lingering, lazy footsteps of this man on the road to God, amid the brilliant speedy journeyings of those more vivid, earnest spirits which gladden the pages of St. John. He creeps along among them, and the eye, more attracted by them, almost consents to lose sight of him. But grace did not lose sight of him. It rather abounds in setting at last the slow-paced Nicodemus in company with the liveliest of them.

"O to grace, how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be,
May that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee."

It is, I own, the creeping progress of this slow-paced traveller, in the very thick and midst of the earnest and vivid histories which fill the pages of St. John, which I chiefly delight to contemplate. There is such comfort in it for some of us, who know the sluggishness of our own souls, in comparison with much that one sees all around at present. For truly it is an earnest, vivid thing, again I say, which one sees around us at this moment. The present work of God with souls is very much of that character. The journey from darkness to light is rapidly performed—and we are conscious that we are breathing the atmosphere of St. John's gospel. The Lord is, as it were, acting on His own models, and taking His first impressions as the order and standard of those which may be among His last. Indeed, the very earliest samples of faith and of divine workmanship in the soul, were of the same character. Adam and Eve, and Abel give witness of earnest, simple, unquestioning, unlingering faith. And precious are such

specimens of the way of the power of God. But to find among them, as we have said, a sluggish traveller who had, it may be, but half a heart for the journey, is relief to some of us; and we accept it among the provisions and stores of His boundless riches of grace. And, therefore, we will not overlook Nicodemus.

But, then, there is admonition as well as comfort. I grant it, indeed. This slow-heartedness is not of God, but of ourselves. The grace that meets it, and blesses in spite of it, is of God; the temper that calls forth that grace, is ours.

The Jesus who has now, as we have seen, dealt with Nicodemus and blessed him, is the Jehovah who, of old, dealt with Gideon. Gideon was a slow-hearted man also. God (to speak as men speak) found it hard to win the confidence of that man of Abiezer. Again and again the heart of Gideon retired. Mistrust of God filled his spirit. But God bore with him, went on with him, and rebuked him in the exercise of His grace, until He prevailed over nature.

fold, the hundredfold are, each of them, owned by Him.

Wonderful! What a witness to us of God! Not, however, that Jehovah did not go on with earnest Deborah more in full fellowship than with reluctant Barak. Not that Jesus did not more delight in the boldness of the centurion's faith, than in the weakness of the leper's. And not but that every servant shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour, and they who sow sparingly shall reap sparingly; and they who sow bountifully shall reap bountifully. Still, as we read the stories of Gideon and of Nicodemus, we surely see that blessing closes them. But withal, beloved, do we praise this slow-heartedness? We praise it not. It has a root of evil in the heart, we may be sure.

The *fear of man* wrought it in both Gideon and Nicodemus.

The *love of present possessions* wrought it in the rich young ruler. He was uneasy, like Nicodemus, and he would fain have known the rest of Jesus. But the love of what he possessed kept him out of it.

He heaped the coal of fire on the head, and consumed these suspicions of His goodness. In an eminent manner, God's "gentleness" made Gideon "great." And so now. Nicodemus has been another slow-hearted man; but Jesus, the God of Gideon, has borne with him and conducted him into the place of blessing—the new world where salvation shines.

Deborah and Samson, in those early days of Gideon, had not been slow-hearted like Gideon, as we have already observed. Andrew and the Samaritan woman had not been slow-hearted like Nicodemus in these days of St. John. But the slow-hearted and the ready-hearted are alike in blessing. As the feeble faith and the strong faith; the faith that can only say, "if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us;" and the faith that without asking leave or making apology, breaks up the roof of the house to reach the Lord, are alike answered. The small and the great, as we read, are together before Him: the thirtyfold, the sixty-

And what was the slow-heartedness of the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, or, indeed of all—apostles and Galilean women together—touching the resurrection? Why this flocking to the empty sepulchre? Had Christ, in their thoughts, no strength equal to the rising from the dead, or had God no love equal to the giving sinners that pledge of their redemption? Why did it appear a thing incredible with them, that God should raise the dead? Whatever form this unbelief may have taken in their hearts, *it involved unworthy thoughts of God*; as the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. xv. And is not that an evil root? "I speak this to your shame," says the apostle. And surely we will not give this slowness of heart, be it found in ourselves, or where it may, anything but a bad character. But surely this magnifies that grace that blesses in spite of it.

The soul hesitates. It refuses to be comforted. We linger and draw back. Why? *We are occupied with ourselves.* Is that to be commended, after we have

been told about the pole in the wilderness? True humbleness forgets self. "It is perfect humility," says one, "to have every thought of Christ, and not one of ourselves." Some of us know too well the workings of a legal self-righteous mind. But we will not, we do not, speak well of it. Faith in silence ascends to God, and dwells in His light. Faith in Joshua, allowed in silence even the mitre to be set on his head. Faith in the prodigal, in silence sat at the table, ate of the calf, wore the robe, and listened to the music. As faith in Adam at the beginning, came forth in silence and in nakedness, to be clothed and blessed.

CHRIST'S ASSOCIATION OF HIMSELF WITH HIS PEOPLE ON EARTH.

Psalm xvi.

I need hardly say that there are many aspects in which we may consider the character of our Lord Jesus Christ; for he is the summing up of all possible

beauty and perfection in Himself. But He is more than this. He is the means and measure by which we can judge of everything besides. If I want to know *God*, I must learn Him in Christ. If I want to know what *man* is, in perfection, I learn it by Christ. In a word, all real truth is learnt, and learnt only, in or by Christ. Whether it be man, or sin, or death, or life, or love, or hatred, all is manifested in Christ, or by Christ. Hence the importance of having the soul occupied with Christ—feeding upon Him, since He is the only transforming power, and the only standard of excellence, and the light by which all things else are made manifest.

It is not the joy of deliverance that is presented in this psalm, nor the work by which deliverance is accomplished; but rather the deliverer in his humiliation and walk on earth, drawn out as the attractive object of our souls. For Christ is an object in a double way. He is an object in glory, to attract our souls upward from the earth, as it is said, "seek those things which are above,

where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." But He is no less an object in His humiliation as presenting the embodiment of all moral excellence before God, and that in a world through which we are called to pass.

If we contemplate Christ in glory, this gives us the definiteness of that hope to which we are predestinated—for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." This awakens the energy of hope, of joy, and gladness. If we are delivered from death, through the blood of Christ, we are also planted in Him as the objects of God's delight. Christ's position before the Father, and His relation to Him, mark our position and relationship, through infinite grace; for He says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." We are like Him in the sight of His Father, and our praises should not jar with His.

"We wait (it is true) for the hope of righteousness by faith;" not for

"righteousness by faith," because we have that, or rather we are that—but we wait for the hope that belongs to it; and we know what that is, for it is that which Christ has now in glory. And we are to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Christ is our righteousness, and we have it, or rather we *are* it; "we are made the righteousness of God in him." But we through the Spirit wait for the *hope* of righteousness. The Spirit was sent down to witness that Christ is glorified; and hence He becomes an object to us in the glory.

It is not good for the soul only to contemplate Christ as an *agent*, important as that is in its place. No question, if I am feeding on Christ, dwelling on Him with admiration, and delight, and joy, as the object of my soul, it presupposes a knowledge of Him as an *agent*, accomplishing redemption by His death, and having taken His place on high for us, and so maintaining the integrity of our position before God and our communion with Him. But if I

am looking at the priesthood of Christ, precious and necessary as it is, He is still before me, more as an agent than the object of my soul. As priest, He is a servant in grace. To see Him girded thus for service, doubtless draws out the affections, and gives power and energy, and brightens our hearts all along the road. But then, all manner of exercise of heart comes in here; because Christ deals with us in this according to what we practically are. The priesthood of Christ has to do with weakness and infirmities, and the ever-varying exercises of the soul; and hence it is said, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Righteousness ever abides in God's presence, and hence the ground of the restoration of communion when it has been lost. If any man sin, we are not driven to a distance, but the soul is restored because Christ has prayed for us. It is not that we have to ask Him to intercede, or to exercise His priesthood for us, but that He has done so; for the movement of grace is always

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." (Deut. viii. 2—4.)

He never forgot Israel for a single day, because all their supplies in the wilderness depended on His remembrance and faithful care; and His care as our High Priest and Advocate is the same to us now. In all this Christ is an agent; but in this psalm He is an object—an object in His humiliation, and more properly, the food of our souls. He is not our food in glory, but in humiliation. We feed on Him here, as a living and dead Christ. Christ does not say in John vi., "The bread of God is He" which *went up* to heaven; but "He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

on his heart. The priesthood of Christ is for those who are righteous, who are redeemed, in order to carry them on through the wilderness of this world. He is their Advocate, constantly carrying on their affairs, and the Holy Ghost is spoken of by the same title (for "the Comforter" is indeed the *Advocate*). Thus Christ applies, in divine wisdom, to the heart, all that we have by virtue of His intercession. He is perfectly cognizant of all that is in us, and knows how to meet it. It is not the idea that I am going to glory, but that God having set me in perfect righteousness, He teaches me by the priesthood of Christ to discern between good and evil, according to His light, or according to His nature. I am utterly dependent in my condition, and He feeds me day by day with manna, as I need. As He said of Israel: "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, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his

That which especially draws out our affections is the tracing of Christ's passage through this world, through everything down here about which He has to deal with us. When He was on earth, the Father could delight in Him in the *beginning* of His path, on account of His *inherent* excellence; and at the close, because of His *developed* perfection. He could say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and God has given us for delight, the very same object in which He delights. What do we say, then? Why, in weakness and poverty, it is true, yet surely, with unhesitating confidence, we say the same! We cannot indeed reach His perfectness in our thoughts; but then the very sense we have of the poverty and weakness of our apprehensions is because the Father has shown us something of his perfectness.

The Father, in communicating His own delight, does not say, This is my beloved Son in whom *you ought* to be well pleased, but in whom *I am* well pleased. How marvellous that the

Father should tell us what His thoughts are about His Son, and what His delight is in Him! It was not what was *true about Christ* that attracted the poor woman in Simon's house, (Luke vii. 37—50,) but it was the beauty and attractiveness of Christ Himself, that *absorbed* her heart. She loved and admired Him for what He *was*, before she knew what he was for *her*. When she knew that, she could reflect upon it, and this would give the ground of constancy to her affections and delight. Jesus commended all she did—her tears—her affection—her silence—because all were drawn forth by her contemplation of Himself.

But before we can properly feed on Christ as our food, we must know Him as our righteousness. Some are attracted to Christ for awhile, and have joy in Him, but for the want of a knowledge of righteousness lose their joy, and know not how to find it again. Righteousness sets us in peace before God, and then we have fellowship, and can speak of it; as the Apostle says,

creature before God: dependence and obedience. Independence is sin—necessarily sin. All effort after a freedom of this nature is but an attempt to break away from the sense of creature-dependence on God. The action of our own proper will is sin.

When Christ became man He took the character of a dependent, obedient one. His Father's will was not only His *guide* in all He did, but His *motive* in doing it: and that was His perfection. Observe the place of dependence he takes in the first verse of this Psalm: "Preserve me, O God! for in thee do I put my trust." It is beautiful to see His obedience, and beautiful to see it in dependence too.

Whenever the Father has His rightful place in our affections He has it in everything. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Take the example of a child in pleasing a father; love makes it a matter of perfect indifference to the child's heart as to what the thing is that is to be done; it is done to please its father, and that is *mo-*

"truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." And on the same ground we have fellowship one with another. Connected with this there are three things: 1st. Walking in the light as God is in the light. 2nd. Consequent fellowship and communion one with another. 3rd. Being perfectly cleansed by the blood. When the soul has the sense of being perfectly cleansed by the blood of Christ, and His death is thus entered into, there is the ground for feeding on Christ, and occupancy with Him as our object. And this the Lord reckons on as a result of His love. He says to his disciples, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." He reckons on their affections making them glad on account of His joy; and He only refers to his joy, to show how He looks for their sympathy to be engaged with what concerned Himself. This however cannot be until salvation is *known*. But Christ should be our object; and dwelling on what *He is*, the food of our souls. Two things form perfection in the

tive enough for anything. And how does the heart look back with delight, and trace this in Christ, in all his ways in his pathway through this world. He had all power, but never used it to serve Himself. From the manger to the cross it was the embodiment of the word, "Lo I come to do *thy will*, O God!" Because He was above all evil, He was able to go through all evil, unassailable by it; while at the same time He was capable of touching and dealing with those who were in it.

In the words, "I said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," Christ takes the place of the servant to God; and there is not a step in the path of life—divine life—but He trod it, in order to show it to us. Surely it was enough to draw out the delight of the Father to see the Son, as man, walking down here, in everything dependent upon His pleasure, and in everything obedient to His will. And we know, indeed, that it was so, from the opened heavens at the baptism of John, and from the voice from the excellent glory—"this is my beloved Son."

In everything He manifested a blessed, perfect dependence. He came out from the Father, and carried back into His presence, a man with the stamp of the same blessed perfectness which he had with the Father before the world was.

He says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life;" and He passed through death in dependence on the Father. Adam found the path of death in his folly; but back to the path of life he never could get. The trees of knowledge and of life to this day are perplexing the minds of men; but no reason nor philosophy of man can reconcile responsibility and the gift of life. Man cannot make it out. From the beginning he has tried to stand in responsibility, whenever the mind has been awakened to acknowledge the claims of God, without a knowledge of His grace. But in everything he has failed; and all that he has done by it is to earn *death*. Christ comes into the place of ruin and death, and makes out and shows us the path of life—that "path which the vulture's eye hath not seen." He was

thrones, but delighting to cast our *crowns* down before Him, and to say, "Thou art worthy"—our souls being filled with the excellency of Him who is in the midst.

The saints, the excellent of the earth, with whom Christ associates Himself, are all His delight. No matter how feeble—how failing; he says they are the excellent, and His delight is in them—not in their *state*, it may be, but in them. And He must have them with Him. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." He must have them with Him. He will be in company with them in the glory, in the presence of His Father, where is "fulness of joy." And oh! may it rest on our minds in what way Christ associates Himself with the excellent down here. And may our hearts dwell on God's delight in Him, and on His perfectness down here, that we may make it our delight to trace His footsteps, weigh His words, and feed on Him.

the life; and he tracks a path for us in the wild waste—"in the wilderness," as it is said, "where there is no way." He finds it and shows it to us, and we have to learn to tread it in dependence and obedience. To Him it must be through death; therefore He says, If any man will follow me, "he must take up his cross." Christ would rather die than disobey: there is His perfectness. We have to tread in the same steps; but Christ before us is the One we have to look to, to think on, to feed upon, in this wild waste of sin and death. It is not the quantity we do that marks our spirituality; but the perfectness with which we present Christ.

"In thy presence there is fulness of joy." There are two parts of blessedness—being *with* Christ, and being *like* Christ. If we were constantly before God in the consciousness of being *unlike* Him, it would only distress. But we shall be *with* Him and *like* Him; and the consciousness of that is blessedness. With Him we shall enjoy the Father's countenance; crowned and sitting on

BOLDNESS.

Heb. x. 19.

The present Gospel-day is called "the last days," in Heb. i. 2. And wondrously does that epistle unfold those characteristics of it which entitle it to be so called. It witnesses Christ to us after He has finished His work, filling the heaven of God on high, and all the visions and thoughts of faith here on earth. And does not this, I ask, entitle this Gospel-day, these days in which we have been living since the ascension of Jesus, to the honour of "the last days?" What can remain after such a condition of things as this, but glory and the kingdom? Adam's condition in the Garden of Eden could not have been called the last days; for all was then bearing witness of uncertainty in the relations of God and His creature. Man was tested. A command had been delivered, and all hung upon his obedience. Death and ruin might be the issue, or a keeping of the first estate.

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So, during the age of Moses, or under the law. Man was again tested, and therefore that time could not have been called "the last days." The creature, in the person of Israel, was then again under probation, as Adam had been, and all was uncertainty. But now, in the stead of things being put to the proof, and the creature tested, and relationships between God and man made to rest on man's fidelity; things are now proclaimed as finished and perfected because of the sealed and accepted fidelity of the Son of God. The Son, now in glory, at the end of His work, is speaking of salvation already wrought out by Himself.

He is there, because He has been here; in the highest now, because He was in the lowest before; dispensing the fruit of grace now, as once He had gathered sympathies with the feeblest of us, and made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself; delivering from the bondage and fear of death now, because He once destroyed, through His own death, him that had the power of death.

mony with these glories thus revealed in the object presented to us.

It tells us to give "earnest heed" to what we have heard, so full of authority is it. It tells us to "consider" Christ in His fidelity to Him that appointed Him to the gracious, wondrous offices of High Priest and Apostle of our profession. It tells us once and again, "to hold fast" by Him, to "come boldly" to the throne now erected in the heavens, and to go on in the study of the great subject of "perfection," which tells us of our sure salvation in Christ. It reproves us for not being "teachers," intimating by this, that we ought to have fully, and solidly, and clearly learnt for ourselves the blessed lesson of grace and righteousness. It encourages us by the example of Abraham, who obtained the promise confirmed by an oath, so that we may have "strong consolation," and enter in full assurance of hope within the vail. And, again, it encourages us by Abraham, who took blessing from Melchizedec, who was but a shadow of the Son of God, in whose hand our

Such an one may well entitle the day in which His name is published, and His virtues dispensed, to be called "the last."

Our duty it is to use Him and to trust Him in the place and character He thus fills, to consider Him, to hold fast by Him as our confidence and rejoicing, which is our answer to Him in this His place of glories. The epistle to the Hebrews is busy and constant in making Christ its object. It presents Him as now filling the heavens in various glories. It shows Him to us there, as the Purger of our sins, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Author of salvation and the Captain of salvation, the true Moses, the true Aaron, the true Joshua, and the Melchizedec of God.

And as this epistle is thus busy and constant in presenting Christ to us, so is it fervent and unwearied in exhorting us to maintain that attitude of heart that is the due answer to such an object. It would fain form in us a soul in har-

blessing as surely lies. It would also have us lost in admiration at the dignity of the sacrifice which has been rendered to God for us, that we may know—and know with fullest, happiest assurance—the perfection and certainty of the purging of our conscience. It tells us to pass with boldness through the vail, and there to serve at an altar, as the priesthood of God, with eucharistic, thanksgiving offerings.

These things we find as we pass through the epistle, by which we learn that it proposes to form a mind in us, which, from its certainty, and strength, and liberty of faith, and brightness and assurance of hope, shall be somewhat of a suited answer to the glories of that object which it has lifted up before our souls.

When it calls us to "fear," or to "take heed," it is lest we should be tempted to turn our eye from that which it is thus ever keeping in our view. It never speaks of fear or of caution, as though we were to render that object a timid or suspicious thought. Surely

otherwise. As it presents One to us full of glories, and glories all suited to our necessities, so it cherishes in us a heart, and mind, and conscience, full of light, and strength, and liberty.

The boldness of faith has been again and again exhibited all along the line of Scripture, in some of the saints of God, and is seen ever to have met a greeting and an answer from God.

Adam exhibits it. He came forth, naked as he was, at the bidding of the gospel, at the bidding of the good tidings about the death and resurrection of Christ, the bruised yet bruising seed of the woman, and at once talked of life in the midst of death, calling his wife "the mother of all living."

Abraham does the same. He does not consider the dead condition of his own body, nor that of Sarah. He has listened to a promise from the living God, the life-giver, and that promise occupies and commands his soul. It is everything to him, let circumstances be what they may, and the conditions of things outside that promise as hopeless as they can be.

the stars in the heaven for multitude. Sarah's word is confirmed at once by God Himself. And the Lord does not leave Bethel, whether the morning have broke or not, till He blesses as Jacob desired, and gives him a new and honourable name—a name that attaches to him and his seed to this day, and will as for ever.

What harmonies are these! Grace abounding, faith full, certain, and confiding, and the Lord again in grace sealing this way of faith as with His whole heart!

Does the course of time change this? The scene may change, but God who fills it and orders it is one. Moses, after the patriarchs, illustrates this boldness. The Lord had said to him, that he must leave Him alone, and let His wrath wax hot against Israel, for they had now disowned Him for their own golden calf. But Moses will not hear of this. He speaks out to the Lord, telling Him that He had sworn by His own name to multiply His people as the stars of heaven. It was

Sarah, too, in her day, was bold. She did not consider her former unbelief and naughtiness when she laughed behind the tent-door, but in the light and power of the gift and grace of God, she would have the house left entirely for her and her Isaac. She would clear away from her spirit all that might cloud or chill it.

Jacob was under rebuke. His unbelief in the matter of Esau his brother had called forth the divine wrestler to withstand him. But even in such a moment as that, Jacob stands. He faints not under this rebuke—but knowing the Rebuker as he felt the rebuke, he lets Him know that He is not to go until He bless him. The day may be breaking, and it may be time to go, but the blessing must come first.

And how is this boldness again and again answered by the Lord? Always under some expression or another of its full acceptableness with Him. Adam gets a coat of skin made for him, and put on him by the Lord Himself. Abraham is promised a seed as many as

impossible that He could do as He was threatening. He must turn from His fierce anger. This was bold, but not too bold—and the Lord vindicates it all by doing all that Moses could desire and plead for. (Ex. xxxiii.)

David is in the same line, and of the same temper, with all these from the days of Adam. Ziklag is in ruins before him, and all that was there has been plundered. Cattle in their flocks and herds, nay, wives and children, have all been borne away by the invaders. Here is a scene, not only full of misery, but of reproach likewise. David's sin has to account for the ruin of Ziklag, as Adam's had to account for the ruin of creation. But what read we? "David encouraged himself in God." And what came of this? The Lord gave him a victory; and out of the hand of the Amalekite all, every thing and everybody, was rescued; so that not a hoof was lost: together with spoil of the enemy, sent afterwards to the cities of Israel as trophies of what the God of Israel, in grace and strength

that abounded, had wrought for David. (1 Sam. xxx.)

Here were harmonies again! The boldness of faith and the aboundings of grace—striking, blessed, precious concords!

Can we let centuries upon centuries pass, and still find the same? Yes; New Testament atmosphere is just the same. In the Gospels, we find the Lord again and again rebuking a “little” faith, but ever delighting in the approaches of a bold faith. No finer instance could there be of that, than what we get in the case of the palsied man and his friends. There, the roof was broken up, that the needy one might be let down before the Lord. A rude act, one might say, and done without leave or apology. But the Lord delighted in it, and sealed His acceptance of it at once. No rebuke was on His lips then. Confidence suits grace; ceremony stands in its way. Love delights in being used, but resents the reserve that would approach suspiciously. The blessed Jesus of the Gospels was

the God who, of old, answered the bold faith of Adam, of Abraham, of Sarah, of Jacob, of Moses, and of David, and of thousands whom time would fail to tell of.

And the Holy Ghost who moved the apostles at the end of the book of God, is the Spirit of Him who acted all through, in days of patriarchs, prophets, and evangelists. This we find, for ensamples, in the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Hebrews.

The Galatian saints had given up this confidence. They had receded to the elements of the world, the spirit of the law, observing ordinances; by which the soul really loses sight of God—or, in the language of the epistle, by which it proves that it has not the knowledge of Him. (Chap. iv. 8, 9.) The Spirit, in the apostle, is fervent and indignant. He seeks to restore the harmony between God and the soul—the faith that answers grace—the liberty that suits adoption. He will have “Christ” *in* them, as He was *for* them, the Spirit of the Son, as He had given them the privileges of sons like Himself.

Thus is it throughout the volume. I have already considered the Epistle to the Hebrews in this connexion—and thus it is, again we may say, all through Scripture. A character of mind is formed in the saint by the Spirit of God answerable to the grace of God. These are divine harmonies. The riches of grace entertained by the faith and confidence of the soul, and that again sealed by the acceptance and delight of the Lord.

What consolation! How this tells us that we may assure our hearts before Him! How it verifies the word of Manoah’s wife to her husband! “If he were pleased to kill us, he would not have accepted a meat-offering and a drink-offering at our hand.” The greater includes the less. If He accepted worship, surely He had thoughts of peace. If He inspires and encourages this boldness of faith, and thus lets me know that He delights in it in His saints, surely this tells me of forgiveness of sins—that He who entertains this confident, assured attitude of heart in

His presence has provided for the remission of sins, without which none of this could possibly be between Him and us. The building, in its stateliness and strength, assumes a foundation. And accordingly, in such scriptures as the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, when unfolding the high conditions and character of our calling, the apostle takes up the forgiveness of our sins, somewhat by the way, as a thing implied and involved in what is taught us.

It is surely the foundation. It is Christ as on the cross that says, “The earth and its inhabitants are dissolved; I bear up the pillars.” The cross is the foundation of all blessing. The reconciliation made by the blood of atonement sustains all. That is true indeed, and the age of glory will have to recognize that through its own eternity. But the glory makes that a necessary truth. And the high conditions of our calling, this very boldness of which I am speaking, the mind of confidence and full assurance which the Spirit would form in us, may well leave the forgive-

ness of our sins, or the acceptance of our persons, as a grace of easy, natural, necessary admission by our souls.

The father never told the prodigal that he forgave him. To be sure he did not. It is among the exquisite touches of the parable, the absence of such a thing. It would grate upon the ear. Let higher things bespeak forgiveness. They can do it far better than the lips of the father. The fatted calf may tell it—the robe, the ring, and the shoes. The music and the dancing shall proclaim it, as with the voice of a trumpet.

EXODUS XX.

There are two parts in this solemn chapter—the first, God announcing Himself in the claims of His holiness, which could only be answered in the people's distance from God, and in the terror which filled their minds; (see ver. 1—22;) the second unfolds the symbols of grace, by which the people are brought to God in the acceptance of

worship—the presence of God with them, and the consequent fulness of blessing. (Ver. 22—26.)

The most terrible result of sin is, that by it man has lost God. There are many deplorable effects and consequences of sin, as Scripture declares and experience proves; but there is no moral effect connected with it so terrible as that by it man has *lost God*. Now, the object of Scripture is to meet this consequence of sin, in the only way in which it is possible it should be met; that is, by a revelation of God; and so *restoring God* to man. Moreover, it may be said, that all true knowledge of ourselves results from our knowledge of God.

The law is often erroneously called “a transcript of God's character;” but surely it is not this, or it would never have been said, *in contrast*, “The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ.” The law is not God Himself, however it may emanate from God: neither does it present what God is *for man* at all, but

simply what *man* must be *for God*, supposing that its requirements could be met.

But “grace and truth” are God Himself, presenting to us the spontaneous actings of His nature—His heart—toward us. There is no grace in the giving of the law; not even if we take it in the divine summary which Christ Himself gives of it: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself.” This is not grace: it is requirement. It does not reveal what *God is*; but declares what man ought *to do*. What do we find down to the eleventh verse of this chapter but enactments to *protect God*, in His rights, and honour, and sovereignty, from man? Man is so rebelliously bold in his ignorance, that he is ready to rush on the bosses of God's buckler. Hence, the first proclamations of law in this chapter are to set bounds to man's wickedness, which would invade the rights and honour of God. See men now rushing recklessly to battle and to death. Do they know

what they are doing in their blind ignorance? Do they know what hell and perdition are? And would they brave the terrors of the Almighty? How affecting it is to think, that if God speaks to man in his present condition in the way of law and requirement, He must first *protect Himself* from man's violence and reckless ignorance: and if He proceeds farther, He must guard us against *ourselves* and against one another!

So that the first table of the law, as it is called, shows that we are haters of God; and the second, that we are “hateful, and hating one another.”

In the 18th verse it is said, “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.” This is the simple accompaniment of divine majesty, and the people, thus under law—which is but another expression of their being *under sin*—remove and stand afar off! It is but the expressive con-

dition of any soul that has to stand upon any law or requirement. Nothing brings *nigh* to God but the absoluteness of His grace. "Ye who sometimes were far off are brought *nigh*." How? "By the blood of Christ!" But nothing will get you near to God as long as you stand in *law* in any way. The gospel *gives life*—not a spirit of lawlessness or insubjection—and in that life we live to God in subjection to Christ. "The grace of God which brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness."

Law, as we see in verse 19, begets the desire for priesthood, or a medium of communication between the soul and God: for the people "said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." But the whole purpose of God is lost if we have not Himself. He wants us and will have us near to Himself, and our consciences must have God, if they are to be "perfect" and at rest. God's heart is set on speaking *Himself* to us; and until He is heard in the soul speaking peace through the blood of the Lamb, God's purpose is not answered.

This positive command lets out God's thoughts of grace and truth, and presents the true and only ground of association with Himself. It marks the place where He would accomplish the blessed purpose of His bosom; for He would meet man in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is the altar of earth—the place of atonement or sacrifice and worship. Christ came to *seek* and save that which was lost; so that there can be no thought of our seeking God in heaven, but on earth. For He has come down to earth in the person of Christ—and on earth that sacrifice has been offered which atones for guilt; and that blood has been shed that "*cleanses us from all sin*." And hence Christ becomes the meeting-place of the soul with God, in the joy of deliverance and acceptance. For, in truth, Christ is our altar and priest and sacrifice. He is all and in all. "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Every resource God has rests in Christ; and it becomes ours in

We come now to the second part of the chapter, which presents the symbol of *grace*, for the *law* gives no altar of worship or meeting-place with God. First, "ye shall not make with me gods of *silver*;" which forbids any human ideas of purity (of which silver is the symbol) to be associated with the ground of approach to God or to be mingled with our worship of Him. "Neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." Gold is the symbol of *righteousness*, the thought of which must be utterly separated from the sinner's heart in drawing *nigh* to God. We are not to come because we are better than others, but to come just as we are. This is still prohibition—necessary to separate man from the thoughts which his ignorance of God, and consequent ignorance of himself, would produce. But now we reach the point of positive command, "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

Christ. If the altar were made of stone, it was not to be of hewn stone. An Ebenezer may be erected, but that is all. It is folly to think that we can do any more for ourselves after we have once come to the altar of earth. We can do nothing to make ourselves more beautiful than we are presented in Christ. If we attempt it, we only pollute that which is divinely pure and perfect. Neither are there to be steps up to this altar, lest our nakedness be shown. Salvation is not progressive; it is accomplished by Christ. And if we think of raising ourselves to Him by a single step, we but discover our own nakedness. The altar is level to us. Its approach is direct; and if there be a single thought, whether as to acceptance or worship, added to the altar of earth, that is so far a step, and only discovers our nakedness. It is something to raise us to God, or to make our worship acceptable to God, that is *not Christ*.

FRAGMENTS OF TEACHING ON EPHESIANS IV. 1—18.

One cannot help seeing the profound love such a passage as this breathes, as well as the profound interest and delight the Lord takes in blessing. A Father's thoughts of giving to his children take their measure very much from the love he bears them. What must be the thoughts, then, of the heart of our God for us, the objects of that love, abject sinners as we are, taken up by Him to shew the greatness of *His* love. It is by Christ He does all. When He sets about to bless, it is by Christ the Son of His love. It is an immense foundation for us to rest on; not only deep, but large; not only wide, but strong. He went down to the lowest place of death, and went up to the highest place in glory, to the throne of God. All between these extremes is filled up by Christ, so that nothing can escape *Him*. Here is strength for me, a poor sinner; something to *rest* on. It is not distant from us; but we have the consciousness

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of its being in and around us. It is said of the city in Revelation, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the *Lamb* is the light thereof." This Lamb is nearer now to my heart than any besides. He has known me better than any; better than I know myself. This Christ, who dwells in our hearts by faith, is the one we shall meet on High. Aye, I shall find one in heaven nearer and dearer to my heart than any one I know on earth. None is so near to *us* as the Christ that is *in* us; and none is so near to *God* as *His* Christ. Present confidence in Christ is needed in trial; for if there were one thing in which I could not rest in Christ it would be dreadful. All our best affections are the cause of our greatest distresses, *because* of sin coming in, and death by sin separating the dearest ties. We must have trial and conflict in passing through this wilderness; but if the heart is kept trusting, every trial gives a man to know more and more of the divine sympathy there is in God Himself; more and more of what there is in Christ to

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meet the need; more of Christ, as possessing Him. "I bare thee on eagles' wings, and brought thee unto myself;" there we find all the unfoldings of what *God is in Christ*. I cannot do without Christ. I want manna in the wilderness; God gives it me; manna and water too, and Christ Himself in it all. Our natural portion as Christians is to enjoy God. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to us." We dwell in God. God's love is *infinite* in measure; but I am in it. I dwell in it and He dwells in me. I, a poor nothing, dwell in Him. "Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;" that is the Church's vocation. What a thought! What a bringing down, not of heaven, but of something more; by special blessing, bringing Him down to dwell in us. God would not dwell in angels. There is not the same need in them; but He will make Himself better known to angels by His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. What is the first practical result of this calling to

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be the habitation of God through the Spirit? "With all lowliness and meekness," a *vessel of God*; all the passions of the flesh there, but having the presence of God making us unspeakably happy, for that is our portion. *A man who is humble needs not to be humbled*. The lowly One is the pattern of all lowliness. I know what water is by drinking; and I know what sweetness is by tasting; and if I know God it is by His being *in me*; and collectively we look one upon the other and see God in all. God is come to take possession of our hearts, and be the spring of the actions of each heart. He comes to make us *love*, because He loves. We shall find it is fully so in heaven.

"For the perfecting of the saints." Christ is the object of His thoughts, and must be of mine. I must have these loved ones like Christ! This is the end of all the communion and all the exercises of our hearts together. *I* in ministering to you and you to me. The object is to grow up into Christ; and all the flow of Christian affection we have here is

to this *end*. I look at any brother here whom I may have never seen before, and I feel a greater union with him than with my nearest natural tie, and I know we are going to be in heaven together. Enjoyment of this fellowship shuts out the world. You are not now thinking of its troubles and cares, you have left them outside, the flesh cannot enter into this fellowship. The more we are individually full of divine things the more will this communion together be realized. *If two together are both spiritually-minded*, they open the sluices of blessing which all our cares in the world cannot dry up. That power of the Holy Ghost which makes us *overcomers here*, will make us full of enjoyment in heaven. Our common joy *now* is the union of our affections *to Him* and to *one another*, which when *we are there* will be complete.

ADVICE.

Be wise; place heaven before thine eye—
A glory and a certainty :
And write the word "HEAVEN" in thy heart,
In letters that will not depart;
That heaven may, as a living power,
Both save and govern thee each hour.

The days are dark and tempest-stirr'd :
To-morrow's greatly to be feared.
Without a certain object fixed,
One with the world unintermixed,
What is't will keep thee in thy course,
And ease the weight of every cross ?

Make *heaven* your object night and day;
'Twill never change or pass away.
A light 'twill be in densest gloom :
'Twill save thee from the coming doom :
And when the end of all draws nigh,
For thee it will unclothe on high.

END OF VOL. V.

G. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row.

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—Eph. vi.

VOL. VI.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1862.

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THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

DIVINE REMEDY FOR EARTHLY HINDRANCES AND DISCOURAGEMENTS.

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

(Read Hebrews i.—iii. 1—4.)

THERE is only one divine way of raising the hearts of the children of God above the depressions that arise from the circumstances of trial and sorrow, which are the necessary accompaniments of their journey through this world. It is to have their thoughts filled with Christ; or, as the apostle expresses it in Ephesians, (iii. 17,) “to have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith.”

This changes the aspect of everything.

The Hebrews were discouraged in their course through its varied trials

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and difficulties, and needed to be stimulated to a "patient continuance in well doing," that they might become "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." This is the practical bearing of the whole epistle; and is the occasion of its being designated, in its entirety, by the apostle, "the word of exhortation." (Chap. xiii. 22.)

Wonderful are its disclosures of the glory of Christ—of His person, His offices, His work—but wonderful and far-reaching as they are, they are, *in their practical bearing*, but the revelations of a God of grace to tried and beleaguered hearts, as a resource against the trials and exercises of their course. They are the basis of the exhortations, and warnings, and encouragements, with which the epistle abounds, and which are designed in their effect to sustain the Hebrews in the position to which they had been introduced by grace and by a reception of the testimony of Christ. They had become, through Christ, "partakers of the

person of Christ. But how is this glory, in which we have so deep a stake and interest, and which is the only divine formative power of our hearts and hopes, our lives and characters, presented? I know not how to speak of it. But as my eye rests on these heavenly pages—where I pray my reader to let his for a moment rest—I see this glory unfold and expand until the whole sphere of heaven and earth is imbedded with the brightness of its heavenly light. In the hands of God's Spirit it glows, and brightens, and extends, until time past, time present, and time future, with all eternity to boot, stand out gilded and irradiated with its wondrous beams! But there is no power in the thoughts of man, in his witless imaginings, to rise to the height of the glory of Christ! It is only by the rising of the sun itself that we can discover its glorious light!

If I listen to the exhortation, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," it is to no excogitation of the mind that I am

heavenly calling," and they needed sustenance against all that was contrary to it in their earthly path. They needed *more*, it is true. They needed to be raised, in faith and in soul, to the true apprehension of their calling in Christ Jesus; but then this, in its reflex, of necessity acted on their practical position, in detaching them from every claim of Judaism, and in raising them above the trials and temptations of the world by the moral leverage of an object of trust and confidence, and by resources of grace and help, without a limit and without a question, out of the world.

They might have been exhorted on many grounds to patience under trials, and difficulties, and discouragements; but, in having the thoughts thus filled with Christ, they at once find the power of the displacement of them all.

For what is it, I may ask, that occupies the two chapters of this epistle, of which this exhortation, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," forms the brief summing up? It is the glory of the

called; but with a reverent heart to contemplate, as they are disclosed by the light of a divine revelation, the lineaments of Him who, as "the word made flesh," is the central sun of the christian system. Here I behold a divine Person, so truly man that the affections of the human heart can lay hold upon Him; and so truly God, that the mind through faith, can at all times and in all places be brought into direct contact with Him. Christ, the divine Man, is the great attractive centre—the sole gravitating point of a system which owes to Him all its coherence, and which would be but a chaos were He away.

In "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," it is true our thoughts are directed to the *offices* which the Lord sustains. But it must be remembered that his official glory hangs on the glory of His person as divine. His offices owe their proper dignity to Him by whom they are borne, and the value of His work results from the value of the person by whom it was accomplished. What he is imparts its character to what he *does*.

The bearing and importance of His offices are fully unfolded in the subsequent parts of the epistle, but in these chapters (chap. i., ii.) His full personal glory is brought out.

This, however, is taken up from the opposite point to that in the Gospel or the Epistle of John. It is not a statement of what He was from eternity, before He was manifested in time—what He was “In the beginning with God,” before He was “the word made flesh and dwelt among us.” He is here presented simply as the continuator of God’s communications to Israel, as of old time He had spoken to “the fathers by the prophets.” He now in these last days has *spoken to us* by his Son, or, “in the Son.” Having thus introduced Messiah as “*the Son*,” he of necessity supersedes every other, inasmuch as His dignity and claims are paramount. As “*the Son*” He is at once presented to us as “heir of all things”—Lord and Possessor of that boundless universe which displays the wisdom and the eternal power of God. But this presents

his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” This is the condensed statement of what is unfolded in the remaining parts of the chapter. Beyond it no *statement* can go; but confirmation of its various parts is now to be drawn from those testimonies which of old had been recognized by the Jews as the oracles of God. “God had spoken”—the Hebrews admitted it—“to the fathers by the prophets,” and now these declarations are given in attestation of the claims of Messiah and of His proper glory.

He is exalted, not above prophets, but above angels—the highest order of created beings, and who held so conspicuous a place in connexion with that dispensation which was now passing away by the introduction of Messiah, “the Son.” “He is made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” In divine relationship He holds a place to which no angel could ever aspire. He *inherits* the name

Him only in the position of imparted glory. He is “*appointed* heir of all things.” To this heirship and dominion He accedes through worthiness and humiliation and death; however His claims to it are based on the deep foundation that creation, in its widest extent, with all its suns and systems, its order and harmony, reaching out to the vast abysses of worlds and systems yet unexplored, owes its existence to that Messiah—“the Son”—by whom God was now speaking to the Hebrews! It is what He *was* that gives the only adequate foundation for what he was *constituted*. The mystery of His person must be known in order to understand the possibility of His being the holder of these dignities.

This is taken up in verse 3 and is expressed in a few brief words, which seem to dazzle by their brightness and overwhelm by their illimitable force. “By whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of

and relationship of “Son.” “He *makes* his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire.” But he does not make the Son anything. He attests that relationship which could alone be His. “Thou art *my Son*, this day have I begotten thee.” And again, “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a *Son*.”

These quotations have a double aspect. The first presents Messiah as God’s King, set on his holy hill of Zion.” (Psalm ii.) “His Son,” born into the world, in accordance with Jehovah’s ancient decree:—and, so presented, having an inherent title to the name of “Son.” Still the title seems only to be fully vindicated in *resurrection*, as in Romans i. 4, “Declared the Son of God with power . . . by resurrection from the dead.”

The second presents Him, with more directness, as the heir of David’s throne. (2 Samuel vii. 14; 1 Chron. xvii. 13.) In both aspects there was the testimony of the prophets—the attestation of God to Messiah as His Son. His Son, too, in such sense that, as no angel ever

sustained the relationship, so He could never be called by the name. "To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?"

So much more exalted than angels is the Son, that when, as the "firstbegotten" God brings Him into the world, He is presented as the object of angels' worship: "Let all the angels of God worship him."

The same divine testimony is rendered also to His intrinsic glory, as God, as before to His divine relationship of Son.

If Messiah's kingdom is spoken of, its sceptre is declared to be in the hands of the Son. But, then, how is the Son addressed in these oracles which speak of his anointing and the perpetuity and glory of his reign? "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," &c.

And, further, if it be as to His claim as Creator, "upholding all things by the word of his power," these oracles are not silent. It is to one who, in humiliation and sorrow, and conscious rejection,

manner conceivable, brought out to view.

But there is another point in which Messiah is contrasted with angels, presented in these verses, (ver. 2, 3,) that is taken up: it is the exalted position He assumed on the accomplishment of His work. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

This place at the right hand of God, where no angel ever sat; this exalted position in dispensation, which no angel ever filled, Messiah has taken—as our Lord showed to the Jews by His quotation of Psalm cx—as being at once both David's son and David's Lord. But it is not nakedly His title to this exalted position that is here in question, but the proof of the actuality of His having taken it for Himself—seated Himself

when in contemplation of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, said, (Ps. cii.) "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days," that the oracle replies, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The title, then, of Son, in this most exalted sense, as belonging alone to Messiah, is thus sustained. His being the perfect manifestation of the being of God—"the effulgence of his glory, and the exact impression of his subsistence"—His power in creation, and His sustainment of all things that exist by His powerful word, are by these quotations in a most wonderful manner sustained. In the last, especially, His eternal duration and absolute power, in contrast with the decay and mutation of all created things, is, in the most touching

there; "when he had by himself," in infinite grace, and love, and power, "accomplished a purification for our sins." The work of redemption accomplished, He is seated at God's right hand until His enemies be made His footstool. But angels are only servants to do His bidding in regard to them who shall be "heirs of salvation."

In the exhortation, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed," &c., which is interjected between the two latter points of contrast, between Messiah and angels, it is impossible not to notice the divinely living, flexible, character of God's most precious word. Here, as in a moment, all the rays of that glory which is being unfolded are made to converge and concentrate upon the conscience, without a break in the continuity—the divine continuity—of the subject! For it will be seen that this exhortation looks back for its basis to the statement, "God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son," and to the majesty and authority of his word by which all creation is upheld. If,

then, the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every dereliction of the law which they delivered met with its just retribution, what would be the inevitable consequence of a neglect of the salvation which began to be spoken by "*the Lord*," and which these Hebrews had seen confirmed by the witness of God and by the concurrent testimony of the Holy Ghost?

But Messiah, "the Son," whose glory is never for a moment lost sight of, unites in the mystery of His person, the Son of God and "Son of man;" and this latter title, with its distinctive honour, remains to be taken up and vindicated. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," &c.

There is a "world to come"—a future dominion of the habitable earth—that is not to be administered by angels, but by the "Son of man." Power, universal power, is to be in the hands of *man*. But there is only one man to whom universal dominion can be accorded. For the Son of man, who was made a little

His death was by "*the grace of God*"—its fruit and wondrous proof. As "the captain of their salvation," He was "made perfect through sufferings." It was becoming the majesty and holiness of God that it should be so. In the sanctification which He wrought, He so identifies Himself with them, and them with Him, that "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Into their condition He, in infinite grace, came down, and through death He brought deliverance, and destroyed him who wielded its power. And if angels again appear in the argument, it is only to declare that men, not angels, are the objects of the deliverance which Messiah, by His death and sufferings, conjoined with His power and glory, wrought. "He took not hold on angels, but on the *seed of Abraham* he did take hold."

Hence being made in all things like His brethren, the basis for the exercise of that priesthood which He exercises in grace and faithfulness is laid. So that, as we have said, the tried and beleaguered soul may find in Him, at all

lower than the angels for the suffering of death, this dominion waits. All things are to be put under His feet; concerning which Psalm viii. is cited as the appropriate witness.

How vast and varied are the glories of that Christ whose grace and love are the daily, only, resting place of our souls! If exalted above angels in glory, he has taken a place below them in humiliation that He might, as the "captain of our salvation," bring all this glory into association with ourselves! For though we see not yet, as the apostle argues, all this dominion subjected to Christ, we see in His being "crowned with glory and honour," when He quitted the field of conflict—a conqueror through death—the certain pledge that ere long "nothing shall be left that is not put under him."

From this point onward it is another aspect in which Messiah is presented. It is His place in association with those who were the subjects of His delivering power—the many sons whom God, through Him, was bringing to glory.

times, a sure resource. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted."

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

It is easy to see what must be the effect on the minds of the Hebrews—those converts from Judaism—of this presentation of Christ, and also its beautiful and heavenly adaptation to their circumstances and position. But "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And though it is impossible to read this epistle without being struck with the peculiarity of its character and bearing, it is at the same time as evident that none of the force or value of its revelations is lost, because the special circumstances of those to whom it was at first addressed have passed away.

Believers now are "partakers of the heavenly calling;" and though they are not viewed in the epistle to the Hebrews

as the church in its position of being "risen with Christ," they are urged by truths no less vital and important, and no less touching to the soul in regard to the infinite displays of divine grace, and the resources that are brought to bear on its exigencies, through the position which is now, through redemption, assumed by Christ.

Simple and effective is the "divine remedy for earthly hindrances and discouragements," which it presents: for if the heart be filled with thoughts of Christ, it becomes not only conscious of infinite help and grace, but at once care and anxiety and discouragement have lost their place.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession Christ Jesus." This is not effort; it is not the soul's chiding its own dulness; it is the simple occupation of the thoughts with Christ. But, then, it is not with the Christ of my fancy that I am to be occupied, nor of my reasonings, nor of my unbelief, but with the Christ whose

If you look through the epistle, you will find that *whatever* it was, the mind of the apostle was above it. Be it life or death, he renounces himself—has one single object in view—viz., Christ—"to win Christ." All the rest he passes by. I do not find anything about sins, the flesh, or forgiveness. He will not have his own righteousness; his *object* is Christ. What has struck me, particularly of late, in this epistle is the saint's entire superiority to *everything* while passing through this world in the power of the Spirit of God.

It is sweet to see the way in which the Lord gives Himself to us as the *source* of our joy and the object with which we can occupy ourselves. There can be no rising above the cares of the way, unless there is a *positive* joy to satisfy the heart. Jesus gives *Himself* to us as this; not only as the source, but as the *constant* spring of joy to our hearts. For it would be *uncertain*, unless He were *always* there and a *sure* fountain of joy. It is not only that we are saved by Him—that He has given

glory and grace, whose work and worth, whose infinite might and infinite love, we have just seen—though feebly—by the hand of the Spirit here unveiled. If I come forth from the shades and darkness to the sun, I find myself cheered by the warmth of its beams as well as irradiated with its light.

Christianity is a simpler thing than most believe. The resources of grace are more ample than our unbelief suggests, and nearer at hand than our habitual distance from the Lord allows us to perceive.

HOW THE BELIEVER IS MADE SUPERIOR TO EVERYTHING.

NOTES ON PHILIPPIANS IV.

The whole of this epistle brings before us, in a remarkable way, the superiority of the saint to *everything* around him. A person walking in the Spirit is superior to everything, whether it be the flesh, the world, persecutions, cares—*everything*.

us glory with Himself at the end; but the love that was in Himself has gone out of Him into us, in the full perfect exercise of all that He is for us above. So the apostle speaks of the "Love of Christ that passeth knowledge." It is beyond all thought; still we can know it. It is blessed as regards the Lord Jesus to understand that He Himself has given to us all the love He can, to make us happy.

He becomes a man—gives Himself up to death; but wondrous as this is, it is not all. He gives us *Himself*. The love which is in Him goes out from Him and into us. We get an analagous truth in John xvii., "The love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." This love dwelling in us, we have the power to apprehend the Father's love towards Jesus Himself. The love of Jesus is not only *set* on us, but flows out to us; in different degrees it may be, but still it is that we "may know the love of Christ—that is, the love that is *in* Him—divine and passing knowledge—but which flows down to

fill the heart. There is no straitening in the heart of God. There *was* straitening in the heart of Christ until His death, as He said, "How am I straitened." His heart could not flow out till atonement was made; now it can. There is no hindrance, because He is our life. He is our righteousness too, but that is immediately connected with the life of Christ in us. We "live by the faith of the Son of God." I have capacity, inasmuch as Christ is my life, to understand the love of Christ. The better I know Him, the more I can rejoice in Him; not in salvation, but in the Lord.

All Paul's trouble brought out more distinctly what it was to "rejoice in the Lord." It is more felt in trial and difficulty than if there were none, though it is the same love *always*. The first thing is to get Himself; that is the secret of our life. He does not speak of glory or anything else. It is "to win CHRIST." It was Himself that his heart was set on in the midst of all, and *without anything else*. Jesus was his joy—his heart could rest there—could find its home

all." This is a relative thought. The first thing is Christ Himself. Now, He says you can bear other things. The heart has got its centre in Christ, and therefore it passes through circumstances lightly, meekly, yieldingly. But there is another thing—"the Lord is at hand." He is the spring of all my delights, whether I think of His glory or humiliation. "He is at hand," and that satisfies the soul. Other things have lost their character: all the rest is as nothing. The mind is possessed with Christ, and that is the state of the soul.

In passing through circumstances it needs power. "Be careful for NOTHING:" (verse 6 :) the world, Church, or circumstances—"nothing." Is it as if he were indifferent to it? No. Is it seeking to know what the will of God is? No; but "make your requests known to him." Is God, then, so near, so bending, so condescending? Tell them to Him. He wants to have your heart discharged and to be occupied with Himself. "With prayer and supplication"—there must be earnestness; and "with

and be satisfied. As the light of the sun excludes every other light, so, when Christ is before the heart, it is Himself that sets *everything* else aside. There may be many exercises for which we should thank Him; but when the Lord fills the heart, it is constant joy. Our spirituality is tried by the measure in which there is fixedness and constancy. Jesus Himself, in whom the love is perfect and infinite, is the blessing as well as the Blessor. The apostle at once feels it must be joy. Think of what you have got in Him *now*, that you may seek to know Him better. The first time the heart feels it is loved, there is joy—wondrous joy often; and the first feeling expresses itself in a peculiar way; but it may be far *deeper* afterwards. In the case of the apostle it was anything but "first love." It was a joy entirely independent of circumstances. What he would have us do is, to rejoice in Christ Himself as if there were *nothing else in the world* besides.

The next thing I would notice is verse 5, "Let your moderation be known to

thanksgiving," because you know you are heard. *Go to Him*. Do not be caring, reflecting, pondering, exercising your own mind, but "let your requests be made known."

And what is the consequence? "the peace of God will *keep* your heart;" not the peace *with* God, but the peace *of* God, that in which He dwells—peace which passeth understanding, just as we read of the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge." The love is divine, and the peace here is divine—He dwells in it. Nothing is a care to Him. He knows the end from the beginning, sees all things. Although the contrast is not needed, there is more *apprehension* of this peace in trial than any where else. All the mercies I get I can understand. Very well; but when I get into cares, I get a peace which passeth all understanding. He tells us to "rejoice in the Lord," and just as Christ's love is a source of ineffable joy, so that peace in which God dwells flows into the heart that casts its care on Him.

He traces all our path: He "with-

draweth not his eyes from the righteous." We come to Him as a child to its father, with EVERY thing, and the confidence of this is its beauty. All we ask for may not be *wise*, but He only gives us what is for our good. Just as we see in Paul, he asks for the thorn to be removed; but the Lord tells him He cannot remove it. It is for good to him and he is made to rejoice in it. This is the proper joy, constant and blessed, in which the soul delights; and it keeps the heart out of activity of *will*. But where did *he* learn it? Where *you* have to learn it every day. I know what He has been to me from the first. Very ignorant I may have been, but He was always the very thing my soul wanted. Paul had known Him thus, till He had made Him so happy in Himself that he did not know which to choose—whether to live or die. If left here, it was serving Christ. If he went away, it was to be with Christ Himself. If He had not thus found Christ all *through the way*, he could not speak of Him at the *close* as he does here. It is for you to find

all our circumstances on the earth; not merely in giving Himself on the cross, but brought home in detail to our hearts. We cannot get into any circumstances into which Christ has not been; and His love, while infinite in itself, has adapted itself to us, and besides gone through all the circumstances in which we may want Him. See how the apostle expresses the experience of this: ver. 19, "*My God.*" The God of the poor prisoner? Yes. He can say, "I know him to be faithful." I have known Him to the end. I undertake to answer for Him *for you*.

How little we believe in the love of God, in His care, His interest for us. If we only thought of Christ giving Himself for us, of His soul being wrapt up in us, we should know better what it is to live for Him.

First of all we are to rejoice in the Lord Himself. Christ personally is the object in which the heart is to rest and to find its present joy and blessing. How far are your hearts living Christ? how far rejoicing in the Lord

your faith every day in this way resting on Him, that you may say at the end, "*I know* in whom I have believed." Is that what we are learning, young or old?

The first great thing is to rejoice in the Lord. When a person finds Christ his portion, his joy and blessing for Christ's own sake, he finds Him such when trial comes. We are all of us defective in this. We may be sincere in following Christ, but there is something else in the heart. He has not such possession of the soul that other things cannot get in. Whatever circumstances may be, if the heart be fixed on Christ for His own sake, I shall find Him what I want for my own concerns. This is the happy Christian. Christ has given Himself to be rejoiced in. I look at Christ as the one to find my delight in. He is the one in whom the Father delights, and He says, "I want you in fellowship with me." God draws us by this love into the enjoyment which He enjoys. He who is the joy of God takes His joy in us and brings us into this joy. We learn this love in seeing Christ in

always? Do you think the apostle was telling the Philippians what could not be realized? How far is Christ your daily source and subject of joy? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." That is the secret of the way in which Christ makes the heart happy. Remember, the source is in Him, dwelling in Himself. May the Lord give you so to think of, dwell on, live on, Christ, that all the rest may be only circumstances. It is *Himself* He has given us, and in a way that meets us where we are. The Lord give us to know it! All the rest will vanish—*that abides*; and it is joy, and sweetness, and comfort in all the circumstances through which we have to pass. It gives its own portion and its own preciousness, and all else is but the passage through which we have to pass, in going to "the rest which remaineth" for God's people.

FRAGMENT.

God's provisions of grace are perfect and infinite. Perfect and infinite are they, if looked at in their absoluteness

in Christ, as founding our happiness deeper than the deepest ruins of sin, and raising it in Him, in a life that is eternal, above all change, and time, and death, and so, allying the heart in its hopes, and prospects with all, that is timeless, permanent, and eternal.

This we see in God's meeting us in Christ, "when we were dead in trespasses and sins;" and, from that abyss, quickening us together with Him, and raising us up together, and "seating us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

But no less are these provisions of grace perfect and infinite, if viewed with regard to our present place in the world, and modified by the exigencies of our condition as the children of God, "in the world," but "not of the world," as Christ was not, and journeying toward our eternal inheritance in Him. God would have His children not only "kept from the evil that is in the world," but in intercourse with Himself. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." We are *now*—here

THE GOLDEN WORD.

There is a word that melts my heart,
No other moves me so;
For me no other can impart
What this word doth bestow.

JESUS is my unrivalled word;
A golden word to me;
For in its sound all these I've heard,
Love, pardon, life for thee!

No mother's voice, grown soft to lull
Her weary, waking child,
Was e'er of tenderness so full,
So hushed, and deep, and mild.

This word is with me in the dark;
I hear it on the wild;
It sheds a light upon my path,
And I am reconciled.

In the loud storms it soundeth clear;
And oft I bless this word;
It tells me that my help is near,
That my faint cry is heard.

Would I exchange this word for ought
Of gold or costly gems?
Ah, no! a world to it were nought.
Though piled with diadems.

—in the world—"to walk in *the light*, as God is in the light;" and in order that this may be possible, and our fellowship be unbroken, His provision is "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son," which "*cleanseth us from all sin.*" The blood is here seen in its cleansing power, as fitting us to dwell in the courts of heavenly light—light where God dwells—and not in its atoning efficacy as meeting the penalty of our guilt. But there is the *practical* cleansing also. This is attached to the act of confession—confession of all that is practically unfit for the light. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But there is more than this: the very trials and vicissitudes of the wilderness through which we are passing, and which are often so sore a test of our patience, are in God's purpose, and to our faith, but the occasions of the active communications of that grace, the provisions of which are perfect and infinite.

CHARITY.

"Yet show I unto you a more excellent way."
"The end of the commandment is charity."—

(Read 1 Cor. xiii.)

This way of surpassing excellence, so often missed, so little understood, it is the purpose of this paper, by the Lord's help, a little to unfold.

"The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." But nothing can be farther from a just apprehension of this "way," nor anything much more remote from this "end of the commandment," than that which is presented in the current thoughts and aims of those who are distinguished by the profession of Christianity in this day. In ordinary Christianity the root of charity is not seen, its divine nature is not known, and consequently its development is impossible and unsought. The utmost that is seen in the divine unfolding of this "incomparable way," is but an attractive picture; a well-considered description; a hyperbolical ex-

hibition of some ideal that must never be expected to be realized in action; or if ever embodied at all, it is reduced to the outgoing of the kindliness of mere human feeling, and attempted to be displayed by schooling the passions into subjection, and the subdual of the natural haughtiness of the temper and spirit under the menage of the bit and curb, or the influence of conventional restraint. I speak not here of the restriction of the term to the mere giving of alms, but of the meaning that lies beneath the current phrases, "in perfect charity," "universal charity," "living in charity," "dying in charity."

But "God is charity." Charity is "love;" and Christ on earth was the divine embodiment of love. Apart from this, men's thoughts of love and their results in natural men, are but a poor and worthless caricature of the divine original. This, surely, is not the display of that to the cultivation of which all the gifts of God's Spirit were to tend, and all faith and truth to foster, and all revelation to sustain; and beyond

which there lies no attainment in the heavenly life, either in this world or in that which is to come. Deeper, far than this, must we look for that whose essentiality enters into every true exercise of the soul towards God, and overlives all that ministers to its development; and is beyond the limit of all mysteries and knowledge, and the endurance of all the wonders that may be disclosed to faith and hope!

It is difficult in a day like this clearly to perceive *God's ends*, whether in the individual believer or in the collective body. And when they are discerned, it is still more difficult consistently to carry them out. This arises, not from any want of plainness and explicitness in the divine word, but from our views being so contorted by the false exhibitions of Christianity around us, and from the heart's estrangement from the moral power of the cross. It is hard to emancipate the spirit from those false influences that are at work, and bear upon us on every side, from a Christianity that, conjoined with the cross, may

be said, emphatically, to "mind earthly things;" and that we should be indebted for the moulding of our thoughts and desires only to the precious revelations of our God in His word.

The assertion ought not to surprise us that even as Christians we often miss God's ends, since it is on record before us that the Corinthians, with their apostolic constitution as a church, and with all their plenitude of spiritual gifts, had failed of discerning God's ends in two most striking points, (there were others too, and of a moral nature) to which they were obliged to be solemnly recalled by the Spirit of the Lord. They missed *God's end* in their gathering together at the table of the Lord, so that it was "not to eat *the Lord's Supper*," but *their own*: and they were so aside in their use of revealed truth and spiritual gifts, as to bring upon themselves the rebuke of being "carnal," and walking as men, and very children in their use and valuation of what they had received from God. It need not, therefore, be thought wonderful that indi-

vidual Christians now should often miss of discerning God's ends in them as His redeemed; nor that the assembly, however rightly constituted, and however full its ministrations of truth as truth, and perhaps secretly boasting in its knowledge, should need to be recalled to the solemn consideration, that "*knowledge puffeth up*, but *charity buildeth up*"—and to be warned in the language of the Spirit, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way!" Of this we may rest assured that no principles, however scriptural, nor truths, however deep, will keep the soul in God's paths, if "love," as the end of all, be not sought.

But what is this charity, without which all gift is but an idle clangor, and all knowledge but as childish amusement?

In Christ its exhibition was perfect, even in its *objective* character. Its exercise flowed from Him without any antagonistic power, and without any place for the negation of self. For as "God is love," so Christ was the perfect manifestation of this love, in a man, in

human circumstances. In truth *He was it*, inasmuch as He was "God manifest in the flesh." But in us it is the exactly opposite. It begins in us in the negation, the active negation, of all that is characteristic of nature, or of the old man. Its power stands in the new risen-man, in Christ. It is Christ in living power in the soul: "To me to live is Christ"—"Christ liveth in me." Hence it is impossible that this "more excellent way," this end of God in His saints, should be understood or sought, where the soul is not in possession of the confidence of acceptance, and where being "risen with Christ" is not practically laid hold of. It is a hopeless enigma where this is an enigma. For the manifestation of a thing cannot be where the thing itself does not exist. It is an energy of life that evolves its own appropriate form; and it cannot be but from the living spring which is within—the divine nature—"that which is born of God." It alone will bear the stress of days like these; for it overcomes and cannot be overcome. Love

plain that God's end is not accomplished in those that are ministered to if charity be not quickened and nurtured, and if its characteristic exercises be not awakened in the soul. The end of God in His saints—His "perfect way" for them—is "charity." And so love's ministry begins in love in him who exercises it, and issues in the nurture of love in those on whose behalf it is exercised; even as the apostle unfolds to Timothy, that "the end of the commandment (or charge) is charity."

If, therefore, it were the speaking with tongues—although they displayed in a wonderful manner the power, and even the goodness of God, in reaching men in their divisions and various languages, which were the fruits of sin—yet, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,"—if love direct not their exercise, and if love be not awakened as their result, I am in the sight of God, and as to all divine results, a mere empty sound: "I am as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

asks no motive: it is its own motive. It depends not, in its exercise, on success, or estimation, or approval, from without. And He well understood its power who could say, "Be it so; though the more I love you, the less I *be loved*." But its perfect example is seen only in Jesus on the cross. Power was not there—sympathy was not there—the estimation of those who had known its exercise in life, in their sick being healed, or their lepers cleansed, or their dead raised up, was not there; nor was the estimation of those there, who were debtors to His love for life and salvation, and who were to know its abundant fruits after love had achieved its victory amidst rejection, and desertion, and sorrow, and death.

In the exposition of this chapter, the peculiar position of which the most careless cannot fail to notice, I take it to be so far plain in its practical bearing on the "husbandry of God," that he who exercises gift or ministry, of whatever character, does it in vain, as to himself, if it flows not from this spring of love. And I take it to be no less

But deeper than this. If it were the interest of the mind, which so often stops short of God's ends, and makes its own recreation and delight its end, even when dealing with the bright revelation of truth, it is worthless. Prophecy, and the penetration of all mysteries, and all knowledge, on which we build so much satisfaction for ourselves, and expect, with frequent disappointment, so much fruit from others, reach not the point. Love's husbandry is not advanced by instruments such as these. Even the "faith" that knows how to bring in the power of God, in its miraculous displays—the faith that could "remove mountains"—will falter in this "perfect way." If I have no more than this, and seek no more, still "*I am nothing*."

But farther still. Benevolence in me may have its widest scope, and zeal may reach its final limit, yet may it never reach this heavenly way. Though I give all my goods in doles to feed the poor; and though I become a martyr in my zeal, if "love" be not the spring,

it nothing profits. Philanthropy may have its devotees, and zeal its martyrs: "love" only profits.

"Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John iv. 7, 8.) Herein the teaching of the Apostle Paul, and that of John, however widely they diverge in their general tenor, are found to coalesce. Indeed, it must needs be so when God's final end stands in the view of both.

"Love," then, "is of God;" and in order to love, we must be "born of God." It is the exercise and display of that which is essentially and characteristically divine. It is to be exercised in a world where trial of its energy will be found, and in circumstances where everything but itself must fail. But "love never fails." In the blessed example of the Lord Jesus we see how everything in a hostile world was but the occasion of the brightening display of love, until it reached its crowning manifestation in the death of the cross.

tions, "will be done away;" "tongues," though the bright witness of Christ as the ascended Lord, "will cease;" and "knowledge," such as the mind of man can grasp, though heavenly communicated, "will be done away." They are but steps by the way—the rudimental advances toward that, beyond which is no advance. When that is reached, these will have receded from the view, or will be looked back upon from the vantage-ground of that which is perfect and eternal, as manhood now looks back on the things of its childhood with a corrected and abated estimation of their worth.

But "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." Deep and eternal as are the truths on which the assurance of faith is built, and apart from which there can be no onward progress for the soul in the paths of the Lord, still *His end* is onward. Even the assurance of hope is not God's end. There is something deeper still. The revelations which ally the soul to Him, "whom having not,

This love, then, can never differ from itself: so that if suffering is to be encountered in its exercise, or an occasion for kindness to be shown, love is girded for its work. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." Nay, further: is another to be advanced and myself thrown into the shade? Be it so: "Love envies not." It looks with an eye not emulous of others, and is not insolent or rash. As it seeks not to diminish another's praise, so it is not inflated with an estimation of attainments in itself. Love's carriage is ever in deepest modesty: there is nothing unseemly in her ways. Her own she does not seek; and is not resentful of the slights she meets. Evil she thinks not, nor imputes. "Rejoices not in iniquity;" but finds in the triumphs of the truth her joy. "Beareth all things" that must be borne; "believeth all things" that should be believed; "hopeth all things," while ever there is the possibility of hope; "endureth all things," while endurance is demanded. "Love never fails." "Prophecy," though dealing with divine communica-

tion we love," will cease, and be no longer the ground of "faith," when "we shall see Him as He is." Even the bright visions of hope, with all the sublimities and glories which it anticipates, will reach their issue, and be no more as hope; but love will still remain. Nor is it in an abstract manner that it is said love will remain, as characterizing the nature of God and therefore eternal as Himself: eternally blessed as is the thought—but it remains *now*, as the way that we have to pursue, a way that never fails. But how surely nothing that is of nature will enable us to pursue this way. Nay! how surely must that which is natural to us, as men, be put aside in order to make a step of progress here! It is the way of the cross; the way of death to the flesh. It is a path that lies only in the sight of God—a path which "the vulture's eye hath not seen," but still it is "the path of life." But a path that none but the "single eye" will find. Unlike those gifts and ministrations of knowledge which bear the stamp and impress of power in their exercise, and

which man can covet and value, "love" looks only to the eye of God for approval of its labours, and can alone be estimated by those whose hearts are fashioned by its heavenly power.

Truth may be ministered and delighted in, but truth in its highest range or deepest character will not keep the soul, if, for himself and in the light of God, each one seeks not the ends of "love." Truth may be coveted, and right principles may be boasted in; but love only will stand the time of trial. All short of this will leave those that are attracted by it but as chaff before the winnowing-fan, when the stress of suffering for the truth may come.

"Love never fails," and "the foundation of God stands sure," and it may be added, "the Lord will keep his own;" still, he who in God's husbandry looks not to "love" as his spring of strength, and seeks it not as his final end in souls, is but laying the foundation for discomfiture and failure, and a result common to every previous revival amongst the church of God.

he reasons about the faithfulness of the one and the appointment of the other, the parallel rises in his mind between Israel, in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and believers now in the world (their wilderness) under the leadership of Christ.

This is the ground of all the warnings drawn from Israel's history in the wilderness, and of the reiterated declarations concerning the fatal consequences of unbelief.

Having said of Israel (chap. iii. 19,) "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief," he adds, in direct application, "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest any of you should seem to come short of it." In saying, "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them," it must not be imagined that he intends anything like the common notions of a preached gospel, or that it referred to salvation at all. The term is used in its most general import of "*tidings*;" and the force of the passage is, "unto us *tidings of a rest* have been brought

Charity respects, necessarily, all that God respects, for "God is charity." It cannot be exercised in maintaining anything that is contrary to God. Its essential character is unknown where such a thought concerning it possesses the mind. It seeks God's ends and these alone. And what are these but the glory of Christ, and that there should be a due estimation of his worth in those that are His?

GOD'S INSTRUMENTS FOR BRINGING HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

THE WORD AND PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

(Read Hebrews iii. and iv.)

The argument of the Apostle in these connected chapters is plain, and the moral suggestions are obvious and of the most solemn import.

Having presented Christ to these Hebrews as the apostle and High Priest of their profession, of which Moses and Aaron were the types, as in his argument

as well as unto them," (Israel.) It is a reference to the tidings brought by Joshua and Caleb and the spies, about the land of Canaan, Israel's promised inheritance. And in adding, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," he had simply, and alone, in view the report of the spies ("the word of the report") which was not believed by the congregation of Israel. From this he passes to the consequence of their unbelief, that they did not enter into Canaan; but "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." But to give it a still closer application to those to whom he was writing, he adds, "We who believe do enter into rest." This has nothing to do with rest of conscience or rest of heart, the rest of faith which believers undoubtedly have in Christ, or any other rest *by the way*. He simply asserts, "Believers are entering into rest," analogously to Israel when delivered from Egypt, who, if they had to go through the wilderness, were on their way to their *promised*

rest. Believers, he says, are now on their way to a rest, of which Canaan was a type, and Israel's history a warning. It is the same rest contemplated all through the chapter; and Canaan and the Sabbath are used as types. It is *God's rest*. It is yet future; and believers, by virtue of redemption, are called to labour towards it. Verse 11 shows that if believers had entered into this rest, they would have ceased from all their labours, as God did when the works of creation were finished. Consequently there would have been no ground for the exhortation, "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

But it is to prevent this issue, and to sustain the confidence of the Hebrews, that verses 12 to 16 are added. It is by keeping the consciences of His people bright and their hearts reliant on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God keeps His people from falling, and brings them to *His rest*: the word and priesthood of Christ being His two great provisions for this end.

sistency in these warnings and exhortations. They are the sign-posts of danger, which are planted along the pathway of the believer, as seen in the light of this epistle. Nay, more: they are the gracious provisions of the precious word, the means which God uses to prevent, on the part of His children, that which results to the mere professor. Both are addressed on the common ground of profession; but the saint uses these instruments for good, and heeds these warnings, while the mere professor goes on in security. Thus that Scripture is accomplished, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

We are in the wilderness actually; that is, it is no mere figure, but is the expression of a moral truth. We are also "risen with Christ" actually, for our life is in Him, and nowhere else. They are the two leading aspects of our position in grace.

"God is light," and "God is love." Blessed, infinitely blessed, revelation of

The scope of these exhortations and warnings is this: in the apostle's mind believers are viewed as replacing Israel on the earth as a people in relationship with God; just as in Rom. xi., the Gentile profession is viewed as the channel of the continuance and on-flow of God's promises; a position which might be forfeited, as they stood by faith. Hence, failing their continuance in "God's goodness," they were threatened with "cutting off." In like manner, in chap. iii. of this Epistle it is said, "Christ is a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if*—" But why "*if*?" Because of the parallel position between these Hebrews, on the score of their profession of Christ, and Israel that fell. They had replaced Israel in relationship with God, but on higher grounds. They had spiritual sacrifices, a heavenly priesthood, and a heavenly city; while a "heavenly calling" put a heavenly Canaan, or God's rest, before them, and this world as a wilderness, in present experience, to go through. On this ground there is the utmost con-

"Him with whom we have to do!" In redemption He has shown this, in having laid our sins upon His beloved Son that He might bear the judgment of them in the cross, and, in result, that we through that cross should be presented "holy and without blame before Him in love." But He shows it also in every step of our pathway that is taken with Him through this present evil world, in having provided the light of His word to detect in us all that is contrary to Himself, and the grace of Christ's priestly intervention to meet all that the light of the word detects.

We are not in the rest, as experience tells us, and the chapter shows, but are labouring towards it. Consequently, there is place for warning, lest the heart become "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," and lest we be overtaken by the fatal consequences of unbelief. Unbelief lost Israel Canaan; and the force of the apostle's conclusion is that, unbelief would lose these Hebrews heaven, or the future rest. It is not the question of how grace is secretly

ministered to sustain the soul, but of conscience and responsibility. If Peter's faith had failed, his sin would have been fatal to him, as the sin of Judas was to him. But Jesus said to him, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Here we see the ground of his preservation from apostacy; as in his epistle he presents the truth, doctrinally, when he says, believers are "kept by the power of God, *through faith*, unto salvation," &c.

The same result is presented, in the passage before us, as accomplished by the searching power of "the word of God," and the intervention of Christ in unlimited priestly, or restoring grace. But here more than the result of final security is contemplated. That which detects and sets aside the latent grounds of apostacy brings into the soul the presence and power of God in his holiness and grace.

It is not indeed the "word of God" as *revealing* his grace and love that is here presented; but it is that word in its searching and *detecting* power. It is

cast entirely and absolutely on Him for the exercise of His grace.

It is true that, if there were nothing but this searching and detecting light of the word, it would only induce the feelings of despair, and would lead to a surrender of all profession as hopeless. Darkness and distance from God would be sought, instead of light, as the only refuge from what the light disclosed. This is suggested in the exhortation, "Let us *hold fast our profession*; for we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," &c.

The business of the priest under the law is thus stated, (chap. v. 1, 2,) "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." For every sin and trespass, for every uncleanness and defilement, the intervention of the priest was provided; and nothing was excluded, except the high-

declared to be "quick and powerful"—living and energetic! As a sword it pierces through every fold which might conceal the working of evil, or hide from our view the germs of unbelief. It is light, and detects not only evil in act, but penetrates to the heart, and lays bare every thought, and motive, and desire that is not in accordance with the character of God, and with the light into which by redemption we are brought. It is thus that apostacy, or departure from the Lord, is arrested in its secret springs, and the soul is brought under the restoring power of grace.

Now "the word of God" is *this*, whether I accept it or not. It flashes its light into the inmost recesses of the conscience and the heart, and uncompromisingly shows me to myself, not by its precepts and commands alone, but by presenting to me what God is without a veil. But above all, it shows me to myself by showing me what Christ was here in this world; and, by the very contrast of what I find within, I am

handed wickedness ("sinning presumptuously") which despised alike the commandments and the gracious ordinances of the Lord. So, in Christ's priestly grace, there is nothing that the word discovers which that grace does not meet, except it be the unbelief and presumption that will not come to Him for help. When it is said, "Seeing we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God*," it is to show that there is nothing which our need may call for that He is not prepared to meet.

In the word of God so presented, and the priesthood of Christ, I see the blessed means of God's own providing, by which, as light and love, I may have Him with me in all the possible phases of my experience, and in all the exercises of my soul, as they are called into play by contact with the ever-varying and ever-trying scenes and circumstances of the wilderness of this world.

There is often, alas! in the soul even that has been brought into the liberty of the Gospel, and where the highest

truths may be current in the thoughts, such a want of practical self-judgment, such a laxity in the feelings and principles, and motives as to indicate a sad want of the practical power of the truths before us, in the conscience and the heart. It may not be that assurance has departed from the soul, or that the sense of acceptance in the Lord Jesus Christ is undermined; but there is a mass of things that lies unjudged in the heart, and consequently keeps it practically at a distance from the Lord. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth."

It is not all and everything to know, as is so often concluded in this day, that we have eternal life. It is, indeed, much to know it, and cause of joy when any are brought by the power of the Gospel out of darkness into God's "marvellous light." For the word remains true, and who can be thankful enough for it? "He that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into

have always *a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.*" I ought, moreover, with the same apostle, to have Christ, through whom and in whom I have that eternal life, so the object of my affections and desires, as to be able to say with him, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This prize, to the apostle's mind, took the form of being with Jesus in the resurrection; and to reach this he was willing to be made conformable to His death. That is, he would pass through anything and everything to reach his object—the cross itself, if that were in the road to his attainment, "unto the resurrection of the dead."

Without this the soul becomes weakened in its apprehension of truths already learned. It requires to be in daily contact with God—to have the faith bright and the eye undimmed in its vision of eternal things. I must be

condemnation; but *is passed from death unto life.*" But that eternal life is to *be lived*, and not to be counted merely as the ground of eternal safety. There is place for the apostle's exhortation to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." This mighty boon of infinite goodness is not only to be known as the ground of present rest to the soul, and of security for the future; it is to be grasped as a present possession, and used as a moral lever to lift us above all that would depress us to the level of things that are "seen and temporal," to the height of those things which are "not seen and are eternal."

It is not all and everything that I should know "Christ has loved me, and given himself for me," and that I am eternally united to Him through infinite grace—that I am, as is often said, "in resurrection-life" in Him. I have, in addition to this, communion with God in the light to be maintained. I have, with the apostle, to "exercise myself to

advancing in the knowledge of God if I would not go back.

In the wilderness Israel had the sanctions of the law and the exhibitions of judgment; but these were not sufficient to bring the people through. Judgment might destroy the golden calf, and hide, for the time, the outward tokens of the people's sin, and the earth might open and swallow the rebellious amongst them, or fire from the Lord consume the "sinners against their own souls." The *rod of power* might be ready to smite, enemies if opposed, and Israel if disobedient; but no exhibitions of power, or avengings of a broken covenant, would avail to bring them through the wilderness, and place them in the inheritance their sins had forfeited. Something other than power was needed for this. It was the rod of priesthood—"Aaron's rod that budded:" the rod which, in a figure, showed that, out of death, God would bring forth mercy and forgiveness, and present the ground for the exercise of long-suffering love.

So is it now. There is the searching

power of the word, and the eye of God, which cannot let any evil pass undetected and uncensured—no, not in thought nor in desire. “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 discernor 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.” (Heb. iv. 12, 13.) But, then, it is added, “Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Ver. 14—16.)

How often does the word assert its

my heart. For while it brings God so near to me, as “light,” that it makes manifest “the thoughts and intents of the heart,” it brings Him near to me as “love” too, and tells me how wonderful is the resource I have in Christ Jesus, to enable me thus to walk in the light as God is in the light. It makes me feel that it is not said in vagueness, but as presenting the immediate and necessary resource of the soul that is walking in the light, “Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The night is almost spent,
The golden dawn is near;
I watch the firmament,
And wish the morning here.

Thou Morning Star, my Lord!
My every thought is thine;
Oh! think upon thy word,
And let thy glory shine.

All my desire's for thee,
My soul no more earth-bound,
Since thou hast set it free,
Is sad till thou art found.

character as here presented; and amidst the throes of a conscience, awakened, it may be, by sorrow or calamity, or by the apprehended approach of death, compel the soul to register its verdict against a thousand things that have been allowed to pass without a scrutiny, or that perhaps have been extenuated or defended at a distance from the light! And how do we tacitly own this power of the word by the consciousness that we must not turn to it for its sanction of anything that our pride may seek, or our love of the world may paint desirable; or that it should allow of the indulgence of dispositions that our self-love refuses to correct!

It may be taken as a moral axiom, that when we are desiring to walk in the Spirit, the searching light of the word is welcome to our hearts; and the reverse is no less certain.

But is it possible for me to walk by such a rule, and to allow my thoughts and desires even to be tried by a standard so uncompromising? Yes. And its uncompromisingness will be the stay of

RETRIBUTION, CHASTENING, AND PURGING.

The more we apply our hearts unto wisdom the better shall we understand God's dealings with us; and if we are attentive to the bearing and purpose of those dealings we shall find that most of them are comprised under these three heads, each of which is distinct in its character, intent, and the effect produced on the soul. It is a profitable subject to meditate on, and before tracing the examples of each action in Scripture I may state, in a few words, what I believe to be their respective characteristics.

Retribution I regard as distinctly belonging to God's government in the world, and the Lord's rule in the church; the principle of which is embodied in that passage, “With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again.”

Chastening is of another order, and is more when we have neglected our calling, like Jacob at Shalem, the Lord comes in to remove the weight which

obstructs our course. Perhaps there is a position to be renounced, which we are *unwilling to renounce*, but which, being an obstacle to our progress, some sorrow is sent to effect the required correction.

Purging I understand to be the help one gets to detach oneself from an association at the moment, during service, which enables us the more effectually to carry out the purpose of the soul, which, *far* from being unwilling, gladly avails itself of the help or correction to right itself; the great characteristic of the action being, that the soul readily accepts it as expediting and enlarging it in the service it is engaged with. We may now examine these a little more closely.

Retribution is often very difficult to trace to its cause, although its occurrence may be manifest enough. One great reason of this is, that God in His mercy often allows such a time to elapse before He inflicts what His righteous government demands; "for there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Death

servant's dealings towards men on earth. "With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again," will explain many a trial which God's people suffer from. For instance, if I speak unkindly of people, some one will speak unkindly of me; my resource is to go to the Lord with my sorrows, and He will avenge me, if I have been unduly dealt with, or unrighteously condemned, though I have met with a just retribution, and it is so far permitted; yet the executioner will always suffer at God's hand condign and signal punishment. The laws I have outraged are vindicated in my public sufferings; but the "Absalom" used by God to retribute me meets with signal and terrible judgment.

As to *Chastening*, many term that chastening which is not so, and vice versa. We are inclined to call all treatment which is irksome to our nature, chastening; but that is not the true definition of divine correction. Again: we very often designate interruptions to our plans as such, which, in reality,

is the first and greatest retribution; "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This is the first judicial penalty attached to an infraction of God's just law of government. The curse of Cain, is an instance of simple *retribution* very speedily instituted, while the suffering of both his sons was a *chastening* to Adam, and we see the fruit of it in his naming of Seth. All Abram suffered on account of Hagar was retribution, for had he not gone down into Egypt he would not have met with her. In David's history we find instances of each. When, in the matter of Bathsheba, he offends against the laws by which God governs man on the earth, he suffers retribution in the sentence that the sword was not to depart from his house; and he is also *chastened*, for his child dies. Retribution occurs apart from chastening, but the exercised soul may use it as chastening, though primarily inflicted, because God's laws have been outraged; not so much, perhaps, with reference to Himself, or the conscience of His servant, as with His

have a very different object. To a certain extent they act as corrections, but their primary object is to save us from some sorrow to which we should have been exposed, if we had been allowed to prosecute our own plans; in fact, we are too much in the habit of associating the idea of penance and punishment with chastening. Now, the same word is used forty times in the Old Testament, and only ten times is it translated chastening. In all the rest it is correction. I think we may say there are three orders of correction: the first and happiest is that termed "*purging*," which we shall notice presently. The second is that correction which is sent to make us renounce what failure has led us into, and which is hindering our progress. For this purpose the soul is brought through sorrow and exercise; and while this process is going on, i.e. while it is passing through the sorrow, there is no fruit. It is "*afterwards*," that it yields the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." This is easily understood, for while one is very much occu-

pied with oneself, there is no power to perceive the necessity of the correction; for we never see anything distinctly till we are some distance from it; in fact, this order of chastening is always "grievous," and during its continuance there is more or less sense of distance between the Father and the soul; while in the first order, or "*purging*," there is NONE WHATEVER.

The third order of correction is when God chastens His people but they do not perceive it. Careless souls are often admonished, and never know why, nor seem to care to know. But the Lord does this to vindicate His own care, so that when their eyes are opened they may recall His correction.

This is, in one sense, unhappy work, and unwilling work, if I may so say, with the Lord; but He must vindicate Himself, His care, and His correction, however little appreciated. But I believe, in such cases as these, that He always corrects as little as possible; nay, that He always *corrects most where He finds most acceptance of it*. Abel's death I

A striking example of the *third order* of chastening may be found in Lot's earliest sufferings in Sodom—those recounted in Gen. xiv., from which Abram delivered him. We have there the Lord's dealings with an unexercised soul, in order to vindicate His own care. And though not accepted as correction at the time, Lot could not, when his eyes were opened by the final catastrophe, have charged God with neglecting to warn him.

Purging I have termed the *first order* of chastening or correction; but though it may be thus classed as a higher order of dealing, it is at the same time quite distinct, having this special feature, that the soul which is purged is in full sympathy with the Purger, and not only accepts, but gladly avails itself of the process (that which flails off, as it were, the hindrances to the nature of Christ having its full development, or whatever impedes its service.) This is what the Lord speaks of in John xv., where He tells us that the Father is the *purger*. "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more

regard as a chastening to himself,* and to Adam of the second order; and as giving us a character of the correction which a righteous man needs and is subject to. No doubt there was testimony in it, but we learn from Heb. xi., xii. that suffering for righteousness is used of God as a correction for ourselves, because "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The demand on Abram to offer up Isaac I regard as chastening, *until he entered on it*, and from that moment it was *purging*, because his soul became each moment more and more free to fulfil it, acquiring strength as it advanced.

Joseph met with much chastening. His repeating his dreams to those who could not apprehend them indicated very clearly how much he required to be humbled under the mighty hand of God: and all his history is one of correction, very graciously dealt out and profited by, and sometimes advancing into purging.

* i.e. if the principle stated in Hebrews xii. 6 in its apparent universality can be applied in such cases as the death of Abel or of Stephen. [Ed.]

fruit." The convicted soul hails the means of righting itself, so to speak; like Peter when he abandoned the ship, and went to the Lord. (John xx.) I do not think he suffered at all at that moment, but that his heart grew happier the nearer he approached the Lord; and the more he did so, the more he renounced his wanderings, and condemned himself for engaging therein. He left them "*with a will*," as we say. And he, of all in the ship, is purged *first*; for he is first attracted from the ship to the Lord, thus proving what has been said, that the Lord corrects most where there is most acceptance of the correction; and the result of this in Peter was to "bring forth more fruit."

Moses was purged when told to put off his shoes, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. And Paul, when in prison, (the result of his own failure,) is relieved from fear by the vision at night.

I regard the blessing of Melchizedek as purging to Abraham, because it detached him from earthly expectations,

and fixed him on the future more distinctly, and thus enabled him, already a fruit-bearer, to "bring forth more fruit," by refusing all the offers of the king of Sodom. When Jacob corrects Joseph as to the position of his sons, it was purging to Joseph. Again, when David puts off Saul's armour after putting it on, his correction was of the order of purging, and gladly hailed by him. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace, it was clearly testimony; but I think the loosing of their bands gives us an illustration of purging; for they were thereby disembarassed in their work and testimony, in order that they might execute more efficient service. When we really seek to serve, we are delivered from what would impede our service; and this is properly purging, which is not necessarily attended with suffering, its grand object being to disembarass the soul from what it desires to be rid of; so that it becomes coadjutor with the Father in the process, at least as to *will*.

lowed by chastening—for Absalom dies; but he returns to the throne, bearing the "peaceable fruit of righteousness."

Any suffering is chastening or correction, if the effect of it be to *lead us unto God*. And when we are in reality thus affected, i.e., when we have accepted it as leading us unto Him, knowing that it is necessary for us to this end, and therefore willingly retaining or sanctioning it, then the chastening has advanced to purging, which often follows the lower order of correction, but which is nevertheless distinct from it, and which always produces joy and vigour of soul, increased fruit-bearing, and freedom for service.

HEAVEN.

"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven."—John iii. 13.

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."—Eph. iv. 10.

The only thing that attracts the heart divinely toward heaven is the affections being set on the Lord Jesus Christ, who

As to the effect produced by each of these dealings which we have noticed, we may add, I am inclined to think that, in cases of retribution, there is no elasticity of soul until the sorrow is past. Retributive sufferings, when accepted, will always lead us rather to humiliation and casting of ourselves on God than actual fruit-bearing. They may prepare us for the latter, but the tendency of the natural man under this class of sorrow is self-vindication; and we generally have to be taught to accept the punishment of our iniquity, not as a compensation for it, but a public satisfaction for God's offended laws, according as we have publicly offended. We may have "sought to do it secretly," as David did; but the enemies of the Lord blasphemed on account of it: and his experience, while suffering from the retribution, which is given in Psalm liii., shows us the true and proper condition of soul at such times, and the one which will lead to full deliverance. Thus will it be with Israel in the latter day. David's retributive sufferings were fol-

came from heaven as His home, and having died for us in infinite love and grace, returned to heaven again to make it our home.

When He was on earth He spoke to His disciples, in the simplest and directest manner, of His "Father's house" being *their* home, as it was His; adding, "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." Thus heaven becomes attractive just in proportion as our thoughts and affections are occupied with Him who has gone there, and has engaged in the end to bring us there in the power of that life which we have through Him and in Him. None has ever loved us like Himself; none has a claim to our confidence such as He has; none has ever proved Himself so worthy of it. I speak of *trust*, where all must be trust, and of the infinite moment of being able to say, "I know in whom I have believed," or, I *know* whom I have trusted. And supposing we have to pass through death, from which nature shrinks, to

our Father's house and our heavenly home, He has gone the way before us, and has opened to us "the path of life;" as He said, with death before Him, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Moreover, there is "the Father," too, who, as revealed to us by the Son, becomes, by His infinite grace and goodness, the attractive object of our hearts; and it is in His house that the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for us. Knowing God and being "born of God," and so possessing a nature that can delight itself in Him, the Lord Jesus has laid the grounds of our eternal confidence in His presence, in that wonderful expression, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Nothing so assures the heart as the certainty that we shall meet our God in heaven in this well-known relationship.

Heaven, doubtless, has its own peculiar glories, far transcending all that is bright

heaven, when contemplated by them, is seen only at the end of life's dim vista, while earth is the place of their busy thoughts and schemes; and it is well if its transient interests and fading associations be not in truth the home of their affections. Too little place, it is to be feared, with regard to the most of us, is found in our creed for that article, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"—and for its counterpart, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

But "we are saved *by hope*;" and there is no thought more patent in the scriptures of the New Testament than that the Church and individual believers *belong*, by their very calling, to heaven, and not to earth. The present citizenship of the Christian, his *πολιτευμα*, is in heaven, as well as his future hope. When Christ was rejected from the earth, blessing on earth became impossible, (not God's "long-suffering" toward it, "which is salvation,") unless men

and glorious on earth; still, it is the stake and interest that our *affections* have in heaven that make it attractive to our hearts. Heaven is the dwelling-place of God, "who has loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and it is the home of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the apostle says, "he has loved me, and given himself for me;" and so contemplated, it alone has power to draw the heart thither. No descriptions of an unseen world, nor imaginative pictures of heavenly enjoyment were ever found to attract the spirit from earth where Christ was not the centre of its desires. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear persons talking of heaven as their place, and of being there; but with the most this language means no more than that heaven is to be enjoyed when earth is done with—that this world is the place for the enjoyment of the body, and heaven will receive their departed spirits. Even believers, as to the great body of them, are Christians only in hope, and little better than Jews in practice. For

were to be blessed there without God, or He should maintain them in happy possession of the inheritance after they had killed "the heir." When He is received, at His coming again, by Israel, the earth will indeed be blessed: "Then truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." But when the darkness overspread the earth at the Lord's crucifixion, and the vail of the temple was rent, it was significantly taught that the earth was closed as to blessing, and heaven opened; and that he who would now be blessed must follow Jesus into heaven, "whither as forerunner he is for us entered."

Nothing can be more striking to a thoughtful mind than the contrast, which a perusal of the Scriptures will unfold, between the veiled condition in which heaven is presented in the Old Testament, and its un veiled state as presented in the New. To the Jew, for example, Jehovah was dwelling in the heavens, as Supreme Governor, there to maintain the right. He is seen walking in "the

circuit of heaven," ready to deliver by His power, and presenting the ground of confidence to those who trust in Him on earth; for "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." But there is no revealed *present relationship* with heaven, as now. Believers might look forward to it as their ultimate inheritance, as Abraham, who sought for a "heavenly country," and "looked for a city whose builder and maker is God." Still, in the Old Testament, God is presented in the height of heaven in the general aspect of the resource of those that dwell on earth.

But now believers, by virtue of redemption, and the revelation of God's purposes of grace in Christ, *belong to heaven*. It is not merely opened to them, so as to have the resources of their strength and confidence there, but their very life is there, and all their associations, as well as having "a hope laid up for them in heaven."

It is not indeed wonderful that there should be this contrast, if we reflect for

to be *with Christ*;" and the heaven he presents to the Thessalonians is, "so shall we be ever *with the Lord*."

But it may not be without its use, passingly to notice the notion of the Jews concerning *three heavens*, which is so far correct, for the scriptures speak, at least, of *three*. There are "the fowls of heaven," "the dew of heaven," "the clouds of heaven," "the winds of heaven," &c., which refer to the atmosphere that surrounds this earth—the *aërial heavens*. Then follow "the firmament of His power," "the sun and moon," and "the host of heaven"—the *starry heavens*. Lastly, "the heaven of heavens, which is the Lord's," or—"the *third heaven*;" if, indeed, the two designations can be thought to coincide. The lowest heaven is essential, in its influences, to this earth, as the rain, the dew, &c.; and the next heaven no less so, in its original order, as the lights of the firmament: "the sun to rule the day," &c., "the precious things put forth by the moon," "the sweet influences of Pleiades," and "the

a moment on what hangs on the marvellous fact of God's own Son having come down from heaven in the accomplishment of redemption, and in our nature returned thither again; coupled with the relationship in which this work places us toward the Father and the Son; and, it may be added, toward the Holy Spirit too. It is no wonder, amidst the wonders of infinite grace, that heaven should be opened to those on whom God has thus expended the affluence of His love, or that it should be presented as their only proper home.

However, it is the *heaven of revelation*, and not of imagination, that is needed to attract the soul toward it; though how much it may be the heaven of imagination that possesses our thoughts, perhaps few of us can tell. Still, there is *the place* where God's honour dwells; and there is the glory into which Christ has entered, and into which He will introduce us; and there is the attractiveness of the Father's house, though one cannot help seeing that Paul's heaven was "to depart and

bands of Orion," &c. These are, as it is expressed, "the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained." There is the glory of these heavens; though "Jehovah has set his glory above the heavens," and the Lord Jesus "ascended up far above all heavens."

The mind of man is naturally attracted by the displays of material grandeur and magnificence, and these are scattered with so profuse a hand in the out-lying fields of God's glory in creation, that philosophers often fail to see anything more glorious beyond. But the heart that is guided by divine revelation perceives the moral to prevail over the material, the nearer it approaches to the place where God's honour dwells. The books of creation and providence and redemption are ill read by him who perceives not in them that the end of all is the display of the moral glory, the *character* of Him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things."

If I turn to Rev. iv., v., I see heaven presented in its governmental

character—the place of the throne; and here I see ranged around, the throne of Him who is supreme, the thrones of the elders who are crowned, and seated as a company of kings and priests. With the dignity of rule there is conjoined the ceaseless worship of Him who sits upon the throne; and the glow of adoration can never languish amidst the echoes of that solemn diapason, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!” But amidst the harps and golden vials and odours, and the myriads on myriads of angels which throng these heavenly courts, and join with the redeemed in the universal chorus, the eye instinctively rests on one whose presence and character alone form the spring of all this joy and praise. It is “the Lamb,” standing in the midst of these elders and this countless multitude, whose presence quiets the heart amidst the overwhelming majesty and grandeur of the scene. Even amidst the bright and glorious symbols by which “the holy Jerusalem” is presented to our view, the symmetry

“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly, and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

These are now, doubtless, the unseen realities of *faith*; but on this very ground it is certain that they will by and by become the embodiments of heavenly happiness and glory. “Mount Sion” is, in simple contrast with Mount Sinai, the symbol of the law, and is the compendious symbol and expression of heavenly grace. Grace is the necessary foundation, the preliminary of all blessing in heaven or earth; for it is the question of bringing sinners, and not righteous persons, home to God. But “God will give grace and glory.” Glory, we learn, is the sure consequent and indissoluble result of grace. Hence it is said, “Ye

of the city and its pearly gates, its glittering foundations and its golden streets, the nations of the saved walking in the light of it, and the kings of the earth bringing their glory unto it, there is one part of the description that alone fixes itself in the heart—“I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof!” What meaning does this give to the expression, “Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?”

In the close of Hebrews xii., I think, I see not only a dispensational aspect of the position in which believers are set by the coming and accomplished sacrifice of the Son of God, but also the great constituents of the scene, in the midst of which their blessing will be found, when heaven and earth are linked together in millennial glory under Christ. It is said in verses 22—24,

are come,” not alone, “to Mount Sion,” but, “unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;” and if Psalm cxxii. be here read, it will give the key to some apprehension of what, by the expression, is intended to be conveyed. In the Psalm it is the earthly Jerusalem; but here it is “the heavenly,” and its glory, proportionally, is transcendent; for it is the metropolis, not of a single earthly kingdom, but of heaven and of the universe, and the place of its glorious throne. What the attractiveness of this “city of the living God,” this “heavenly Jerusalem,” is, we may catch, if we reflect that Jerusalem was the central point of meeting to all the chosen tribes of Israel, the scene of their holy solemnities. It was the gathering place of those joyous worshippers who were “glad when they said, Let us go into the house of the Lord;” for the crowning glory of Jerusalem was, that it was the place of the temple, where Jehovah dwelt enshrined. But of “the heavenly Jerusalem” it is said, “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God

Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it;" so that as now the church is "built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," when it is transferred to the heaven of its destination, it will be so surrounded by the blessed presence of God and of the Lamb, that that very presence will be its temple.

But the heaven to which we are going is not an unpeopled solitude. "The heavenly Jerusalem" is not a cold array of solitary grandeur, where palaces untenanted and streets untrodden might awaken the thought of "a city of the dead." It is the great place of congress of the universe. "Myriads of angels" are there. It is "a general assembly."*

"His state is various."

But within these ranks of angels, this "innumerable company," and nearer to the throne, is "the church of the first-born ones enrolled in heaven." They are here presented in their own place, the place assigned them in the riches of God's grace, as the predestined heirs of

* The term is used to indicate the festal assembly of *all* the states of Greece.

If, therefore, one were in heaven, the heart, amidst its throbbings of wonder at heaven's magnificence, and happiness, and glory, would still be saying, Where is God? I *must* go unto "God, my exceeding joy." It must be so. But it is added, "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all." He is here indeed presented in His majesty as the Supreme and Sovereign Arbiter of all. But He who judges, and awards to all their destiny and place, is no less the God who is the eternal spring of all the happiness that angels know, and the source of every stream of goodness that ever flowed to refresh this weary world; while to us He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"—and that which follows, "God *our* Father," through Him.

But God surrounds Himself in heaven with more than we have seen; hence it is added, "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." The saints of former ages, who lived on earth before the development of the Church, which we have already seen, is in its place, in

this glory—the acknowledged citizens of this "city of the living God." On earth our Lord told His disciples to rejoice that their "names were *written in heaven*." And amidst the seductions and trials of this world, believers are admonished that their "citizenship is in heaven." This is presented as accomplished here; for it is the province of faith to see things as God sees them; though, at the same time, it may understand that what is first in counsel may be last in accomplishment. But what is heaven, or all the thronging hosts of angels and saints that people heaven, without the God whose presence alone gives its character to heaven? The effect of grace is to bring the soul to God, to find its resource in Him, to find life in His smile, and to know that "His lovingkindness is better than life." Besides, Jesus "suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God*;" and the effect of this *now*, through faith, is to give the soul a resting-place in God's presence, a home there, such as it can find nowhere else.

this "city of the living God." For let it not be supposed that, when these blessed constituents of heaven have ceased to be the moulding powers of faith and hope, that they are destined to fade away like the deceptive colourings of a dissolving view. "The things which are *seen* are temporal; but the things which are *not seen* are *eternal*." Resurrection will place these "spirits of just men made perfect" in this blissful scene; but, as it is said with regard to the resurrection, "every man in his own order," so these saints of earlier days are seen in their "own order," ("God, the Judge of all," has so awarded it,) as "the church of the first-born," are found in theirs. It is of them who formed the cloud of witnesses, who had finished their course in faith, which we have yet to run, that it is said, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some *better thing for us*, that they without us should not be made *perfect*."

But the complement of heaven's joy and heaven's attractiveness, is still,

by no means full. Its centre of unity, as the heaven of grace, cannot be wanting; as it would be if He were absent, or unseen, whose love and grace alone, and blood-shedding, have brought every poor sinner there. Jesus indeed is there; but He is there in special title, as in consonance with the immediate bearing of this scene on the faith of those who were especially to be stimulated and encouraged by it. "Ye are come . . . to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant;" to Him who, in this title, links earth and heaven together in the grounds of blessing, joining the risen saints in heaven with the accepted worshippers of earth; for it is with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" that this covenant will be made. Then will be accomplished the prophetic declaration, "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel"—the seed of God.

But it is added, "To the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things

is yet destined to see "days of heaven upon earth," amidst the bright scenes of millennial blessing; and in Israel's blessing there shall be as "life from the dead" to this poor world. Men, and especially Israel, like Cain, had been guilty of the death of Him who came as the only righteous One, and in love had allied Himself to man; but whose blood is now heard, not in demands of vengeance on the murderers, crying from the ground, but in accents of mercy, where judgment and vengeance only were due.

But "the half has not been told." Completeness on such a subject, what pen can describe, though far more skillfully handled than his who presents this sketch? Still, the little that has been presented may set the heart athirst for more; though no skill in the descriptions of heaven is sufficient to raise the affections there. Attachment to Christ was the secret of such men's longing after heaven as Rutherford's, and the Lord grant that it may be ours.

than that of Abel," which completes the link with earth again. "Mount Zion" was the starting point in the upward path to heaven; but from thence we have reached in our journey "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" and have passed through the ranks of the "myriads of angels" that form a part of this "*general assembly*," up to the place of "the church of the first-born ones enrolled in heaven;" and have "come,"—Oh, wondrous thought!—"to God the judge of all."

Higher, even in heaven, *in thought*, it is impossible to go: and hence we must take a downward path. If "*downward*" may be used when it is only intended to show the range of that heavenly grace which can gather a church from amongst sinners "dead in trespasses and sins," and plant it in glory, "hard by the throne of God;" making "the last first and the first last;" apportioning, too, in heavenly glory, the place of all; and then, through Jesus, bending down to earth again, and presenting in the new covenant and "the blood of sprinkling, the point of contact with Israel, which

THE LAW.

(Gen. xvi.—xxi.; Ex. xix.; Matt. xxvii.)

Wondrous are the premonitions we get in the Old Testament of the richer and fuller disclosures of the New. The old is the dawn or twilight of the noon-tide that shines in the new. Among other instances, or samples of this, I might mention "the law;" for we get in a section of the history of Abraham, that is, in Gen. xvi.—xxi., a short or miniature expression of the whole legal dispensation which lies between Ex. xix. and Matt. xxvii.

We may consider this great subject for a little while together.

The God of grace and glory had been dealing with Abraham from the very beginning of his history in Gen. xi.; and in chap. xv. a promise is given him that he should have a son. But he failed in confidence in God; and this, as I may say, brought Hagar and Ishmael into the house; and we know that that bondwoman and her son were, mystically, the law.

Hagar and Ishmael thus brought in through Abraham's unbelief or want of confidence in God, two things attach to them while in the house. They have title to be there, but they must be in subjection. The angel of the Lord thus instructs Hagar. (Gen. xvi.)

During this stay of Hagar and her child in Abraham's house, the God of grace, the God of the promise already made to Abraham, is true to Himself. He continues to make promises to His elect one. He ordains circumcision in the house of Abraham; and circumcision was the witness of grace, not of law. He visits Abraham, and distinguishes him in a very marked manner. He shelters him from the consequences of his own sad failures; and at last, He fulfils His promise, and gives him a child by Sarah. (Gen. xvii.—xxi.)

The birth of the promised child begins a new, but short, era in the story of Abraham. The two children are then in the house together for the little interval from the *birth* to the *weaning* of Isaac. Each, however, had his place in

the house, and neither could treat the other as an intruder. It was a strange time. It was difficult to manage matters, we may say; but so it was. The two mothers and their children, the bond-woman and the free-woman, with Isaac and Ishmael, were together in the house of Abraham.

The time, however, soon arrived for making a change. The two children get opportunity for manifesting their different tempers and their different relationships to the house; and this works a separation. Ishmael, the elder, the son of the bondwoman, a youth of fourteen years of age, strong in the flesh, despises the feeble infant when it was weaned, when it was just beginning to feed on strong meat, to know its relationship, as it were, and to cry, Father! All this marks a full moral divergence between the two children; and Sarah, the free-woman, demands the casting out of the mocking son of the bondwoman; and accordingly, though with some grief of heart, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael out of the house, and Sarah

and Isaac dwell there alone. And I may say this took place ere Isaac was old enough to make acquaintance with the child who had been now sent away. All that Isaac could have known of Ishmael must have been by family tradition, or what he had heard of him, as I may further say, through his mother.*

Thus, in these materials, thus lying in Gen. xvi.—xxi., we get the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham. We see their introduction there, and how they were to dwell there for a time, and then, their dismissal. This is the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham; but it is also the story, in mystic dress, of the law in the house of Israel, as between Ex. xix. and Matt. xxvii.

What wonders! What a miniature, and what a full-sized portrait! And we may now see that the miniature

* Isaac and Ishmael meeting together afterwards, to bury their father, as we see in chap. xxv. 9, makes no difference as to this. Isaac did not know Ishmael in the house of his father, Abraham.

bore all the features of the full-length figure.

Grace and salvation had visited Israel. The God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob had gone down to Egypt and delivered them out of that house of bondage, had then gone before them in a pillar of cloud and of fire, had made a passage for them through the Red Sea, and had guided them in safety and in honour to the mount of God—the pledge and earnest of the coming kingdom. (Ex. i.—xviii.)

But now, as Abraham had failed in confidence in God, after God had done such wonders in grace for him, so now Israel conceive confidence in themselves, after God had done all these wonders in grace and power for them. And this introduces the law into the midst of them, (Ex. xix.) as want of confidence in God had brought Ishmael into Abraham's house.* The law thus brought

* Want of confidence in God, and confidence in ourselves, thus betrayed by Abraham and by Israel severally, are the two sources of the

in by reason of Israel's self-confidence, the same two things attach to it there, as, by the voice of the angel of the Lord, were attached to Hagar in the house of Abraham. The law has title to be there, but it ought to be in subjection, or the one to serve the heirs of promise. The Lord Jesus decides this point in His argument with the Pharisees at the opening of Matt. xii.; and so I believe St. Paul does in his arguments in Rom. ii., and Gal. iii. iv.

But then, again, as during the stay of Hagar and Ishmael in Abraham's house, the God of grace, who had been there before them, was true to Himself and true to Abraham, nourishing, as we saw, the heart and the hope of His elect in various ways, so now, during the age of the law, the same God of grace nourishes the hearts and the hopes of His Israel. Among other things, we see this all through the Old Testament from Ex. xix. Ordinances were set among them, the shadows of good working of the legal mind in ourselves, as they introduced the law in Gen. xvi., and Ex. xix.

Ishmael. Each had title to be there. Neither could treat the other as an intruder. It was a strange time. It was, again I say, difficult to manage matters. This was the period of the four Evangelists. But the strangeness, the peculiarity of that season, the difficulty of ordering things duly while such divers elements were found in company with each other, only serves to set off the bright moral glory of the Lord Jesus, as we see Him tread His way during that season, the season of His sojourn here in flesh. For He was then, at one and the same time, the witness and minister of the Father, or of God in grace, and the perfect servant and fulfiller of all righteousness under the law.

The time, however, arrives for the making of a change. The Lord of salvation is offered up, a sacrifice for sin. By His death He destroys him that has the power of death, as well as makes reconciliation for sinners. But not only that. He cancels the law to all who believe on Him. He nails it to His cross. And the saints of God could

things to come. Long-suffering goodness was exercised towards them. Discipline was exercised. Pledges upon pledges that they had not been forgotten were given to them. Deliverances were wrought for them. Saviours were raised up to them. Prophecies of glories still to be displayed in the midst of them, with all the grace that was to prepare the way for those glories, were published from time to time. They were kept alive in spite of a thousand provocations, as they are to this day. And at the last, the promised Messiah is born to them, as the promised Isaac had been born to Abraham and Sarah.

Wondrous accuracy in the resemblance between the miniature of which we speak and this full-length portrait!

But as we compare them still further, it is only more of this we see.

The birth of Messiah, like the typical birth of Isaac, begins a new but short era in the course of the legal or Mosaic dispensation. The two children are then in the house together; as I may express it, Christ and Moses, like Isaac and

then say that they were dead to the law by the body of Christ. It had dominion over them as alive; but now, in the age of the resurrection of Christ, they were no longer as a living, but as a dead and risen generation.

This great event, the crucifixion of the Christ of God, takes place, as I may say, in the day of Matt. xxvii.; and then, in principle, the law had ended its course, as it began it in Ex. xix. The self-confidence of Israel had brought it in; the self-sacrifice of the Son of God now, as to the elect, puts it out. And when the Spirit of the Son was given, when the Holy Ghost, on the glorification of Jesus, came down, and was a spirit of adoption in the elect, forming Christ in them, making them the true Isaac, and breathing in them the mind of the children of the free-woman, then, as Paul teaches us, the true Ishmael, the spirit of the bond-woman must go at the bidding of the zealous, indignant demands of faith. They could not dwell together. The one who shares the spirit of adoption does not, cannot, know the

spirit of bondage. Isaac never knew Ishmael: the saint of this dispensation does not know the law. "If ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."*

The law still lives for the ungodly and for sinners. That I know. (1 Tim. i. 9.) But again I say, the Isaac of this dispensation does not know the law, or Ishmael. It left the house ere, I may say, he entered it.

Surely, then, after tracing these wondrous coincidences between the miniature of Gen. xvi.—xxi., and the full-sized painting of Ex. xix.—Matt. xxvii., we may stand and admire the divine harmonies which are found in the oracles of God, and see another vivid and brilliant ray of that self-evidencing light which shines in the whole volume from beginning to end. And we may afresh assure ourselves, how truly known unto God

* Of course I mean in principle. The saint may know too painfully the workings of the legal mind. But he treats it as unworthy of his calling of God in Christ Jesus. One has said, "The Church never has seen Christ in the flesh." True. I just add, neither has the Church ever known, personally, the law.

home or at ease, as all His intercourses with His elect in the Book of Genesis show us; but when He appears in Ex. xix., about to take His place as in the law, He is as evidently not at home, not at ease; an expression of this is given to the whole occasion.

Again I say, wonderful—and as precious as it is marvellous! What secrets of the divine bosom disclose themselves through all these strokes and touches in the way and in the writing of God!

But I must say a little further as to this, and upon law generally.

Adam was put under law; for the God of all grace, and who is love, delighting in the exercise of His nature, leads His creature to stand, not in self-sufficiency, or on title of innocency, but in grace and on the ground of redemption. He tests him accordingly, prescribing a law to him by the observance of which he must stand, and by the breach of which he must fall. He fell—sin entered, and death followed.

In a great general sense, there was no need, after this, that law should be

are all His works from the beginning of the creation.

But still further as to the law. Having been brought in through the self-confidence of Israel, God uses it. He makes it a test. "The man that doeth it shall live by it," He is willing to say. He causes the offence to abound by it. He makes sin by it to become exceeding sinful, and turns it into transgression. These and like uses He makes of it, causing it to serve some of the ends and purposes of His holy wisdom. But—blessed to tell it—*He never joins Himself with it, as though He were making it His witness or representative.* He left it in the hands of angels and a Mediator, keeping Himself, the rather, in company with the promises, or with the ministration of grace. (Gal. iii.) He will have it listened to as spoken by angels, while He speaks of salvation. (Heb. ii.) He is still in the midst of those counsels and secrets of grace which He was occupied with, when (as it were left to Himself,) He was dealing with the patriarchs. He was then like one at

applied to the creature, a second time. He had already broken it, and ruined himself; and immediately upon that, grace applied itself to his condition, and he was put into a blessed wondrous system of redemption, such a system of combined mercy and righteousness as was to cost God everything, and to secure to the sinner everything.

What a display of God was this; and we find it all produced immediately on the entrance of sin, in the words of the Lord to the serpent!

But, as we have seen, in the progress of this paper, though the Lord does not a second time apply law to the condition of the creature, yet, when either self-confidence in the creature, or his want of confidence in God brings it in, the Lord uses it for ends of His own wisdom, proving by it the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and by it causing the offence to abound. But it does not become His principle of action a second time. It had been that in Gen. ii., but it is not that in either Gen. xvi. or Ex. xix. It stole in, or came in, by the

bye; or incidentally then, (see Rom. v. 20, Greek,) and was not the principle of divine action, or the witness and expression of God Himself. It had already done its needed work when it had tested Adam, proved creature-insufficiency, and laid in ruined creation the basis of a displayed, glorious redemption.

And, again I may say, when it is thus brought in a second time, the Lord expresses His indisposedness to it. The very first time that He appears to Abraham after Ishmael had been brought into His house, He calls on Abraham to repent, and to walk before Him again. (Gen. xvii. 1.) This has a voice in it. And I have already noticed this same indisposedness, in the evident restlessness and want of ease and satisfaction that mark Him in Ex. xix.; and also in the Spirit in the apostle being careful to show the Lord in company with *promise*, while He left *law* to be ministered by angels and a Mediator. (Gal. iii., Heb. ii.)

All this, surely, gives us not only a clear, but a very significant history of

under the law, the law had dominion over Him only as alive; when dead, and risen, and glorified, it had no title to Him, nor to His elect as dead and risen with Him. Let the law plead its own cause, and even then it must be dismissed upon its own showing, when it faces not a living but a dead and risen man.

The Galatians, I may add, exceeded Abraham in that which was contrary to God in this matter. He grieved at having to part with Hagar and Ishmael when the voice of the Lord, through Sarah, demanded this of him; but they were daring enough to bring the bondwoman and her son back and home again, after, by the voice of the Lord, they had been sent away. (Gen. xxi; Gal. iv.)

O we have much to watch against—the spirit of Abraham in Genesis xvi., the spirit of Israel at the foot of mount Sinai, and the spirit of the Galatians among the churches of the New Testament. The soul needs ever to have to do with God in grace; not dealing with

law. It tells us not only when it came in, but how it came in, and God's relationship to it. It was not His rest or dwelling-place; it was not His witness. And can I, after reading such a history of law as this, judge that it is simply in the righteousness of it God will have His saints to shine before Him in the courts of His glory in heaven? Most surely do I conclude, that it is in other and brighter robes, robes of His own preparing, and not of the law's preparing, that He will array them for His own eternity.

The Lord, in dwelling here on earth for a season, and in the midst of Israel, the circumcised, was made under the law as well as of a woman. He vindicated the excellency and perfections of that law which God gave when Israel, in self-confidence, challenged or accepted it. He rendered up to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit, and proved Himself also to be the true circumcision, the only Son of man who ever kept the whole law, as circumcision under Moses demanded. But even as a Jew, as made

Him as a Judge but as a Saviour, apprehending Him in the exercise of a love that never wearies, and is from everlasting to everlasting. We have to live the life of faith in the love, the self-sacrificing love of the Son of God towards our very selves. (Gal. ii. 20.)

THE WALK OF FAITH.

(Heb. xi. 8—10, 17—19.)

The faith of Abraham, bearing as it does the very same characteristics as our own faith, is a study full of instruction for us; his difficulties, produced for the most part by his failure, are also such as we often have to encounter, whether in pursuing the path of faith or in our deviations therefrom.

What then was the object of Abraham's call? It was to be a witness for God against that independence which man had declared in the building of Babel. Noah had been the witness to the time of Abraham; but Abraham's call was altogether of faith, a witness for

God *against* the evil and in opposition to the evil. The first action of faith was to leave his country and all associations of the flesh. That was his starting point, and next he becomes a stranger in the land of promise, and is there by faith sustained of God.

Thus is it with the believer. He is called from the associations of nature, characterized only by human independence and is introduced into a region where he is as yet only a stranger, and where the most thorough and entire dependence on God is necessary. We have not yet got the inheritance, though the Spirit gives us the earnest of it, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; but we are still strangers. A man in his own country would not be a stranger there. Abraham was not a stranger in the land of the Chaldees, but in Canaan he *was* such; and still further, he could only continue there by faith. If he lose his faith, for *one moment*, he is worse off than if he had never got there at all. So with us; God has done all for us—He has raised

already called up into the heavenlies might *rest* there, that their eyes being opened practically to realize the position which love had brought them into, as recorded in Eph. i. ii., they might rest knowing this love. (Chap. iii.)

Every Christian knows, more or less, the love that has acted towards him, but it is another thing to know *where* that love has brought me to; and if I do not know this I shall be floundering. So the apostle prays that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened "to know what is the hope of *his calling*," &c. And what is this? Not that we *shall* be, but that we *ARE*, raised up with Christ. Am I, then, in heaven? Yes. God tells me that is my position. Is glory come? No; I must know very little of the pressure of the world if I think it has; but if not, we have heaven by faith, and if not maintained there practically by faith, I shall be worse off than ever; I shall become a Lot! A miserable spectacle was Abraham when he lost his faith. Seeing a difficulty, he was unprepared to meet it,

us up and seated us in heavenly places with His own Son; but if we do not maintain that position in the power of faith, we shall be worse off, to all intents and purposes, than if we had not known it.

I am not only to leave my own country, but to go to my own place, that place where, so to speak, God has exhausted all the activity of His love. Love is never satisfied until it has done its utmost for its object, and human love knows the pain and distress which the inability to do this causes; but God, infinite in power as well as love, can and does the utmost. He has exhausted all the demands which love made on His heart, and He can do no more for us. He gave Christ; called us into fellowship with Him; raised us up with Him. What more *could* He do? In Ephesians the apostle does not pray for the saints to know the *activities* of love; he knew that it was there *exhausted*, as it were, that is, that it had done all its part, all that it *could* do for its object; but he prays that the souls of the saints

for never was a person prepared by faith for a difficulty found unable to meet it; and many have to encounter difficulties simply because they do not set themselves to meet them. Abraham's position in the land of Canaan was very different to that of Israel's. Israel was in possession, but Abraham dwelt in the land without possessing so much as a foot in it, and was sustained therein as long as his faith failed not; but whenever it does fail, he either wanders *from* it, or gets into trouble *in* it. Once he drops his faith and goes into Egypt, and what is the result? He has to come back, and begin *over again*: that was *one* character of failure. If the soul does not draw from the resources of God, it goes down elsewhere for help. Again he deviates from the path of faith, and falls into ordinances, or human arrangements, as in the case of Hagar and Ishmael: that was *another* order. The soul drops its living link with God; and how much sorrow and trouble did he thereby bring on himself! If a Christian drops from the walk of faith, he either

becomes worldly or engaged with his *own* works. Nature cannot depend on God doing better for us than we can do for ourselves; it will crave after plan and fret itself to accomplish its *own* way, all the while proving that we have lost our dependence on God. Abraham with shame has to retrace his steps, but God did not give him up, though he disciplined him. If He had, Abraham would have become a Lot, and there would have been no recovery or blessing, for Lot never again takes his place in Canaan.

But it is of Abraham's faith, rather than of his failures, that I desire to speak.

Let us turn and look at the action of faith, and the character of blessing which walking therein gives. Supposing, then, that while firmly treading this blessed path so happy for oneself, and so glorifying to God, I meet a Lot, who is looking about for something for nature, what shall I say to him? "Take what you like best: I want nothing. I can afford to give up all; for I know what I

feet. Neither can we do so *rightly* unless we follow the manner as well as the act of His service to us. Why is it that, when we wish to correct a fault in another, we only offend him? Because we do it not as the Lord has done it to ourselves; we have not learnt His manner: if we had, it would be rehearsing the blessedness of it to our own souls. It was thus with Abraham; and the result is, Melchizedek meets him in the way returning from his honourable service. God reveals His mind to the soul that is walking in faith. If I have not God's mind, it is because I am not walking where God can meet me. Nothing gratifies Him so much as for a soul to depend on Him; for it is to say to Him, "I look to you, because I *know* you care for me, and I can cast all my care on you."

To continue. God reveals Himself to Abraham in a special way after his rejecting the offers of the King of Sodom. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." And Abraham replies, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go

have in God. His love is, as it were, ~~exhausted~~ on me. What more do I need?" But when trouble comes upon Lot, and he is taken prisoner in the meshes he had laid for himself, *then* is the moment for service, as far as I am concerned. Abraham puts his life in his hand, summoning together *all* the resources of his house for this one occasion to deliver his brother, just as we, when on firm footing ourselves, can turn round and pull another out of the mire. Could we do so if we were in the mire ourselves? No; but if walking in faith, we can come forth, armed and ready, using all our means to declare all God's goodness, in the power of having experienced it ourselves. And what is our reward? The *blessing of Melchizedek*.

What a place of service the path of faith puts us in! Lot knew neither the service nor the blessing. Instead of being on the sure ground and the firm position, which would have left him free to help others, he needed help for himself. We cannot wash the feet of another unless the Lord has washed our

childless," &c. *He craved the promised seed.* "What were all else to me," he says, "if I have no son:" because God had made that the centre around which all His promises were to revolve. Position would be nothing to us without the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. All our blessings centre in Him. And whatever the scope of our blessing, we never could enjoy it solitarily. Heaven would not be happiness to us without Christ. Why is man alone down here? Because he cannot trust anybody. But we can trust the Lord Jesus entirely, knowing at the same time all the anxious tenderness of His love. He is the only one we can rest in. He is up there as the perpetuity of our blessing; and we are raised up to sit with Him in the heavenly places. Everything really from God to us in this world is through our Lord Jesus Christ. All God's mercies reach us through Him. The mercies or gifts may be removed from us; but *He*—never! Are we prepared for every mercy we possess to pass into death? Do we only enjoy it as received in a

figure from death? This is what faith teaches us, as it taught Abraham—to view everything, though existing, as akin to death. God takes away Jonah's gourd and he is angry; but if I am prepared to let all die, I am walking up to the mark, as Abraham did, when by faith he "offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." The greater the mercy, the greater the death. What terrible rending of soul there is in the ascent of Mount Moriah! How one shrinks from it, and puts off the evil day; and when it does come, how we fret, like Jonah, that such a thing should come. Yet not so with Abraham, his faith bore him through it; and in the power of the like faith we, too, may ascend, and see Jesus all the way; and if we do, we shall be able to say, "My only son is dead, but I have lost nothing; Jesus is mine, and I shall receive what I have lost in resurrection." What a thing to

had come to an end. God will never keep His mercies back from us; but we know little of the manner of His love with us; and the very gourd that engages our affections may be that which must come down, in order to teach us His love.

To conclude, if we know our position we shall be better prepared for service; and better prepared for glory. If we want to serve the Lord we must walk by faith, holding our position, because then we enjoy the climax of God's love; and if we want glory we must pass on to it through resurrection. For twenty-two years Abraham and Isaac were in the happy enjoyment of one another. God demanded him of Abraham in the full bloom of life, just to teach him the lesson of death and resurrection. Does God thus deprive us of mercies in order that we may feel how dreary is the valley of the shadow of death? Nay, but to make it the brighter. All these terrible breaks are but to show us more of our infinite resources in Jesus. Oh! if our hearts could reckon more on the

be able to hold all as liable to death, but to have my own soul at the other side of death in life and joy. All we take up will have to pass through death; yea, even all that God gives us; the more perfect the gift, the more sorrow on account of its not being permanent; for we want permanency with perfection. "I do well to be angry," said Jonah, when he lost his gourd. But what had he to learn? The sympathies of God; His love and tenderness to His creation down here, which he never had, even for himself, an idea of before.

If the Lord brings to an end what we are resting in, He always conducts to a higher scene. Moses on Pisgah had a much brighter view of Canaan than if his thought of entering it had not come to an end; and he stepped from it to the mount of transfiguration. Was there ever so happy a man as Paul? We have the practical expression of the place he was in in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, the position and the condition; and that was when all that his heart had been set on here

heart of Christ, and know so well the shelter of His love, that if a storm comes and sweeps away everything that comforts, (as a feather from God's wing,) we may know where to look, seeing Jesus everywhere, restoring it in resurrection, as Lazarus was restored to his sisters. Then the walk of faith is happy dependence on God.

FRAGMENTS.

The single eye is receiving everything in the light of God. To view it so transmits as God views it. It is an apprehension of the word and mind and counsels of God judging all that is presented. The soul thus receives nothing but as judged of by God, and the whole existence is in the light. It gives also "a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," as if you were enlightened by a bright and sudden shining. If thine eye be evil, receiving a judgment that is morally the reverse of the word and counsel and judgment of God, thy

whole body is full of darkness. See therefore that the light that is in thee, and that you boast of, be not darkness.

Seeking first the kingdom of God—subject to Christ—practical obedience as immediate to Himself. To do so, creates such an interest in Christ as a charge on Him that He would not let you want for His own glory's sake. It is not that you should not eat and drink and clothe yourself; but belong to Him, consult Him, serve Him as His in a world that is not His. The world being considered as a thing never to be kept for itself, and parted with as that to which you are in no way bound; given away as future treasure; God supplying all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Seeking things for themselves is to do as the Gentiles do. It was the fault of the prodigal son to ask for his inheritance before the time.

'Tis Jesus their Saviour, who's coming, ere dawn,
From the darkness to catch them away:
To their eyes He'll appear as the herald of morn,
The golden forerunner of day.

With what hearts have they watched for His
coming again!
Through whole ages of darkness they've waited
for Him.

They have known what it is to have trouble and
pain,
Heavy hearts, and tired eyes growing dim.

But their star will arise: not a doubt but it will.
When the night's at the darkest their star will
appear.
Through the world-folding-clouds it will issue, to
fill
Their souls with its radiance clear.

With these watchers I'll join, for their hopes are
my own:
I've been washed in the Saviour's blood.
Of His Church I'm a part—of His fold I am
one:
I'm the child of His Father and God.

In the prayer of these watchers I'll heartily join,
When the Spirit and bride whisper, Come.
"Lord Jesus, come quickly" 's a cry that is mine.
When that's utter'd, how could I be dumb?

Why cannot they pray? Prayer is a spiritual exercise—they are immersed in sense. Prayer lifts us above this world—they mind earthly things. With their eyes rivetted upon earth, how should they look up to heaven. May we by improvement of the grace already given, prevail upon God to pour upon us more and more abundantly the Spirit of grace and supplication, in sense of our need; for, be assured, if we would ever go to heaven ourselves, our hearts and desires must be there before us.

THE WATCHERS.

(Rev. xxii. 16, 17.)

Through the slow-rolling hours of the desolate
night,
There are watchers still watching to see
The star of the morning discover its light.
What a moment its dawning will be!

For their hopes are all centred in that single star;
And whenever its light shall appear,
They'll be caught, they'll be wrapt, in a moment,
far, far,
From the face of this sin-furrowed sphere.

COMMUNION.

Read Exodus xxix.

It is often profitable and helpful to us that current expressions should take a defined form in our minds. Few expressions are more in vogue than those of communion and fellowship, and as the terms are scriptural and expressive of our highest calling and deepest spiritual feelings, they are well worth a little meditation and analysis.

What then is communion? It is the partaking in common with another of any given condition. The word *κοινωνία* (communion or fellowship) is used twenty times in the New Testament, and in every case bears this signification. In four of these passages (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 4; ix. 13; Heb. xiii. 16;) it is communion of act rather than of feeling; the value of the act of course springing from the feeling, but the word is used to express the nature of the contribution of the saints, and fitly so, for they all had a common share in the act. It was the principle of

gathering the manna; each contributed to the common stock and thus they had fellowship in the work. In the other passages the word is applied to feeling rather than to act, and this determines more distinctly its moral meaning.

We first find it in Acts ii. 42: "They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" thus expressing the sense of participative feeling which each had with all in the religious exercise in which they were engaged; and for the first time in the history of God's people on the earth, showing how they had now a common sense together of distinct engagements before God; i.e., they felt that they were interchanging a collective feeling. This is still more fully conveyed in 1 Cor. x. 16, in the words "communion of the blood of Christ," which teaches us that we should have a feeling, weak and imperfect it may be, but yet a feeling absolutely in common with what the blood of Christ indicates and supplies. The contrast to this is shown by the use of the same word in

2 Cor. vi. 14: "What communion hath light with darkness"—what blending—what communicating of interest—what commingling of parts can such antagonistic elements have? Now 1 Cor. i. 9 instructs us as to what the saints are called unto, even, "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;" i.e., to share in common with Him; and though our apprehensions may be, and are very limited, yet every true apprehension we have is one in common with His. So also it is used in Phil. iii. 10, where it refers to sufferings, and not enjoyments; "the fellowship of His sufferings;" and in Phil. ii. 1 we find it in a very high sense, "fellowship of the Spirit," i.e. having a common feeling or purpose with the Spirit; and this is the sense in which the word is used in its very highest doctrinal enunciation in 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" thus announcing to us, that being partakers of the eternal life which was with the Father, through the Son, we are now sustained by the Spirit in fel-

lowship with the Father and the Son, i.e. in common feeling as to the enjoyment and activities of this eternal life which belongs to the Father and the Son and is ours as given by them. Our feeling therein may be weak and ambiguous; but still, the fact remains, that what *we* have *imperfectly* is in common with what the Father and the Son have *perfectly*.

So much for the general term communion; but we may find profit in analyzing the nature of it a little more closely in the light of Exodus xxix. which beautifully sets forth the whole subject of communion: our introduction thereinto, and progress onward to the highest order and experience of it. First there is atonement, and washing off all that the soul requires for acceptance, without which there could be no communion. And then there is consecration, or "filling" (in the Septuagint, perfection, *τελείωσις*, only used twice in the New Testament, Luke i.; Heb. vii.) all conveying that, as accepted, we are now to be introduced into a full, perfect

sense of our blessedness, and this as an essential preliminary to service or *co-operation*, which is communion of *act*, as interchange is of *feeling*. Now, there were two rams; one is wholly offered up, which, I consider, typifies our Lord gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God: the other is the ram of consecration, i.e. Himself, too; but *as apprehended by us*, and presented by us while possessing Him and holding Him in our hands; and this, in two distinct points, the fat and the right shoulder, one His excellency, and the glory declared in resurrection in consequence of His death; and the other, (the right shoulder) the power of His resurrection. These were presented in company with the high priest and taken up by God as a sweet savour, while the breast was waved by Moses (typifying Christ as the Son of God) and representing the affections of the heart of the sent one—*not burned*, but eternally waved for us. Thirdly, the residue of the ram was eaten by Aaron and his sons in the holy place.

Now I think there are three orders or divisions, so to speak, of our communion, which, though consequent on one another, are still quite distinct. 1st. We have communion with Christ *where He is*, even in the heavenlies. 2ndly. We apprehend and enter into His excellencies. 3rdly. We have the consciousness of strength and support derivative from Him and of Him; He imparting to us of Himself for our support down here: this is eating in the holy place. Each of these three divisions I regard as set forth in the first ram wholly offered up, and the two parts of the second, the ram of consecration.

I have said the first order is, communion with Christ where He is—that is to say, the soul has consciousness of participation with Him who is our life, and in that place to which He has gone; it has fellowship with Him in that position, and fellow-sentiments as to what that position is; but the second order is still higher—it is the consecration or filling: the fat, right shoulder, and breast of the ram, the apprehension of the ex-

cellency, power, and affections of Christ, which, according as they are vigorously and correctly apprehended, give strength and skill to our souls to judge of and ascertain all the ways of God on earth, and make a man what the apostle calls “spiritual, judging all things.” The great interpreter and elucidation of all God’s purposes is our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is according as we apprehend, know, and have common feeling with Him, that we are able to comprehend what the counsels and ways of God are tending towards; for God will glorify Him, and set Him forth in full manifestation in all the excellency which is now partially and feebly apprehended by us; but in proportion as it is apprehended, are we able to comprehend His ways and works, and to be practically in common feeling—in fellowship with Him. This is a partaking of His mind, as it were, an understanding and responding to it, a sharing of His judgment of things.

It is evident that these two orders of communion which I have adduced, and which the two rams present to us, are

very different and quite distinct. In both cases I am, so to speak, in the company of Christ, and in the region in which He now is; and I cannot be in His company without having more or less sense of it; but I may have a large measure of appreciation of my position and *identification with Him therein*, (which is fellowship,) without that apprehension of His *excellency* which makes me sensible of interchange and intimacy with His *mind*. We may illustrate the two in a lower sense by the example of Peter and John, in John xiii. Both were in the Lord’s presence, both were conscious of participation with Him in position and association, but Peter was ignorant of His *mind*; and though in His presence, he *was* anxious; whereas John enjoyed intimacy; he leant on His bosom, and had free interchange as to any question that might arise. Communion with the Lord’s *mind* comprises everything. Mere interpretation of Scripture falls very short of it, unless it be active at the time, suitable to the occasion, and in the sense

of His *presence*. Thus it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, when their hearts “burned within them as He opened to them the Scriptures;” and thus, though unconsciously to themselves, they were in communion with both His presence and His mind, advancing deeper into it, the further He led them thereinto. These illustrations, though drawn from the Lord’s sojourn *on earth* and His corporeal presence, serve to show the distinction between fellowship with the mere presence or company of another and that of the *mind* which is thus present with us. Now, of course, it is His spiritual presence, unseen save to faith; and the region of this communion must be *where He is*, even in the heavenlies; but many a soul is happily and blessedly conscious of its participation with Him there; and moreover, that its sentiments as to that position and portion are identical in *nature* though not in degree with His, who, nevertheless, does not know that intimacy which enables it to enter into His feelings, tastes, and judgments

of all things; and this is the difference between godliness (*εὐσέβεια*) and spirituality. Godliness refers everything to Him, spirituality feels and thinks *with* Him.

And now as to the third division of our communion, which is, however, part of the second, closely allied to it, and the effect of it. It is the *residue* of the ram of consecration, eaten by *Aaron and his sons in the holy place*. (Ver. 32.) This I regard as the strength and nourishment which accrue to the soul from the apprehension and communion typified by the other part of the ram, burned and waved. And here it is communion with one another, as well as with the High Priest. We feed on it together: "in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." It is the effect of being in apprehension with all saints of the "length, breadth, depth, and height;" and this effect is to be "filled in all the fulness of God." It is a consummation—a finishing up, as it were. David knew something in his measure (fettered,

of course, by his dispensational position) of each of these orders of communion when he "sat before the Lord" in the full sense of His presence, full intelligence of His mind and counsel respecting himself, His people, and all things; as well as full sympathy and *fellow-feeling* with Him, possessionally apprehending what God was for him, and in His own intrinsic excellency, and feeding thereon in meditation and tranquil enjoyment. We are called to it in a far higher sense, our fellowship being based on UNION with Him who is the object and centre of it.

In conclusion, this chapter (Ex. xxix.) sets forth to us in type the means by which we are introduced into this blessed position and experience in our priestly character. The first thing is acceptance; secondly, communion, of which we have three divisions—first, that of positional participation with Christ, the power of which the soul enters into in the offering up of the first ram—secondly, that of apprehension of His excellency, mental interchange of thought and feeling, as

set forth by the fat, shoulder, and breast of the ram of consecration—and thirdly, that of strength and nourishment derived therefrom, *with Him and with one another*: while *abiding* with Him in heaven, eating the residue in the holy place.

THE WALK OF A BELIEVER.

Phil. ii. 1—16.

That as believers we are "to walk and to please God" is a truth which none who have known the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for themselves will be disposed to deny. But the admission of this truth in very few minds perhaps amounts to more than a vague and general impression that piety is to mark the conduct of a Christian; without any very definite reference to any rule or example to which his walk is to be conformed.

The design of this paper, by the Lord's help, is to give definiteness to

this rule, in statement at least; trusting to His grace to give it power in the heart.

The special subject of the Epistle to the Philippians is the walk of the believer here in this world, journeying toward heaven; and in consonance with this, it unfolds the springs of his energy and the final issue of his course; interweaving with it his true and proper experience by the way. It presents the practical and earthly side of the Christian's heavenly calling.

In chap. ii. 15, 16, the rule, the force of which we are seeking, is given. "Blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

The definiteness of this rule receives its illustration from what Christ Himself was in His walk down here in this world; though the apostle himself could add, with rare devotion, "Brethren, be followers together of *me*, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an

ensample." If this exhortation to be "blameless and harmless" is to be anything more with us than the words of a book, we must know that it is a tone of spirit that goes along with personal devotedness to Christ, and is never found apart from the soul's intimacy with Him who, having given it rest from its heavy burden, now says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am *meek and lowly in heart*:"—and who had just before said to His disciples, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

But the relationship in which, through grace, we stand to God, comes into the force of the rule; for we are to walk as "sons of God," according to the exhortation in Eph. v. 1, "Be ye therefore imitators of God (*μιμηται*) as children beloved." The privilege (and who can estimate it highly enough?) and the responsibility are coupled together. It was what Christ *was* as Son of God that stamped its character on His whole walk through this world, and gave it its

have given them thy word, and the world hath *hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." While in His own example He gives the ground of the world's hatred of Him, when He says, "*Me* it hateth, because I testify of it that its works are evil."

"What communion hath light with darkness?"

Hence, in our rule it is added, "among whom ye shine as lights in the world." The effect of grace is thus expressed in Eph. v. 8: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" and the exhortation founded on it is, "walk as children of light." And in the Epistle of Peter, "That ye should show forth the praises (virtues) of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." This also has its illustration in the walk of the Lord Jesus here on earth; as He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." There is no such thing

entire contrariety to the world: as He said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." But, then, it is with no less definiteness said of believers, "Now are we *the sons of God*;" and it is added, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, *because it knew him not*." The rule of our walk, then, in this part of it, has its force in us when we daily and habitually bear in mind what infinite grace has made us, and are found going on through the world as the sons of God to the home of glory, where Christ has gone before us.

But we are also to be "without rebuke"—or cause of blame or reproach—"in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Separated from the world, in its separation from God and its coming doom, is what every Christian will glory in being; but all will not, alas! allow the thought that there should now be a personal moral separation from its principles and aims, its habits and maxims, its character and course. But what is the meaning, then, of those words of our Lord and Master, (John xvii.,) "I

as being "lights in the world," except as we are practically living the life of Christ, and are walking in that path which He has marked out for us. To be "lights in the world," we must in spirit and act express, according to our feeble measure, what He was here in the world; as it is said, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." And hence the apostle could say, "Ye are *our* epistle, *known and read of all men*." But it is well to be reminded that we are not true, or worthy, epistles of Christ, unless Christ can be livingly read in us by the world through which we are passing.

"Holding forth the word of life;" as the heavenly bodies hold out their light, and are only seen by the light they give. So here "the word of life" is looked at as reflected in the life and walk of the believer; as our Lord says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Such is the rule we are to walk by, such is to be our aim.

But let me ask the question, is this the definite conception that we have constantly before our minds of what a Christian should be in his walk? Is this the rule that I propose to myself for the daily, hourly regulation of my life? Is it with me a matter of definite thought (to say nothing of attainment) that I ought, as a Christian, as seen by others, and most seen by those who see me most, to be blameless and harmless, a son of God, without rebuke, shining as a light in the world, and holding forth the word of life? Do I recognize this as my standard? It is something to have the aim right. It is frightful to think how much truth we admit—that is, do not deny—and how little of its practical power we express! One looks at the example of Christ, at the course of the apostle, at the simple and unstrained statements of the legitimate effects of the principles of the Gospel, and what, in truth, were those effects, as seen in the Acts and in the Epistles; and then looks round on those who admit, and glory in admitting, that there is no

a great thing to have before our minds fairly and honestly *the true standard*. I may then come short and fail; but if the standard be corrupted or lost, all is gone; there is no hope. If it were always in the recollection that the *imitation of Christ* is the true rule of a believer's walk, while, as it may be readily supposed, it would abate any feelings of self-complacency, as if we had already attained, it would also elevate our *aim*; and that, I again repeat, is something gained. For as it has been quaintly said, "He will shoot higher who aims at the stars, than he who only makes a tree his mark."

But the rule, so far as it has been hitherto disclosed, is only the didactic expression of what is presented in the living example of our Lord in the previous part of the chapter. In whatever way the love of Christ is in truth brought home to our hearts, we get by it a lever that raises at once our aims and spirit and walk above this world. It was the kindness of the Philippians in supplying the apostle's necessities

lower standard than the Scriptures for the ascertainment of what a Christian should be in standing and privilege, in hope and in walk; and the survey brings home a kind of aching into the soul, a chill of almost hopelessness upon the heart, at the thought of what once was, and what now is, as to the practical legitimate effect of the same unaltered truths, professed and believed, and oftentimes believed, it may be, to be *adequately expressed*!

It may be want of faith in the writer, his infirmity; but with this thought before his mind, it is hardly possible for him to look at any exhortation or practical truth of the New Testament—at anything almost beyond the unmixed grace of Christ in the salvation of a sinner—without this feeling. It is, I admit, no part of the Spirit's work to produce despondency; for to the end will He be here to take of the things of Christ and show them to us: and whatever else may fail or decay, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." But, I repeat, it is

during his imprisonment for the Gospel's sake, that awakened, as it were anew, his sense of the wonderful love of Christ, and set the springs of his admiration and gratitude flowing anew. Hence he says, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like minded," &c. This is the ground of his exhortation and entreaty, and it is according to the vividness of our apprehension of these heavenly motives that we are in possession of the secret springs of power to answer in any sense to this earnest entreaty. The more the heart is found dwelling on these things, the more the force of the moral exhortation is enhanced, and the greater the power to obey it.

In looking at the precepts of the divine word in contrast with the spirit of the world, and the temper and bearing that are so natural to us as men, how do they bear enstamped upon them the impress of heaven! The treasures

of grace which the Gospel unfolds, and the love by which redemption was wrought, are not more divine than the morality which it enjoins. And real subjection of heart to its wonderful, *yet simple*, precepts, however little estimated by man, is the way to bring the blessed temper of heaven into the soul and the witness of heaven into the walk. What blessed affections are these: "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." What channels are here opened for the flow of that living grace in the soul which a participation of the divine nature gives: "Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." How fruitful of heavenly rest to our inner hearts, and how Christlike in its effects on others, if the every day principle of our action, were "look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

But we have yet to look at the marvellous summing up of all this in the

ness, should be given also. It is, then, the self-renouncing, obedient, mind of the Lord Jesus which is presented as that which we are to cultivate.

As divine in His nature, as the Son of God, He had claim to perfect equality with God; but as appearing in this world for the accomplishment of redemption, as man, his condition in it was marked by entire and absolute self-renunciation. He humbled Himself to become man; and as man, He further humbled Himself in His obedience—obedience which reached even unto death—"the death of the cross." He came into the world to glorify God—His Father; and hence He came in such circumstances as to present to men nothing but the claims of perfect goodness. There could not have been a perfect test of men's hearts, as to God and goodness, if there had been anything adventitious in the Lord's circumstances as a man, anything that would have appealed to the pride of men, or their self-estimation, or their love of worldly distinctions. But, as we know,

presentation of the mind which was manifested in the Lord, as the ground and exemplification of the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Fundamental as are these truths, (ver. 6—11), to the divine person of the Lord, and much as they might detain the heart in the richness of their elucidation, they can only be taken up now, as they are presented, as furnishing the ground of the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And O, if this were only our aim! If it were only the purpose of our hearts!—to say nothing of our attaining—if it were but present as a monition to our spirits, what fruits of peace would it bring, and what a correction of all that troubles a spiritual mind in its fellowship with others in the church of God would it afford! May I, for its own sake, possess and cultivate this mind, even if I were alone in the pursuit!

The exhortation having been given, it was necessary that the example, in which alone it could be seen in perfect-

the world—and it is unchanged in its estimates—had no heart for the claims of perfect goodness. It had no reverence nor love for the only perfect image of God in His moral character that it ever beheld! It had no place for that *lowly man*, on whom alone the heavens could open, and the voice of God acknowledge—for Him who is now enthroned at the right hand of God, and at whose humbled name—even the name of JESUS—"every knee shall bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father!"

On earth, as we know, His course began in a manger, and it was ended on a cross! Still in His whole course in the world there was the display of perfect goodness; and on the part of man nothing to prevent his treating it as he pleased; and how he treated it the cross must declare.

There were no worldly circumstances to commend to men this perfect goodness, and therefore it was rejected. There was no tinsel of human vanity to make

its appeal to their hearts, and therefore heavenly worth was frowned from their association. There was no savour of a lie to season this perfect truth to the world's taste, and therefore it would not believe it. Alas! for the spirit of the world!

To us, however, it is presented as a walk wholly according to God. The Spirit which was given to Him "without measure" led to no other. "He through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God."

But *how* shall we be able to show this mind which was in Christ? By always remembering the truth that "*Now are we the sons of God*," and that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Need I add that, "Every man that hath this hope in *him* purifieth himself even as he is pure?"

There is no *natural* elevation of position that presents the ground for this self-humbling, self-renouncing, *obedient* mind of Christ. I say "*obedient mind*," because, if it be not this, it will degenerate

Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel;" but it is no less true that, in view of the church, his cares and fears, his tears and conflicts began at the point where the saving power of the gospel had taken effect. His "warning every man, and teaching every man, and desiring to present every man perfect in Christ," was with another object than the conversion of souls, precious and near to his heart as that confessedly was. The evangelist may find more excitement in his work, and see the effect of his labour more quickly and more palpably; but he who is feeding the flock of God, however unostentatiously, will no less surely, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, receive His approval in that "crown of glory which fadeth not away." But I close with a brief quotation, the wholesome words of which some of my readers will recognize as familiar to their minds.

"The danger of the office (i. e. of the evangelist) is, that it has to do with the world; there is much room for car-

into "voluntary humility," in which the flesh will take the lead. We must remember that we are "sanctified unto obedience," and that Christ is the example of our obedience, who humbled Himself that He might obey, and then humbled Himself in His obedience. This mind of Christ springs only from the knowledge of what God is—of what Christ is—what the Christian is—and what the world is. And this knowledge is alone fully presented in the cross.

The moral power of the cross must be known, as well as its power to salvation, or we can never be "crucified" to the world, or the world crucified to us. It is this which sometimes brings a thought of sadness in connexion with the preaching of the gospel, when conversion is viewed, as it often practically is, the *end*, instead of the *commencement*, of the Lord's dealing with souls. It needs but slight acquaintance with the epistles and the character of the church of God to perceive that where the anxiety referred to ends, the apostle's as plainly begins. It is true that "from

nal excitement, and the office is in honour among men. Hence the reason that the character of the Christian ministry has more tended to this than that within the church, which is more unobtrusive, and is not of honour among men, though highly honoured in the sight of the great Head of the church." : Among the evils which have arisen to the church from the attempt to unite the two departments of the ministry in one man, may be noticed, first of all, the undervaluing of the pastoral office. Almost all systems that have been formed by men, have been looked upon as a more or less extensive sphere for preaching the gospel; and hence almost all stated ministry has become properly that of the evangelist. The church is not fed; believers are not built up on their most holy faith, because the heart of a minister is more called forth in sympathy to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, than to those who are converted. If, indeed, there be a heart burning with love for souls, and God has given him wisdom to win them,

let him take the large sphere that is set before him—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." But it must not be forgotten that whilst the Lord Jesus would have the gospel preached to every creature, that He Himself "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 26.)

FRAGMENTS.

Abraham staggered not at the promise. "He trusted in God, who quickeneth the dead. In this aspect of his service—in a scene much higher than that of Moses forsaking the court of Pharaoh—he becomes our pattern. It is ours to let God *choose our service*, though it might be to leave a sphere of public usefulness, where we hoped to win souls to Christ, to go to a sick bed or to a prison. We are at best but poor judges of what will most glorify God and serve our generation. *He knows;*

reason gets the exposition, that patience may work experience, and experience hope.

Keeping the testimony, and not keeping things together, is the proper work of those who would now be found in God's path, and advancing. That which has wrought so much confusion and scattering is, that people have been more concerned to keep things together than to keep the testimony.

"Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

EXTRACT.

Remember, there is a difference between form as proceeding, and that as superinduced; the latter is the death or imprisonment of the thing—the former is self-witnessing, and has a sphere of agency.

and therefore we may well give up our wishes and our hopes for the accomplishment of His blessed will. May He give all His servants *grace* to do this!

Let our souls learn that to obey God is to renounce ourselves—to give up our own will, that we may do His. Let us not calculate that we shall be always able to expound or harmonize His ways. Verily "He is a God that hideth Himself." Nothing but faith, implicit faith, can carry us through the path of trial. When He tries faith, He often confounds reason. He asks us to walk through the sea, to eat bread from the clouds, or to drink water from the rock of flint. "We must learn," as one has said, "to trust Him where we cannot trace Him." He sent Elijah to the brook, and the brook dried up; then to be sustained by a widow, who had only a meal to eat, and die. He gave a son to the Shunammite, and afterwards took him away. But even to reason, in due time He made it all plain. He would have faith, first of all, to hold her empire unwaveringly; and then it often happens that

DIVINE INTERCOURSE.

How finely the voice from heaven varies its tone in the story of Saul's conversion, as given to us in Acts ix.!

When it *challenges the persecutor*, how peremptory it is! how loudly it speaks! When it *addresses itself to the disciple*, (Ananias) how it approaches him as with the accents of a well-known voice, and in the style of full personal intimacy! When it *rebukes the servant*, (this same Ananias) how decisive! and yet giving witness that love was undisturbed, unchanged, because the rebuked servant was still, and immediately put into further service as one trusted and valued.

Precious are these various ways of Him with whom we have to do. How ought we to trust the one whose love can thus array itself in these its different suits and styles! He will challenge us when our condition demands it; rebuke us, or speak intimately to us; and His love approves itself equally

in each, for our good and blessing is the end proposed and accomplished.

And man, under the drawing and teaching of the Spirit, answers this voice in beauty and fitness also.

The persecutor fell under it at once. He could not but do so. It was as Adam behind the trees of the garden. Saul could not help calling Jesus "Lord" at that moment. It was the necessary utterance of one in such a condition. But as this one is led of God, he follows in beauty and fitness. I mean this: when called by the voice from the glory that had laid the sentence of death in him, to arise and stand on his feet, he did so, and appears from that moment as one separated to that voice, or to what had now happened to him. Like Peter, in a kindred moment of conviction, he thought not of the sinking boat, so occupied was his soul with the impressions of the glory or of God upon his spirit; and so Paul now. The three days' want of food and the loss of sight, were, I believe, as nothing to him. He had been separated

was answering the intimacies of grace with the confidence of faith. This was like Moses speaking face to face, as a man would speak with his friend. And this was indeed beautiful in its place. Such a spirit of faith, being of divine operation, was acceptable to God, and sweet to us. It was as Jonah in chap. iv. 1, though not so marked; and, like Jonah, Ananias has then to be rebuked and corrected, and is given to know that the error was all his own, and not the Lord's.

When Ananias had questioned the orders he had received to go to Saul of Tarsus, "Go thy way," says the Lord to him. This was a third voice from heaven, as we have already seen; and this voice, like the earlier voices, is answered in all beautiful fitness. Ananias at once goes, and the moment he sees Saul, he addresses him on the sole authority of the voice he had now heard, and in the spirit which that voice inspired. The Lord had said, "he is a chosen vessel unto me;" and Ananias now addresses him "brother Saul."

How perfect, like all the rest, this is!

to that moment in its full power. He had looked on Him whom he had pierced, and was apart; as in another kindred moment, the house of David and of Shimei will be, husbands and wives. (Zech. xii.)

But there is another answer which the voice from heaven gets in this striking scene. Ananias answers it as well as Saul; and according to the relations in which he stood to it answers it likewise in beauty and fitness.

The voice, as we have seen, addressed him in all blessed, gracious intimacy. Ananias' style shews that (Abraham-like) his spirit was at home in the presence of it—in the presence of the glory from whence it came. He takes his place instinctively before it. "Behold, I am here, Lord," he says; and then, the voice giving its orders and revealing its secrets, Ananias replies, (Jeremiah-like, or Peter-like in such cases,) intimating that the Lord seemed to be making some mistake, that these directions needed some correction, or at least, interpretation. And surely, this

The first voice, convicting the sinner, is answered by the sinner separating himself to it. The second voice, addressing the saint, is answered by the saint in like confidential intimacy. The third voice, rebuking and arresting the servant, is answered, not only by an act of obedience, but by that act being conducted and carried out in the very style and spirit which that voice was inspiring, in fullest concord with the mind which had directed and awakened it.

This scene gives us, then, in the person of Ananias, an instance of that intimacy with the Lord which faith has reached, and deems itself entitled to. And, let me say, faith has not, in this, over calculated its rights. Grace warranted this intimacy at the very beginning, at the creation. God then, as we know, delighted in the work of his hand as it grew up and came forth day by day, and when all was completed at the close of the sixth day, looking on all, He tasted rich delight, and consecrated the seventh day in memory of this His rest and refreshment.

But in addition to this, man becomes the source of special delight. Man had been signalized as the chief point in the whole workmanship, and the head of the whole scene. Peculiar care was used in setting him in the garden, enriched and blest, crowned and espoused, and altogether satisfied. And then the Lord seeks his company. "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" He was seeking companionship with that chiefest and most excellent work of His hands, as though companionship with him was to complete His enjoyments. The Lord sought man. "Adam, where art thou?" "His delights were with the sons of men," as He says in another place; and then, as at the very beginning, He gave warrant and title to man to know this intimacy. I need not say how Adam disappointed this divine desire towards him. But the desire survives, and it is still said, "My delights are with the sons of men."

Among those of the people of God

speak not, however, of the intercourse disciples had with the Lord in the days of His ministry among them; but of that intercourse and intimacy which faith still held with Him after He was glorified, when He took, in a divine sense, the relationship to them which He had had of old with patriarchs and prophets.

We see samples of this in Ananias, to which I have already referred, in Acts ix., in *Peter* in Acts x., in Paul in Acts xxii. Now these three reasoned certain points with the Lord, the glorified Jesus, as Abraham or Jeremiah and others had reasoned points with the Lord God in their earlier days. Ananias, Peter, and Paul may all be in error, more or less, and have to be rebuked, and get their judgments corrected; but still they enjoy an intimacy which it is blessed to think of. They are dealing with one well known by them, and on a title fully approved and justified. Surely again I may say, it is blessed to think of it. And I ask, Is this still to be so? Is the soul to know it, in this day of

who have specially illustrated this personal intimacy with the Lord we might first notice *Abraham*. The Lord, in deep and full grace, warranted this, and drew Abraham into it; but Abraham, in faith, read his title to it, and used it. I need not notice the occasions; they shew themselves clearly in the progress of the story. Moses afterwards is seen in the same place. He converses with the Lord as a man with his friend. He debated matters with the Lord, as one that would know divine secrets and reasons, and give his own mind, and express his own difficulties and sorrows.

As we advance we find *Jeremiah* of this same class. He would speak to the Lord about His doings and judgments, and enquire of Him respecting the grounds and meaning of His commands.

Jonah, also, another among the prophets, gives us another instance of the same. He is very bold, telling the Lord how it was, and how he had known it would be, between God and himself.

And this intimacy is not reduced when we enter the New Testament. I

the Holy Ghost and of an absent Jesus?

The posture of Lazarus at the table with his Lord, and at the side of his Lord, expresses this character of communion. It is found in company with the worshipping Mary and the serving Martha—all beautiful in their place and season. (John xii.)

And so the soul knows its present title to the same, though it as well knows how poorly it enjoys it, and how nature and the enemy will hinder it in that, its right and joy. But so it is. We are straitened in our *bowels*, not in our *calling*; in our *experience*, not in our condition. Through the Scriptures, and taking occasion by reason of our daily circumstances, we may use this place which has been open to the elect from the beginning. It is surely ours in this day of the Spirit, if it were theirs who walked with God in the infant-day of patriarchs, or in the advancing times of prophets, who had not, however, reached the dispensation of the Spirit, given on the ascension to glory of the Son of man, as we have done.

And I still ask, Is this still to be so? Is this *eternal* in its character? Is this to be the same in the coming days of the glory, as it has already been in days of patriarchs, of prophets, and of apostles, and as it is now? The holy hill, where we see the glorified, answers this. Speaking of Jesus there transfigured, the evangelist says, "And behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Here was intimacy of just the same character as at the tent in the plain of Mamre, or within the cloudy tabernacle in the wilderness, or in the court of the prison at Jerusalem, or outside the gate of the city of Nineveh, or on the roof of the house of Simon the tanner, or in the temple with Paul. All is unchanged. Scenes change as much as they well can, in all this vast variety—tent-doors, wildernesses, prisons, house-tops, temples, and the like; but the realms of glory, where the translated saints have joined their ascended Lord, claims to be

of His creature, when His creature was untainted and in innocency. The entrance of sin did not hinder this, but this intercourse continued among the fruits of that grace which put sin away, and if the entrance of sin has not hindered it, neither shall the display of glory. The garden, the ruined world, the kingdom in its glories are alike the scenes of it; each and all maintains and witnesses the divine intercourse, this companionship of God with man.

HOW THE UNDERSTANDING IS ENLIGHTENED.

It must be a matter of enquiry to every thoughtful soul why it is that, whatever be the measure of our faith, we so continually betray ignorance of God's mind, and as much inability to judge as if no light gleamed from our faith to help us.

Faith is the credence which God gives us by the Holy Ghost in any revelation

another of the same places, and to witness and exhibit that intimacy which began at the beginning, and has been continued throughout.

All ages, then, give us samples of this intimacy, this divine intercourse. Patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, evangelic ages, all illustrate it, and the days of the glory will do the same. This intercourse is something of its own kind. It is not grace giving a gift and faith accepting it. It is not the soul exercised in prayer, or intercession, or thanksgiving, or praise. These things are so, I need not say; but it is none of these. It is of its own generation, and bespeaks the title which the believer consciously enjoys of coming near to God, not as a suppliant, or as a worshipper, but as one that has been let into His confidence.

And I believe till we take this place, till "we thus walk and talk with Jesus," we have not fully obeyed that form of doctrine which God, in the riches of the grace of His gospel, has delivered to us.

Wonderful! save that God is God. He laid Himself out for this enjoyment

of His mind; and this belief is the acceptance of its positive reality. So that in faith the soul possesses, so to speak, the substantiation of the truth presented and assured of. *Ordinarily*, I might give full credence to a person's assertion of things either present or future; but with God it is different. When I believe His truth, I have in me a conviction of the realities of things in which I myself am to be a sharer. And as I am in the world among uncertainties and shadows, so am I in faith apart from all natural influences here. And more than this, I am imbued and engrossed with the realities of which I have, through faith, the substance in my soul.

When I walk in the power of this faith, I must necessarily introduce the idea of the realities on which it rests in contrast to the pretensions and oppositions to God here. And this truly supplies the means for judgment, and practically is light; for "light is that which doth make manifest."

Now, I think I may have faith, and yet I may so little *realize the circum-*

stances into which that faith introduces me, that I may not be able to contrast the divine scenes which are opened to faith with the earthly ones where my nature roams. And if I am more engaged with the latter or inferior scene, I shall not be able to judge between the two, for the difference will be very imperceptible to me; and to be able to distinguish between two things where there is the smallest apparent difference, is the great proof of judgment.

It is said, "If thy whole body be luminous, having no part dark, the whole shall be luminous, as when the bright shining of a candle gives light;" that is, if you are under the control of the light yourself; if it has mastered every dark part in you, then you will be luminous, as a candle is luminous; you will not only shed light, but you will judge darkness.

Now here lies the entire obstruction to the action of light on us, that light which we derive from our faith, and which would act on us fully, only there is some "dark part;" and just as in a

dark deep dungeon, until a lamp masters the darkness on *all* sides it cannot be a light therein; so, until I am swayed by the faith which I have received, I do not and cannot bring its ideas to bear on all things around me, and therefore I cannot compare them. Practically, the dark spot comes in to warp my judgment. How easily would Paul have accepted the warning of the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem, had there not been in his heart a *natural* desire to go there, yet unrebuked by the light of that faith which dwelt in him, and which afterwards so controlled him when writing the Epistle to the Ephesians. The hindrance is always from the natural man; hence the apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind, that ye may be able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

If there remains conformity to the world, there will be a dark spot which the light has not penetrated, and *so far* there will be inability to prove what is

the will of God. It simplifies our enquiry very much if we see that it is not the fault of the *faith*, so to speak; that is to say, it is not any lack either as to the order or the amount of our faith, but that there is a dark spot in us—we do not add "virtue," (2 Peter i. 5;)—there remains some natural clinging to the world which has not been overcome by our faith, which obstructs the light and leaves us unguided ourselves and useless for others.

We have a striking illustration of both points of the enquiry which we have been pursuing, in the case of Isaac and Jacob, and the faith which actuated each in the close of their history. That of Isaac is thus commented on by the Spirit in Hebrews xi. 20, "By faith Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob concerning things to come." Thus we see his *faith* was not at fault; but was his whole body luminous,—was there no part dark? Genesis xxvii. gives the answer, and reveals to us the condition of Isaac's soul at the time when he had this faith thus acknowledged by the Holy Ghost.

We find, that while intent on blessing his son in accordance with it, that he betrayed a lusting for this evil world, which we shall see warped his judgment. In forgetfulness of the word of God at the birth of Esau and Jacob, he had so allowed himself to be attracted by Esau, because of his *present* attentions to him, that he, now at the point of death, instructs Esau to "make some savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it me that I may eat, and my soul may bless thee before I die." We might think that this was too small a liking to operate so disastrously as to warp the judgment of Isaac, and to induce him to apply the disclosures made to faith, in direct contravention to God's words! But so it is. If so small a thing can warp one so much, what would not a greater one do? It teaches us that if the soul allows itself enjoyment in a scene outside this faith, that in the attempt to apply the truth, we shall always find it directed to a wrong quarter, for the mere fact of possessing faith does *not ensure* the right application. *No*; if your

soul is occupied with the *present*, which cannot be of the faith, for "that which is seen is not faith," the natural engrossment will pervert your judgment, and lead you to misapply any truth which you hold by faith.* You will see people continually, who believe simply in a truth, quite misapplying it, or unable to reduce it to its proper application, simply for this reason, that some present engrossment, like the dark part in the body, hinders the true luminous expression of the truth. Alas! how much we all suffer from this! But it is well to know *why* we suffer. Now when Isaac is, through mercy, awakened to the mind of God, we see what an earthquake his soul passes through: "he trembled with a great trembling." This describes, I believe, the commotion which takes place in the soul, when the mind and word of God assume their mastery, and when the faith in a truth engages a soul com-

* If I believe in the Lord's coming, and act contrary to this belief, will not the act balk the light? or if I act contrary to my faith, do I not therein baffle and impede the light from faith?

prospects of others, that he *now* had none. "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachael died by me in the land of Canaan," &c. As another has said, "those words, '*as for me*,' unfold a tale of a heart which has emerged from the crucible of suffering; which has been brought in spirit to the tomb, and has left there all most dear to its natural affections and instincts, but which is content to leave them there, and seeks no more for an outlet for them below." How different this state was to that of Isaac! Jacob had no link or attraction to earth, and he was a *worshipper*, too, because his soul was undistractedly engaged with the truth which his faith grasped; consequently he is in the judgment of God, and therefore guides his hands "*wittingly*" to correct the arrangements of Joseph. In God's presence, into which faith leads us, when engrossed by the truth which it has seized, we are not only worshippers, but we fall into communion with God's mind, practically proving it, because we are "renewed in the spirit of our mind," being delivered

prehensively with itself. It is when the non-conformity to the world is avouched by the "renewing of the mind," and the consequent proving of the "good and perfect will of God." Hence, *after it*, Isaac exclaims of Jacob, "*he is blessed and shall be blessed.*" God always maintains His truth and graciousness to His servants; but the servant is greatly humbled when he tries to connect things of faith with things of sense. May we watch, and so seek to have our souls in the REGION of our faith, that we may know ourselves to be under the government of our Lord's mind, of which we shall then be the exponents.

Thus was it with Jacob in Genesis xl. 8, 9, and great is the contrast between him and Isaac in the two corresponding epochs in their history. When Joseph brings his two sons to him to bless them, Jacob's eyes were dim for age that he could not see, but instead of being occupied or engrossed with anything here, his whole soul is a luminous expression of the mind of God; and his words to Joseph imply, whatever might be the

from the pre-occupation which would cloud or hinder it.

In conclusion, I would only remark, that the true and simple way of obtaining or deriving light from any truth which we believe, is by so connecting the truth with *the Lord*, that we are consequently in the region of it, and, therefore, worshippers before Him in *connexion with it*; the effect then will be, that we shall be divinely influenced by it, our feelings swayed, and our desires formed according to it. We shall know how to compare the pretensions of man with it, and be able to judge when we do compare, because we have light to see wherein they differ. We must always make ourselves the subject of the experiment *first*; the little world in ourselves must be first judged in the principles which we desire or require to judge in the wide world; for we may rest assured, that we shall not be able to judge the *mass* if we have not judged the unit, *self*, which is but a type and miniature of the whole world. We may often seek to judge and pass sentence on

the world as a whole, but it will be found by every true disciple, that his power of doing so (divinely) on the whole, is only in proportion to his attainment and subjection to divine judgment in *himself*. The Lord so lead us to live in the realization of the truth which we believe, that we may prove its power to guide us in the circumstances, and to preserve us from the influences of this evil world. Amen.

INTIMACY WITH THE LORD.

Notes on Genesis xviii.

The position in which Abraham is presented in this chapter gives a very descriptive display of the ground of intimacy with Himself on which the Lord has set His people. In many respects it is a positive blessing to be brought into association with the Lord, as we find in the case of Abraham; but he is here presented not as the depository of promises or the object of

covenanted blessings, but as enjoying the *intimacy* which his position brought him into with the Lord.

The condition of the revelation, which separated him from natural associations and earthly ties and made him a stranger and pilgrim in the world, put him into this place of intimacy; as God had said to him, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." But the testimony to us is that in virtue of God's dealings with us in Christ we also are brought into this place of confidence and intimacy, though in a much higher sense. Abraham stood on the earth, the place of judgment, but God's call in grace puts us in direct association with the blessing, and as risen with Christ, altogether apart from the place of judgment. Ephesians i. 9 presents this intimacy as resulting from the place in which we are set in Christ: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself," &c. This revelation to us of the thoughts of God does not relate

to our own direct blessing, but is the token of confidence toward us whom He has set in such intimacy of relationship with Himself. As Christ said to His disciples, "I call you not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

Abraham's position with the Lord was one of perfect peace and unquestioning confidence. He has no question to settle with the Lord, but is on that ground where he can enjoy without any hindrance communion with Him. Neither the scene that was passing before him nor the thoughts of the judgment that the Lord tells him he is about to execute have any power to disturb the quiet with which he maintains his intercourse with the Lord.

In the sixteenth verse it is said, "The men rose up from thence and looked towards Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on their way." The Lord directed them in judgment, and

Abraham went with them to show them the way. He is here the companion of the Lord, and confidant of His thoughts. And to us the Lord is not only the eternal spring of blessing to our souls, but He makes His saints His companions; not invariably, it is true, but still He does so. And it is in the communications which the Lord makes to us that He thus makes us His companions; for certainly there is not a more happy or certain way in which any one can show his love to another, than by communicating to him his thoughts and feelings. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord!" "But we have the mind of Christ." "Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him." So we are called to walk with Christ until he comes and takes us up to Himself. The exercises and the path of faith are all in this world, but the issues of the trial and the bright "hope of righteousness by faith" are above. "Abraham went with the men to bring them on their way." That was all. He was entirely apart from the judgment that

was about to be executed upon Sodom; as the Church is also above the world's judgment, though not above the Lord's discipline for its good. Lot, in his desires after the good of this world, had looked toward Sodom, and found himself ensnared by it; but Abraham was so entirely out of it, as to be talking to the Lord about its fate, when Lot had to be roused by the startling words of the angels: "Hast thou here any besides? Sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place." But the Lord said to Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him," &c.

The Lord God put Abraham into the place of covenant blessing, and on this ground He communicates to him His thoughts. He had, in a sense, bound Himself to be Abraham's companion by the very terms of the revelation He had made to him; for He had said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,

unto a land that *I will show thee.*" And the result is, this introduction into confidence and intimacy of intercourse with the Lord, who speaks to him "of his house for a great while to come." And the ground of the Lord's communication of His thoughts to us is, that having centered His love in us, He lets us into His confidence. He has united the Church to Christ, and associated it with Christ, and hence He makes known to us "the mystery of his will." It is the consequence and result of the place in which He has set us.

The Lord says of Abraham, "*I know him,*" &c. There is the greatest blessing in this; it is so entirely the language of friendship, and so opposite to the way in which He speaks about judgment. He does not talk about "*knowing*" those He is going to judge, but says, "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." Until He has fully investigated, He will not strike even in judgment. But it is not thus with the

saints; He has no need to go down to see about them, for he fully knows and owns them, as He said to Abraham, "I know him."

"The men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." It is a blessed thing to so know our place and blessing with the Lord as to be able to do this. For if the Lord thus "knows Abraham," so as to secure to him the blessings he had promised, it is answered by Abraham's staying with the Lord Himself.

He is going to bring judgment on the world; but He will not smite until He cannot help it: as He said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." But no judgment that was coming on the cities of the plain could separate Abraham from the Lord. The Lord's eye so rests on him that he is able to rest quietly in the Lord. And so it is with us; whatever trial, or sorrow, or judgment is coming upon the world, our place is to abide with the Lord Himself; and then, like Abraham, the

effect of having drunk into His grace will be, that we shall be calm, quiet, and happy. There will, alas! be Lots many in the well-watered gardens of the plain; but let us be in the mountain with the Lord, abiding in perfect peace; not alone in security from the judgment, but, in that which is far higher, with the Lord Himself.

Abraham being thus with the Lord in perfect peace, has nothing, as we see, to ask for for himself; but becomes the earnest intercessor for others. And even subsequently, in the case of Abimelech, the Lord says, "Restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee and thou shalt live." The force of this is, if he be a prophet, if he has this intimacy with the mind of the Lord, let him pray for thee, and I will hear him. So it is with us: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." The possession of the Lord's mind gives us the power of intercession for others. This is not like wrestling Jacob, who had to get the

blessing for himself, though it is possible we may have to wrestle for ourselves in order to get individual blessing, for we must not be untrue to our actual state; but Abraham's prayer for Sodom is communion, and the knowledge of this communion produces peace and joy. It is not that reverence will be absent from the soul, for Abraham says, "I am but dust and ashes," in the profoundest sense of his own nothingness in the presence of God; still there is the most perfect intimacy, as we witness in his advancing from point to point in his pleadings with the Lord for the sparing of Sodom; while this whole wondrous scene closes with the simple words, "And the Lord went his way as soon as he had done communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place."

No one can be in the presence of God without holy fear. And he who cannot reconcile this with confidence and joy, does not know what the presence of God is.

Our hopes are heavenly and eterne,
And ere another day,
May be, the hour for which we yearn
Its glories will display.

Yes, ere another day is past
Our absent Lord may come;
Fast will our bosoms beat—how fast!
With gladness overcome.

Then we shall quit the struggle here,
Forsake life's moan and woe,
And that blest hand will wipe each tear
And we no grief shall know.

FRAGMENT.

Satan has no power over the new man in us; but if we walk in the flesh we lay ourselves open to his devices. It is the secret of our strength against him to know that he has no power over the Spirit, but only over the flesh: and that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

OUR HOPE.

The man who bears one living hope,
Deep hidden in his breast,
Is eager with life's storms to cope,
And seems already blest.

When other faces lose their smiles,
His overflows with joy;
He sinks not with the crowd that toils,
But soars above annoy.

An earthly hope is his—some dream,
May be, that fills his soul;
And yet, triumphant down life's stream,
It wafts him to his goal.

Then what should hopes divine achieve
For them who such possess?
Surely the victory they should give
O'er pain, toil, and distress;

Should bear them with a holy joy
From day to day through time,
Above life's stormiest billows buoy
Towards heaven's blessed clime.

Ah, never more let us repine,
Whatever be our lot;
Nor ever let our hearts decline
In any dreary spot.

THE PATH OF LIFE.

1 John v.

Life has two distinct actions in its path down here; one is victory over the world, and the other the realization of the soul's confidence in God; and if we are defective in either of these, there must be an unevenness about our manners and ways, which plainly indicates constitutional derangement.

The eternal life necessarily asserts its own qualities. It is *from* the Father, made known and given to us *in* the Son, and *against* all that is of the world, for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and still further, it can only find rest and solution for the Being whom it owns, by conferring with the Father about everything down here. "And this is the confidence we have in Him," &c., &c. Overcoming the world is the first victory of life. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Little children" know the Father, but

"young men" overcome the wicked one, in whose power the world lieth, and as soon as ever life is in energy, it declares itself by contending against the order and notions of things which are antagonistic to its own origin and tastes.

But though this is the *first* victory of life, it is not the *only* one, though from want of intelligence it often appears to be one's only aim and success; but if we stop short here, we shall not know simple gladness and rest of spirit, for though truly the energy of life, it does not comprise its rest and satisfaction, which can only be assured by confidence in God—by knowing Him, and we can only know Him intimately in relation to ourselves according as "we know that he heareth us." The Lord (John xvi. 33) no sooner said, "I have overcome the world," than He lifted up His eyes to heaven and says, "*Father.*" The full action of life not only overcomes the opposing forces here, but reaches up to the Father, who is its proper source and region. It first leads to victory through faith in the Son of God who has over-

overlook the full range of it, even that which leads him into confidence and knowledge of God as He would be known privately and peculiarly to *himself*. The love of *doing* or seeing oneself the agent may betray itself in the spiritual as well as the natural man; but when it does, the life is checked and hindered, and the very point so coveted is for the time-being forfeited; for however the energy of that life may declare itself in overcoming the world, the rest and support known in communion with God Himself, who is the source of life and victory, are needed not only for guidance, but for the soul's onward progress. Samson may slay a thousand men with the jaw bone of an ass, but will that sustain him personally? No; he would have sunk from exhaustion if God had not attended to and relieved him, and thus cemented the personal link between Samson's soul and Himself.

But if victory, real victory, is insufficient without the heart conferring with God in confidence, we may with equal truth say, that mere prayer will not do

come, and then finds its home and rest in God, learning His mind and His love respecting every interest pertaining to the human vessel down here.

Now anything which is easily seen, and its results palpably felt, we naturally estimate as paramount to that which has little or no external evidence. Victory over the world is seen and recognized at once, and he who is in the power of it is conscious of the power by which he overcomes: he is acknowledged by his fellows, and is pleased himself with the strength he is gifted with; and this may be without any assumption or self-sufficiency. A "young man" illustrates one in whom is the energy of life. He is commended for his energy and enjoys it, not that he can feel himself (if conscientious) entirely victorious; but he feels in that condition which is properly an overcoming one, and the more he does, the more he desires to progress therein, and so far he is *right*: but the tendency and danger is that his mind and spirit may become so engaged with this primary action of life that he may

without the energy of warfare. Life must be unfettered and embrace the full range of its activities; for it is hindered if either action engages to the exclusion of the other. Joshua lying on the ground crying to God, (Josh. vi.) when he ought to have searched for evil and overcome it, illustrates to us how we may spend our time in prayer and seeking the Lord, when we ought first to have overcome the wicked one in his devices in our immediate circumstances. Check life on one side, and you cannot promote it on the other. It declares itself in victory over the world, but it is invigorated and directed in conference with God. The more we confide in God, the more we *shall* confide. The more we overcome the world, the more shall we enjoy the refreshments of His presence; and (like Abram), the blessing of Melchizedec *after* our victory will so enrich us that the offers of the King of Sodom will have no attraction for us. If I am much with God, I become gentle, considerate, and serene; whereas when I am more occupied with mere

strength, I am severe and impatient, like Jonah; I want to see my work prosper, and my sayings fulfilled, regardless of the sympathies of God. The man who knows God's mind from conference with Himself, can alone use the strength with which he is gifted skilfully and surely. Gift is often misapplied, and, in the present state of the Church, nothing is more apparent than a lack of apprehension of God's mind as to the nature and use of the gift possessed.

Let us now examine a little how we may cultivate and realize this action of life in our souls. By faith in the Son of God we overcome the world; and as we do, we have the consciousness of strength and the exultation of victory; but unless we know the mind of God, and His intention for us in our circumstances down here, we are conquering without the sense of peace or nearness to God; hence the Lord says, not only "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," but, "In me ye shall have peace."

We want to be not only eager for

in it, against Him; I feel and know that faith in Him whom He has sent, bears me above it; and, as *above it*, I am seeking nothing but what is of the nature and sentiments of Him by whom I am overcoming; even the spiritual blessing wherewith I am blessed in Christ Jesus—skill and ability to maintain a victorious path through this evil world: in a word, the assured sense of holding the path of life. If I am careless or indifferent about the certainty of the Father hearing me, I may make great pretensions of serving God, (like David bringing up the ark in a cart,) but in the end there will be confusion; there is the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbals, but none of that happy self-possession and dignified action which flow from a soul able, in some little measure, to express the assurance—"I know that thou hearest me always." No one who knows the love of God by learning "Him who is from the beginning," after overcoming the wicked one through faith in Him, in a word, who is advancing to be a "father," but *must*

overcoming what is against us, but also to walk in the holy, solemn, happy sense that "God is for us;" and that He is working every thing for us after the counsel of His own will. As a babe in Christ I know the Father. Faith in the Son leads me to victory; and then successfully combating the world which is against Him, resting in the Son, I not only feel myself gaining by dependence, but also that I have learned to have confidence in Him. I know that if I ask anything according to His will He heareth me. I could not expect Him to do aught for me contrary to His will: but if I seek anything from Him according to His will, who has manifested His love by sending His Son to take away my sins, He will hear me. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, will he not with him freely give us all things?" There can be no doubt that if He gave the greatest He would give the lesser, and, therefore, here is my rest; I know that if I ask anything according to His will, He heareth me. I feel and see the world, and everything

feel that the one great point in all his references to God is, "Does He hear me?" I know that I have learned this much—"If I ask anything according to his will he heareth me." And now, if I know that He hears me, I have the petitions that I desired of Him. The idea here is not importunity, as in Luke xi., though it be quite true that importunity is required of God in order to establish *our faith* in Him alone. If I have any other resource, I should not persist in asking even one who *could* help me, if I saw there was no indication of it; but if I have *no other* resource, then the more urgent my wants, the more shall I persist in preferring my suit. But that is not the point *here*. It is rather that I have *confidence*—that if I ask according to His will He heareth me; and the point for me to determine, and to seek, and to be unsatisfied if not known, is *whether He has heard me or not*; to pause and wait till I have the sense of being heard.

Oh! if we walked even occasionally in this happy conference—in this blessed

sense of His hearing us, and of receiving the petitions we desired of Him—how calmly, how solemnly, should we move on! Victorious indeed down here, as “young men” in the fresh energy of life, but also as knowing Him “that is from the beginning.” Waiting always on God, knowing that he is attentive to all our desires if according to His will, and therefore unsatisfied unless we knew that He had heard us. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.”

SANCTIFICATION.

To a mind that has become accustomed to draw all its conclusions directly from the inestimable word of God, and to do homage to the authority of that word alone, there is something unspeakably empty and unsatisfactory in the dogmas of systematic theology—those systematic reasonings of learned men by which the wondrous truths of revelation are

direct appeal to the living word is as great as would be experienced by the natural affections, between being presented with a cold but correctly chiselled statue, and the living, breathing object of the heart's warmest love. But the cold correctness of abstract truth can hardly be conceded to these exemplars of heavenly doctrine, as a very slight examination of Scripture would be enough to show. And on no point, perhaps, are they farther from giving the plain and simple declarations of Scripture, than on that which it is the object of this paper to present.

Sanctification in Scripture *always*, I believe, means *separation*. This may be *absolute*, by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Christ; or it may be *relative* or *practical*, through the application of the truth by the Holy Spirit. Still it never deserts the idea of *separation*. Thus believers are “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus.” (Jude 1.) That is, they are *separated* unto glory by Him, as they are “chosen in Christ before the founda-

attempted to be arranged and limited, defined, and stereotyped. For personal edification and advancement it might be enough simply to pass them by as mere *bis*terns, not always pure, in order to drink at the fountain. But if the thoughts are directed toward others for their good, it cannot be concealed that the minds of multitudes of believers and their habits of thought on divine truth are almost entirely formed and governed by these systems, as they form the groundwork and staple of those sermons which from week to week they are accustomed to hear. Hence it is that their conclusions on the most important doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truths of revelation, only so far as these truths have been recast in these cramped and imperfect moulds of human thought and expression.

Now if it might be conceded that truth, and not error, was always so far taught, still, to say nothing of the direct authority of the word over the soul being lost, the difference to the mind between this systematic teaching and the

tion of the world;” “according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” (Ephes. i.) As in Hebrews x., it is said, “By the which will we are *sanctified*, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are *sanctified*.” And in Hebrews xiii., “Jesus, that he might *sanctify* the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate; let us therefore *go forth* unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” This shows the true meaning of sanctification. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus lays the ground on which the Father can carry out the purpose of His love; while the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, has power to bring us into fellowship with Himself, and to make us, as He was, *in* the world, but not *of* it; and the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them that believe, makes them know their place of separation, and produces in them *practical sanctification*. For every truth of God applied to the soul by the Holy

Spirit, has a separating tendency; as the Lord Jesus said, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." (John xvii.)

In the Old Testament, the term always denotes separation: ordinarily, separation to the Lord and to His service.

Under the law, sanctification *by blood* is abundantly presented. Aaron and his sons were *set apart* by blood; and the tabernacle, and the vessels of the ministry, and the altar, &c., were sanctified by blood. Thus also the believer is separated to God by the blood of Christ; and the very name by which believers are most commonly addressed in the epistles, marks them out as separated persons; those who have *gone forth* without the camp to Jesus. The simple meaning of the term "saint," is a separated person; as the Epistle to the Ephesians begins thus, "To the *separate* and faithful (or believing) in Christ Jesus who are in Ephesus;" and that to the Colossians, "To the *separate* and believing brethren in Christ, who are in Colosse."

scures the brightness of His witness to the soul concerning the finished work of Christ. If one fails to *add to his* "faith, virtue," &c., he may go on until he becomes "barren and unfruitful," and so "forget that he was purged from his old sins." (See 2 Peter i.)

Sanctification is indeed connected with the work of the Spirit, but then the work of the Spirit is never presented as the ground of peace. It is in Christ Jesus "we have redemption *through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his (God's) grace." (Eph. i.) The ground of peace and assurance is found alone in the once, and for ever, perfected work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, as has been often said with truth, Christ's work, *for* the believer, which is eternally perfect before God, that gives him peace; while the Spirit's work, *in* the believer, leads him into conflict and self-judgment and the mortifying of the flesh; and so to advancing holiness, or practical separation of life and walk.

If then the current phrase, "*progressive*

This view of sanctification, which will be confirmed by a fuller reference to Scripture as we proceed, presents no contradiction to an ever-growing attachment to Christ; to a more simple obedience to His will; to a deepening piety; or to an advancing conformity to His example. But it is the emphatic denial that anything gives the ground of our fitness for heaven but the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the denial, too, that our title to heaven is a *growing title*; as is abundantly proved by the words of the apostle, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath *made us meet* to be partakers (see Greek) of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath *delivered us* from the power of darkness, and hath *translated us* into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have *redemption* through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i.) And it is the denial further, that *sanctification* is ever in Scripture presented as the ground of assurance and peace; though assurance may be *weakened* by unholiness, because it grieves the Holy Spirit, and thus ob-

sanctification," were intended to express no more than is presented in the exhortation, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," however inaccurate, one would take no exception to the thought. But the popular idea connected with it is that of a progressive fitness for heaven, based on the notion of a gradual change and improvement of the old nature, and that is not a harmless thought. For in the first place, this notion involves a contradiction of Scripture as to the entire corruption of our nature, or, as Scripture calls it, our "*old man*." And in the next place, it involves the most inadequate conceptions of the character of redemption, and of its results in the believer, as "a man in Christ;" or, as it is expressed in Eph. ii, "*created in Christ Jesus*." "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

It might be well asked of some people—Christians too—'Is there such a thing as "the old man?" and how is it characterized? or, Is there such a thing as

"the new man?" and how is it distinguished? or *what* in us is it that the Spirit sanctifies?" I read in 1 Thess. v., "The very God of peace *sanctify* you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, the apostle looks to the power of God to be so applied that there might be wrought in the Thessalonians a practical separation according to that power, and according to the place in which they were set by the reception of the gospel and the action of divine grace. And mark, it is "spirit, soul, and body," that he desires may be preserved blameless. These are the integral parts of man as man—the constituents of his being as such. But there is something more than these in every fallen child of Adam, in every Christian, renewed man though he be. There is alas! "*the flesh*," in which, the apostle says, "there dwells no good thing;" which "lusts against the Spirit," and is contrary to it, and which, it is affirmed, is "not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be." There is, it will be observed, not a word about *sanctifying the flesh*, though believers are to mortify it, and are not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. As a principle, the apostle says, "They that are after the flesh cannot please God;" and with regard to believers, he speaks of it as a past condition of life out of which they had been brought by grace: as he says, "When ye *were* in the flesh," &c.

There is plainly in Scripture the thought of practical sanctification, i.e., of *separation unto God*, in heart and affections, and in walk, that may be more or less perfect; and that may be, and ought to be, advancing. With this thought there is no dispute. But if this be made the hinge of a soul's peace, or the ground of confidence, it is affirmed that *this* is not a scriptural thought. The Scripture tells us that "Christ himself *made peace* by the blood of his cross"—and that "*he is our peace*." "Having been *justified by faith*, we have *peace with God*." "In Christ Jesus, ye

who sometime were far off are made nigh *by the blood of Christ*." So that if the thought of growing sanctification be made in any sense the ground of peace and assurance, it is in effect the dimming of the bright perfectness of the work of Christ, and the fostering of the spirit of self-righteousness, than which nothing can be more alien from true scriptural sanctification.

But I turn to some passages of Scripture in farther confirmation of the truth. In Matt. vi. 9, where the term first occurs in the New Testament, its meaning is to recognize as holy or separate from all that is contrary to it, the name of the Lord, or that which is expressed by that name: "Hallowed be thy name." So in Matt. xxiii. 17, 19, the temple is said to sanctify the gold that was upon it, and the altar the gift which was offered on it. That is, it gave to that which was connected with it the specific character of separation which belonged to the temple, as the house of God, or was presented on the altar dedicated to Him. And this principle, in its moral bearing,

is insisted on by the apostle in 1 Cor. x., where he says, "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" That is, are they not by this act involved in all that is abominable in idol-worship? As the opposite asserts association with God in all the responsibility connected with the holiness of His nature, His character, and claims. In John xvii. 17, 19, our Lord says, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*;" and again, "For their sakes I *sanctify myself*, that they also may be sanctified through the truth"—or truly sanctified. That is, our Lord *set Himself apart* for the perfect accomplishment of the Father's will, that by means of this we might be truly set apart to God. But it is expressed, in terms, in Heb. x., "By the which will *we are sanctified* by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*." And again in ver. 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected *for ever them that are sanctified*." Add to this also the declaration of Heb. ii. 11, "Both *he that sanctifieth* and *they who are sanctified* are all of one: for

which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Moreover, in John xv. 3 the Lord had said, "Now are ye clean (*καθαροί*) through the word which I have spoken to you;" and in xiii. 10 He had expressly marked the condition of His disciples, to the exclusion of Judas, when He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is *clean every whit*: and ye are clean, but not all." In Eph. v. 26 also it is said, "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word;" or as I think more exactly giving the force, "Gave himself for it that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word." Both terms, "sanctify" and "cleanse," are here used. So in Acts xv. 9, when Peter was showing the ground of the reception of the Gentiles, he says, "God hath put no difference between them and us; *purifying* their hearts by faith." Again, in Titus ii. 14 it is said, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all in-

His grace. In Acts xxvi. the same thought is repeated, only it is there added that the position is practically gained *by faith*: "That they might receive the forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me."

There are few Christians, perhaps, that have not at some time or other felt the crushing weight of that passage, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. xii. 14,) when looking within for something to correspond to the requisitions of the holiness of God. It is not that practical holiness is not desired and sought after; nor that when the soul has learnt the liberty of grace and the gospel, it does not delight in the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy:" but apart from the clear apprehension of the power of the work of Christ, there is, where there is nothing perhaps to stain the walk, a sense of the "law in the members warring against the law of the mind;" and the question painfully returns, How am I to become possessed of this absolute holiness? For it is felt

guilty, and *purify unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In Heb. i. 3, the literal expression is, *when he had through himself made a purification, or cleansing, of our sins, sat down,* &c. And in 1 Peter i. 22, it is said, "Seeing ye have *purified your souls* in obeying the truth through the Spirit," &c.

So that, whether our separation be expressed by sanctification or purification, the ground of it is declared to be the work of Christ, while its effect in us is received by faith, through the word, as God's instrument, and by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

But there are other passages. In Acts xx. 32 we read, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Here the term marks the definite characteristic or condition of believers, as distinguished from others, whether now or hereafter, and is declared to be accomplished by God and the word of

that nothing but *absolute holiness* can meet the requisitions of God's presence. Let anyone see the bearing of verse 10 of this chapter, taken in connexion with x. 10—14 and xiii. 12, 13, already quoted, and the difficulty will at once vanish. If it be holiness that *fits for heaven*, we have abundantly seen its ground and source. But if it be *practical holiness*, that we may as children be in accordance with the character of our Father, we find that God's fatherly chastenings are administered to this end. But then it is that we may be "partakers of His holiness." That is, God uses these chastenings to separate our hearts from that which is of nature or of the flesh, that we may be partakers of the holiness that characterizes His nature, and of which He is both the standard and the source. For in this epistle we shall see it is *God's salvation* that we have part in—*God's rest* that we are called to enter; and it is *God's holiness* we are made partakers of.

Believers are declared to be "Sanctified in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. i. 2.)

"Sanctified by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 16.) And in 1 Cor. vi. 11 it will be seen that their *cleansing*, and *sanctification*, and *justification* are viewed as having been accomplished by the reception of the gospel, and are presented in contrast with their former condition. The words are, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." While 1 Cor. i. 30 declares, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." It is quite true that the leading idea in this passage is that God has introduced in Christ an entirely new standard, which sets aside all the lofty pretensions of man's intellect by a wisdom that is divine; and shows to be nugatory the false righteousness of man, by bringing in a righteousness which is of God; and sets aside the lustral purifications of the Gentiles and the mere ritual cleansing of the law, by a sanctification that is absolute; and finally, which discovers

and sets aside man's weakness, by the introduction of a power that redeems him out of the corruption and death of which he is the helpless victim. Still it presents Christ as the example, and depository, and ground of it all; and it will be seen that sanctification is as absolute, and of God, as the wisdom, and the righteousness, and the redemption. To which we may add 2 Thess. ii. 13, "God hath from the beginning chosen you through *sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth;" and 1 Peter i. 2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." These passages need no comment: the latter presents a condensed summary of truth, such as nothing but the word of God can afford. In 2 Cor. vii. 1 we have the exhortation, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This is practical, and we see how it is that this separation in the fear of God

is perfected. It is by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. In 1 John iii. we read, "Every man that hath this hope in him"—i.e., of seeing Jesus and being made like him—"purifieth himself even as he is pure." But the accuracy of Scripture uses another term for this, as also in 1 Peter i. 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," &c.

In the consideration of this subject I do not think I have omitted any material passage bearing on it; and I do not think that there can remain on the mind of the attentive reader any doubt as to the definiteness of Scripture testimony concerning it. Even practical sanctification never leaves the idea of *separation*. For example, if I am advancing in holiness, what is it but that I am more and more separated from the world, its spirit, and aims, and pursuits; more separate from the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Practical sanctification is a growing separation from all that is not like Christ and that does not

spring from the life which I have in Him and from Him. Sanctification is never spoken of in Scripture as the attenuation of the old nature or the flesh, which is declared to be corrupt, "The old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts," "The flesh in which dwells no good thing." We put off the old man, and put on the new. The old man is not sanctified, it is put off. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." For "as is the earthy, such also are they that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly." The principle of identity in nature is first established, and then the final result is declared—"we shall bear the image of the heavenly."

Whoever is accustomed to observe the workings of his own mind and to measure them by the perfect holiness of God, or to compare his thoughts with what is revealed of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ, will acknowledge how far his condition is from that which will bear the inspection of the light.

Nay more, he will find that there is not in practice that progressive advancement in sanctification which he may perhaps hold as an unexamined doctrine. Hence there will be felt in proportion to the seriousness of the mind's habit, a dark and distressful feeling as to what possible change can take place *in death*, which will fit a heart for the purity of heaven, which up to the moment of departure has been felt, as to its secret movements and tendencies, to be entirely contrary to all that is pure and holy. And nothing can solve this difficulty but the blessed testimony of the divine word, which makes us know that "flesh and blood *does not* inherit the kingdom of God;" and that the change which is wrought in the believer by the power of God's Spirit is not the change of that which is *essentially evil* into that which is absolutely good; but is the impartation of a nature that is in accordance with all that characterizes the heaven for which it is destined. "Born of God," "born of the Spirit," "created anew in Christ Jesus," taken together with the declared con-

trariety of the two natures, present the ~~divine~~ solution of the difficulty. "That ~~which~~ is born of God sinneth not;" and the Saviour's declaration, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit*." It is not "flesh and blood that inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption." It is the ~~new~~ man, and not the old that inherits glory. Blessed be God, as "the flesh" knows *no change*, however subdued, so ~~it~~ knows *no resurrection*.

I CORINTHIANS XIII. 12.

Clothed with this tabernacle still,
We dimly, darkly gaze,
As through a window dim we view
Eternal glory's blaze.

Our knowledge now is but in part:
Our highest knowledge here
Is all imperfect as our sight
Of yon celestial sphere.

But this imperfect sight must pass,
This partial knowledge flee;
And "face to face," "knowing as known,"
For evermore 'twill be.

Yes; and the soul tastes deepest joy
While dwelling on the Word,
Since that which shall be seen and known
Is her own worshipped Lord.

FAREWELL TO LIFE.

There is a weary head, an eye
Whose light is ready now to die:
There is a heart whose movement grows
More languid, drawing to a close:
There is a spirit sighing sore
To be released for evermore.

But o'er this scene a light has spread,
For Jesus holds the weary head,
And on the vacant, fading eye
Beams glory from the world on high—
And to the heart that beats so slow
Eternal love's own waters flow.
The sighing spirit views its home,
And whispers faintly, "Jesus, come."

Thus death is vanquished, Lord, by thee,
And pain, and fear, and sorrow flee.

THE SUCCESS OF FAITH.

"Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."—Hosea xiv. 9.

Faith is the only power which the believer has over the world, and the moment he acts in faith he is in opposition to the world, and the world to him. The world in the hand of Satan will always be arrayed against him in various ways, but as long as there is faith there will be victory. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John v. 4.) Now faith is maintained in power in my soul if I am acting in reliance on God's word. I then walk in faith, and the greater the apparent difficulties, the more they are made to conduce to my benefit and to the world's discomfiture.

The children of Israel, (see Ex. xiv.) saved from the judgment of God on Egypt, and having fed on the paschal lamb, are called to leave Egypt, and

while they acted in obedience to this word of the Lord, which told them to depart therefrom, they walked in faith. But in so doing they must encounter the enemy, and the whole power of the world and of the devil is brought against them. The Red Sea typifies the "strong man armed, until the stronger than he had come upon him, and taken away the armour in which he trusted and divided the spoils." Until Christ came no *man* could assert mastery over Satan; but to Him Satan had to bow, and acknowledge, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." The Lord Jesus entered into death "that he might destroy him that had the power of death," and He is now raised far above all principality and power, as supreme over every shade of hostile agency. When a soul is quickened with the life of Christ, its first consciousness, after assurance of its safety, is, "I am not of the world, even as he is not of the world." *Then* begins the walk of faith, and this being the aim and evidence of the life that produces the walk,

wheat are the most direful oppression; the "vessels to dishonour" in the great house the most effectual corruption; the "spots in your feasts of charity" the most unescapable persecution. No suffering which the Lord endured from the world was equal to that of Judas's treachery. If the world follows me, it is undoubtedly with a purpose to detain me in Egypt; and if it avows it openly, like Pharaoh, so much the better for me. The children of Israel do not appear to have apprehended the pursuit of Pharaoh till they were hemmed in by the waters of the Red Sea. The soul does not realize the terrific power of the world, until *circumstances* combine with the violence of man to convince it that there is no escape except in the power of faith. In this trying and excruciating moment the weakness of our flesh loudly betrays itself; but faith on the other hand asserts its reliance on God. The children of Israel in their murmurings represent the *one*; Moses the *other*. *They* say, "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians. *Moses*

its first action is to lead out of the world, or, as here typified, out of Egypt; and *then* also begins the trying to the soul, which is caused by the array of forces which beset and embarrass it. And this is necessary. I must feel the terribleness of the difficulties in order that I may enjoy the greatness of the victory which will be vouchsafed to me. If I were of the world, the world would love its own; but because I am not of the world, but He has chosen me out of the world; therefore the world hateth me. Israel had hitherto proceeded with a high hand, as many a young believer does; but ere long the world, in some shape or other, presses on him; and the more so as he persists in leaving it.

Amid the various ways in which the world acts against us, there is none more dangerous than its indirect imitation of us. Pharaoh and the Egyptian did not professedly imitate Israel, but they follow in Israel's track with a deadly purpose and evil intention. In this they typify the world in its most insidious form of attack. The tares among the

says, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." The soul that has never entered into this strait, painful as it is, has never truly essayed to leave the world, and take the place of victory over it by faith; and therefore it has never known the mighty power of God in vouchsafing to it full and marked deliverance over all the power of the enemy. It has not realized what it is to "sit together with Christ in heavenly places," which is the Christian's calling. I may be a believer and know myself sheltered from judgment through the blood of Christ; and still more, I may have fed on Him as my life; but unless I overcome the wicked one, in whose power the world lieth, I am not strong; and I am depriving myself of the consciousness of strength, which is my portion, if I am not marching onward to leave the world behind. A "babe" I may be, but I shall never be a "young man," unless I overcome; and that which overcomes is faith; and faith is not in *fall* exercise until I am so pressed that none but God can extricate me. The

very experience of this strait is an evidence that I am in the path of faith, overcoming what is not of the Father down here. The combined forces of the world; (men and circumstances;) in another place "giants and cities walled up to heaven" so hedge me round that in order to escape from them I must be cast simply and entirely on God. *Until* I am thus cast on Him, I am not in active faith; and *when* I am, I shall know what is "that victory that overcometh the world." When I simply trust in God He always helps me in a way quite unexpected and unthought of, and also supremely above my utmost calculations.

In this moment of agony Moses's faith waxed strong; it felt that God was equal to the difficulty; and God's first word is, "Bid the people that they go *forward*." The only movement of any value at such a moment is a more decided advance; for it proves the existence and energy of faith, and the dauntless advance wins the position. Daniel's move into the lion's den places

dren of Israel are given in the following way. "The angel of the Lord 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 night." Here is *another* great evidence of being in the path of faith! God does not *guide* His children by circumstances; for such guidance would be below faith; but He often corrects us and forces us back into the path of faith *by* circumstances. I ought to know my Lord's will for me in everything, independently of circumstances. He could not indicate His will to me in any other channel except the Holy Ghost, who dwelling in me and helping my infirmities, maketh intercession for me. I cannot therefore estimate any of God's orderings for me according to their true value until I am in the path of faith; but the moment I *am* in

him in the end above his enemies. Oh ~~that~~ our souls knew better that the way to rise superior to the power of the world is to be more active and determined in abandoning it! God, whose "way is in the sea," now opens therein a path of deliverance; and the believer realizes His mighty power.

The Egyptians follow, and as yet there is no obstacle to hinder their advance; for imitators of Christianity can readily follow the people of God up to a certain point, but no further. And from thence arises a fresh disclosure to faith; for however wondrous the opening that had already been made to the people of God through this great difficulty, it by no means *ends* here: on the contrary, the soul is led still more deeply into the sense of God's interest for it *after* the resolution of the difficulty, given in answer to faith. The first engagement of faith is with the *distress*, but God having opened a clear, safe, and wondrous way for me out of it, He then unfolds to me *how* He cares for me. This blessed disclosure the chil-

that path, He makes an abundant display to me of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. The soul is then made sensible of special acts on God's part intercepting and checking the power of the world which threatens it, and this is a most blessed and cheering experience, but only known in the Red Sea; i.e., *after* the soul has entered the opening vouchsafed to faith. *It could not be known outside.* Paul at Philippi encountered a terrible "sea" in the violence of the world and Satan; but he walked in faith, and God opened the prison doors. And not only so, but his jailer is changed into his *host*, and he receives the utmost care and attention, where a little before all must have been, to human vision, darkness and misery. There is no truly loyal soul that has not a history of its own in its struggles to get detached from this evil world, with a bright page here and there marking every successful step. The world is always in antagonism, whether avowedly or not; and, withal, so reckless and presumptuous, that it will venture

to imitate the path of faith, in order to detain the people of God in their onward advance. This is Satan's aim in provoking the imitation, though the instruments that he makes use of to attain it may not be always conscious of so defined a purpose. All the religious forms and services which are continually adopted by people of the world without faith are, doubtless, urged upon them by Satan in bitter hate of the people of God. And as "Jannes and Jambres (imitators to a point) withstood Moses," so do imitators now-a-days withstand the truth; and they are as destructive in their secret intentions as were the Egyptians who pursued the children of Israel through the Red Sea. But their folly will sooner or later be made manifest: the further they proceed, the greater will be their difficulties. "In the morning watch the Lord looked into the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." As with the five *foolish* virgins, the discomfiture increases as the hour of deliverance for the *wise* ones

cheering and triumphant assurance, "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, *ye shall see them again no more for ever.*" There is no resuscitation of a conquered foe. Many others may arise, but one thoroughly conquered—overwhelmed in the sea of death—can never present itself again. May the Lord in His mercy and love lead us on in the power of that faith through which we shall be more than conquerors, in the practical realization of the wonders of His own victory for us!

THE RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv.

Familiar as we are all obliged to be with death, and in nature shrinking from it, still feeling it inevitable, it is strange that the heart is no more impressed and the thoughts and feelings no more moulded by the wonderful revelation of God, which presents the only possible remedy for death, and alone sheds a ray of brightness on the gloom of the grave.

approaches. They may *enter* the path without difficulty; but as they advance, troubles increase: "Their chariot-wheels are taken off, and they drave heavily." Terrible is the moment for the persecuting, imitating world!

The believer finds the path of faith, at first, one of fear and risk; but as he advances, difficulties disappear, and he is triumphant *just before* the world is overwhelmed.

This triumph is another great evidence of being in the path of faith. Faith always leads to triumph; and as it advances, imparts an increasingly clear consciousness of fulness of victory.

God always makes a way of escape; and after we have suffered awhile, makes us perfect—stabilizes, strengthens, and settles us. If we faint not, we may surely reckon on deliverance; for the "end of the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." But we must endure, and we must *advance*; and if we do, we shall surmount every difficulty in this world, be it great or small. And not only so, but we shall have the

Nothing in the universe is more solemn than death. It is justly styled "the king of terrors;" and it is not by banishing thoughts of it from our minds, nor by thinking lightly of it, that we shall gain the victory over its terrors.

If Christians thought more deeply of what death is, as the quenching and dying down of all earthly associations and hopes—the perishing in a day of all human thoughts—the dissolving of every tie which affection has ever woven to bind our hearts to those we love—the breaking up of every interest in which, since life began, we have taken a part—the removal from all that, as to this world, has ever awakened a joy or caused a sorrow—to say nothing of the mournful circumstances that so often wait on the hour of dissolution, it would assuredly throw them, as a necessary resource, more on the consideration of the resurrection—that truth and victory of Christ in which alone the remedy for death is seen. It would not then be held lazily and inconsequentially—a doctrine amongst other doctrines, and

nothing more; but in its living power; as alone buoying the heart over the vastness of the ruin; and with unfailing thankfulness to God, for having given the brightest light of revelation where nature is most at fault, and thus throwing a ray of the brightest glory on nature's darkest hour!

In the marvellous unfolding of the blessed subject presented in this chapter, it is important to notice how the apostle links all that is revealed to him of the certainty and order and power of the resurrection with the gospel which he preached; and also how simply he presents the elements of that gospel in which alone man's deliverance from sin and all its consequences is found.

This gospel he sums up in the briefest terms, namely, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." This he says was the subject of common testimony by himself and by the other apostles and witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. "Whether

it were I or they, so we preach and so ye believed." It presents thus the death of Christ as the result of God's counsels and the fruit of His infinite grace, according to the testimony of mercy, from the time sin entered into the world until its guilt was met, not by the blood of the typical sacrifices which had been enjoined, but by the death of Christ, who "now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "He died for *our sins*, according to the Scriptures." The cause and object of His death is thus presented; for it is not in a living Christ that the gospel is found for dying men. It is true that He *lived* before He died; but, simple as the distinction may appear, however much Christ may be the subject of preaching or testimony, there is no gospel for sinners but in His *death*. Man, in death, is reduced to the impotence which belongs to his condition as a sinner; and in it he is obliged to bear witness, however unwillingly, to the solemn judgment of God against sin. Men may deceive themselves about

death coming "in the course of nature," and may talk about dying as "paying the debt of nature," or "laying the head to rest on the bosom of mother earth;" but in it there is no "course of nature," nor anything else but the just judgment of God—a judgment irreversible if met apart from faith in the death of Christ. "It is *APPOINTED* unto *men* once to die, but after this the judgment."

It is important to notice (for many Christians are deceived by it) how much the life of Christ is dwelt upon—not, it is true, to the exclusion of His death as a historic fact—in the preaching and writings of those who, on the one hand, present Him as restoring *man*, in *his nature*, to association with God; and on the other, by those who would present the efficacy and grace which dwelt in him as incarnate as *continued now* by means of ordinances and a priesthood. But we must learn from Christ Himself, that whatever excellency or perfection dwelt in Him (perfection on which the renewed heart delights evermore to

dwelt) is a perfection apart from man and dissociated from man, and can only be participated in by His death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is only in death that even Christ Himself becomes fruitful in life and blessing to others. In life He is *alone* in His infinite perfectness and worth: in death that worth and excellence become the portion of those that believe on Him in His atoning death. It is this which stamps such importance on the death of Christ, and gives its emphasis to the apostle's declaration, "Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures."

But the other part of the gospel is, "that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." In the doctrinal statement of Christ's death and resurrection, it is, "he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Here it is the certainty of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, as the fundamental truths on which the whole of

Christianity rests. He was not only raised from death, but from the grave. Death and the grave are conquered by the resurrection of Christ; as the apostle speaks at the close, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Thus he recalls to their minds what was the gospel he preached, and which they received, and by which they were saved—unless, which he does not for a moment allow, all had been in vain. That which he had received by direct revelation from the Lord he had declared to them; for this was the special characteristic of Paul's testimony. He was a stranger to Christ when he was on the earth, and the other apostles were called; and the resurrection of Christ, as His death also, was a mere nullity to him until convinced of it by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself on the journey to Damascus. This enabled the apostle, in a special manner, to join the array of witnesses which he here enumerates in their testimony to those fundamental truths on which the possibility of salva-

such thing as a resurrection from the dead, it is plain that Christ, who was both dead and buried, could not be risen. And if this were so, all the consequences immediately followed, that the apostle's preaching was vain, and vain was their faith; and those who had preached a dead and risen Christ were found to be false witnesses in regard to God, because they testified that God had raised up Christ, which could not be, *if the dead do not rise*. But, then, if Christ were not raised, their faith was vain—they were yet in their sins. If the resurrection of Christ was gone, all was gone. His death was no atonement for sins, and, consequently, those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished, and the apostles were of all men the most to be pitied for trusting implicitly to a mere fable, and for suffering such miseries in the world on account of it. It is likely that the Corinthians had no thought of consequences like these being connected with their denial of the resurrection of the dead: for certainly they had no thought of making a formal surrender

tion alone rests, and on which the whole of Christianity is built: and he adds, "last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

It is the mention of this appearance of Christ to himself that throws his mind back on the state of things with him when thus met by the Lord. He thinks of his having been a persecutor of the Church of God, and his heart is bowed by the sense of that grace which saved him and made him an apostle and a witness for that Christ whose name he had so madly attempted to destroy. He ascribes all the energy of his service to the grace which he had received; and his labours, which were so abundant, he renounces as *his*, and declares that they were due only to the grace of God which was with him.

He then assumes as the foundation of his argument that Christ had been preached, that "he rose from the dead," and asks how it should be that some amongst them said that "there was no resurrection of the dead." Because if it were once allowed that there is no

of Christianity; but the Spirit of God by the apostle shows that, if this point of christian truth were sacrificed, Christianity in its whole essence was gone, and man was left in the hopelessness of sin and despair, notwithstanding all that the gospel might have promised. The resurrection in the apostle's mind connects itself alike with the foundation of his faith and his final hope beyond the grave: without it his only standing in the presence of God is gone, and every hope perished.

Having proceeded thus far in proof of the testimony that had been borne amongst them, and shown that the denial of a resurrection of the body from the dead,* whatever they might think

* It does not appear that the Corinthians denied the immortality of the soul, or the life of the spirit in another world after this; but they said there was no *resurrection of the body* after death. It is against this notion that the whole reasoning of the chapter is directed; and it may well teach us the importance of the doctrine that was at stake, and the place which the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection from the dead of those that are His should hold in our minds.

of it, was the utter subversion of the whole of Christianity; and assuming the position as incontrovertible that, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," the ground is cleared for his advancing argument. But from verse 20 down to verse 29, the revelation is confined to the resurrection of Christ, and to the position of power to which, in the counsels of God, he was advanced by it. For it is as man that Christ is contemplated here, and "raised up from the dead *by the glory of the Father*." Christ in His resurrection is presented first as "the wave-sheaf," or "first-fruits of them that slept," in reference to the gathering in of that harvest which will take place at his coming. His resurrection is the pledge and power of the resurrection from the dead of all that are of Him; as it is stated, in verse 23, where the order of the resurrection is given, "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Then it is shown that, as it was by *man* that death was brought in, so it is by

association with Himself, as the head of redemption to all those that are in Him by faith, and whose resurrection is the consequence of another principle than the exercise of divine power which all must obey. This is seen in Rom. viii. 11: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The next thing that is presented is the *order* of the resurrection: "Every man in his own order."

"Christ the first-fruits"—which, as we know, has been accomplished more than 1800 years—"afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." It is not until His coming that those who are His will be brought into the enjoyment of the actual resurrection, which is necessary in order to their entrance into glory with Christ, however they may have known "the power of his resurrection" in many of its blessed fruits before. This is fully presented in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: "For the Lord himself shall

man that the resurrection of the dead, the only possible remedy for death, is also introduced. This is shown by the contrast between Adam and Christ: death is by the one, and life out of death by the other. Death is the consequence of association with Adam—it is nature's doom; life is the fruit of association with Christ—it is faith's triumph.

The universality of the terms, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," is limited to the association with the respective heads of death and life. "In Adam all die" is so far universal as a consequence of relationship with him by natural descent, as it is unmet by association with Christ through faith. "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive" does not regard the exercise of His power, when "all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," some to "a resurrection of life," but others to "a resurrection of judgment." Not that this universal power of Christ over the dead to call them forth is questioned; but in this passage it is limited to

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."

It is not the intermediate state, or the happiness of the spirit apart from the body that is here dwelt upon, however it is declared that "to depart and be with Christ is far better," and "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." It is the resurrection of the body from among the dead; the intervention of Christ's power to deliver the bodies of his saints from the corruption in which they have been sleeping, and thus to rescue them from the last trace of the power of sin, and to present them "faultless before the presence of his glory," as the trophies of his power and love.

Next in order after the display of Christ's power in the resurrection of those that are His, at His coming, is

"the end." This τέλος, or end, is shown to be at the close of Christ's mediatorial kingdom which he will then deliver up. But this will not be until His power and reign have resulted in the putting down of "all rule and all authority and power," and the subjugation of all enemies. Even "death" itself is to be destroyed by the power of Christ, inasmuch as those who are left under its power, as not having a part in the "first resurrection," will at the end be raised, as presented in Rev. xx. 11-15. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man ac-

passed away." It is at Christ's coming that He receives the kingdom; but "the end," refers to the period of His giving it up, after the full exercise of power in putting down all opposing rule, and the subjugation of every enemy.

Nothing is more wonderful or calculated to impress the soul than this breadth of Scripture, which, in a few simple sentences, lays open the destinies of man and of the universe; and, while outstripping the flight of time, directs the eye through the long vista of God's dispensations, until the view is lost in the eternity of God Himself! And what calmness does it give the soul, what superiority to all the interests of time, to be thus occupied with the thoughts of God, and to find that our true inheritance, our eternal portion, is thus bound up with His eternal counsels in Christ Jesus! And what dignity does it throw around "the man of sorrows," whom we have learned to love, to find Him thus the centre and the end of all these counsels.

But it may be asked, how is it that

cording to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The only notice of what is termed the "general resurrection," or the resurrection of those that are *not* Christ's, is found in the expression, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," which answers to the passage just quoted from Rev. xx.

That which follows upon this is the final state, beyond all dispensation, "when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father;" and when "the Son also himself shall be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." It is this state that is presented in Rev. xxi. 1-5, following in order of time the judgment of the dead, already referred to, at the close of Christ's millennial reign. Its characteristics are "a new heaven and a new earth," and the declaration that "the tabernacle of God is with men," "for the former things are

events like these, of which there is no foreshadowing in the annals of time, should be spread out before us thus with all the definiteness of a map? The answer is, it is *God's programme*. His outline of the vast drama of the universe, which runs on till eternity shall meet and engulf the flood of time! That which *man* knows fully he can declare simply; and God, whose wisdom has foreordained all things, and whose power accomplishes all, can reveal with perfect ease and simplicity the order and sequence of the purposes of His eternal mind! Happy he who finds his interest and his joy knit up with all that is thus revealed!

From verse 20 to 29 of this chapter we have a subject of itself—a divine episode concerning the power and glory of Christ as the Risen Man, and His reign until "the end." The direct argument concerning the resurrection of the dead was broken off at verse 19, and is resumed again at verse 29, with the words, "Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" And the questions are

asked, "Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" In verse 18 the apostle had shown, as a consequence of the denial of the resurrection of the dead, that "they which had fallen asleep in Christ had perished," and now he reasons on the folly of their being baptized for the dead apart from the hope of the resurrection. To be baptized into Christ's name, *then*, whatever it be now, was equivalent to being baptized *for death*. If the martyrs were struck down and others rushed into the ranks to fill their place, it was with the prospect of sharing their fate. But what inducement could there be to encounter this, except in the certainty of the resurrection? They were thus baptized "in regard to the dead;" for that appears to be the force of the passage. Not that there was any such custom, in apostolic days, whatever there may have been in the progress of superstition since, of persons being baptized in the place of others who had died without baptism that they might have the benefit of it. This

as it is, furnishes no motive apart from *the resurrection*. And it is exactly here that we learn the importance of the doctrine and the place it held in the apostle's system. We have already seen the bearing of its denial on the gospel and on the apostle's testimony and the faith of believers; and now we see it as cutting the sinews of the apostle's energy, and as the utter extinction of his hopes. The resurrection gone, he sees no alternative but to "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And he more than intimates that this effect had already resulted from the denial of the doctrine, at least on the part of some. "Evil communications had corrupted good manners." The philosophic notions of the heathens around them and their corrupt and sensual practices were producing their fruits amongst the Corinthians. Their intercourse with those who were far from God had, it is likely, first corrupted their doctrines, and as a consequence was now corrupting their morals.

(To be continued.)

seems to have been a custom fabled to meet the difficulties of the passage, which in its connexions is simple enough, and the explanation above is confirmed by the next point to which the apostle adverts, viz., his own experience. He had said, (ver. 19,) "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable:" and he now adds an illustration of this in the question, "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" His life, for Christ's sake, was but a succession of perils. He had *daily* to meet death as the consequence of the hopes he cherished. He had to encounter an infuriated populace at Ephesus, which he compares to the contest with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. But what advantage was there in all this, if the dead rise not? Take away the resurrection and there is no motive left for the encountering of persecutions and evils in this life. It is of no use to say that other motives might still have impelled to such a course. That is exactly the point in question; and the apostle declares that *christianity*, such

THE RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv.

(Concluded from page 256.)

It was this corruption from heathen intercourse which led to the stern rebuke of the apostle, "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." This does not imply that there was direct ignorance of the being of God or a denial of His existence, but such an absence of the sense of the holiness of His character and claims as could only result from neglect of the truth and the absence of that communion to which the grace of the gospel introduces. For we must remember that the grace which the gospel presents comes to us through the unfolding of the character of God in the truth and righteousness and holiness which characterize His being. This amongst the Corinthians was lost, as it is in every case where error becomes dominant in the soul. This knowledge of God, which gives activity and brightness to conscience, being absent, the

safeguard of the soul is gone, and we are exposed to Satan's wiles: for these can only be detected as we are walking in the light.

As to the doctrine itself, it is plain that no philosophic speculations about a future life, nor reasoned conclusions about the immortality of the soul, nor imaginative sickly sentimentalizings as to the enjoyments of disembodied spirits, the "*philosophy of a future state!*" can ever take the place of the plain Scripture doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; that doctrine which brings in God in the supremacy of His power to complete the redemption which His grace began, and which leaves to *man* no place but that of a helpless sinner, the just victim of death and corruption. It was in the resurrection from the dead that Christ's victory over death was accomplished and proclaimed; and it is in the resurrection of His people that their participation in His victory is shown. The knowledge that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better," is not denied. The truth, as regards the believer, that to be "ab-

tation of the creature waiteth *for the manifestation of the sons of God;*" and this manifestation will be when they are raised from the dead by Christ at His coming. "When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall we also appear (be manifested) with him in glory." Glory for the believer is not reached through death, but through resurrection, or that which is tantamount. "He shall change our vile bodies and fashion them like to his own glorious body." What believers are declared to be waiting for is, "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

It is not, then, in consonance with Christ's glory, nor is it for the interest of holiness, as producing separation from the world's spirit of self-indulgence, nor does it tend to energetic, hopeful service that the eye and the heart of the Christian should be so little set upon that which is beyond death, even upon that resurrection which is the peculiar and distinctive privilege of those that are Christ's; however much it may be merged and lost sight of in the notion

sent from the body is to be present with the Lord," has its own rightful place. Nay, we owe to the same apostle the revelation of these truths; but how much do they appear in the reasonings of this chapter? Are they for a moment allowed to weaken the importance of the fundamental truth he is establishing? The reason of this is plain. The certainty of the soul's being in the presence of Christ at death gives present light and cheerfulness to the passage—is an instalment of heavenly hope; but it is only in the resurrection that Christ's full power over death is declared. Corruption has still a hold on that which Christ has redeemed while the body is sleeping in the grave. The victory is not complete while any part of that which constitutes the integrity of our being is still under the power of death. We know, indeed, that our Lord, when the resurrection of the dead was in question, (Luke xx.,) declares that "God is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto him." Still we are taught that "the earnest expect-

of a common and *distant* and simultaneous resurrection of all men, from which, in scripture, it is most carefully distinguished, both in point of time and principle of accomplishment. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

Here (verse 35) the argument takes another form, as to *how* the resurrection is accomplished and with *what* body. This we shall briefly pursue.

In the first place, the difficulty or objection which is supposed in the questions, is declared to be the offspring of *folly*, and consequently is not *directly* answered, and perhaps could not be. It is a question simply of the power of God, which is not to be limited by man's capacity to conceive of its exercise. Still, there are certain analogies which cast their light upon the question. First, there is the example of the seed sown. This does not spring up apart from the decomposition, the death, of the grain; nor does it come up the same body that was cast into the ground, but with a body given to it according to God's good

pleasure. Still, every seed has its own appropriate body, whether it happen to be of wheat or any other kind of grain. Next, there is the analogy of animal organised life. In this, though flesh is a common characteristic of all, there is the difference which adapts each kind to its peculiar habits and to the element in which it is designed to exist. It is marvellous, but for its familiarity, that flesh should exist in such different circumstances, and in such opposite elements, as we find to be the case in men, and beasts, and birds, and fishes! Next, there is the difference between the heavenly bodies and the earthly; and their distinctive glory. "The glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another." But between the celestial bodies also there is a difference in splendour or glory. The glory of the sun is distinct from the glory of the moon; and star also differs from star in glory. In all these there is the bright witness of the power and wisdom of Him on whose fiat the resurrection of the dead depends. So that any question

sorrow. For what Christian that has ever stood by the grave, and seen the cold sod fall heavily on the bosom of the objects of affection, but has felt relief in the thought, "It is but a sowing?" The grave is but receiving the seed in order to render it back again in all the triumph of christian hope expressed in the words, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

This last characteristic of the resurrection-body, which expresses its differential character, gives occasion to a declaration, the force of which is sometimes overlooked. The apostle says, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This is not the trite assertion that man is composed of a natural body and a spirit, which we all know; but that "there is a *spiritual body*"—a body known and existing in the wondrous economy of God, bearing

of "*how*," or "with what body," only resolves itself into the folly and ignorance of one who is blind to the displays of divine power around him, or unobservant of His works of might and wisdom that the wide creation presents.

"Almighty God has done much more: and what He can He will: His own omnipotence stands bound to see it done."

This closes the analogies; for "so also is the resurrection of the dead" (ver. 42) does not refer to the differences of the heavenly bodies and their various glories, but returns to the example of the seed sown. (ver. 38.) This is pursued through all the characteristics of the resurrection-body, in its incorruption, glory, power, spiritual nature—the bright contrasts of the corruption, dishonour, weakness, in which the natural body is sown. "It is *sown* in corruption," &c. The very term, when so applied by the Spirit of God, awakens hope at the moment the eye is most disposed to be fixed on the gloom of the grave, and paints a bright rainbow on our cloud of

this distinctive character after the type of which the saint will be invested at the resurrection, as he is now possessed of "a natural body," suited to the exigences of his existence in the present state. It is with regard to these expressions that reference is made to the first Adam being a living soul, and the last Adam a quickening spirit. It marks the condition of Adam's being in his creation, and what Christ is in His divine person. It is introduced as giving the basis of the natural body and of the spiritual body, of which it is shown that in the order of time the natural comes first, and afterwards the spiritual. Adam being made of the dust of the ground is said to be "of the earth earthy." This is the character of the first man. But the second man is not said to be of the heaven heavenly, but "the Lord from heaven." What He is in His nature and divine relationship of necessity enters into and characterizes what he accomplishes, and what He is as the head of redemption. The next point in prominence is the par-

ticipation of this nature. It is said that, "as *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy; and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly." Our participation in Adam's nature associates us with him in like condition of being, and places us in all the circumstances connected with his state as of "the earth earthy," having no spring of life beyond that which is natural, and which is forfeited by sin, and having by the very condition of his nature, "of the *earth earthy*," no association with *heaven*. But participation in the nature of the second Adam, "the Lord from *heaven*," places us in the condition in which He is as the risen head of a redeemed and heavenly family, and in all the circumstances and connexion with heaven in which the resurrection has placed Him. "As *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also which are heavenly." Mere natural circumstances of earth may remain, as resulting from our connexion with the first man, but our life, our nature, is derived from heaven, and belongs to heaven, and can only have its

in the resurrection, when it is "raised a spiritual body," &c., from the impossibility of man's nature being associated with the glory of the kingdom of God. This brings out another point of revelation, exactly as we see it when the believer's hope concerning the departed is presented in the Thessalonians. "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"—answering exactly to verse 51 of our chapter: "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. The assertion of the absolute necessity of this change, in order to inherit the kingdom of God, necessitates the disclosure of the power of Christ in another form than that which takes place in the resurrection. It seemed up to this point as if the kingdom of God, and the change that fitted for it, could only be reached through death. But we are taught that, though the necessity for the change is universal, the necessity for death on the part of believers is not universal. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." A change will pass upon the

home in heaven, as it is allied to "the second man, who is the Lord from heaven."

Hence the next point that is presented is our sharing the *likeness* of Him whose *nature* we share. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the *image* of the heavenly." This is what will be: it is connected with our hope. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be *like him*." But even now, amidst all the misery by which we are surrounded, amidst sorrow and corruption and death, and all the dreadful consequences and issues of sin, we know that, "as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly." "We are more than conquerors through him who hath loved us."

But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption." There is the necessity, the absolute necessity, for a change as to our present condition of being, tantamount to that which the apostle had already taught takes place

living saints when Christ comes, without their passing through death. A single moment of time, a period marked by the twinkling of an eye, will be sufficient to invest them with the garments of light, and to introduce them into the kingdom of glory. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed*." This will take place, we are told, "at the last trump"—a military phrase, in reference to the sounding of the trumpet for a general advance, when the various divisions are formed; which corresponds with Thess. iv.: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the *trump of God*;" the effect of which is the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the catching up of the living all together "in clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

How wonderful is Christ's power! And how absolute the position in which He has placed His people. Death to them is no longer a necessity. They only wait for the word of Him who is

risen and in glory to say, "Come up hither;" and in a moment the world and all the interests of time will be left behind, and they in bodies like His glorious body will join the Lord in the blessedness of the eternal kingdom of God!

It is true that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;" but we have seen that a moment of time, when the hour comes, will be sufficient in the hands of the Lord Jesus to accomplish this! And "when this corruptible"—the body that has been subject to death and the grave—"shall have put on incorruption," and "this mortal"—referring to the dying nature of the body—"shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory!" Death that has conquered all besides, himself receding and lost in the entire and glorious victory of Christ! "Life and incorruption are brought to light by the gospel;" but here death with all his hold on those that are Christ's, disappears—"swallowed up in victory!"

Christ!" Little thought is there of this victory, or of the sorrows and sufferings through which it was won, on the part of Christ, or even of the terribleness of the consequences of having no part in his conquest of sin and death, where the world and present things possess the thoughts and heart! But where the dreadful character of sin is known, and the groaning of creation is entered into, and all the sorrows of the saint in passing through this world are present to the soul, the victory will be felt to be great indeed; and the heart will advance with a firm and unshaken step towards *death*—if we are called to die—or wait with earnest hope the hour of Christ's return. This wondrous truth established, all besides that concerns us is summed up in the closing exhortation, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!" Every changing circumstance of life is but a step onward to the hour of final

The apostle's spirit kindling with the contemplation of the entireness of this victory and power of Christ, exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" For apart from redemption, death is armed with a terrible sting, and the grave has a cruel victory. But in Christ the sting of death is entirely taken away. His power to wound is absolutely gone. For "the sting of death is sin;" not the pains of dissolution, or the natural fears that may accompany it. So that sin being gone, the sting of death is of necessity gone, for sin was its sting. It is the judgment of God against sin that arms death with its sting; and it is the law which gives sin its terrible strength, its power to bind conviction on the conscience, from which there is no escape, but through the knowledge of Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and "who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus

victory; and every occupation for which we are left free by Christ, may be made "the work of the Lord," a work which will not be in vain or have no fruitful issue; but which He will own and honour when He comes. Amen.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST.

"That in all *things* he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 18.) Such is the statement of the inspired word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It may not be without interest briefly to see how this is carried out.

God has revealed Himself as a jealous God, as one who will not give His glory to another. The very idea of one God implies none other of equal authority. He, and He alone, must be the object of all worship. How constantly do we see this in the history of Israel! Did Israel go after idols? God's honour must be vindicated. Did the heathen nations exalt themselves and their

idols above the Lord's people and Jehovah Himself? Then judgment must go forth on them, that men may know that He whose name alone is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. (Psalm lxxxiii. 18.)

But when the Lord Jesus is presented to our view, when He came to Israel, what do we see? One in "the likeness of sinful flesh" is pointed out to the believing, expectant remnant as the object of their heart's desire. "Behold the Lamb of God," says the messenger of the Lord Jehovah, as he points to the Virgin's son. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And when the multitude of His disciples surround Him at Jordan's brink, He exclaims, "There standeth one among you whom ye know not: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt. iii.; John i.) Scarcely had the echo of this announcement died away ere Jesus Himself appears to be baptized of John. "And when he was baptized he went up straightway out of the water, and lo,

the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16.) The attention of all is then directed to the Lord Jesus, the object of the Father's delight, and the one on whom the Holy Spirit rested. He is the one to whom prominence is now given. To Israel it had been, "Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. vi. 4.) To us it is, "Hear ye him," the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, God over all, blessed for evermore.

We may trace this same prominence in the name of Jesus. Several people had names given them from God, as Abraham, Jacob, Solomon, in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist in the New. But while in this they resembled the Lord Jesus, having in common with Him a name given them by God, in this they differed, that their names, though referring to the blessings bestowed on them, or the favour with which God regarded them, had reference also to Him

who gave it. With the Lord Jesus it was different. Thus when God changed Abram's name to Abraham, it was done, we are told, because "a father of many nations have I made thee." (Gen. xvii. 5.) Jacob received the name of Israel, "for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. xxxii. 28.) Nathan was commissioned by God to call David's newborn son Solomon, Jedediah, beloved of the Lord. (2 Sam. xii. 25.) And John speaks to us of the grace of Jehovah so soon to be manifested. But of Jesus we read, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) Here there is no thought of the bestower along with the recipient, as is the case with the others. When we read of Abraham, Jacob, or Solomon receiving a name from God, we may think how blessed they were to enjoy the favour of the Lord God Almighty, and to be called by another name. But whilst thinking of the favours shown them, their very name brings to remembrance the One from

whom they received it. Not so with Jesus. It would seem as if on Him all eyes were to be concentrated, and nothing was to be presented with Him that might draw away attention from His person. "He shall save his people." Not a word here about Him who gave the name. The only thought is about Christ. He who was the desire of all nations had come. To Him men were to look, God manifest in the flesh. Not that in beholding the Lord they would forget God, for He was God. Not that in taking the place of prominence the person of the Father is overlooked, for He was the Son. But it was the Father's good pleasure that the Son, in whom was His delight, should be the one object for the eyes of the whole world to rest upon.

Again, at the transfiguration do we not see the same prominence given to the Lord Jesus? Moses and Elias appear with Him on the mount, and speak "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The astonished and bewildered disciples witness

these two in glory holding converse with Him. They saw three enter the cloud with themselves. But when they emerged "they saw no man, save Jesus only;" whilst a voice had been heard from heaven bearing witness to the Lord, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased: hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.)

If we search the word of God to find out the origin of all created things, in that also we see the prominence given to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we enquire who made the heavens and the earth in the day that they were created, was it not God? Yes; but the word answers that it was by the Son "he made the worlds;" (Heb. i. 2;) "All things were made by him." (John i. 3.)

If the mind, when contemplating the different orders of angelic beings which surround the throne of God—those ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation—enquire, Who called them into life? the word of God again supplies the answer: "By him were all things created, that are in hea-

ven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) Is it the new creation which occupies us, the glories of the Church, its high position, its firm foundation? In all this we find Christ. Of the new creation He is the head. What gives stability and strength to the Church? Christ, the "precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 6.) What gives it position and dignity? Christ the Head and the Bridegroom. (Col. i. 18; Rev. xxi. 9.) Is the Church a body? It is the body of Christ. (Eph. i. 23.) Is it in heavenly places now? It is there in Christ. (Eph. ii. 6.) In whom are we presented perfect before God? In Christ.

What is the object presented to the sinner? Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name

whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) What is the subject of apostolic preaching but "Jesus Christ and him crucified?" (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Are all things to be gathered together in one? It is in Christ. (Eph. i. 10.) What is the antidote to all spiritual poison but Christ in some one or more of the varied aspects in which He is revealed. Is it the assumption of superior wisdom and depth of knowledge to be found in human philosophy, which leads the mind astray, where shall we find the fulness of wisdom and the unfathomable depths of knowledge but in Him, in whom they are hid; (Col. ii. 3;) and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? (Col. ii. 9.) Is the heart endeavouring by assiduous attention to legal ordinances and ritual observances to attain to that standard of righteousness, which can abide the searching scrutiny of an holy God? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 4.) "We are made the righteousness of God in

him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) Are we seeking for an example? He has left "us an example that we should follow his steps." (1 Peter ii. 21; John xiii. 15.) Do we want to know something of the invisible God? We see Him in the Lord Jesus—"The brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." (Heb. i. 3.) "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John xiv. 9.)

Again, what cheers the dying saint like the prospect of being with Christ? "Absent from the body present with the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 8.) What encourages the struggling believer as he journeys through the wilderness, so much as the hope of the Lord's coming? If down-cast at the want of spiritual progress, and the wide difference between the example and the copy, what consoles him like the remembrance "That when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is?" (1 John iii. 2.) And when sin comes in and clouds his view, how precious the remembrance that "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

and he is the propitiation for our sins;" (1 John ii. 1, 2;) and that, "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) What, too, was the wish of the apostle as he drew near the close of his earthly pilgrimage? He had gone where no mortal had been before or since. Caught up into the third heaven, he had heard words which no mortal dare repeat. He had seen the Lord in glory, and had drank deep of the wells of knowledge and fountain of truth. Yet still we find he had a want unsatisfied, a desire not fully gratified—"That I may know him." (Phil. iii. 10.)

Once more, if we look through the door opened in heaven, surveying the scene as presented in Revelation iv., v., and catch the sound of praise as it rises from the lips of the redeemed, what is the subject of it?—the Lamb! It is Him they worship, in the very presence of the One who sat on the throne. And as they sing, "Thou art worthy," the multitude of the heavenly host—ten thousand times ten thousand and thou-

sands of thousands—take up the strain; and, just as when the First-begotten came into the world, the command went forth, "Let all the angels of God worship him," (Heb. i. 6,) so now the whole angelic choir joins to cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And if He is thus the object of angelic worship, and the subject of saints' praises, what are His titles as given in the word? Do not they point Him out as having the pre-eminence? "First-born of every creature," (Col. i. 15,) in connexion with creation; "Prince of the kings of the earth;" (Rev. i. 5;) "King of kings and Lord of lords," (Rev. xix. 16,) in connexion with the government of the world; "First-begotten of the dead;" (Rev. i. 5;) "Captain of our salvation;" (Heb. ii. 10;) "Author and finisher of the faith," (Heb. xii. 2,) in connexion with redemption. How truly, then, do we see that in all things He has the pre-eminence. He is the object of the Father's

love, and the subject of the Spirit's testimony. To Him the Father bore witness when on earth; to Him the Spirit now bears witness as He reveals Jesus to our souls. How marvellous to find One suiting the need of all; at once the refuge of the sinner and the stay of the believer; our strength in weakness, our wisdom in ignorance, our solace in sorrow; the One who meets all the desires of our souls, and the One whom all in heaven combine to worship. In all things He has the pre-eminence. And whilst saving as God can shew sympathy as man. No mere mortal could take such a place. None but the Son of God could fill it. But if He occupies such a place in creation, revelation, and glory, what place has He in our hearts? He is the Father's delight; is He ours? It is the Father's will that in all things He should have the pre-eminence; do we respond to this? It is God's decree that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;" (Phil. ii. 10, 11;) do our hearts now bow to Him? What an object have we presented as the One to whom all shall bow! But marvellous as all this is, and whilst with all intelligent creation we are to give Him the pre-eminence, which is rightfully His, we have a position, a relationship with Him which none other of God's creatures can enjoy. He who is the head over all, God blessed for evermore, is not ashamed to call us brethren. (Heb. ii. 12.) Nor is this all; we are one with Him, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. v. 30.) "One spirit with the Lord." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) Our security is bound up with Him. Our life is linked with His. He is our life. (Col. iii. 4.) "Because I live ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) But we do not stop even here, for "we are in him;" (1 John v. 20;) and yet, more wonderful still, He dwells in us. (John vi. 56.)

The name of the Book of Psalms means *praise* in Hebrew. Had we more of the secrets of wisdom to see each psalm in its proper light, we might find each to be *praise*. It is a great secret to put things as God puts them. That which, viewed in one aspect, might be as a firebrand to the conscience, in another would be blessed light. Many of the Psalms begin with the word "blessed." It may be said of many of them, as of the beatitudes in Matt. v., that if they are used as the probe of our soul, there will be anguish; but if we see that they express what CHRIST is, there will be blessing. Thus, "Blessed are the merciful:" if we see *Jesus* in this, I find just what I need, as a poor, ruined prodigal.

It is well to remark that these are called *Asher* psalms in the Hebrew—the name of one of Jacob's sons. The mother was so thoroughly delighted with her child, that she named him "Asher"—saying, "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed."

taking the ground of this *first* blessing, I do think there is danger of the saints confounding the second and third species of "blessedness," i.e., the blessedness of the poor prodigal, utterly lost and freely saved by Christ, with that of Him who has the joy of the Spirit in the sense of obedience.

DESIRE.

Jesus, my soul would nearer be
Than it has ever been to thee;
For it has searched this desert drear,
And found that nothing good dwells here.
Its wants are many, only thou
Canst satisfy its cravings now.
More of thy love it longs to know,
To prove its depth and fulness too:
It finds no love in things below.

The empty thou dost gladly fill;
The tossed and troubled thou dost still.
There is no pillow, save thy breast,
Whereon the weary head can rest.
Empty am I, and troubled sore;
Oh could I reach some tranquil shore:
Then draw me, Jesus, nearer thee,
That I divinely blest may be.

These "Asher" psalms are of three distinct kinds—turning, as it were, on three distinct pivots. First, in Ps. i. there is not the slightest allowance made for any evil. Secondly, in Psalm xxxii. it is the blessing of the poor sinner, who has not one shred of righteousness of his own. Thirdly, as in Ps. cxix., we have the blessedness of the person, whose sins having been pardoned, he, as grafted into Christ, knows what it is to walk in His ways.

It is easy to see how entirely distinct are these grounds. In the first, it is one who can claim a right to his reward. But who can say it? None of us, doubtless, would take such ground; but still there may be the thought of getting better. But in this 1st Psalm it is *Christ*: not what *He* says of Himself, but what God says of Him. Here is the delight of God in that perfect One, that God-man, who never did anything amiss; so that He has given all things into His hands, and set Him upon His throne.

Though we may not be in danger of

A SERIES.

No 1.

THE CONDITION OF MAN BY NATURE.

If we do not understand the nature of man we cannot adequately comprehend the aim and meaning of God's process in leading us unto Himself; therefore is it a subject of the highest importance. For many there are who know and acknowledge that Christ can alone be their sufficiency before God, who, nevertheless, are by no means convinced of the practical and utter ruin of their nature.

The normal state of man, as first created, was that of innocence—he had done no unrighteousness; and this consisted in his doing God's will, and not his own; therefore, he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for if he did, he would substitute his own will for God's. Satan, in his enmity to God, assails man, and beguiles the woman by representing the great benefits that would flow from the act—

i.e., from disobeying God and following his own will. Satan engendered in the woman the thought, that God would not do for her as well as she could do for herself, and Adam, listening to his wife, fell into the snare. What God had refused, the serpent assured them, would greatly serve them; and what God would not give, to that they could help themselves. Thus God was disbelieved and Satan listened to; and *herein was* ✓ sin instilled into man's nature, which thence underwent a change, not only ✓ in intelligence but in feeling. It was poisoned with an untrue idea of God, and imbued with self-dependence. It now trusted itself and its own powers more than God's, and implied in its line of action, that God would refuse what would benefit, though abundantly in His ✓ power to give! What a delusion! What an estrangement from happy trust in God and full obedience, delighting in the mercies of His hand, to be now so filled with distrust that not only is His word disbelieved, but He is accused of limiting man's blessing, who must there-

fore secure for himself what God has denied! What more painful feeling could be entertained towards a once esteemed benefactor, than that he has power to advance me but interdicts it, and that I can help myself to it in defiance of him! *Satan gained his point*, and instilled the poison into man's nature, which must henceforth rankle with distrust of God and self-dependence, which was only increased and helped on by an enlarged intelligence or power of judging between good and evil, though the standard of such intelligence must be a low one, for it must be with relation to man, and not with relation to God, of whom man had now no right idea.

What then, we may next inquire, was man's course in this fallen condition? Having been made upright he was not without some knowledge of God, though he had sought out and pursued his many inventions; he had conscience, too, which, while it had no power to debar him from his inventions, could always tell him that he was not up to the mark. No man, however hardened, could say

that he had entirely answered to his conscience. He might not listen to it, but if he consulted it at all, he must allow that he could not do everything, even according to his *own* standard. But the more man's nature, thus poisoned, developed itself, the further it got from God; and not liking to retain God in his knowledge, God gave him over to a reprobate mind, and the result was, all the immorality of Paganism—an immorality which as we see in heathen mythology was sought to be excused by assigning a special divinity to each class of it, which profane doing evinced, that the conscience, degraded as it was, sought some relief from the evil by assuming that it was divinely sanctioned, and therefore all that system elucidates most clearly the religious corruption which fallen nature is in itself capable of; for we need to study nature as a whole in order to understand its tendencies and fruits.

The system of heathenism, showing what fallen nature following its corruptions will do in order to satisfy its

conscience and at the same time follow its own will and lust, gives us a great clue to its spirit and will. It illustrates man trying to combine the lust of his corruption with conscience and to satisfy conscience, while acting according to his own will and lust; so that in the end it became too monstrous and absurd even for man's reprobate mind. Then a new system sprung up, a reformation which was introduced and promoted by men called philosophers, which system in principle proposed that man should attain to divine favour, not through any intervention of God or divine instrumentality, but by discipline of himself. This doctrine, supported by two opposite schools, became attractive to any one who felt the degradation into which mere Paganism had plunged him; and the more so as it was addressed to him as having in himself an inherent power to improve and advance himself, which to man, in any degree conscious of his demoralization, was the most pleasing and delusive idea. The spirit and aim of all this philosophy was that

man by his own unaided efforts could attain to virtue, and that such attainment would be bliss. This being a mere human reformation, and having to encounter the licentious system of Paganism, could not stand its ground, and in the end had to succumb; so that we find at Athens (Acts xvii.) an altar, in addition to all other altars, inscribed "to the unknown God;" thus distinctly intimating that their knowledge had only reached this point—even to know their ignorance—to *know that they knew nothing*, and to verify the word of God that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Thus if in the system of Paganism we get *one* principle in man's nature, even the endeavour to combine the satisfaction of his natural conscience with his own will and lust, we find in that of philosophy *another*, equally leading and distinct, and no doubt allowed of God to be tested and developed to the utmost by the Greeks and their followers, even that man's effort to repair himself eventuates in the acknowledgment that his greatest at-

history of weakness and sin. To Israel were committed the oracles of God, and yet they caused His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles, and wandered into even greater excesses than the nations, and, as we learn by the parable of the vineyard, they increased in bitterness and opposition to God as times grew on—and were only the more aggravated in antagonism by the presence of the Son of God among them. In the gospel narrative man's nature is distinctly and painfully exposed, and finally condemned, too, as irretrievably incompetent in every respect, proved as such by its reception, converse with, and treatment of "God manifest in the flesh." It was found to be either so wicked and abandoned as to contemplate and contrive His death; or so weak, that in the most desired moment it cannot maintain the semblance of allegiance to Him—but so grossly the contrary, that it can deny Him. It is impossible for any one to read the history of man's reception of the Lord from heaven—He who, as born of a woman, was one of the human family

tainment is only to disclose to him his ignorance of God.

Thus we have seen what man's nature is as left to itself, in the development of its own mind and will; but there is another phase and circumstance in which we must consider it, even that as placed in the light of revelation from God. And what does *that* reveal? We have only to read the Old Testament in order to ascertain how man in his own nature responds to the revealed will of God.

Early enough Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord; the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. He would enjoy himself independently of God, just as the tower of Babel was conceived and erected in sheer independence of God.

Then, what a commentary on man's nature in the most favoured circumstances is Israel's history: exhibiting to us the antagonism and enmity of its will toward God in so many varied and painful forms, that any one who knows anything of his own heart must be convicted and humbled by the resemblance to it which he reads in that

on earth—and not be struck with the utter depravity of man as regarded God, though he had all the light of God's revelation to assist him. The secrets of many hearts were revealed by the manner and measure of the rejection which each levelled against the only one who ever appeared on earth in human perfection—the one Man who came up to the perfect standard of God's mind and will. The scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests, and all the teachers, while boasting of being the repositories of God's mind, were the loudest and fiercest in demanding the death of the Son of God! Where was the goodness of nature or the gain from revelation *there*? They instigated the multitude to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" If nature had a single particle of true power, ought it not to have had some apprehension of the sacredness of the person of the Son of God on earth and the divinity of His mission, especially when educated and assisted by the revelation of God? Was it not tried then, and found—oh how sadly!—wanting?

What greater or better opportunity could it ever have again of expressing its ability to understand the ways and manner of God, than when God's only-begotten Son was in all the nearness and intimacy of flesh among men?

But if the teachers and guides under the law of God could be so led away by their natural mind, as not only to refuse and reject the Son of God, but to hate Him so much that nothing but His death would satisfy them: if, I repeat, the natural mind were proved so utterly insensible to the divine mind, and at issue with it, notwithstanding all the opportunities offered to it, how could any one again assume, much less maintain, that there was power, or principle, or perceptiveness in it to desire or attain to what was divinely perfect? As the Lord said, "Now they have no cloak for their sin." He had "done among them the works which none other man did." The perfection of humanity often lauded, and by the Pharisees grossly imitated, was displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the chosen people of God,

educated in His law, disowned, rejected, and consigned Him to an ignominious death. He that cannot appreciate a superior proves himself an inferior. To what a depth of degradation, then, did man's nature sink in the crucifixion of Christ!

But this was not all. Not only do we find its irretrievable wickedness, as evinced in the Jews' treatment of Christ, but in His very disciples, in those who loved Him in the secret depths of their hearts, we find that the nature of man is so feeble and inconstant, that it cannot support and vindicate impressions and feelings of which it has been assured. Nay, in its pitiable weakness, it does violence to the approved sentiments of the soul. They all forsook Him in the hour of His distress, not from want of love or faith, but from the simple infirmity of a nature which could not support the good emotions working in it and approved of.

The beloved disciple slept when asked to watch; and Peter, who had hardihood enough to smite off the high priest's

servant's ear, when unsupported, cursed and swore that he did not know his own loved Lord and Master.

Thus the gospel narrative details to us how man's nature has been subjected to the last trial, when, if it had a particle of goodness or power, it must have appeared; but instead of this, it exposed itself at EVERY point, both in wickedness and weakness.

I have thus endeavoured briefly to set forth the history of man's nature, and how it has been proved, step by step, to be utterly profitless, and its enormity so sealed, that God's fiat—now pronounced by the Holy Ghost, who is at once the witness of man's sin and of God's righteousness—is, "the natural mind is at enmity against God;" and, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

PHILIPPIANS II., III.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

If it suit your little publication, I send you some brief thoughts on the second and third chapters of Philip-

pians. The whole epistle is a very remarkable one, and raises the Christian to his highest condition of matured experience; but on this I will say a few words before I close.

I turn now to the above chapters. The former gives us christian character, as men speak,—christian grace; the latter, the energy which carries the Christian above present things. The former speaks of Christ coming down and humbling Himself; the latter, of His being on high, and of the prize of our calling above.

A little careful attention will show that the second chapter presents throughout the gracious fruits connected with the heart's study of the blessed Lord's humiliation, and of its imbibing the spirit of it; and that the third gives the picture of that blessed energy which counts the world as dross, overcomes on the way, and looks forward to the time when the Lord's power shall have subdued even the power of death in us and all its effects, and change us into glory. We need both these principles and the

motives connected with them. We may see much of the energy of Christianity in a believer, and rejoice in it; while another displays much graciousness of character but no energy that overcomes the world. Where the flesh, or mere natural energy, mixes itself in our path with the divine energy, the way of the sincere and devoted Christian requires to be corrected by the former; more inward communion and gracious likeness to Christ; more feeding on the bread which came down from heaven. Besides displaying Christ, it would give weight and seriousness to his activity; make it more real and divine. On the other hand, one who maintains a gracious deportment and judges, perhaps, what he sees to be fleshly in the energy of another, fails himself in that energy, and casts a slur on that which is really of God in his brother.

Oh that we knew how to be a little self-judging and complete in our christian path; that we had nearness enough to Christ to draw from Him all grace and all devotedness, and correct in our-

selves whatever tends to mar the one or the other! Not that I expect that all Christians will ever have alike all qualities. I do not think it is the mind of God they should have. They have to keep humbly in their place. The eye cannot—it is not meant it should—say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the hand to the foot. Completeness is in Christ alone. Mutual dependence and completing one another under His grace, is the order of His body. It is hard for some active minds to think so; but it is true humility and contentedness to be nothing and to serve, and to esteem others more excellent than ourselves—an easy practical way to arrive at it. They have the thing which we are deficient in. Our part is to do what the Lord has set us to do, to serve and count *Him all*, for in truth He does it; and to be glad to be nothing when we have quietly done His will, that He may be all.

But to return to my chapters. That the second gives us the humiliation of Christ is evident. We are to pursue its

application. But the way it is introduced is very beautiful. The Philippians, who had already early in the gospel history shown grace in this respect, had thought of Paul in his distant prison; and Epaphroditus, giving effect to their love, and full of gracious zeal, had not regarded his life to accomplish this service, and minister to the apostle's wants. The apostle makes a touching use of this love of the Philippians, while owning it as the refreshings of Christ. He had found "consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and mercies," in the renewed testimony of the affection of the Philippians. His heart was drawn out also toward them. If they would make him perfectly happy, they must be thoroughly united and happy among themselves. How graciously, with what delicate feeling, he turns to note their faults and dangers here in association with their expressions of love to him! How calculated to win and to make any "Euodias and Syntyches" ashamed of disputes where grace is thus at work! Then he speaks of

the means of walking in this spirit. Every one should think of the spiritual gifts and advantages of his brother as well as of his own. To do this he must have the mind that was in Christ. This leads us to the great principle of the chapter.

Christ is set forth in full contrast with the first Adam. The first when in the form of man set up by robbery to be equal with God: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And he became disobedient unto death. But the blessed One, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and in the form of a servant was obedient unto death. He was really God, as Adam was really man; but the point here is to note the condition and status each was in respectively, and out of which, in ambition or grace, he came. For Christ was truly God still, when He had taken the form of a man; but He had taken the form of a servant, and was, too, really a man and a servant in grace. Christ in love humbled Himself: Adam in selfishness sought to be exalted and

was abased. Christ humbled Himself, and was as man exalted. It was not merely that He bore patiently the insults of men, but He humbled *Himself*. This was love. There were two great steps in it. Being in the form of God, He took the form of man; and as man He humbled Himself, and was obedient unto death, and that, the death of the cross. This is the mind which is to be in us—love making itself nothing to serve others. Love delights to serve—self likes to be served. Thus the true glory of a divine character is in lowliness—human pride in selfishness. In the former, in us, both gracious affections and devotedness and counting on gracious affections in others are developed: a source of genuine joy and blessing to the Church.

In following the chapter, we shall see this taught in general, and produced unconsciously, as it were, in details. First, after stating the exaltation and glory of Christ as Lord, he presses obedience, (perfectly shown in Christ,) than which nothing is more lowly, for

and adoration in Him. It is formed in us.

Now see the gracious affections which flow out from this lowliness, in which self disappears by love. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." He makes the faith of the Philippians the principal thing. *It* was the offering to God. His part was only supplementary towards it, though it went to death. For the Philippians were Christ's, the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul, Christ's crown and joy as Redeemer. So the apostle saw them and rejoiced in them. His service had ministered to this. If it went on to give up his life for it, he rejoiced in the service, so much the more evidently self-sacrificing love, for love delights in this. And they, for this reason, were to rejoice with him, for it was really his glory thus to give himself up for Christ.

But more. He was thinking of their happiness, and would send Timotheus and learn how they were getting on. But he counted on their love, and he

we have no will in it; and having directly to do with the power of the enemy, without the shelter of the apostle's energy, they were to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. For if Paul, who had so laboured for them, was now in prison, and could not, it was, after all, "*God* (not Paul) who worked in them, to will and to do of his own blessed good pleasure."

Salvation is always in the Philippians the great result of final deliverance from evil and entrance into glory. Everything is looked at at the end, though the blessing shines down on the way. See, then, the result: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Is there a word in this that could not be said of Christ? Only He was the model, and we are to follow His steps as partakers of life in Him. It is just what Christ was, and so it is christian character. We study it with delight

would not send him till he would be able to say to them how his affairs were going on at Rome, where he had to appear before the Emperor, perhaps so to close his life. All this is very sweet. There is the confidence of love, the reckoning on it in others, which produces its free flow, mutually felt and known to be so. Nor was it in the apostle alone, as we shall see. Moreover, it was in the midst of the coldness of the saints, which trial, and for the flesh the discrediting opposition of the world, had produced, to which the apostle alludes in this epistle. But the apostle's love did not grow cold nor distrustful by it, and God had given him the comforting testimony of love in the distant Philippians, as he notices in the beginning of the chapter; and love was springing up into courage in others, too, by a little patience, as we see in chap. i. 14. But these same fruits of love are found in Epaphroditus and his relations with the Philippians. Paul sends him back with affectionate witness of what he was; for Epaphroditus was longing

after them all. He had undertaken his commission heartily. Came probably along the great Egnatian high road nearly a thousand miles, and, in his refusal of relaxation, had been sick, nigh unto death. But it was the work of Christ. Did Paul appreciate it the less as to himself because it was for Christ? In no way. Had Epaphroditus fallen a victim to his service for him, it would have been to the apostle a deep blow and sorrow, and that he had his cup full of, though sustained of God. God had mercy on Epaphroditus, and on Paul in him. See here how the heart, free in grace, can estimate present mercies! It was not natural affection in relationship, just and fitting as that may be in its place, but divine affections. Epaphroditus would have gone to heaven surely. But the spirit of the apostle would taste present goodness—God's goodness in circumstances; would know a "God who comforts those that are cast down." And he blesses God that the beloved Epaphroditus did not fall a sacrifice to his zeal in accomplishing his mission.

we are nothing. But practically in Christ, the mind which was in Him is to be in us, and in grace we have to humble ourselves, to have the mind that was in Him, to have done with ourselves and serve. Then these lovely fruits of grace will flow out unhindered, whatever be the state even of Christendom around us. Working out lowly our own salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of the spiritual dangers of the christian life, and of pretensions to greatness and spiritual distinction, because true greatness has disappeared as it had when the apostle was put in prison; not with the fear of uncertainty, but *because* God works in us, and that gives the sense of the seriousness and reality of the conflict in which we are engaged; obedience, the humblest thing of all, for there is no will in it, characterizing our path, we shall seek the mind of Christ and be clothed with His character. Blessed privilege! Be more jealous to keep it than our human rights and importance, and the blessed graces of heavenly love will flow forth and

Nor was this all. What made Epaphroditus anxious was, that the Philippians had heard he had been sick, and he knew this. He reckoned on their love. They will be anxious, he thought, and will not be at rest until they know how I am; I must set off to them. How a son, who knew a mother's love, who had heard he was ill, would reckon on her uneasiness and her desire for news, and would be anxious she should know he was well. Such was the affection among Christians, and among Christians where devotedness and love had, alas! already sadly waned—where all sought their own, as a general state, such were "the consolations in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the bowels and mercies." How refreshing it is! Nor is the blessed source ever wanting in Christ, however low all may be; for faith knows no difficulties—nothing between us and Christ. There is no lack in Him to produce fruits of grace.

If we look at ourselves we could never speak of humbling ourselves: for

bind together in a love, which has primarily Christ for its object, the hearts of the saints. In such a state it is easy to count others better than themselves, as Paul saw the value of the Philippians to Christ; he was but offered on their faith; easy because when we are near Christ we see the value of others to and in Christ, and we see our own nothingness, perhaps, our actual short-comings in love too.

I have lengthened out my communication on this chapter so much that I reserve what I have to say on the third chapter, and the character of the whole epistle for another opportunity. I think, on the whole, that this gives the higher, though not the most readily striking and energetic, side of christian life. But, as I said at the beginning, both have fully their place. If it suit your publication, I may afterwards, if the Lord will, take up some practical subjects which have connected themselves with these in my mind.

May the Lord bless your various communications to the edification of His

saints, and make that blessing flow in those, too, who contribute them.

Affectionately yours in the Lord,
J. N. D.

NOTES ON REVELATION IV.

There are two points I desire to notice in this chapter—the perfect peace of soul which belongs to the redeemed, and the consequent spirit and character of their worship. We evidently see that the character of this book is that of judgment, for with the exception of the Church in bliss, the whole action of the book is judgment. God is sitting on a throne and that throne is not in the character of grace, but in the Sinai character. Not that the throne will be on earth, but the terrible judgments, the thunderings, the lightnings, which are coming on the earth, all issue from this throne. In this introductory chapter, and the throne with the thunderings, &c., issuing from it, we have God in the character of “Lord God Almighty,” and not in the character of Father. Jehovah,

faith; so that however we may be tried down here in the world, when we come before God we can sit down in perfect peace and rest there. But now mark another thing: it is not only the thunderings and lightnings, the pouring forth of the terrible judgments during which they are in perfect peace; but when the character of God is opened out in the threefold ascription of “Holy, Holy, Holy,” does this disturb them? Not in the least; so it is with us, when the full character of God’s holiness is seen, in His justice making good His Holiness. If, in the presence of His holiness I thought there was a spot upon me, I could not be at peace before Him. What a comfort to have our home and place of rest where the thrice Holy God is! When they hear, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” their affections move them, and they fall down immediately in worship, while all the terrible judgments do not move them at all. This is the result of being in perfect peace in the presence of this Holy, Holy, Holy God. Their affections

“Lord God Almighty” is the Old-Testament name of God in connexion with the power which will be put forth in coming judgment. Now what shews out the perfect peace into which we as believers are brought is the seeing the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones round about the throne, whence these judgments are issuing in perfect peace. They are not at all alarmed; there is no movement from their seats, no disturbance, no trembling because they are associated with the very throne from which these judgments flow. Then mark another thing: *they are sitting*. They are not even here seen *standing*, but sitting in perfect peace, in undisturbed grace, like David, “who went in and sat before the Lord.” They worship, it is true, and fall down, a much higher thing than sitting. But how thoroughly this scene shows into what a place of perfect peace we are brought, that even when the judgments break forth we are unmoved, having nothing to alarm us. The elders are sitting in perfect peace, and that is our place, realized now by

are brought out in praise. They rejoice to lay their crowns at His feet, attributing all to Him and worship Him. “Thou art worthy.” It is intelligent worship too, for they know why He is worthy. He *is* worthy; but they know it for themselves, for He has redeemed them unto God by His blood. There were no terrors awakened in their soul when the thunderings and lightnings were going on, no nor yet when the character of a thrice holy God was opened out. But when He is spoken of and glory given to Him, their affections flow out and they *worship*. If there is any *fear*, there can be no *worship*. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.” But grace has set us in this place of *worship* in the power of the Holy Ghost. Having been made kings and priests unto God and His Father, we can *worship* Him. We are not in this glory yet, but may we grow in the sense of what He is, and worship Him who is worthy to be glorified.

"We are sanctified unto obedience."—1 Peter i. 2.

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of all the present and practical blessings of the believer; for the Spirit is not grieved, and so becomes the minister of the grace and knowledge both of the Father and of the Son, and the simplest believer walking thus, enjoys the blessings of the covenant-faithfulness both of the Father, and the Lord, and the Spirit to the purposes of love in which we stand, and of divine glory.

The very blessings of the Church bring us into a kind of conflict that we should know nothing of apart from such a position, and privileges, and blessings. So the Church is subject to more failure and evil than either Jews or Gentiles were, because they were not set in the same blessings. A Jew might do many things which would be monstrous in a Christian, and find no defilement in his conscience. The veil

THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

I have the prize in view,
Whose worth no words can shew;
This prize I seek alone:
All things are dung and dross,
All things I count but loss,
For Jesus fully known.

The day declineth fast,
Almost its hours are past,
Its lustre waneth now:
That other heavenly day,
With its enduring ray,
Will soon light up my brow.

O may I follow still,
Faith's pilgrimage fulfil,
With steps both sure and fleet:
The longed-for goal I see:
Jesus is there for me:
Haste, haste, my weary feet.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 13, 14.)

that was over the knowledge of God being rent, the light shines out, and the consequence is, that this light which has come out of the holy place cannot tolerate evil. Christians are in a more dangerous position, if not walking in the light, than a Jew. Satan may draw and entice me with many things which would have no power against me, if I were not so favoured. Hence the need of the exhortation, "Be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might."

ONE THING I DO.

Morn, noon, and night,
Through days o'ercast and bright,
My purpose still is one;
I have one end in view,
Only one thing I do
Until my object's won.

Behind my back I fling,
Like an unvalued thing,
My former self and ways;
And stretching forward far
I seek the things that are
Beyond time's lagging days.

PETER.

Great variety of natural character, and of moral temperament, we see in the apostles who were gathered round the Lord. There was the reasoning Thomas and the uncalculating Peter, and the John who had his resources rather alone or in communion, and the same Peter again, who was active and social, letting himself out on every occasion.

And beside such variety as this, there were some of them who are never prominent, like Simon Zelotes; others partially noticed; others always in the foreground.

It is good and comforting to observe these things; they are the anticipations, so far, of things around ourselves at this moment. What we read of then we see now. And it is happy thus to find the Lord Himself in the scene, with all its elements and working, before us; so that we may know that the very materials and circumstances which now address us and draw us forth, in His day addressed themselves to Him.

Among the Apostles, Peter is a special person from the beginning, and so continues throughout. His quickening, as we see it in Luke v., was marked and emphatic. It is signalized among the stories of those who, one after another, joined themselves to the Lord. And so, from that hour, we see him a marked, emphatic character.

He is peculiar in making mistakes, and consequently in suffering rebukes. An ardent nature, that was ready to act, would expose itself to this. But such a nature would likewise be quick to express affection, and would meet answering affection. And in all this we find Peter. But with all, he was specially dear to his Master. Specially I mean in one sense—because, in the great evangelic, gracious sense, in the thought of sovereign mercy and of the salvation of God, all are in a common love. But Peter was signalized by his Master. He did not spare him a single stroke of the rod; neither did He deny him a single ray of the glory. It is a *rebuked* Peter, for instance, that is taken to the *holy*

hill; and again, it is a *rebuked* Peter that is taken *as after the Lord to heaven*. (Matt. xvi., xvii.; John xxi.) With John and James, (erring Peter as He was,) he is separated by the Lord to a very distinguished place again and again. And thus, the emphatic way in which he had been apprehended at the very beginning, is pursued all through; and so at the very end, For, after the last supper, the Lord says to him, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

This was a very distinguishing notice of Peter. It set him eminently in the midst of his brethren. The poor, erring, rebuked Peter, the one who was on all occasions letting himself out only to expose himself, is the one thus dealt with by that love which has its own methods, excellent and wondrous and divine as they are. But there is something so peculiar in this last case, that I must dwell on it further.

The Lord does not pray for Peter that he might not fail *in the process of sifting*, nor be found to be but chaff; but He prays for him, that if found to be but chaff, his *faith* might not fail. This is much to be observed.

There were two stages in this part of Peter's journey. He went from Gethsemane to the hall of the High Priest's palace; and on that journey he denied his Master. He went out from thence, from the hall of the palace, alone and in tears; and afterwards we find him going with John to the sepulchre. This second stage of his journey, however, shews us that his faith had not failed, though the first stage of it, as we saw, had proved him to be but chaff. The Lord's intercession had kept him. His weeping at the first, just as he left the palace, and then his casting himself into the sea to reach the Lord, at the last, let us know, in the mouth of very persuasive witnesses, that his faith had not failed, according to the prayer of his Lord for him. He is restored. He is converted, brought from a condition of weak, igno-

rant, self-confidence, (not, however, the self-confidence of a proud, imperious, nature, but of an earnest, uncalculating affection,) to a better understanding of himself, and a closer, more dependent walk with his Saviour.

Being such an one as this in the *Evangelists*, we see him in character in the *Acts*. He is chief in action again. He is the stirring, leading one still. He instructs the rest in the mystery of Judas' lost apostleship and the taking of his office by another. He preaches on the day of Pentecost; and again on the occasion of the healing of the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple. He answers the challenges of the rulers. He is put into prison. Again he stands the spokesman for the rest, in the presence of the powers. He maintains the purity of the house of God by the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira. He goes through all quarters; and in the distant parts of Lydda and Saron he comforts the saints by the raising of Tabitha. He is then at Joppa, with the brethren there; and from thence goes to

Cæsarea, to gather the first-fruits of the Gentiles. He establishes the hearts of his brethren, after this, at Jerusalem, by rehearsing the way of the hand of God by his ministry. And at last, he is cast into prison a second time, but brought forth from thence through the sovereign interference of God, and made the signal expression of that great deliverance which awaits his nation in the last days of their history, when their captivity is to end, and their great enemy is to fall; when Israel, the delivered, shall be like men that dream, as Peter's friends and brethren here were, when they heard of his being out of prison, and when his enemy withered under the rebuke of the Lord.

All this of Peter in the course of the first twelve chapters of the Acts was surely "the strengthening of his brethren," according to the commission which he had received. His was now an unbroken rest. "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," was realized in his ministry now. He was the pastor, the self-sacrificing pastor of the flock of God in the land of

Israel in this day. And we know that he sealed his testimony, and ended his service, by dying for the name of his Lord. But we lose him, I may say, after the twelfth chapter. Another apostleship is called forth, another thing besides a Jewish remnant becomes the husbandry of the Spirit of God, and Peter retires. He is not the prominent one at the end of the book of the Acts, as he had been at the first; nor is he the chief one in the epistles, as I may say, as he had been in the gospels. In his epistles, surely, he still "feeds the sheep," and still "strengthens his brethren;" but they are not of the heavenly elevation of those of the Apostle of the Gentiles. They still, characteristically, address themselves to a remnant gathered to Christ from the people of Israel.

Thus I have gone with Peter, very briefly and rapidly, as from first to last. There are some points, in the review of this, over which I would tarry for a while somewhat longer.

The soul has its history as well as the

body; and takes its journeys at times, as well as the body: a serious history, and important journeys full of the weightiest business. This we know and have experienced.

The soul of Peter took a wondrous journey in Luke v. We see him there, at first, in the place of *nature*; an easy, friendly, kind-hearted man as ever lived; earnest to love and to serve. Being such an one, he readily lent his boat to the wondrous stranger who was at that time addressing the multitude on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. And when the words of this stranger were ended, at His bidding he as readily put out his boat further into the lake, and let down his net for a draught.

All this, however, was but nature. Peter had not yet left his native place, the place where he was born, as I may say, the place where his natural friendliness and easiness of temper had put him all his life hitherto. "Master," said he to Jesus, "we have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net."

And now the journey of his soul begins: a wondrous, distant journey, but performed as in a whirlwind. The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, in their way, were waiting for him.

The draught of fishes which came at the word of the stranger surprised the soul of Peter, and at once bore him to an unknown land, a place untrodden by him up to that moment. It carried him into the presence of God. The stranger was transfigured before him—as really under the eye of his soul then, as afterwards the same stranger was to the eye of his body on the holy hill. This stranger was the Lord of the fulness of the sea, who could command the depths; and Peter stood in the presence of God. The Lord was in that place, and Peter knew it not. The sight overwhelms him. He learns himself, and he is confounded. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is no more "Master," but "Lord." It is no longer the *fisherman* Peter, who had been toiling all the night at his nets, but the *sinner* Peter. He is in a new world, the

brightness of which is intolerable. He is in the presence of God, and there (for there only is this done) he learns himself. We have all "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and that is discovered when first we really reach that glory.

Now this was a journey indeed, a journey which the soul of Peter had now taken. But he must go still further into this new world. He must still travel; and the word of the Lord shall show him the way, and lead him along it. "Fear not," says Jesus to him. The very presence which had overwhelmed him speaks comfortably to him. The glory itself addresses him, inviting him very near—and following, his path ends. He has now finally and for ever left his native land for the presence of the glory, and his spirit has found a home there.

Many a journey I am sure the soul of Peter took in days after this. He had to pass through the rebukes of the Lord, and they ever give the soul a chapter in its history, or take it some stage of its

overwhelm him. He can stand before the glory now—it had already given his conscience a home. And though that conscience had every reason at that moment to be a coward, it is bold as a lion. The *fisherman* Peter, when first brought into the presence of God, becomes, as we saw, the *sinner* Peter; but here this same fisherman knows himself a saved, accepted, loved man; and he courts that presence with all speed.

Right indeed it was, only needful, that at the first, in that presence or before that glory, he should be convicted, and discover his sin; but right it is now that he should be at ease in that place, for the glory had already spoken good words and comfortable words to him.

What two draughts of fishes these were! What two journeys for the spirit of this dear man to take! O the secrets of that land where Peter now dwelt!

But further.

These scenes in Luke v. and in John xxi. suggest John xiii. to me in a way that I would now for a moment longer consider.

living way. But I will notice particularly that other journey which this loved and earnest man performed under the hand of the Lord, in John xxi. 1—14.

There we find him again at his fishing. Sweet, natural scene it is indeed. He and some companions are again on the Lake of Galilee. He had said to them, "I go a-fishing;" and they had said to him, "We also go with thee"—and again a stranger addresses him. In like natural friendliness and easiness as before, he does as the stranger bids him; and he is, in like grace and power as before, rewarded by a heavy draught of fishes.

This was a token. This was symptomatic of who this stranger was. The finger may not be duly sensitive to feel the pulse, or the eye keen enough to discern the mark. Peter fails in this faculty, and John has to feel and to see for him. "It is the Lord," says he to him. The eye had seen for the body, and then the foot begins its service. Peter is in the water at once to reach his Lord. He now knew Him as he did not in Luke v. His presence does not

At his quickening, Peter's *nature* is detected. He discovers himself to be "a sinful man." For the first time, he is brought to the presence of God; and, as we have seen, after being convicted and confounded there, he is left in peace and in the service of the Lord. He hears the words, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

At his restoration this process is not repeated. His nature is not again exposed to him. He has not to discover *himself* a second time, but to be made mindful of a *particular transgression*. The three challenges of Christ carry on this process. They suit Peter's three denials of his Lord; and under conviction of that sin he cries out, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

This has great moral beauty in it. The act of restoration distinguishes itself from the act of quickening. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet only." That word in John xiii. is illustrated in these dealings with the soul of Peter. The Lord's actings set

forth His teachings. Peter himself had been washed in Luke v.; his *nature* had been detected then, and as a sinner he had been in the presence of God, and there found peace and reconciliation. Afterwards he had been defiled as a saint, and he must get his soiled-feet washed. His particular offence is discovered to him, and he passes through that process which restores his soul, and fits him for service again—fits him to “feed the sheep,” as before he had been commissioned to “catch men.”

Restoration is not to deny the previous quickening. The washing of the feet assumes the washing of the body. And very happy it is, and very edifying, to see the Master thus illustrating His own lessons, causing the doings of His hand or Spirit to be in company with the holy wisdom of His lips.

Peter's is a very fruitful piece of inspired biography, as we get it in the course of the four Evangelists. But I would now leave these scenes, and look at another and a different occasion in his history.

for the Spirit falls on all them that heard the word. (See Acts ii. and x.)

Thus was the promise and pledge of the Lord to this confessor of His name and person made sure and redeemed. He used the keys which had been given him, and his word of loosing and binding was sealed and ratified in heaven. And this Peter himself in the council at Jerusalem afterwards recognizes. For there he says, “Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe: and God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us.”* (Acts xv. 7; 8.)

Others, too, I may say, in like boldness with Peter, testified and asserted the gospel; and, in like manner, their testimony was sealed in heaven. Philip's

* Apart from the testimony of the Gospel, Peter's word may be his own word; and in the stead of its being sealed in heaven, may have to be rebuked and set aside—as we know took place at Antioch. (Gal. ii.)

Having made confession to the person of the Lord, and the truth thus confessed being recognized by the Lord as the Rock of the Church, the Lord confers certain dignities on Peter. He gives him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and tells him that his binding and loosing shall be sealed and ratified. (Matt. xvi.)

Accordingly, we see Peter using these keys in the Book of the Acts: for in the second chapter he opens the door of faith, or introduces the present dispensation, to the Jew; and then in the tenth chapter he does the same to the Gentile. And beside, His word to both Jew and Gentile gets the seal of heaven upon it at once. He tells the Jew to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and that he should then receive remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit. And so we find it; for there were then added to the Church three thousand of that nation. He tells the Gentile that through the name of Jesus every one that believes should receive remission of sins, like the believing Jew. And so we find it again;

word to the Eunuch, and Paul's word to the Philippian Jailor, were thus sealed and ratified. And surely we may still further say, that like boldness in the faith, and in declaring the Gospel of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, is to be exercised still. Are we not still to assure sinners that salvation waits upon faith in Christ? Are we not still to declare it, that life waits on the acceptance of the Son? The spies at Jericho used this kind of boldness. They pledged deliverance and life to the woman and to all who were with her, under the shelter of the scarlet line. And are *we* not to tell of the virtue of the same Christ of God, the same eternal life, and the full shelter of the cross? Peter, Philip, Paul, and others like them, who tell of the Rock, are only persons in the train of the great embassy, the witnesses and heralds of that divine Lord, Son of man as he was, who could say, and did say, that He had “power on earth to forgive sins.” A present, a sure, a perfect salvation is the secret and

the gift of the grace of God. This is published in the gospel, and this will be sealed and ratified and made good for eternity.

Other incidents mark the special place which this dear man held among the apostles. Each of them might well afford a distinct meditation for the profit of our souls—his walking for a little moment on the water; his word to the collector of the tribute-money; his cutting off the ear of Malchus, and others; but I will go no further. It was in our own very world all these things happened, and happened under the eyes of the Lord Jesus. Men like ourselves He conversed with, and had to expose again and again; and what He Himself was then, such is He now. Knowing Him in the narratives of the Evangelists, we know Him for ever to the full comfort and confirmation of our hearts.

REGENERATION AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

The terms regeneration, quickening, and being born again, are used in Scripture to express that change or new existence, which is originated in a child of Adam when he is vitally, or from the heart, turned to God. We have seen in the paper on "Man's Condition by Nature," that man in the spirit of his mind is alienated from God—at enmity with Him; and still more, that he is unable in the most convincing circumstances, to recognize or appreciate what is divinely good. All this being proved and admitted, it now becomes us to enquire and note, what is that change commonly called conversion, and which the Scriptures designate as regeneration; how it occurs, and by what is it characterized?

The new birth must be the introduction of a new principle into the soul of

man, at once so distinct and so effective, that it maintains for itself not only its unique existence, but also its supremacy in spirit and intent over the old nature; often influencing it silently, where it does not control. The influence being a silent one simply for this reason, (which I hope on a future occasion to shew more fully,) that the new, on account of man's wilfulness and self-satisfaction, does not assert its superiority until the old is convinced of its necessity. But notwithstanding, the new is there all the time, a positive reality, and a positive rein and awe to the conscience, though often for the moment there may be little or no evidence of it in the walk. If the change be not of this distinct and effective order, how could it be termed regeneration, or, as the Lord Himself said to Nicodemus, "being born again?" We all know that in order to dislodge or master any power in actual possession, it requires a power greater than that by which the possession is maintained. Consequently, if man by nature, alienated from God, and at enmity with Him, be vitally turned

to Him, it must be by a power not only greater than the will of man, but also one proportionate to the service required; which service is nothing less than to establish happy relations with God in a soul hitherto in the terrible distance of ignorance and enmity. This is accomplished in the new birth by the first principle of its existence, even faith; a principle which is always propagated by the Spirit of God blowing where He listeth. Called into being by the Holy Ghost, the way in which it reaches man, is (as we read) "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The word of God is deposited in the soul. The intelligence of that word is not so much the question as the effect of it; which effect is to convince the soul, in the first place, that God *is*; and next, as to what His *nature* is according as it has been revealed; though often a long period may intervene between these two, which *should* not be disunited; and in the end, and for peace and happiness of soul, *are* not.

The first principle, then, of this new

existence, and its first utterance, is *faith*. Faith is the first characteristic of regeneration. The old man is an unbeliever in every degree; the new is a believer in every degree. Adam's fall was in consequence of disobedience of God's word, the offspring of unbelief and distrust of God Himself. His nature thus became a prey to this adverse sentiment, which, acting and re-acting on his fellow-men, have produced all the contumacy toward God of which man is guilty. The grace of God in every age has been above man's guilt, and therefore He has *compelled* many to come in; in one way or another awakening the soul to the sense of the existence of God, either as a relief or a correction to its ignorance; in a word, giving it faith in God, through the word of God. The Spirit of God has always been the propagator of this new principle, so that where the smallest germ of it exists, there, blessed be God, the Holy Ghost has worked. The old man is utterly incapable of faith in God; therefore, wherever faith works, however feebly, regeneration has taken place.

hence the simple quality and radical nature of the new birth. Man in the old nature was characterized by unbelief; the new man is characterized by exactly the opposite, which it declares as just and compensatory: and thus faith is its peculiar mark, and the proof of its existence. New birth exists wherever faith exists, and *vice versa*. If I be ever so changed or improved and have no faith in God, there can be no conscious new birth, for the first utterance of the newly-born soul is that of faith. It knows that God is to be trusted, and let its trust be ever so feeble, the response returned to it from God is *eternal life*—he that believes hath eternal life. And this eternal life is the second characteristic, the inalienable possession, of new birth. In all times, as I have remarked, faith in God was the first expression and utterance of the quickened soul: and this simple fact clears away much of the confusion and uncertainty with which the subject has been surrounded. Both teachers and souls have been diverted from the plain and true ground by looking for an

And mark! it has been thus in *all* dispensations. The difference between the Old-Testament times and the New, or the present,* consists not in the principle of existence, for that is the same in both; and, moreover, it is begotten by the same Holy Spirit; but the distinction lies in the strength and scope of the *sense* of the existence. Now, the sense of eternal life is *assured* to us as God's gift through our Lord Jesus Christ; *then*, though the activity of that life existed, it was as yet *unassured*, because Christ had not died and risen.

Regeneration, then, is a new existence, ("if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,") of which faith in God is its very principle—its first and simplest characteristic, and eternal life its portion. How evident, then, is it that they who judge of or describe it as an improvement in morals and tastes, wholly misappre-

* In noticing this distinguishing feature of the two dispensations, I would add that I here confine myself to the subject before us, regeneration, without trenching on other distinctions, most important, but beyond our present subject.

improvement in feelings and manners, instead of first insisting on the necessity of the existence of faith, from which in true power the other would follow. A remarkable change and improvement may be wrought in me from many other causes; but faith in God in my soul is proof positive that it is newly born; for nothing but His Spirit could have produced it, and this entitles me to nothing less than eternal life.

Now I may find many a newly-born soul, who, though he believes in God, does not apprehend that, as born of God, he has received eternal life. I do not question his regeneration because he is not sensibly enjoying the highest privilege of it; but it is evident that such an one is inadvertently ignoring the legitimate portion of his new existence, without which his regeneration must be unsatisfactory to himself, and defective in expression toward God.

In all dispensations there has been an enlightenment corresponding to the revelation made of God to the soul. That which is conferred *now* is eternal life;

and if I am not assured of that which God has assured *to me*, I am not apprehending His revelation in its range and scope—nay, in its very essence.

Life, the sense of living by Christ and with Him, belongs *now* to regeneration. Christ died for our sins; but having risen from among the dead, and the power of death being destroyed, He is Head of the new creation in everlasting life; and we who were dead in trespasses and sins are quickened together with Him, being by grace, through faith, made partakers of His life; and that on the ground of righteousness, inasmuch as He has borne death for us, and made us thereby the righteousness of God in Him. It is most important that we should see that eternal life is *now* co-existent with regeneration. However, God in past ages accepted the sinner, and linked his soul to Himself by faith in a new existence, eternal life was not manifested until Christ came. "The life was manifested," says the Apostle John, "and we have seen it, and show unto you that eternal life which was

with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The Son was the manifestation of the eternal life that was with the Father, and "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." He came here to do the will of God in a body prepared for Him, and in that body to bear our sins on the accursed tree, God laying on Him the iniquity of us all: made sin for us who knew no sin, in order that God might be just and the justifier of every one who believeth in Jesus. What would any gift be to me from God if I did not believe in the source of it, even in His Son? God can now do what He never could do before—He can give His love full scope; and therefore the moment faith in Him is engendered in any soul, (the action of which faith is to look at God's revelation of His grace in Christ,) the blessing—the portion—the gift of God to that soul is, eternal life. Nothing less would answer to the love of God, now at liberty to indulge itself (if I may so say) through the righteousness established for the sinner by His own Son,

and to express the full range and purpose of itself. Therefore it meets the sinner at the very start and threshold with this wondrous truth: (see John iii.): "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Other blessings and great glories follow, but God meets the condemned, lost sinner at the point at which He had met the serpent-bitten Israelite aforetime; and He says to him, "I have so loved you, that I gave my Son to bear the judgment of sin; and as in Him is manifested the eternal life which He has with me, so every one that believes in Him shall share it with Him."

In fine, I would lay stress on this important point of our subject, that the essence of the old nature being unbelief, the soul that has a particle of faith in God has entered on a new existence. That existence is "regeneration;" the characteristics and essential properties of which are, faith and eternal life.

APHORISMS.

ON BEING KEPT FROM FALLING.

We do not by any means sufficiently realize the power of God to keep us from falling. There is so much levity of heart in Christians, (for I am not speaking of the unholy levity of the world but,) so much lightness of thought even in our best intercourse with one another, and lightness of speech even about good things, that it keeps us from realizing what the holy power of God could and would do in us in keeping us from falling. People excuse themselves by saying, "The flesh will be in us to the end." This is true; but we are nowhere told that the flesh must *work* in us to the end. The flesh ought never to be allowed so to work in a saint as to get into his conscience, or to show itself before others. We ought not to have the pain of learning the nature of the flesh by its own workings, but by the workings of the Holy Ghost in us. And when we detect the flesh, because we are in communion with God, it never

either troubles our conscience before God, or dishonours our Master before men. God is able to keep us from falling both inwardly and outwardly. A saint feels that an unholy thought is a fall, for it takes him out of God's presence, as really a fall as an open transgression, though not so manifest to others. Indeed, where there is much spirituality, an inward fall will be perceived by others. If a brother comes in when an unholy thought has weakened my spirituality, if he is in communion with God, he will feel the deficiency in me. We should bear in mind that even these inward falls are not necessary. He is able to keep us from falling altogether; and if the flesh were always judged, and thoroughly judged, by us in the presence of God, we should find that He would thus keep us.

"PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST."

We do this when in praying we are conscious of His presence, and conscious, too, that we are asking according to His will. Even if our understandings can-

wholly on *Himself*. The path of faith is not one of ease, but the path of trial. Nothing is done for God without a struggle.

THE JOY OF HEAVEN.

How blessed to get into the *sounds* of the heavenly kingdom! It made them wonderfully happy, in the Father's house, when the prodigal was received. *We*, poor lost ones that we were, are necessary for the display of His grace—jewels from the darkest depths—pearls from the most unsightly shells. We shall have a burning love to Christ the angels will know nothing about.

THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

The non-apprehension of Christ's glory is positive loss of blessing. A wrong apprehension of Christ places people out of the reach of blessing. A right apprehension of Him is life eternal. The carpenter's Son was the secret source of all power; but the Jews failed to apprehend this.

not fully unfold to us what we need, we may be thus conscious of desires according to His mind, according to Rom. viii. 26. Nothing short of this is "praying in the Holy Ghost." But I do not say this to weaken the liberty we have to bring *all* our desires to God in prayer: it may be true prayer still. However foolish our requests may be, still let us in childlike confidence bring them to God. He will grant them if it would be good for us, and will teach us better if they are foolish and wrong. He bids us make *all* our requests known to Him; and we should ourselves like our children to come and tell us *all* their wishes, leaving us to act as we thought right about them. But prayer in the Holy Ghost is our privilege; and I need not say the most blessed when in full understanding.

PRAYER.

Prayer is nothing else than a fervent mind settled upon God.

TRUST IN GOD.

God tested Abraham, to see whether he was trusting in Isaac, or resting

A SERIES.

No. 3.

ADOPTION OR SONSHIP.

In the previous numbers of this series I have sought to present what is man's condition by nature and by regeneration. I would now seek to shew what are the position and the privileges accorded to him as regenerate or born of God. The first of these is assuredly Adoption or Sonship, and it will be well worth our while to inquire, first, how we are entitled to this high privilege; secondly, what it confers; and thirdly, how a soul not in the conscious enjoyment of it may attain thereto.

In Galatians iv. it is said, "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.*" Now it is evident from this passage, and from many others, that the ability to call the blessed God "*Father*," is not what entitles any one to be a child of God, but is conferred on him after he is made one by new birth, which does not by any means depend on

this ability, but on a work previous to it. "Ye are all (says the apostle—Gal. iii. 26) the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And it is to the *children* that is granted the Spirit of the Son whereby they say, "Abba Father." The new birth, wonderful as is the grace of it, does not comprise or embrace the position and privileges given to us of God, though it gives full title to all. It is one thing to know myself as regenerate by faith engendered in my soul, and another to take my place before God in the relationship which my new birth confers on me, and in the intelligence belonging to it. Now all this the Spirit of adoption ensures. The newly-born soul has, or at least ought to have, the sense of life; but he knows nothing as yet of the nature of its action, nor of the intelligence of the relationship; and it is because souls do not enter into this, the purpose and blessing of the adoption, that they are, though born again, so defective in both peace and vigour of life. To enter into and

ferred in chapter iii. I now come to understand what my title to this great gift embraces—even that I am to have a sense, not only of its actual existence, but of its range of action which is no less than "springing up into everlasting life." The ground of my title is not one whit added to by the development of the blessings to which it has entitled me; though I appreciate the ground, and revert to it with deeper praise as I become acquainted with all the blessings which it assures to me.

Still further, in John vii. the Lord teaches that the Holy Ghost was to communicate this gift in such a manner that out of the believer's belly should flow "rivers of living water;" i.e., that the Spirit of God would not only furnish him with full nourishment and invigoration, but that it should flow over; in a word, the fulness of the gift is described in chapter vii., while the action of it is detailed in chapter iv.

I have touched on these chapters in order to show more clearly what I have already stated, even that the enjoyment

appropriate it is the portion of the regenerate, but no one receives grace from God except as he appreciates it. A soul must be awakened to its *need* of the blessing, before it can be awakened to the *nature* of the blessing which God is offering him and has provided for him. I desire most distinctly to state that there is nothing to be provided afresh—all things are ready: the only question is, are souls prepared for each special blessing; or are they ready to receive it, knowing their need of it, and thus appreciating the grace which offers it?

In John iii., where regeneration is detailed, it is said, "he that believeth hath everlasting life." That is positive and conclusive as to right. The soul has the sense of its right as God's gift; but if no more than this, it would neither know how to use the right or comprehend what the position such a right entitled it to. Hence in chap. iv. we are told more of this gift, even that it is a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is a very important and immense addition to the right con-

of the great privileges connected with the gift of eternal life is distinct, and in addition to the mere sense of the gift; but if we lose sight of these privileges, we must circumscribe the greatness of the gift. In one sense you might as well deprive natural life of the various senses by which its vigour is known, and be content to be thus deprived, as to expect to enjoy eternal life without the privileges belonging to it and by which it expresses its vigour and value.

Every regenerate soul then *ought* to have the spirit of adoption. And this being conceded, we may inquire what does this adoption accord? Conferred on me by the Holy Ghost, it enables me to say, "Abba Father." It assures me not that I am rescued from judgment—that I know in virtue of my new birth; but far more, even that I am in the relationship of a son through Christ to God; and because of His Spirit in me (See Rom. viii. 2—4) I am consciously set free from the law of sin and death, out of the reach of condemnation, for "the Spirit is life because of righteous-

ness." Having received eternal life at the new birth, the Spirit now establishes our new relationship, proclaiming that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba Father." The Spirit does not make me any more a child, but He teaches me what is the proper portion and intelligence of a child. The woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment was healed before she had any conference with Him. It was not the conference that healed her; it was His virtue appropriated by her through faith; but the conference established to her soul the healing—and how? By her learning the heart of Him whose virtue had so served her. Thus it is the Spirit who unfolds and establishes to the soul of the regenerate the extent and security of the blessing received. The Spirit unites me to the heart of Christ, and here I learn not only my Sonship, but with it all the privileges and portion secured to me by Him. The Spirit is the promise of the Father and was sent as the Comforter

but the Spirit is in me a "well of water springing up into everlasting life;" and still more, the well not only furnishes me with all I can use, but out of my belly flow rivers of living water. I am a witness of that which I personally enjoy.

And now let us inquire how a soul, not in the enjoyment of this, its rightful privilege, may obtain it. We have seen that every believer is *entitled* to it. The Holy Ghost is given—He has quickened, and He is down here as the Comforter to abide for ever. (John xiv. 26; xv. 26.) Why then is He not received or enjoyed more fully? It is clear that to enjoy Him is not only a privilege, but I might also say a necessity, if the gift of eternal life is to be known in any measure according to its value. The answer is because He is neither comprehended nor appreciated. As the renewed soul learns to comprehend the ministry and use of the Spirit, so does it appreciate Him, and as it appreciates it enjoys. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." If a soul is

during the Lord's absence. He is the *Unction*, that which, as the name implies, connects us with the Anointed, and therefore it is said, "Who hath established us in Christ and anointed us is God," and still more, "Who hath sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." It is the distinct and full operation of the Spirit which it is so important for us to understand and enjoy. If I have not the Spirit of adoption, I am not consciously set free from condemnation, even though I may feel myself a rightful owner of eternal life and have occasional gleams of happiness. I have no sense of being "in the Spirit and not in the flesh." I still have the spirit of bondage again to fear. I am not able in the Spirit of the Son to call God my Father or enjoy the sweet relationship of which such an utterance is the exponent. If I have the spirit of adoption, God's gift of eternal life is not only the sense of life but the power of life; not only owned, like that of a newly-born babe without any of the consciousness which makes life enjoyable,

seeking the Lord, desiring to know Him, it is sure to find Him in all the fulness of the heart's desire. The Spirit is the known minister of it all, because He has come down here to reveal to us our absent Lord. The woman who was healed by touching was led on until she heard from His own lips the love and purpose of the heart of Him who had healed her; and this assured her, not in the work of healing, but in the love of Him who did it, as well as in the reality of her link to Him.

And so it is now. If any soul has tasted of the healing power of Christ's work, and has not yet entered into the assurance of heart which flows from knowing His feelings towards it, and the close relationship into which it is brought, all it needs is to come to Him and confer with Him, tell Him all that He has done for it, and that soul will be made to rejoice in an unerring consciousness through the Holy Ghost, not only of its adoption but of the glorious privileges which are its portion through God's gift of eternal life through Jesus

Christ our Lord, to whom, let us say in the joy of our hearts, be glory both now and for ever.

THE ASSEMBLY AT CORINTH AND THE APOSTLE PAUL— A CONTRAST.

When reading the Epistles to the Corinthians one cannot fail to remark the great contrast between the Corinthian converts and their spiritual father, the Apostle Paul, showing clearly that the possession of *gifts* is no safeguard against error, and that those who most abound in them may be those who fall into the greatest evils.

The Corinthians "came behind in no gift, being enriched by the Lord in all utterance and all knowledge," as certainly they came behind no Christian assembly of that day in disorder and scandalous proceedings. Divisions had come in—dissensions had arisen—not caused by the entrance of doctrinal evil or immorality of walk, leading the

spiritually minded to purge out the evil or separate themselves from it; but arising from the undue exalting of certain teachers among them. It was not faithfulness to the Lord which caused these divisions. Moral evil there was of the grossest kind, but *that* formed in their minds no ground for separation. A crime, such as the very heathen would blush to think of, had been committed among them, yet the offender had not been put out, and the apostle has to reprove them for their laxity, and to urge the exercise of discipline ere the assembly is moved to action. It was not that the assembly had shared in the deed. The apostle, in the Second Epistle, chap. vii. 11, writes, "in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." But their state of soul was so bad, they had not judged the evil. It was the indulgence of party spirit which had induced this state of things, had blunted the edge of their conscience, and dulled the sensibility of their soul.

Following human teachers, not the Lord, how much trouble had it occa-

sioned! Enriched with all gifts, they were intoxicated at the thought of such wealth, and they began to value a teacher for his eloquence or his display of human wisdom. (1 Cor. i. 17; ii. 1.) It was not so much *what* he taught, as *how* he could speak; not whether he spoke in the Spirit, but whether he displayed the wisdom of words. Their eyes were diverted from the Giver to the gift. They were occupied with man, the recipient and channel through whom blessing was to flow, instead of with the source of all gift and fountain of all blessing. Looking thus at man, they were in danger of forgetting they were Christ's. Calling themselves by this or that teacher's name, they remembered not they were God's husbandry, God's building. They were glorying in men when they should have been glorying in the Lord. They were dazzled with a display of eloquence and wisdom, satisfied with the mere natural gifts, without reflecting whether there was "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The natural result soon manifested

itself. Unmindful on whom they were dependent, "they were full, reigning as kings," says the apostle, "without us." (1 Cor. iv. 8.) And he who had planted the Church at Corinth, and could point to them as a proof of his apostleship, found his claim to be an apostle called in question. The father is well nigh disowned by his children, the teacher is repudiated by his pupils, so much so that the apostle is forced to convince them that he has the qualifications of an apostle. They indeed were proofs of it. Did they doubt whether Christ spake in him? They had only to examine themselves to find out. (2 Cor. xiii. 3—5.) Nor was this all. He could point to labours and services which showed him to be an apostle indeed. Did labour and trial constitute a proof of apostleship, who had encountered more perils, or laboured more abundantly than he had? Was sympathy with others a needful quality for an apostle? "Who," says he, "is offended and I burn not?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) Were the teachers Israelites? Which of them could boast of a purer descent than he,

"a Hebrew of the Hebrews?" Was his bodily infirmity a ground for refusing him that respect and obedience due to an apostle? That infirmity was the result of his ascending to the third heaven, and hearing words which it is not lawful for man to utter, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation given him." (2 Cor. xii. 7.) They might complain of his bodily appearance, and his speech, but they were forced to confess his words were weighty." (2 Cor. x. 10.) They might compare him, to his disadvantage, with other teachers possessing greater natural gifts and no infirmity; but his infirmity was the proof of a near intercourse with God, such as no other man could boast of.

But the evil did not rest here. Disorderly proceedings were tolerated, such as no other Christian assembly had admitted. Women, it would appear, spoke in the assembly, and dressed in unseemly attire. (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; xi.) Whatever any one might say about it, or

however any one might defend it, the apostle cuts all argument short with the simple sentence: "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (1 Cor. xi. 16.) But graver cause for scandal there was. The Lord's Supper had been made an occasion for carnal feasting. One would come to satisfy his hunger; another would be there drunk—yet we have not fathomed the depth into which they had fallen. "Envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," had crept in. (2 Cor. xii. 20.) Having turned from God to man, and magnified the human instrument, their eyes had been diverted from the only object which could keep them straight, that centre round which, when acknowledged as such, everything would range itself in its proper order, and all assume their due proportion. It was not difficult to descend from man to self. Selfishness, in all its forms, was prevalent, evidenced, as noticed above, in strifes, &c.; and in that litigious spirit which received a rebuke and correction in 1 Cor. vi. Another form of it, the

grossest form, was the licentious indulgence of carnal desires. (1 Cor. vi.; 2 Cor. xii. 21.)

But it had yet to be demonstrated in two other ways, showing how far the assembly had fallen. Their liberty must be asserted and maintained even at the expense of a weak brother's faith. They had liberty, they affirmed, to eat meats offered to idols. Why should they be restrained in this their christian liberty? Their spiritual discernment allowed them to sit at meat in the idol's temple without joining in the idol worship. Why should they be denied this pleasure? Was a weak brother thereby stumbled? Why should they be in bondage to any one? Hence self (for after all it was self) must be gratified, even though a weak brother's conscience receive damage. Thus their position as freemen in Christ was made the ground of the gratification of their appetites, and indulgence of their natural desires. But self had yet another aspect, viz., the longing after those *spiritual* gifts which would bring most glory to the possessor. What

gift so suited for that as speaking with tongues? Their aim was the exaltation of self, rather than the edification of the assembly. What a picture have we in Corinth of the depth to which saints could fall! For saints they were, but placed in circumstances widely differing from any in which a christian assembly in Christendom, at least in these days, could be found, being surrounded with vices, openly and unblushingly practised by the heathen, which the influence of Christianity has driven into the shade.

Let us now turn to the apostle, and see how high a sinner saved by grace could rise. Were the Corinthians glorying in their teacher, glorying in men, he gloried only in the Lord. They were captivated with the natural gifts of their teachers. He had learnt the lesson, that all human teachers, to whom were entrusted the gifts of ministry, were but "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man." (2 Cor. iv. 7.) He came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, and was determined to know nothing among

them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. ii.) They were self-sufficient—"full." (1 Cor. iv. 8.) He was "not sufficient of himself to think anything as of himself, but his sufficiency was of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) They were reigning without him. He would only connect himself with them. "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ;" "helpers of your joy;" (2 Cor. i. 21, 24;) "ourselves your servants for Jesus sake;" (2 Cor. iv. 5;) "shall present us with you." (2 Cor. iv. 14.) Not a word here of his superiority. He classes himself with them, and makes himself their servant. They stood up for their liberty, so did he. But how different the case with him! Would he indulge his palate at the expense of a weaker brother's faith? Nay, "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. viii. 13.) What, then, was the liberty he claimed for himself? Simply this, that he might preach the gospel to them without

charge! What could prompt him to such labour without a temporal reward? Was it the hope that they would value such disinterestedness? He had already felt that, after all, his labours on them, and affection for them, they had not valued the one or requited the other. How, then, did this affect him? We see in 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15: "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours but you and I will gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." What grace was here. The divine nature in him showing itself; love working for its own sake, loving objects unworthy of its love. And who was this who thus wrote? Was it one who felt his deficiency in gifts when in such an assembly as that of Corinth, and wished to make up for that deficiency by an assiduous attention to their wants? Far from it. He was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle. He might indeed be rude in speech, but not in knowledge.

He had a power, the apostolic power, which he could have used, but he did not. What a contrast then between the apostle and the Corinthians!

What caused it? Whence came it? Both he and they were children of Adam, descended from the same corrupt stock. Both he and they were subjects of the same divine mercy, and objects of divine grace. But he had learnt a lesson which they had not. He had learnt the death of the old man, hence he was not looking at the outward appearance; he looked far higher. He lived as it were on the other side of death; they on this side. All that was nature he estimated at its true value. For him, self was nothing: Christ and God were everything. That was the secret of the difference between them. What teaching there is in all this. "He had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead." (2 Cor. i. 9.) Throughout the first five chapters of the Second Epistle we see this brought out. Did he triumph, it was in Christ, and moreover

it was God who made him triumph; (ii. 14;) his sufficiency was of God; (iii.); if the light of the gospel had shone into his heart, it was God who had commanded it; (iv.); and the excellency of the power of ministry was of God; and all he suffered was for the glory of God. With him, God in Christ was everything; and now as risen in Christ he knew no man after the flesh. All this the Corinthians had forgotten or never learnt. Accordingly, in the first three chapters of the First Epistle, we have a continual contrast between man and God, to recall them to their true position as Christians. God had called them to the fellowship of His Son, not man. It was God's Church he addressed. God was pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and the object preached was Christ the power and wisdom of God. Was he chosen for this work, God had done it; and God had made Christ unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." It was God's testimony he declared, that their

"faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Yet he spoke wisdom, but it was the wisdom of God; and he spoke of things which the natural man could not receive, but God had revealed them by His Spirit; and the Corinthians were God's husbandry, God's building. He recognized these things, as the Second Epistle shows. They had forgotten them, as the First Epistle teaches. Hence the difference.

What a lesson then to us. If the eye looks away from God to man, into what may we not fall—what evils may not come in! But, on the other hand, the true remedy for decline of spirituality in the assembly, when man is exalted and self reigns, is to recall it to a right sense about God. It is God's work. The instruments are God's. The increase is God's. The building and temple are God's. This truth, brought out in 1 Cor. i.—iv., forms the groundwork of the apostle's direction. Christian liberty is to be permitted, but only to the glory of God. (1 Cor. x. 31.) Spiritual gifts

NOTES ON PSALM I.

It is needful to have the foot firmly grounded on the Rock Christ, free grace being the ground on which we are saved. Then there will be the going on to walk "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." The saints begin in free grace. Then they try, and they ought to try, *to walk*. But they are apt to forget that it is still the Rock on which the foot is planted.

It is common to many of the Psalms to see one righteous one and one unrighteous one. This wicked one is always either Satan or antichrist. Again, in other psalms, there is one righteous and there are many wicked.

There is a contrast between Christ as presented in psalm i. and in Eph. and John xvii. Here it is simply Christ as man. This is not like the praise and the glory which God now gives to Christ at His right hand. It is true that God does still give Him this praise, as the One who was perfect here; but He is on much higher ground: for He was not only put into the furnace, and tried here where the wicked were—He was truly

are to be exercised, but in an orderly manner: "For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace." (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) Man may be followed but only as he follows Christ. (1 Cor. xi. 1.)

When God gets his place in the assembly and hearts of His children, all will go well. But if not, the capacity to judge moral evil may be weakened; meetings for worship be made opportunities for the display of gifts, as the vanity of the possessor may dictate, and even the Lord's table become a scene of shameful confusion. How needful then, to watch against the first departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. But as evil in the assembly is generally the result of evil unchecked in individuals, what need of individual watchfulness to keep the eye fixed on the true centre. When looking at God, and living as dead and risen with Christ, the Lord will have *His* place and man *his*; conscience will be alive; evil, if it comes in, will be judged, and the assembly be in truth the temple of the Holy Ghost.

NOTES ON PSALM I. 377

put into the furnace, and no evil was found in Him. He saw the path of the wicked, and the seat of the scornful, and still He remained the perfect pilgrim and stranger, "separate from sinners." But God had thoughts higher than these when He pointed out to His Son, from His eternal throne, that if He would take the cup of sorrow, receiving thus the penalty of sin, He would highly exalt Him, giving Him a name above every name. Here was all the largeness of the divine counsels as to Christ. As man, Jesus is seen in a narrow field, bounded off. God points to what His Son was there.

I do not think that the sinner finds true *rest* of heart, unless he sees what sort of person Christ was down here. God did not at first present His Son in all His exaltation; but showed Him as He walked on earth, saying, as it were, "Read my character by what you find in Him. Just as He is upon earth, you may suppose me to be as God." I suppose the very spring of our first comfortable thought about God, is the

being brought to see God's thoughts about CHRIST. When wearied with all that is in self, has it not been brought *vividly before the mind, that God delights in Christ*, having found in Him all that He can admire? There are two things: first, God has found one in whom He can fully rest; secondly, He is so occupied with Christ, that I can draw near as accepted in the Beloved. I am sure that our near approach to God is inseparable from God's delighting in Christ. God is occupied with His Son, this perfect one; and I know it. This measuring of what Christ is to God is very different from being occupied about that of which *I* am the centre—and it is the only ground of stable peace.

Ver. 1. No provision being made in the first psalm for the slightest failure, it must present *Christ*. Of course it gives our moral characteristics, if we are saints; but none could take such ground for a moment but Christ. Could Paul, could Peter, have taken up such language as this in psalm i.? No. It is the character of the way in which we try to

walk, but no saint can say, "Here is that which abstractedly marks me." What was that which characterized Paul? That he had been a blasphemer, but had obtained mercy. How careful was he even to take this ground! But God came in, in spite of all. This first verse tells our hearts that we are indeed "blessed"—not on the ground of what we are, but altogether on the ground of what *He* is. We have the threefold character of man's evil here: first, without God, as the poor Gentiles; secondly, sinnership, every man wandering on in his own way, as the Jews; thirdly, antichrist in the seat of the scornful.

Ver. 2. This enters more deeply into what the blessed Lord Jesus was. I do believe there is a word of comfort for us here. There is a deep mine of comfort suited to meet our mind as *down here*, in looking at the Lord Jesus as man. (It is a subordinate position, lower than the glory, by which He sustains Himself in these positions.) Christ looks up to God, and says, "I love thee, and what is dear to thee." Look at the Lord Jesus as loving His neighbour—

the poor Jew, or more generally man; the Gentiles, or the Church—as Elder Brother, firstborn from the dead. Thus it is that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—sympathizing with us down here. Let me ask you, Do you know what it is to be in Christ's presence, and to find your heart burdened?

The Jews, the Gentiles, the brethren, are all dear to Christ's heart. I am as sure of this as that He is in the heavens: and I cannot say otherwise to God than that "the one at thy right hand loves thee and the things which thou lovest." This is not merely a fact, but it is that which we should do well to lay to heart. Has not Christ's heart been occupied about you during the past night, and up to when? When did He *begin* to think about you? Ah! He begins where He was found—with His Father. Dark man turns to darkness, and thinks of Christ as beginning with us in our darkness: but it is not so with Christ; He begins with God, His brethren are God's. He loves His own, because God loves them. How should He but love them?

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth.”—Eph. vi.

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LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1863.

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THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

WATCHMAN! WHAT OF THE
NIGHT?

Isaiah xxi. 11, 12.

HERE and there in Scripture we find different minds brought into contact with the same moral perplexity. For instance, *the prosperity of the wicked*; and we see the different way in which this perplexity was dealt with.

Jeremiah took it at once to God, as a thing too hard for himself. This was dealing rightly and religiously with it. (See Jer. xii.)

David was overwhelmed by it, and spoke impatiently under it. His soul, however, was sweetly restored at the last. (See Psalm lxxiii.)

Ecclesiastes contemplates the wicked taking advantage of God's long-suffering, or delay, in judging the works of

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iniquity, leaving man still to prosper in his wickedness. (See viii. 11.)

Malachi speaks of a generation who exceed even this, challenging the God of judgment because of this same thing, the prosperity of the wicked. (See ii. 27; iii. 14, 15.)

These are instances of what I mean; the same moral perplexity differently dealt with by different minds. But this last case from *Malachi* shows exceeding wickedness. Judgment is scoffed at, the thought of it, as it were, ridiculed, because evil-doers were still prospering—and this naturally introduces us to a meditation on *Isaiah* xxi. 11, 12.

Dumah or Idumæa, the land of Esau, was the land of the profane one, the man of the world, the infidel. The voice of the scorner is heard in that land: it challenges one of God's watchmen, asking, "What of the night?"

This tells us, that that watchman had been already talking of the night. And this evidences his faithfulness to his commission; for a part of our testimony, under the Spirit, is to "the night"—

This is the watchman's *faithfulness*. He maintains his testimony to "the night," though telling of "the morning" likewise. He declares that judgment is coming, as well as the kingdom in its glory. But there must be *grace* as well as faithfulness in the watchman's ministry; he therefore has a word for the scorner's conscience. It could not satisfy him to tell of the terrors of judgment without some seasonable word of warning, some "seeking to persuade men," as the apostle says. (2 Cor. v. 11.) Accordingly he adds here, in answer to the Edomite's challenge, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come." He warns the scoffer to be of another mind: and if he enquire at all, to enquire in a due spirit, a spirit of repentance; to "return" from his mocking of God's servant and his testimony, and to "come" in a believing, worshipping mind to lay his question before the Lord.

All this constitutes something beautiful. This combination of faithfulness and grace gives us a fine sample, though so short and small, of the ministry of

the present night-time of man's world, or the coming solemn, dark, night-time of God's judgments. The very challenge of the profane Edomite, I say, evidences that the watchmen had been faithful, that he both understood and discharged his ministry. Prophets and apostles largely tell us of "the night." They speak abundantly of judgment preceding and introducing the kingdom or the age of glory; and the watchman here challenged had been in their company, in "the goodly fellowship of the prophets." And he is not one who has to recal his words. Having already spoken of the night, he still speaks of it; for in answer to the challenge he says, "the morning cometh and also the night." He can talk of "the morning," it is true, but he will not refuse to tell of "the night" also, however the thought of it may be scorned. Glory in the time of the Lord's presence, or in the morning of His appearing, will come; but the dark, solemn season of judgment must go before it, as all the prophets witness.

all watchmen under the Spirit of God. He insists on the truth of God, and will not qualify it, but seeks likewise to press it on the acceptance of the conscience of sinners.

Now, 2 Peter iii. is called to mind by this short, impressive oracle on Dumah in *Isaiah* xxi. For in that chapter we listen to the voice of a scoffer again, and again get the answer of the Spirit of God.

The scoffer challenges the promise of the Lord's coming. And this evidences that such a promise had been part of the previous testimony—just, as I was observing, the challenge of the Edomite in *Isaiah* xxi. evidenced that the watchman had been already talking of the night. And the scoffer here would make good his challenge by a fair piece of reasoning, as it is judged to be. "Where is the promise of his coming?" he tauntingly asks; and then he says, "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." They dispute with the mystery of the Lord's coming on

the authority of the general course of nature, and of national events; and all this is in the spirit of "Watchman, what of the night?"

The apostle answers. He lets this scorner know, that things from the beginning of the creation (as the scorner himself had spoken) had taken their course, not by mere force of cause and effect, and established laws and analogies, but that all, in successive ages, had depended on divine good pleasure or the word of God; that by that word, the heavens were of old and the earth also; that by the same word the flood had come; and that by the same word we have now another heaven and earth which waits its doom by fire at the pleasure of the same word of God.

This is a fine answer from this New Testament Watchman to the Edomite of his day. And having done this, he turns to give exhortations to the saints, on the ground of coming judgment and coming glory; that is, on the ground of "the night" and "the morning" of the prophet. And he would fain have them

In the Lord's dealings with the earth, it has always been "the night" and "the morning"—the morning of glory or the day of the kingdom, and the night of judgment clearing the way and cleansing the scene.

In Noah's time this was so—the judgment by the deluge went forth and did its work, and then the new world shone out. The sword of Joshua judged the nations of Canaan, and then the land was divided among the tribes, and the glory seated itself there. David's victories cleared the way for the throne of Solomon. And so with the world or the earth now. Night is in the prospect, the Apocalyptic night—the judgments, whether under seals, trumpets, or vials, which the Apocalypse discloses. And morning is likewise in the prospect, the Apocalyptic morning—the kingdom where the saints shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years; and the bride in her beauty shall descend, having the glory in her. So that if any enquire, "What of the night?" as far as the future of the earth is concerned,

"grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," and hold to their steadfastness of faith and hope in the midst of the reasonings of the scoffers. And, further, he would have them able to interpret the delay of this coming which the scoffers were rebuking, and resolve it into the most blessed and gracious of all purposes, "the salvation of God."

I do indeed read this chapter from Peter as a fine New Testament scripture in connexion with the oracle of Isaiah over the land of Edom. The scoffer of the last days of Christendom is found in company with the profane Edomite in the days of the kings of Israel. And I ask, is not the present, among other characters which it bears, a day of Edomite profaneness and scorning, and a day when the Lord's watchmen, like Isaiah and like Peter, should know what to do and how to answer? Surely this is so. Who can mistake it? Present times are full of meaning. Political revolutions and christian activities are giving them a character which is far out of the common.

the answer still is, "The morning cometh and also the night."*

A SERIES.

No. 4.

THE OLD AND NEW NATURE:

THEIR DISTINCTION AND THE ACTION OF EACH.

Of all subjects affecting us as Christians, there is possibly none of which we are so ignorant in practice as in our ability to distinguish between the old and the new nature, and to ascribe each motive which passes through our minds, and each act performed by us to its proper source. If there be some motives and acts so distinctly marked that it is comparatively easy to determine them, that only proves that it is the lack of spiritual discernment that prevents us from determining all. Nay more, it proves that the vigour of our spiritual life may be measured by our ability to draw this line of distinction, for "the

* I speak not of the future or the prospect of the Church. The morning star shines therein.

spiritual man discerneth all things." Alas! we know how little we have attained to this; and yet, as I have already shown, our actual place is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh.

What, then, let us enquire in the first place, is this new nature which is imparted to us, and what is the relation and antagonism which the old man bears to it? Formed in us by the Holy Ghost, it is nothing less than the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect man, of which we partake in virtue of union with Him through His death and resurrection, by which He consigned the old man to the grave, and became the head of a new creation in the power of an endless life. It is *His very nature*, therefore called in 2 Peter i. "the divine nature," and our conformity to His image, for which we are left down here, is not brought about by any fresh communication of that nature, but by the development of that which we have already received. This development is through the operation of the Holy Ghost, which, though distinct from the

new man, is its power of action. Pure and holy a thing though it be, it is nevertheless necessary that the Holy Ghost, who planted it in the ungenial soil of fallen man, should give it that activity, development, and power necessary to maintain its due supremacy over the resisting elements, which it has continually to encounter. The gradual subjugation of the old nature to itself results in the conformity of the whole man, more or less, to the image of Him whose nature is thus possessed, and whom, when we see, we shall be like, not in the inner principle only, but in body, soul, and spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ walked about the earth as fulfilling every duty to humanity; and though Himself above man, yet as a real man walked with God on the earth. He is the head of the new creation, and as it is His nature, *as such*, that I possess, any feeling or act of mine which He would not have felt or done cannot properly be called an emanation of the new nature. He was perfectly human and possessed every feeling and

capacity proper to *sinless, unfallen* humanity. To us, as fallen, there are certain conditions allowed, because of human infirmity, not evil in themselves, (unless taken up in the carnal mind,) which nevertheless we must not confound with the new nature.

All the activities of humanity ruled by the will of the flesh is what Scripture calls the old man, and this I have already shown to be alienated in feeling against God. (See No. 1 of this Series.) By this will of the flesh my mind and body in nature have been controlled and used: to it they have naturally yielded, so much so that it is extraneous and strange for either to respond to any other rule. But this is what both mind and body are required to do when I am born again, and when the Spirit, having planted the nature of Christ in me, sets up His rule, and the claim of that nature for due supremacy. The mind and body, hitherto accustomed to the rule of the old man which is contrary to God, used and tenanted by that which is against God, is now demanded by the

new man as a channel and expression for itself. The members, heretofore yielded as "instruments of unrighteousness," must now be instruments of righteousness, yielded to God as those alive from the dead. What a transition is this! What a mighty work to achieve! For not only is the old man in actual possession, but it has the advantage of addressing itself to the human mind, and through it to the human body, in a way that the new cannot; that is to say, the will of the flesh addresses a man's mind in such a form as to make *himself* the object, (and we know how captivating this is to any being,) while the Spirit of God addresses the mind, making *God* the object; its starting point being Christ's lordship and ownership of both body and mind. We must remember too that the body and mind have undergone a change since the fall, apart from the question of actual sin, the body being liable to death and subject to continual infirmity, and the mind, through the action of conscience, being always

uneasy, and apprehensive too of death in a way entirely unknown to lower animals; so that each is all the more ready a channel for the will of the flesh, the first action of which is to make man, and not God, its object.

Now in the Christian there is the introduction of another existence, even the life of Christ, and with this new existence the nature of a perfect man, which now by the Spirit of God would manifest itself through the mind and body of man, though deteriorated and fallen. The superior man is planted in the inferior; the holy thing in the failing vessel, and it is through the organs and machinery, so to speak, of the inferior, that the power and fashion of the superior must be developed; just as though a mill, which having hitherto been worked by horses to grind gunpowder, should now be worked by water or electricity to grind wheat. The mill is still the same, only impelled by a different power and for a different end. But this simile fails as a due illustration, for we must remember that the human

of self-dependence and alienation from God.

If I have succeeded in making this elementary truth at all clear to the apprehension, it will be seen how it cuts to the root of all the false notions of human perfection now afloat in the world; for in the light of this truth, what is it that man seeks to improve and to perfect? A thing so corrupt in principle, that all education and knowledge communicated to it is only made subservient to the exaltation of itself. Turning everything acquired to its own glory, it is ready to receive any knowledge which will contribute to its own elevation.

Even God's revelation will be listened to and received so far as its light may serve to minister to this one burning desire of the old man; and from his avidity and readiness to adopt truth and light, even from God, arises one of the greatest difficulties to a true judgment or distinguishing between the action of the old nature and the new; which, though so opposite in principle, are often so similar in expression.

machine is not like the mill, vacated by the old power on the introduction of the new, but that the former remains as an antagonistic principle and power, though gradually yielding in proportion as the new maintains its ground and place.

God having made man in His own image and likeness, that image must have been one adapted and suited for the expression of God's mind on the earth; but when the formation or machinery became corrupted in the principle which worked it, it was used *against* God instead of *for* Him, so that a new principle and nature is required to reset the instrument to its last key and harmony. This new nature demands an expression for itself through the earthen vessel, which, though suitably formed, was diverted by an evil principle from its primitive use. The new man is derived from Him who has borne the judgment due to the old man, and therefore He now claims by His Spirit to develop a perfect man derived from Himself, in that very body and mind which is still occupied by the principle

In order to form this judgment, it is most important to understand clearly what we have already stated, even that it is through the mind and body of the inferior man that the Spirit of God would develop the ability and grace of the superior. We shall thus perceive the nature of the difficulties with which we have to contend, and apply the remedies with the earnestness of one who feels its need of them.

Let us, then, consider the difficulties. The chief and leading cause of confusion in our minds arises from the fact, that all the new motives and acts must flow through the old channel; that channel which has hitherto served as an egress for the unholy ones, and which, alas! still does, more or less. Were we provided with a new intellect, and a new body, as a channel for the good—leaving the old for its accustomed evil—judgment and discrimination would be easy enough; but we are called as Christians to do the same things perhaps as other men do, but with different motives and power; so that two acts, similar in their

expression, may be performed by two different natures, and to all intents and purposes may appear the same. But why (a soul may reason) should I enquire into the motive since my act meets the case? *Why?* Because if the motive be from the old man, you have departed from the divine nature as your spring of action, and the consequences, like the fruits of a tree, will betray you; (for eventualities always disclose the origin;) while your own spirit has forfeited the strength which it would assuredly have possessed, had it acted under the Spirit of God.

The great difficulty, then, as to discrimination consists in the sameness of the acts, which, regarded merely as to themselves, would never enable me to judge whether I am acting in the flesh or in the Spirit. Of course, I do not speak now of evil ones, which can easily be distinguished, but it is where the difference is *least* that judgment is *most* required. And how many acts, really good in themselves, would, when exposed to this test, be viewed by the

may be performed by the same person, from motives so widely diverse, that they spring from two different and *opposite* principles of existence: one, human and corrupt; the other, divine and holy: one, objectively for self; the other, objectively for Christ.

Another difficulty less common and more easily detected, is when the mind has received a right idea as to any act, a real suggestion, it may be, from the new man, and is impressed as to the goodness and rightness of the object to be attained; but instead of waiting on God for the execution of it, which would insure its being carried out in the power of the Holy Ghost, the mind still, in a measure, under the influence of the old man, essays to undertake it according to the natural will, and that will must necessarily suggest some mode of execution which will distinguish *self*. Thus the carnal mind will make use of and seek to mar the very emanations of the new nature, and will often succeed; for that nature, holy though it be, is, as we have seen, as dependent on the Holy

spiritual mind as not only worthless but **evil**, because having their spring in the old man, whose object and centre is self. The acts by which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, were the same to all appearance as his own. It is the same body and mind which are ruled by two entirely-opposite powers, but with this important difference, (which leads us to another landing in the tower of difficulty,) that the inferior power is continually filching from the intelligence contributed by the superior in order to baffle it; that is to say, my old man learns manners, appropriates feelings, and gleans intelligence from the new, in order to supplant it in excellence, and thus exert a counteracting influence over my mind; Satan aiding, when it is worth his while, in order to seduce me under the carnal motive which seeks *self*, and away from the divine one which seeks *Christ*.

The more we pursue this source of difficulty, the more we shall see that it is that from which we suffer most, and which most warps our judgment. It is hard to believe that the very same act

Spirit for action and development as the old man is on the adversary, who ever seeks to minister to its will and lusts.

Moses, in his first attempt to deliver his brethren, is an instance of this; he stumbled at this difficulty, and we see what lengthened education he required before he learned God's way for executing the idea, received from a divine source, but undertaken in the energy of human will. Each order of difficulty requires in God's school a distinct order of discipline. But, interesting as is the subject, it is not my purpose to trace it here, so I will only observe, that when the idea is divine, having its spring in the new man, we may be sure that, however delayed by the intrusion of our natural will, it will be executed sooner or later, according to its own instincts and in the power of the Spirit; but if its source be in the old man, however good and plausible the idea, it must be brought to nought. For the Holy Ghost asserts the claim of that nature which He has Himself planted in us, to generate all ideas, as well as to carry them

out according to God through His power and operation.

I now turn to the remedies or divine means which are afforded us in order successfully to overcome these difficulties. In the first place, if the old man is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," if it always acts from and for itself, its energy being the will of the flesh, it is clear that God's *expressed* will is the first and simplest means of escape from it. Man, by nature, has no one superior to himself to turn to for counsel or help. Satan will only aid him to greater distance and estrangement from all that is good and true: so if I want to be independent of that nature in me, which is opposed to God, I must not listen to its suggestions for a single moment, but wait on God for instruction in everything. The unchangeable, unalterable purpose of my soul must be not to adopt an idea of any thing but from God and His word. The word of God, searched and waited on for the enunciation and direction of every *idea*, is the first of remedies. It

machinery will be necessarily engaged in the current and will of the old man; and while occupied with the inferior, it is never at the disposal of the superior. How many know a quantity of truth which is neither expressed nor practised by them, simply because they are hindered from seeing its light and value on account of some worldly influence or attraction, which must needs be subdued, before the body and mind will be fit expositors of the truth. I may not know what the new nature is claiming or requiring of me; but whether I know it or not, there will be no outlet or opportunity for its action, if I am indulging myself according to the old. Hence the many vexations and sorrows which befall saints in their path here below: for we must be taught, not only the vanity of our own desires, apart from God's mind, but also, like Moses, the futility of our own plans even to carry out God's mind. We must relinquish, not only the offspring of the old man, but the investiture with which he would present and make use of the

is the very food of the new man, and I cannot consider myself completely under the control of it until I can echo the words of our Lord; words which all the discipline *and mercies* of the wilderness during forty years were to produce in the soul of God's people as their great result: "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

In conjunction with this there is another remedy embodied in that exhortation of the apostle, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Self-denial is absolutely necessary to enable me to discern and respond to, that "good, acceptable, and perfect will of God" which my new man delights in, but which my old man wars against. I must "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," or its

offspring of the new. In the one instance we learn that all flesh is grass; in the other, that flesh will appropriate anything, however good and pure, for its own ends; and that our plans, like the cart provided for the ark, (2 Sam. vi. 3,) will involve us in greater trouble.

God continually allows me, when I am acting in the will and insubjection of my old nature, to carry out my own counsel until I find out the folly and insufficiency of it; but for the subject soul there is one golden rule by which its course may be determined, be the perplexity ever so great. Some true souls think, when two opposite courses are open to them, that if they take the one contrary to their natural inclinations, it is sure to be right; but that is by no means a sure guide—the old man is so subtle, that it will not do to measure things either by his tastes or distastes. Others, again, seek counsel of their brethren which can seldom be relied on, and even when sound, tends to cloud the individual exercise of the soul with God. Whereas, one simple question, if asked in integrity

of heart, will resolve all such problems; viz., "Which of the two courses open to me is objectively for the glory of Christ?" Now, if I do not know what is for the glory of Christ, I am not walking with Him; and if not walking with Him, I cannot apply this rule. But in that case I cannot be honestly seeking His will: I am walking in the will of my old man, which must be in abeyance, before I can determine any questions or courses for the glory of Christ.

I have but briefly touched on the headings of this subject, so especially important in this day, which is so rife with delusions as to human perfection. The carnal mind has assumed for man a perfection, the idea of which is borrowed from God's revelation. The very manifestation of Christ in flesh—He who is the sole head and source of all perfection—is made use of to help the natural man to exalt himself into greater distinction and independence of God, by borrowing, without acknowledging, the glories of the only son of God. And so incorrigible is his desire of self-

glory and virtue "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

THE STANDING AND PORTION OF A BELIEVER.

Romans v.

The first part of this chapter unfolds our present portion, and then the end of the chapter shews the ground on which we can boast of this standing. We have peace: we stand in grace, and are rejoicing in hope of the glory. Peace as to what concerned the old nature—favour as to present relationship, and we can rejoice in certain things in hope of the glory to come, and in tribulations by the way. They make the hope the brighter and things clearer along the road; and another thing of joy on the road is, "joy in God," in God Himself. The spring of all is grace reigning, and the foundation of all is "the obedience of One."

exaltation, that even where he does in any measure acknowledge those glories, he will not allow that fallen man can only become partaker of them by a new creation, founded on the consignment of the old nature, root and branch, to the grave of Him who suffered in the flesh for this end, and who reproduces those glories in redeemed man; not in virtue of having assumed human nature as an *incarnate* Saviour, but by bearing its penalty and judgment, which at once passes sentence on the old, and provides a new and risen, life to all who believe.

That we as Christians partake of a perfect ~~humanity~~ ^{divinity} is incontrovertibly true; but if we desire to display this nature of Christ—the new, the heavenly man—we must yield to His word in everything, live by His counsel, and deny and mortify the members of the old man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful lusts.

May we seek to walk humbly with our God, denying our flesh, that it may be no barrier to the expression of the divine nature, and rejoicing that "through

Look first at what the christian state is. Here we see how little real Christians have got hold of this—how little their state is a settled, defined thing. The portion of the Christian is peace: it is a settled thing. He is justified as to all the evil and sin that requires this justification. Then, as to our relationship with God, it is grace (that is the fountain, too); but if I ever think of God, it is peace as to the past—that is negative; and the present standing is grace—favour. Then, as to the future, I have nothing to look forward to but glory. I do not hope for righteousness; I do not hope for life; I do not hope for peace—I have all this; but I hope for glory, that I have not yet. The hope of glory—that is the key to everything. I may have tribulations—plenty, perhaps; but "tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God" not only is proved in the gift of His Son, but is brought into me by the Holy Ghost: we have the joy of it by the Spirit in us. God's LOVE

is shed abroad in our hearts: I know His love, delight in His love, lean on His love. Then I can rejoice in tribulations.

And we not only can rejoice in what He has given—peace, grace, hope; but we can delight in Himself. Every day I get tokens of this love; but to delight in Himself is the best thing. Then I can go on, even counting the tribulations by the way greater prize than the blessings.

Do you think the purpose of God, and the blessed Son spent on us, and the Holy Ghost sent down, is to have no result? Are we to be left uncertain whether God loves us or not? Has the light come to leave us in the dark? No: it is never His purpose to leave a heart uncertain as to its relationship with Himself. No heart would have right affections without a knowledge of its relationships. A child brought into a house, not knowing whether those it is brought to are its parents or not, has not the affections of a child toward them. A soul born of God, but not

knowing its relationship, cannot have the play of holy affections proper to it.

"Sin has reigned unto death." It has been master of the scene. All have departed from God, intellectually and otherwise. Bring God in where men are enjoying themselves, and what enjoyment of God would they find? Sin is reigning; man's will is away from God. Man has turned his back on God. There is not one thing in man's moral nature that does not shut out God. Does conscience help the will? No: conscience never brings a man to God; it drives him away. "Sin reigns unto death." What is to be done? Confess you are what you are. Confess that you are slaves to it. You cannot hide it from God: do not hide it from yourselves. Notice the contrast of sin reigning: it is not righteousness reigning, but grace reigning. There is one who is above the sin, and that is God. He is above it in love: that is what grace is—having to do with sin, but being above it—that which can love, though perfectly holy, because above the sin.

That was first manifested in the Son coming into the world. Sin was complete when He came, and that was the reason He came. Because man had no power to get out of it, Christ came to take him out. Where do I learn that "God is love?" I know it in the consciousness of my sins being put away. You say, "I cannot get out of them." Christ came to take you out. You say, "I am defiled by sin." "That is the reason I came," says the Lord. No man can be a truthful man but the believer in grace. Then is God content to have him in his sins? No. "Grace reigns through righteousness." "He was made sin for us." God has dealt with the sin that is pressing on my conscience, and the sin is perfectly put away through the cross. If I look at my sins, I look at the cross; if I look at my position before God, I look at Him who is taken into God's presence; "through the obedience of one many are made righteous." You must be content to say, In me is no good thing; no righteousness in us.

LUKE IV., V.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I hardly know whether the thoughts I send you suit your little journal, but trust that all that unfolds the way the blessed Lord presented Himself on the earth, the connexion of the Old Testament with the New, and the revealing of God in man upon the earth, will be profitable to some of your readers at least.

I forward to you therefore some remarks on the Gospel of Luke, flowing from thoughts which have arisen in my mind while lately reading it. There are two great subjects in the life of the blessed Lord which Luke brings out: the fulfilment of promise, and the revelation of God in grace in the "Son of man." These are presented to us in the history in a very interesting way. I will notice this as displayed in chapters iv. and v.

In chapter iv. the Spirit of God has shown us the Blessed One led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, victorious in trial, as the

first man had failed in it. He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, having first bound the strong man. Let me remark here, in passing, how faithfulness in trial and temptation shows the power of the Spirit as much as the energy of action. Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted, overcame Satan by the word through the Spirit, and returned in its power, working miracles and casting out devils. But the power had been exercised all through the temptation, only in standing fast. (See Eph. vi.) Therein He had overcome Satan, baffled his power, really bound the strong man, and then had only to spoil his goods. He used too the weapon we have to use, the word of God; only we must remark that we learn from Eph. vi., that to use the word, we must first have all the defensive armour, that is, the state of the soul must be right. Christ, of course, was perfect and used it perfectly. In the measure of our spirituality and uprightness we shall be able to wield this blessed weapon. But here even the sword was a defensive weapon. He met

as the fulfiller of promise, announcing the favourable and gracious time of God's mercy in His own person. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." But at the same time He tells them that He will be rejected. A prophet has not honour in his own country. But He adds that grace, as grace, passed beyond the limits of the Jews; that God was sovereign in His goodness, and of old had sent help to two Gentiles, while many remained in sorrow in rebellious Israel. This the haughty Jews would not bear, and, gracious as His words had been, they are now ready to destroy Him for preaching a grace which Israel might lose all part in, as rejecting Him, and the Gentile get blessing by. They are ready to destroy Him, but it was not the time, and He passed through the midst of them.

Now see the character in which the devils own Him; how it meets this character in which He was really come. How sad a picture! Devils perforce own Him; men reject Him with hatred. It is remarkable how these evil spirits own Him

the wiles of Satan by it. Whatever reasonings or scriptures Satan may use, if we are spiritual enough to use it, the word of God suffices to confound him.

But to turn to my more direct subject.

The Lord now stood as man, anointed of the Holy Ghost, having overcome Satan, to make good the grace and goodness of God amongst men, and specially first amongst the Jews; but the glory of His divine person was not to be hid. But first He presents Himself as the anointed man, fulfilling all that had been promised in grace. I must remark another point. The Lord looks for rejection: and this it will be seen is the case in both the characters in which He presents Himself. First, then, as the anointed man. "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 captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Thus He presents Himself

according to the truth, (as we may remember the spirit of divination did Paul,) but surely only as dreading, and, if they could have done so, avoiding His power. "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." It was the reluctant owning of a power they could not avoid. The time was not come to cast them into the pit, but to deliver man. He came out of the man at Jesus's word. But this title was a prophetic one of Jesus; and this title as summing up all the mercies of God. It is unfolded in Psalm lxxxix. The word "mercies" in the first verse of that psalm, is the same as "Holy One" in verse 19. "Holy One" in verse 18 is quite different. Mercy was to be built up for ever, the psalm declares. How? "Thou spakest in vision of (not to, I think, but about, as we see that of the prophecy, Psalm lxxii., "A Psalm about Solomon,") thy Holy One," thy gracious One, in whom help and mercy is summed up. "I have laid help upon One that is

mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant," &c. Here, no doubt, the immediate subject is David; but in the mind of God a greater, even Christ, is here. The evil spirit owns that this Holy One is there in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Help was indeed laid upon the Mighty One, who having overcome Satan wholly, could have delivered man from all the miserable fruits of his power, even death itself; but man would have none of Him. He must be redeemed or lost.

Next, in this fourth chapter, when healing many, the devils who are cast out own Him as the Christ the Son of God. This was owning His title as promised to Israel in Psalm ii.; but which also witnessed to His rejection. Thus the power of present delivering goodness, in the promised One, was there. He is owned the Holy One of God, in whom mercies came to Israel; as the Christ and Son of God spoken of in Psalm ii. But in His own country He is not received. The prejudices and passions of

man rise up against grace and this gracious One, while the devils own Him, but through dread; a strange but solemn picture! They could not but know Him. But what is knowledge when only such? Those He really came to would not receive Him.

In chapter v. He is seen in another character. He reveals, and is, Jehovah. In the miraculous draught of fishes He makes Himself known to the conscience of Peter. He sees the Lord in it, and acknowledges Himself a sinful man, unfit for His presence. This is always the effect of the revelation of God to us, and indeed of nothing else. Jesus speaks words of grace, "Fear not." From henceforth he should catch men. In what follows He heals the leper, which was Jehovah's work alone. But there was a special circumstance connected with this, full of blessed significance. The leper recognized His power, but was not sure of His goodness or willingness to help him. "Lord, [he says] if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The Lord does not merely say He is willing,

He puts forth His hand and touches him. Now, if a man touched a leper he too was unclean, and must be put out of the camp. But here was a divine person come down, Jehovah, who could cleanse. One who could say, "*I will*;" "*be*." One who could not be defiled, but had for that very reason come down to touch the defiled one, and remove the defilement. He was Jehovah, come as man, to touch, so to speak, the sinner in grace. Jesus was one whose holiness was so perfect, as God become man, that He could carry divine love to the vilest; carry it wherever a need or a sorrow was, and as love touch the defiled, not to become so, but to heal. It is a wonderful picture of what Christ, Jehovah, present to heal was in this world. Thus revealing Himself to the conscience, and doing a divine work in love, in what was a figure of cleansing from sin, mark Him out as Jehovah in the world in grace.

He withdraws Himself into the wilderness and prays; ever the dependant, as the obedient and victorious man. But other elements of divine grace are yet

to be observed here. He was sitting with doctors of the law, ready to object to grace, and ignorant of how the Son of God had in manhood visited this sinful world in the power and title of divine grace. One sick of the palsy is brought to Him by faith. He goes to the root of all sorrow, and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The question is not here how through the precious death of Christ forgiveness was consistent with divine righteousness and glorified it. What is here revealed, is Jehovah present in full unmingled grace. As the testimony and witness of this, the Lord does what is ascribed to Jehovah in Psalm ciii., along with the forgiveness of sins. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; and healeth all thy diseases."

Lastly, the Lord shows, as the friend of publicans and sinners, that He had come in sovereign grace to gather, in the power of good, not looking for it in man. But thus also He must be rejected. This new wine, for it was so, could not be put into old bottles; Judaism could not receive and be the vessel of sovereign

grace; nor could those who were used to Judaism easily receive the new wine of the gospel and Spirit of God. And so it ever is in all ages.

Ever affectionately yours,

J. N. D.

SANCTIFICATION BY THE TRUTH.

When we look into the practical details of the Epistles, and the more carefully we do so, the more constantly, nay invariably, do we find, that it is "the truth" which is used in the cultivation of christian character, and as the sanction and spring of godly behaviour.

The Lord, having finished the work that was given Him to do, committed the keeping and the sanctifying of His people to the Father; desiring that they might be kept through His name, and sanctified by His truth. (John xvii.) This desire the Holy Ghost acts on in the Epistles; for again I say, it is "the truth" which is there always used in

Lord Jesus, that this people should be sanctified by the truth, answered by the Spirit when He comes, in His day, to deal with the elect, and carry on their education, as we speak.

There is no using of *law* to form christian character. Could we, I ask, admit the thought that the Lord, having ransomed us by Himself, by His own most precious blood, and having made us children of the Father, giving us His own Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, could, after that, commit us to Moses to be kept and educated? What say our souls to such a thought? Are we prepared to admit that the Lord would do this? Nay, and it is nowhere in the Epistles found that He does. The conclusions which our own souls would draw, and the way of the Holy Ghost in the Epistles, harmonize. All is in consistent elevation of thought and purpose. And I may say, it is happy to see, though surely it is what we might expect to see, that the Spirit effectuates the Son's desire, and works according to it.

the sanctification of the elect, or in the formation of christian character.

We find all the penmen of the Spirit, as in the Epistles of the New Testament, doing this. We find hope, mercies, promises, the law of liberty, the grace that bringeth salvation, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and things of like kind with these, used in this sanctification of the elect, all serving to this end, all made to be the instruments for carrying on the husbandry and culture of the saints. And these are parts of "the truth." The fruit of them in the soul and life is righteousness and holiness of truth. (Eph. iv. 24.) And so much is this so in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, that there "the coming of the Lord," another part of "the truth," is first employed in forming and cherishing several different features of saintly character, and then for the general cultivation of living, practical Christianity in spirit, soul, and body. (See 1 Thess.)

In this way, and it is full of beauty and interest, we see the desire of the

I may say that we get a fine and vivid illustration of this in 2 Cor. iii. 5.

In the first of these chapters the apostle contemplates the soul, as I may speak, in the presence of *the law*, and then in the presence of *the truth*. In the presence of the law the man has his face veiled. He does not affect to be learning one single lesson there. He is abashed rather and confounded. His face is in his hands. The law was commissioned to lay the sentence of death in man as a responsible moral agent, to expose and convict him; and it has answered its end in us, when it leaves us in the sense of utter hopelessness. This was its operation when, at the very beginning, it was announced in the hearing of the camp of Israel, and this was its operation in an individual soul in these last days of the New Testament, as we see drawn out before us in Rom. vii. (See Ex. xx. 18—20; Deut. v. 22—29.)

Indeed this is so. With a veiled face we are to listen to the law. We are not to go to it to learn lessons.

The law is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and disobedient. We are to be in the presence of it, that we may be convicted by it, and find out that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. A veiled face, again I say, becomes us there. We are not to affect that we learn lessons there, but that we simply take the sentence of death into ourselves; and as we stand before it, cry out, with the camp at Mount Sinai, "Let not God speak with us;" or with Paul, "O wretched man that I am." This is its business with me, and this is my answer to it. But if I set myself before it to learn my lesson, and then go away to do my duty accordingly, I am misusing it, and not understanding the veiled face of Moses.

But, on the other hand, in this very same chapter, 2 Cor. iii., we see the apostle with an open, unveiled face before the glory of the Lord Jesus as that glory shines in the gospel, or "the truth;" and *there* it is we see him learning his lessons. He makes it his aim and business so to stand in the presence

himself fainted not under ministerial labours and sorrows, if others got blessing. Death might work in him, if only thereby life worked in them. There had been a joy set before Christ, in the hope of which He had endured the cross: there was the same, in his way and measure, in the apostle, by reason of which he counted his afflictions to be light. Jesus believed and spoke; Paul also believed and spoke. This surely was learning lessons of the truth. He apprehended also, as he goes on to tell us, the truth of a coming judgment, when all things would be manifested; and by that truth he was led to aim at acceptability with Christ. He knew the terror of the Lord; and by that he would be an earnest-hearted witness to his fellow-sinners. He knew the death of Christ for sinners; and by that he was ready no longer to live to himself, but to Him who had died for him. And surely all this was sanctification by the truth. This was an exhibition of one who was learning lessons as he stood before the glory of God in the face of

of that glory, that he may take off and bear away the image or reflection of it, and be, as he speaks, "a manifestation" of it.

It is there, then, that I find Paul learning his lessons, and not before the law. It is there I find him not with a veiled face, but with an open face; and then in the chapters which follow (2 Cor. iv. v.) he lets us know some of the lessons he had learnt there, and how he was exercising himself in them. Having received mercy, he fainted not, neither did he walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully. This is a sample of the lessons he had learnt, and of the teacher that had taught him. The mercy he had received was his teacher, and he had learnt not to faint. The light of the glory he had looked at, he goes on to tell us, had shone into his heart and was breaking forth with many a beam of moral brightness and beauty. The life of Jesus was manifest in His body and in his mortal flesh. Did the Lord live for others? The apostle through grace is able to say that he

Jesus Christ, and stood there with unveiled face. This was "a manifestation of the truth," as he speaks here.

These chapters (2 Cor. iii.—v.) are truly wonderful.

And as to the flesh, at the close of them, he tells us, that he knew no man after it. And I ask, if he knew no man after the flesh any longer, how could he know the law any longer? If he had ceased to know man after the flesh, how could he but have ceased to know the law? How could he any longer, though he may have been doing so all his life before, use the law as the former of his character? The law addressed itself to man in the flesh. It was made for man in the flesh, in the old creation. It had connexion with Israel, and told Israel of their duties as Israel in the flesh or under the old covenant, standing in moral, independent responsibility, in title, if they could make it out, of their own doings and deservings. Such a state the apostle refuses to know. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh," he says, he himself being a new

creature, part of the new creation, where "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." He was in the divine, eternal system of redemption. This is what that man was who, with open face, was beholding the glory of the Lord.

Could such an one, I ask again, take himself back to the law? Could he return to that schoolmaster, to be educated and have his character formed by him? Or could such an one send us, the saints of God, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, there? He could not, and he does not; nor do any of his fellow-apostles, the inspired penmen of the New Testament, the authorized teachers of the Church of God. No. They send us, as I have said, to "the truth," in all its vast, and fruitful, and various provisions, to "the mercies of God," to "the exceeding great and precious promises," to "hope," to "the law of liberty," to "the grace that bringeth salvation," to "the coming of the Lord," and the like. (See Rom. xii., 2 Cor. vii., 2 Peter i., Titus ii., 1 Thess., James ii.,

glory of the hope to which it points, the might of that resurrection-strength which is conducting them on to that hope, the height, length, depth, and breadth of that high, mysterious calling itself, and the surpassing, immeasurable love which is the spring of it all, and which alone can account for it. (See chap. i., iii.) And surely this is desiring their sanctification. To have these prayers for them verified, and realized, and answered in their souls, would surely be their sanctification, their participation in "divine nature;" a result which the law could never have produced; for the best it promised was *human righteousness*, "our righteousness," as Moses himself speaks. (Deut. vi. 25.)

And then in the closing, practical details of this same Epistle to the Ephesians, we find the apostle ever using something of "the truth" to cultivate the tempers and order the ways of the saints he is addressing.

And surely I may add, without asking leave and without fear of contradiction, that the very purpose of the Epistle to

1 John iv.) These are the masters from whom we are to learn our lessons. The day of the schoolmaster is past. Tutors and governors have discharged the office they had under the Father. The time appointed by Him for their dismissal has come long since. We are redeemed from under the law, from them, and from the schoolmaster. We are to be sanctified by the truth; to cultivate "the righteousness and holiness of truth;" to put on the new man; to be led of the Spirit, and this is to be not "under the law." (See Gal. v. 18.)

The Holy Ghost, through His servants the penmen of the New Testament, thus answers the desire of the Son which He uttered before the Father ere He left us. "Sanctify them by thy truth." And another illustration of this we get in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle is teaching the saints their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he prays or desires for them that the Spirit may give them the understanding of all this, the apprehension and sense of this high calling, that they may know the

the Colossians is to *keep saints at school to the truth*. The apostle found that the brethren at Colosse were leaving that school for the schools of either the philosophers or Moses; for either the rudiments of the world, or the ordinances of the law; and to keep them still under the culture of the truth, that they might "increase with the increase of God," is his purpose.

What words! Could the law supply the increase of God? What can warrant such language? What can account for it, but the nourishment which the truth provides, and which the Spirit dispenses to the soul?

And now I just ask, if the Lord have ransomed us by His blood, and given us His own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, and have committed us to the keeping of the Father, and to the sanctifying of the truth; and if the Holy Ghost have accordingly, by the apostles, led us to the truth to learn our lessons, is it to be said, that God has purposed that we are to be in His presence for ever, in righteousness of law? Are we, after all this,

to shine in courts of heavenly glory, as those who are beautiful in the beauty which Moses would have put upon us? Are we to say, He is not now educating us by the law, but He will put us into the righteousness of the law, therein to appear before Him for ever? I cannot receive such a thought—Scripture never inspires it. It would be altogether inconsistent. The desire of the Lord, uttered before the Father, in John xvii., and the whole education of the soul under the Holy Ghost in the Epistles, could never find its proper natural result in such a thing as that. It is in the righteousness of *God*, not in the righteousness of *law*, we shine. We are in the righteousness of God by faith. It is that righteousness which is imputed to us. It is that righteousness we are, "the righteousness of God by faith." This is the crowning, the perfecting of the whole mystery. All is consistent. We are ransomed by the blood of the Son—we are committed to the keeping of the Father—we are sanctified by the Spirit through the truth—we shine now

righteousness which that sacrifice has maintained, vindicated, and displayed.

A THOUGHT ON JESUS.

It has just struck me that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did that; nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of introducing Himself to their favour. I am sure that He did not seek to please; and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself. This was very blessed: and the same thing in any one is always a symptom of moral power.

If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to do so. That is true, I doubt not; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes our fellow-creature supreme; and we deal with him as though "his favour was life" to us—which God's is, but *His only*. But to bind one in full confidence to us—to draw the heart—to have ourselves in the esteem and affections of

and for ever in the righteousness of God.

In His life on earth the Lord Jesus fulfilled *human* righteousness. He magnified the law. He presented to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit. Made not only of a woman, but under the law, He presented man, in His own person, to God, as man ought to be under it. For He came not to destroy it, but to fulfil it. But in and by His death He maintained *divine* righteousness. He glorified God, satisfied all the demands of the throne where righteousness is seated, and vindicated and displayed full divine moral perfection. He presented God to the whole creation in divine moral glory, just and a Justifier, just and having salvation, a just God and a Saviour, which is His proper, His desired glory, the glory He will not give to another, and surely will not allow to be taken from Himself. (Isaiah xlv.)

If I, a sinner, have faith in this blood, or death, or sacrifice of Jesus, God accepts me, myself, my person, in His presence, as this very righteousness, the

others, without ever in one single instance having that as our object—this is morally great: for nothing can account for this but that constant course of love which, by necessity of its own nature, tells others that their real interests and prosperity (blessing) are, in deed and in truth, the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And this was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to please them; but everything that He did told them that He sought to bless them. And again I say, I believe He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself into their favour. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on many occasions which might have been resented. And both of them, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of moral perfection which took their rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him, to put Him to an effort to please, malice had no part in Him, to make Him quick to resent. He would not be flattered into

graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

Mark iv. 26 to v. 20.

There is nothing more striking in the word of God, as showing its divine authorship, than that, when read with diligence and care, there should be constantly rising up to view some fresh proof, some new and striking feature, of its infinitely-diversified and infinitely-perfect character.

When read with careless indifference, the mind contracts a habit of supposing that all has been learnt from it which it contains, because familiarity with its general contents serves to take off the edge of its interest. It is far otherwise when the habit of daily study keeps the word before the soul.

This thought has been suggested by a recent meditation on the two parables, and two historic scenes in our Lord's life, which are presented in this passage,

otherwise afterward, without attention to which it is impossible that the gospel should be understood.

It was plainly an expectation familiar to the Jews, however much their thoughts were astray as to the nature of "the kingdom" and of the characteristics of its subjects. The phrase itself appears to have taken rise from a prediction in Daniel, if not from an earlier oracle in Deuteronomy, (chap. xi. 21,) in which Israel's blessings are foretold as "the days of heaven upon earth." But Daniel is plain. In chap. ii. 44 it is said, "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom," &c. This, coupled with chap. vii. 13, 14, presents the fact of the kingdom, and the person of him who is said to wield its power. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the *Son of man* came with the clouds of heaven, and came unto the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom," &c.

The corresponding phrase to that of

and which I will now endeavour briefly to set before my readers.

It may tend to an understanding of the subject, and to give definiteness to our thoughts, if a remark or two be made on the phrase, "the kingdom of God," with which both parables are introduced. In Matthew's Gospel, and peculiar to it, as the Gospel of dispensation, the corresponding phrase is "the kingdom of heaven," or the reign, or rule, of heaven. From the uniform application of the phrase, it is manifest that a distinct dispensational period or state of things is characterized by it. In Matt. iii. 2 we find John the Baptist commencing his preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, by crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When John was cast into prison, it is said, (iv. 17,) "From that time *Jesus* began to preach, and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" i.e., He announced a new period in God's dealing with Israel, with its own peculiar characteristics, as about to commence. Much is said about it in parables and

Matthew in the other Gospels is "the kingdom of God." To a considerable extent this is interchangeable with that in Matthew, and is often so employed. It is, however, distinctive, and is less knit up with Jewish expectations; and I think it is always used to indicate the moral power connected with the reign, rather than simply the reign itself. Moreover, it runs on in its application to a sphere which lies beyond the apparently-proper range of the kingdom of heaven. We read in 1 Cor. xv. 50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the *kingdom of God*: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

As used by the Lord Jesus in these parables, it marks a definite sphere in this world subject to the operation of God; which commenced, as to time, with His own ministry, and will be terminated by His coming again, in connexion with its final results. There needs no formal proof as to who the sower is, and as little as to who it is that will be present again in the "time of harvest."

The purport of the parable is to show that to the eye of man, after Christ left the scene, as the sower, all goes on apparently in its natural course; and in truth that there would be no personal interference on the part of him who sowed the seed until the time of harvest. The parable represents simply a process in husbandry. A man casts seed into the ground. He sows his field and leaves it. "He sleeps and rises night and day;" i.e., the ordinary circumstances of life go on, and he does not trouble himself about his field. He has sown it, and however indifferent he may appear, the field was sown that in the time of harvest it might be reaped. Meanwhile the processes of nature go on. The seed springs and grows, but he knows not how. It is the result neither of his power nor care. "The earth brings forth fruit of herself." In due time there is the blade and the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. All this is a result apart from man's power, or man's care, or man's cognizance. When the fruit is brought forth

sowing for the harvest, has fallen into the ground and died:] and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." But the lesson of the parable is, the absence from the field, and the apparent indifference toward it of the sower, until harvest brings him again into personal concern and interference with it.

The parable of the "grain of mustard seed" presents another aspect of "the kingdom of God," and which indicates that its recognition, in this character, is by the eye of man, like the former.

The historic scenes which follow are intimately connected with the parables, and give the other side of the truth with regard to them. But their elucidation must be deferred to the sequel of the paper.

(To be continued.)

and the harvest is the result of his sowing, immediately he puts in his sickle and reaps, "because the harvest is come." The parable is but a tale of everyday farming life, and is seen in accomplishment in the revolution of every season. The divine instruction is, "so is the kingdom of God." The seed was sown by the Son of man. Since then the world has gone on in its ordinary, unheeding course; but ever since the harvest has been advancing.

Man's care, it is true, has had little to do with the matter; but the power that gives the increase has been silently and effectually at work. To the eye of man there is no interference. All seems to have been left to the course of the world; but the process has been going on. The blade has sprung up, the ear has been formed, and the full corn in the ear is at hand, when "the harvest" will bring Him who sowed the field, to be again present in connexion with it to gather the wheat into his garner. "He was once offered to bear the sins of many: [the corn of wheat, the true

LUKE VII.

(Continued from page 42.)

I do not for the present make any remark on chapter vi. Only we may note that the Lord is gathering distinctly around Himself, apart from the nation, and that He addresses His disciples as thus separated—as those already called to possess the kingdom. But in chapter vii. we have the Lord brought out in a far greater character, and more fully revealed, than as the fulfiller of promise. He is entirely a divine person, and consequently reaches out beyond Judaism, and even human life, in this world. Still the Jews are recognized by the Gentile whom the Lord blesses: and this was right. The Lord did the same. It was the lowliness and submission to God's ways which the knowledge of God, true faith, always produces. Remark here, too; a principle which will be found to shine forth through all the Gospels, namely, that whenever Christ was manifested as God, it was impossible that He could be confined to His relationship to the Jews. God present in

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His own nature, as love, cannot be confined to the special relationship to a nation to whom He has made promises; although he may, and surely will, faithfully meet them according to promise. This is largely and specially brought out in John; where, indeed, however, the principle reaches further, and thereby assumes another character. The Jews are there looked at, already, in the first chapter, as reprobate, and so treated; though dealt with, still, all through the Gospel. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." The world, too, is viewed as blind. "The world knew him not." It was that phenomenon known only in morals, the light shining in darkness. The effect of this is to bring out the Lord in two characters in that Gospel—first, as God, as light in the world, and as such when forcing the conscience to attend to Him, bringing out the terrible truth that men love darkness rather than light—that they will not have God such as He is. This especially, and formally, in the eighth, when His word is rejected, as

rejected in the eighth, in the ninth He gives sight, and this brings in effectual grace; and, rejected though He be, He will have His sheep. Here we have not simply God, who is Light in darkness, revealed, but the Father sending the Son in grace. This distinction is always kept up in John. When grace is spoken of it is the Father and the Son; the Father sending the Son. While as mere light it is God. But this expression of Father and Son refers to grace revealed and effectual, not to the love of God in His nature and character. Where this is spoken of it is still God. "God so loved the world." I may follow this gospel and its character more in detail, if it suit you and the Lord so will, another time: but this leads me back to the general truth that Christ as revealing God shines necessarily out beyond Israel. Thus, in a very striking and beautiful example, the Syrophenician woman. There the Lord seems to hold back and confine Himself to Israel. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "It is not meet to

His work is in the ninth. But this makes a turning-point in the Gospel after the first three chapters, which are preface. The first, Christ in nature—Christ incarnate—Christ in work of blessing on earth—Christ (as John Baptist also) calling and gathering on the earth; which reaches on, by His servants, to His millennial presence on earth: in all which, note, no heavenly character or office of Christ is given, as is ever the case in John's writings. The second gives the millennial kingdom. The third what is needed for the kingdom, and heavenly things; where John also brings out His full person and glory in grace. Then, being driven out of Judea, the new order of things is intimated, from God's nature and the Father's love, in the fourth chapter. Thereon, to the end of the seventh, Christ is presented the divine, lifegiving Son of God; in incarnation, and as the dying Son of man; the Giver of the Spirit, as the feast of tabernacles, the figure of earthly rest, could not yet be kept by Him. Then, His word being

take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." The poor woman says, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Could He say, God is not so good as you suppose? He has no crumbs for the wretched, who even look to Him through grace? Impossible. It would have been denying, not revealing, God; and her faith is at once met. Remark, too, again here, how lowly faith is and how it submits to God's sovereign will! She owns herself a dog, and the privilege of being near God, as Israel was, as a nation. But her faith pierces through the difficulty, with a want, to Him who revealed God in love; and divine goodness, which had taught her to trust in it, met, could not but meet, that confiding trust.

Now in the seventh chapter of Luke the Lord fully takes the divine place. He is owned by the Gentile as One who can dispose of all, as he himself ordered his soldiers about; and the Lord owns his faith. "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." In the next recorded event He goes further in the

display of divine power and goodness. "When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her." That was His first thought; and to the bereaved widow He spoke first, and this was God too, though as man near to her sorrow. But divine power was there too; and a word from Him woke up to conscious life the young man they were about to bury. But power, the fullest, divine power, did not obliterate goodness, nor cannot. God *uses* power, but He *is* love. He delivered him to his mother.

This reached the ears of John. The very dead were raised, and he remained in prison. He sends to know, Is the promised One come? He trusts the word of Him of whom he had heard such things, but he wants to know if He be the One that should come. John is to believe in Christ, not Christ receive testimony from men. But "He that should come" is the promised One. And John is to receive Him, as others, by the testimony which He gave of Himself, as setting right all the sorrows that sin and Satan had brought into the

world, and in grace caring for the poor. But this was more than promise, though it witnessed to the promised One. It proved the presence of One who was love and had all power. But because He manifested God He was the rejected One, and blessed was he who should not be offended in Him. If He came in promise, as man expected Him, it would not have been in the grace of divine power come down in love to every want. But because He did, though His arm was not shortened, "He was despised and rejected of men." However, when John's messengers were gone, the Lord bears testimony to the captive one. He was Jehovah's messenger, sent before His face to prepare His way. But it was really Jehovah who was come. But he who mourned to them, and he who piped to them, were alike rejected by that generation. One class alone received the Lord—the humbled ones who had owned their sinfulness. These intelligently justified God's ways in both John and Christ. But it went far beyond a Messiah: they had morally met

God. They owned they needed repentance; they had deserved the axe. They owned the suitableness of grace. It was not merely Messiah they received. Perhaps, in some of the happiest cases, they are not much occupied with this, though they may have recognized Him as such. They wanted compassionate grace and they had found it. They recognized the justice of God in condemning them and calling them to repentance. They acknowledged His sovereign goodness in having to do with and in receiving worthless sinners. They justified God. One who was self-righteous thought John and divine grace alike out of place. Repentance was all well for others; they were the heirs of the kingdom. Now this is characteristic of Luke. The promised One was there no doubt. But it was in grace to men, grace bringing home to them their moral state. They were meeting God. His way, such as He was in truth, John prepared; Him, in His own person and ways, Christ fully revealed; God manifest in flesh meeting sorrow, meeting

Satan's power, meeting death, meeting sin, in grace. They who felt all these found God in perfect grace there; the friend, indeed, not of the lame, and blind, and deaf merely; but, more wondrous still, of publicans and sinners. They—O how willingly! justified God in His ways; while they did so truly and righteously, in what led them to it, in the mourning testimony of John, who coming in the way of righteousness, went into the desert alone, (for there was none righteous; no, not one,) and calling for good fruit, found only that which sinners could, through grace, come with—the confession that they had borne bad fruit. But this gave understanding. The conscience, recognizing the state he who has it is in, finds in the manifestation of God Himself in grace all it wants, and what infinitely attracts the heart. The knowledge of God is found through conscience, not through the understanding. The convicted sinner is wisdom's child: he knows *himself*—the hardest of all knowledge to acquire. And God in

grace meets his state exactly. But such a manifestation of God does not meet the Pharisee. Right and wrong he knows, and can judge of God's dealing in grace; but not the smallest ray of it enters his soul. Yet God can only be so revealed to man who is a sinner, if it be not in eternal judgment; and even so *He* is not known, for *He* is love; that is, he does not know God at all. Intellect never knows grace; self-righteousness does not want it. We learn to know God through conscience, when grace has awakened to feel its need. Here the child of wisdom is found. The history of the poor woman and the Pharisee is the example of this. The poor sinner was the child of wisdom. She judged her sins with God: she had found Him in grace for her sins. She did not know forgiveness, but she had tasted love. It had won her confidence, the true divinely-given confidence of an humbled heart. This was Christ's work in the world. At the beginning Satan had gained man to evil and lust by first producing distrust of God. Why had God kept back

this one tree? Man would be like Him if he had. Confidence in God was gone; then lust came in. The blessed Redeemer, while coming indeed to put away sin, yet in His life as the manifestation of God, had come winning back the confidence of man's heart by perfect love—grace in the midst of sin; humbled to the lowest to bring it wherever there was a want: to win man by his wants, and sorrows, and even his sins, where by grace the true sense of them was, back to God; that he might trust in God, because He was God, in love, when he could trust in none else, and thus know Him as God in the fullest revelation of Him—a child of wisdom, true in heart, and knowing God. Such was this poor sinner; justly feeling her sins, but feeling that being such, and feeling herself such, there was One she could trust. Had He been less than God, she could not—had no right to do so—no profit in doing it. It would not meet her case. What God was had reached her heart. She could not have explained it. But it had met her case.

How lovely is this, and yet how humbling to man! In the Pharisee we have clear intellect—the perception of right and wrong, as far as natural conscience goes. All that was in Christ, all that was in God manifested in grace, he had had no perception of, saw no beauty in it. His eye was blind as to God. 'He was no prophet, to say nothing of the promised One.' This the Lord showed He was, by exposing his heart, and noting to him what state he was in; then leaves him, and the cavillers he was surrounded by.

His heart was with the sinner, the humbled one. Her sins, He had declared to all, were forgiven; but to her He turns, to unfold all God's grace, to give rest to a weary heart—"Thy sins are forgiven thee." No concealing, no marring integrity by softening matters with her; though owning all that grace had wrought, (she loved much) standing by her, with the heartless. When He notices her sins, she would not have had it otherwise. We never would when grace really works. "Thy sins"—but notices it as God, which He could, and

could righteously, through His coming work—"Thy sins are forgiven thee." Man's cavils do not interrupt His work of grace: "Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee." What words from a divine Redeemer! Sins forgiven, faith in divine love owned, and salvation declared to be possessed by it: peace—perfect, divinely-given peace, for her! She had not trusted the heart of God in vain. He had revealed Himself that she might trust it. Grace was greater than sin, though it allowed none of it. It wrought conviction, confession, confidence; but it gave forgiveness, salvation, peace: for God, who had restored the soul, and more, by the revelation of Himself, was there. It seems to me, besides this profoundly interesting individual case, instructive to see how, while manifested clearly as the promised One, the Saviour in this Gospel passes on, by the way in which He is manifested, into His divine manifestation in grace. It is not followed here as in Matthew, which speaks of dealings with Israel, with woes to Chorazin and Bethsaida,

though even there it issues in grace; but in the manifestation of God in grace, and the picture of a poor sinner become the child of wisdom, as taught her soul's need, and the grace of God to meet it. Observe here, too, how love is known, and brokenness of heart trusts it before the answer of peace is given by Him who could do so.

Our chapter gives us thus the God of the Gentiles; the God who delivers from death, raises from it; the God who meets the sinner in grace, when all sin is known, and sends him away in peace from Himself. It is well to have to do with such a God!

A SERIES.

No. 5.

THE RULE OF LIFE AND THE USE OF THE LAW.*

The condition of man is, as we have seen, one of enmity against God, not retaining God in his knowledge, and his

* There are several inaccuracies of expression in the Paper on the "Old and New Nature," (No. 4 of this series,) which the writer of it desires

mation of all that is pleasant to it, eagerly ranging over it as the eye travels over beautiful scenery, proving that it has not obtained what it wants to know, and its very curiosity betraying its ignorance, as well as the fear of the consequences of its ignorance. In fact, nothing but a divine revelation could relieve this lurking insatiable necessity. What was Adam to do after he fell, if he had no divine revelation? Where was he until it came? Dressed with fig leaves; and his conscience so alarmed by the voice of God and the consciousness that he was naked, that his acquired information only leads him to hide himself among the trees of the garden. What could have been his rule of life without revelation? That which he *had*, he had broken and despised; and now he was undergoing the penalty of his transgression, and notwithstanding all his human information, he was without clue or guidance how to extricate himself or order himself under a new rule. Revelation alone supplied this to him. By it he learned what his course on earth

foolish heart darkened, therefore he must of necessity be dependent on revelation for revival or certainty of any knowledge of that God who was, to all intents and purposes, lost to him.

If by a rule of life be meant man's course in relation to God, (and what else can it mean?) it is plain that revelation, according to its terms and scope, is in all ages and dispensations the only rule of life proper to man or appointed by God, since his fall and alienation from all that was good and true. If man did not retain God in his knowledge, where could he obtain any just or adequate conceptions, in order to return to Him, but from revelation? Study the mind of man in its own activities, and see how it searches on all sides to extend its infor-

may be corrected in accordance with the following note.—ED.

I beg to omit the word "unfallen" in page 12, line 1, as unnecessary and tending to give a wrong idea. I also desire to substitute "nature" for "humanity" in page 27, line 16, as a more fit expression for what is intended to be conveyed, viz., the "divine nature," of which we are made partakers, and which is the nature of Christ.

should be. By it he learned what was to be his deliverance, and how it should be effected; and by God was he clothed and prepared to enter on his new and changed circumstances. It is easy to say or think that man's own sense would have discovered what alone seems sensible; for wisdom, *when once declared*, is always palpable; and people wonder they had not seen what appears so self-evident. But in Adam we have an instance of the action of human intelligence, having fallen from *one* rule of life, before it received *another* through revelation; and how that revelation supplied it with distinct lines of knowledge and hope, of which it knew nothing before. Moreover, that in adhering to the light and rule which these lines presented to him, he was observing the *only* rule of life either offered or known to him. It was vain for him to attempt to return to that which in unbelief he had abrogated, and to which, according to the terms of the penalty of disobedience, all return was impossible. He presents to us the spectacle of a

great man degraded without any ability to repair his ruined fortunes, though having sense and intelligence to know that his circumstances were disastrous and humiliating. In this helpless condition, a revelation from God is vouchsafed to him, and its light and counsel is to afford him a true and distinct rule of life; that is to say, if he be subject to and influenced by it, he would tread the path by which he should be extricated from all the misery and darkness in which he found himself; but if he did not, he must only return to the confusion of an enlarged intelligence, which rendered him all the more bitterly sensitive to a position which could neither counsel nor extricate him from judgment, nor restore him to happy relations with his Creator. God's purpose, and his mind towards man, and therefore man's relation to Him was the true rule of life. To depart from that one jot or tittle was to lose it. Adam accepted it, for he believed it, and called his wife's name Eve, as the mother of all living, though judicially, and apart from revelation, she

reveals must be truth; and subsequent revelations do not contradict previous ones, but confirm them, though the adaptability of each is according to the special need in which it found man for whom it was given. And the fuller it is, the more distinct is the claim it asserts over the believer to walk according to it. When man reverts to a prior revelation, however good in itself, he has lost the rule of life suitable and necessary for him in the day and hour in which he needs it; simply, because God has since given him a fuller one, and the fuller light is suited to the greater need; and is not only the better revelation, but the only one competent to overcome increasing evil, or with which faith would simply engage the soul. If I am not in the light of the revelation given to me of God, I cannot be in the rule of life incumbent on me according to the terms of the revelation. If Noah had confined his rule of life to that of Abel, he would have been lost in the flood. If Abraham had reverted to that of Noah, he never would have

was the mother of all the dying. In Cain, Adam's firstborn, we see how the rule of life is abandoned the moment the light and doctrine of the revelation is overlooked or disregarded. Cain slipped away from it sadly by recognizing no judgment on man or on the earth; and the consequence was that, however good his intentions, he was not accepted; and his murder of Abel only established the fatality of having left that rule of life, by the observance of which Abel finds full acceptance with God, who counted him "righteous;" beyond which no rule of life could lead or place him.

Let it be admitted that God's revelation of His mind was always the truth which indicated man's course and relation before him; and we have it without controversy, that the knowledge of that revelation, and subjection to its claims, was the true rule of life in every age, and specially given for and suited to that particular age or dispensation. Not that any previous revelation was set aside or disregarded, for all that God

left Ur of the Chaldees. And if a Christian revert to the law, Christ is for him "dead in vain."

Let us trace a little more fully how the revelation unfolded the rule of life. Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, all acted in accordance with the revelation given to each, and became heirs of the righteousness which is by faith. More they could not have desired. Their rule of life was satisfactory for them, and their righteousness was of *faith* and not of *law*. But in process of time the law was given, and this was a different revelation to any which God had previously made to man. It did not unfold His grace and purpose towards man as previous revelations had, (I now speak simply of the law itself,) but it declared God's claim on man, on His chosen people, who professed themselves able and willing to respond to it.

Now the law, though verily a revelation from God, and given for a special purpose, which we shall notice presently, did not of itself comprise the rule of life even for those to whom it was given.

It could not, for it was only a revelation of God's claim on man, and not of His heart towards man; and however ignorantly and recklessly man might accept that claim, God's grace was too great to leave him solely under it for a rule of life. Nor would it have been possible, for there were sins to be remitted which were not a direct infraction of law. The gracious God then at the same time ordained a course of sacrifices through a priesthood, which, while the law spoke of His claim, proclaimed, though darkly, the grace of His heart in providing a ransom for sins outside law. The sacrifices were as much a rule of life for Israel as the law was; and were necessary even when the law made no judicial claim. The *one* was God's demand on man; the *other*, in type, His grace to man; proclaiming that "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

For what purpose then was the law given? Was it to reveal God? Was it a transcript of what God is in Himself or in His relation to man? Not at all: it was God's righteous claim on man;

and given to convict of sin; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So that it could be no rule of life with reference to what God is. And this, i.e., what God is, had been the rule of life for the saints of God in all previous revelations: the claim on them was to respond by faith to the declaration which God had made of HIMSELF, and by yielding this response, they became heirs of righteousness. But no faith could respond to *law*. When that was given, a new claim was preferred against man; viz., as to what God required of him; a claim which he must either satisfy or sink into the place of utter helplessness and condemnation. It was an exaction from him, straining his strength to the utmost, and never in any degree offering him any succour; so that the law (instead of revealing God and affecting man in the light and knowledge of that revelation as heretofore) could do nought but reveal *man* in all his rebellion and corruption, that "by the commandment sin should become exceeding sinful." If I educate my son and furnish him with

stores of intelligence, and then point out the path and the rule I wish him to adhere to, he ought to be able to accomplish my wishes, because the very difficulties of the path would only disclose to him the value of the information with which I had stored him. But if I took an uneducated slave and required him to master languages and execute works of which he had neither knowledge nor ability for, though I might be quite justified in doing so, it is plain he must sink under my imposition. Now this is what the law did. It addressed man *as he was*; furnished him with no light nor increased moral power, but simply exacted from him, and thereby tested his ability. Demands on me that are greater than my resources necessarily test my power and inconceivably press on me; but they are not a rule of life for me practically, unless I can satisfy them. And even then only in part, for I should only be what God demands of me, and not what His own nature requires, if I would walk with Him. Hence, Enoch and Noah, though they knew not, and there-

fore did not, keep the law,* walked with God in all intimacy, which Saul of Tarsus, who was "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," never could.

What then is the real rule of life for any quickened soul? The same I reply *in principle* as it was for saints in all dispensations; for Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham. Even that which leads it in company and fellowship with the mind of God, *according as that mind is revealed*. To us, unlike the saints of old, it is *wholly* revealed, and that in the Lord Jesus Christ, who declared the Father, expounding fully what God was, and what a true man (for such He was Himself) should be towards Him. Therefore, to "put on Christ," and nothing less is for me the full and true rule of life; and for this end I have His life, which places me in communion with the Father and the Son. He is the sum of all promises, the substance of all shadows, the end of all law, the ex-

* That is, in its formal requirements and as law.—ED.

pression and impersonation of all that suited God, the Man who pleased God. The law exacted an observance of a *part* of the will of God, but Christ, giving full expression to that will, went far beyond the law, inasmuch as the whole of anything must include all its parts, and left us an example to follow His steps, having, at the same time, placed us by His death as much beyond judgment as He is; for "as he is, so are we in this world." So to make the law our rule of life is wholly derogatory to our high standing. It is all the difference between being merely what God claimed of man, and being suited to Him in the closest relationship. The law is for the slave: the spirit, life, intelligence, manners, and ways of the Son are for the sons; for though "the righteous claim of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit," it is infinitely exceeded by us, as in fellowship with the Father and the Son. And to make anything short of the Son, my rule of life, is to ignore my union with Him, and the full revelation which

God has now given of Himself in Him, as well as the life and spirit which He has given to every believer to walk in conformity to His mind and ways.

I have said that subsequent and fuller revelations do not invalidate prior ones; and it is plain that, by making the believer's rule of life of so much higher an order and aim, we do not make void the law. On the contrary, it holds a place, though a distant one, as to what God demands of man as man, though not as in the near place of sonship. Nor should I hesitate to make use of the law if I wanted to convict a man of anything contrary to sound doctrine. But if I wanted to urge one to his high estate, I should point out the way and manner of Christ to him. To convict a wilful one of excess, and to exhort a willing one to progress, are two very different things. If a man is so wilful, that to say to him, "You are not like Christ," would, though true, be inapplicable, it only shows how far below the light of God's revelation he has fallen. The law, by which of old "sin

became exceeding sinful," I might use to show how God's lowest claim on man had been transgressed by him, and thus silence him. He must, in the light of it, either repent or be condemned; for it would give him no succour. It is negative; and a man must be persisting in the flesh, when I should use it against him, merely to convict and condemn. But when I want to stimulate a true disciple, be he never so failing, I point out to him the spirit in which Christ walked; and the spirit of Christ in him responds to the exhortation. I want to invigorate such an one, not to condemn him; and I therefore seek to engage his soul with, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and to whose image he is to be conformed.

To "put on Christ," I have already said, is now the rule of life, because we have His life, and He is the new man; and it is to Him as the new, risen, and heavenly man that we are being conformed. The soul of the believer has no neutral ground. It is to "put off the old and put on the new man, which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And what could it have more? There are two states in which this rule of life acts. The apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Now this passage shows that the practical life and position of a Christian is connected with the two states passed through by our Lord—the one in resurrection, and the other in death and suffering here. The rule of life must embrace the two; and if I fail in fellowship with either, I must be defective in my rule of life. *First*, I must know Him in the power of His resurrection, otherwise I am in death or its consequences. But in knowing Him *thus*, a new object of interest, and a wondrous power even—a power out of death—is known to me. It is knowing Christ, *where He is*, and the power which placed Him there. The man who has this rule of life must be pre-eminently distinguished from the natural man, who does not know God, and who is in

bondage and weakness because of death. But this is only one state which the rule of life embraces. The other is knowing Christ as He was down here—not as a Jew, or walking in Jewish circumstances; though, of course, He was such, and did so walk: but as the suffering man, and thus knowing the fellowship of His sufferings, “conformity to his death.” The rule of life for me embraces all with regard to which He could say that He has left us an example to follow His steps. His path was one of suffering unto death; and though, of course, He entered into both in a way and degree that we never could, still, in following His steps, we take the place of suffering and death here, and that because we know Him in the power of His resurrection as above it all. Because in spirit we are with Him in heaven, where our citizenship is. Now if the rule of life embraces these two lines for me, I am, like the apostle, “found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by

faith.” It is a righteousness quite apart from, and above, law; as we read, “Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested”—a righteousness that, so far from being measured by any commandment or sum of commandments given by God to man, has no lower measure than Christ Himself. His life in me, His resurrection-life, reaches up to where He is, knowing the power that placed Him there; and, at the same time, puts me into the place of suffering here which He occupied. And so perfect is the rule of life given me, that it will take no lower ground than to be “found in him,” in “the righteousness of God.”

In conclusion, I repeat, that man’s correspondence with the revelation of God in every age was the rule of life. So is it now; and my correspondence must be with the full revelation of God in His Son, who is at once the model for me, and the One from whom a new life flows to me, which enables me to walk in likeness to Himself, and in such acknowledged acceptance before God, that as He is, so am I in this world: beyond judgment, and in the righteousness of God through faith. Revelation helps man to act with reference to God, for it reveals *God*. Law exacts from ruined man in order to reveal *himself*, expose his poverty, and the pride in which he denied

his poverty. Useful, I admit, for the *same end* even now, but not as a standard or model. Such alone now is the life-giving Lord, “God manifest in the flesh,” to whose image we are to be conformed. To His own likeness in word and deed He seeks to lead us, until we all come “in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of Him, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The better I know my Lord, and walk in communion with His mind, and in the power of His Spirit, the better do I know the high and blessed sphere which I occupy before God, and what is that great and holy rule of life proper to me. So much so, that I do not judge any of my acts by the law, but by Him (and I hereby “establish the law” and immeasurably exceed it) who as man was the Father’s delight, not only obeying Him, but in every possible way well-pleasing to Him, not only paying Him what He required, (for that is law, and that He did also,) but saying, “I delight to do thy will, O my God.”

In Him, and through Him, it is that we have a rule of life and therefore are inconceivably above all law. Little, alas! do we walk in it. May we do so more and more, and thus know better the blessing and power accorded to us therein.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

The question may sometimes have occurred, when reading the Minor Prophets, why are they arranged in the order we have them? Is it accidental, or is it designed? They are not chronologically arranged, excepting the last three, who prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Were they placed in chronological order, we should have them as follows—Jonah, Joel, Amos, Micah, Hosea, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Why, then, are they arranged differently? Can the subjects of the different prophecies furnish a clue to their position in the sacred volume?

Hosea is the first of the twelve as we have them, according to the arrangement in the Hebrew Bible. Why should his prophecy stand first? In the following pages an answer is attempted to be given.

In this book we have the grounds of God’s moral dealings with Israel. They

were His people. He would cast them off because of their sins. "Ammi" should be "Lo Ammi," and "Ruhamah" become "Lo Ruhamah." But was that a final sentence? No. "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God." (Hosea ii. 23.) Such is the statement of the Spirit of God. It is further added, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." (Chap. iii. 4, 5.) How can this be brought about? How will it be accomplished? These two questions are answered in these prophets. Hosea answers the first; the others, Malachi excepted, answer the second.

Having, in the three first chapters of

mourning of Judah, when judgment comes on them, the Lord's interference with the northern army, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the gathering of all nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment. Zion, we see, is to be the centre of the whole earth: "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." (iii. 16.) Joel then gives us the sphere in which the great and solemn events of that day will be principally transacted.

Amos succeeds Joel, opening with judgments on all the nations who inhabit any portion of the territory which God promised to Israel—between the Euphrates and river of Egypt. He then goes on to speak of judgments on Israel and Judah, all of which have already taken place. From iii.—viii. we get another account of the moral condition of Israel, which brought on them God's judgments. In ix. we read the final condemnation of the sinful kingdom, (8,) but the restoration of the tabernacle of David, as in the days of old—not the appearance of a new

the prophecy, stated what Israel had been, what it was to be, and what it would again be, in the last days, the Spirit of God in chap. iv.—x. gives a picture of the moral condition of the nation when the prophet wrote, showing the utter corruption of all classes—people, prophets, priests, princes. How, then, could God deal with them again? He could not on the ground of what they were; but He could deal with them in grace. Hence, from xi.—xiv. we have that brought out, ending with the confession, which the Lord prepares for them, when they shall see their sin and turn to Him. Hosea is therefore the account of God's moral dealings with them, showing why they are cast off, and on what principle He can yet bring them in. It stands, then, as the first prophet of the twelve, ere the judgments and circumstances connected with their restoration are recounted.

Joel comes next. His subject is the day of the Lord, in special connexion with what will take place in Judah and at Zion. We have the fasting and

dynasty under the name of David, but the re-establishment of his house. In close connexion with this we have the statements (1) that they shall possess the remnant of Edom, and (2) that there will then be Gentiles on whom the Lord's name is called. The two following prophets open out these two thoughts; Obadiah giving the destruction of Edom, and the possession of Mount Seir by Israel; and Jonah showing on what principle God can deal with Gentiles as exhibited in his dealings with Nineveh by the hand of his servant. It is not that they are innocent, for all have sinned. It is not that He fulfils His covenant with them, for He never made one with Gentiles. It is not on the ground of law that He deals with them. It can only then be on the ground of grace, sending a message to them, telling them what they are, and the consequences of their sin if persisted in, a message which when received is one of salvation to those who believe it.

Micah follows. Here we get the circumstance of the last days in connexion

with Israel again introduced and fresh subjects stated. If kingly power is to be restored as predicted by Amos to the house of David, the true worship of God is also to be re-established in Jerusalem. "In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (iv. 1, 2.) Thus the true worship of God will be restored in Jerusalem, and that not for Israel only but for many nations as well. But Micah gives us other prophecies of interest. He tells us who the King is, what treatment He will meet with, and we know how that has come to pass—His birthplace as man, His eternal existence as God, "whose goings forth

to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." (18—20.)

These two latter subjects, the destruction of the Assyrian and the position of the remnant, form the burden of the two next prophets, Nahum and Habakkuk, in the latter of whom we see the ungodly in the midst of evil, waiting for the fulfilment of the vision, for it will come, and rejoicing in God, even if all outward prosperity has vanished.

Zephaniah follows. His subject is the day of the Lord. (i. 14—18.) We have then the judgment of the Philistines, Moab and Ammon, and the occupation of their territories by the children of Israel. Ethiopia also and the land of Nimrod are included in the nations judged. But not merely have we judgment spoken of, but the nations of the world forsaking idols and worshipping the Lord. "He will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship him every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." (ii. 11.) Micah predicted many nations coming

have been of old from everlasting." (v. 1, 2.)

The result of the King's authority being asserted is the destruction of the great centre of worldly or political power, the Assyrian of the latter day. (v. 5, 6.) But ere that takes place the remnant will pass through much trouble from the ungodly part of the nation. (vii. 2.) What the Lord foretold (Matt. xxiv.) will then come to pass. (5, 6.) What the remnant have to do is therefore stated. "I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation." (7.) The ungodly may rejoice at their trials. They acknowledge they are of the Lord, but they look for deliverance; for "who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy

to Jerusalem, to learn the ways and laws of the God of Israel. Here we have a wider scene, the acknowledgment of the Lord by all nations as the only true God, and their legitimate object of worship. "I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." (iii. 9.)

We come next to the three prophets who prophesied to the returned remnant after their restoration, placed in chronological order. Yet there seems in them also a moral order which befits their position. Micah and Zephaniah have predicted the restoration of worship at Jerusalem, and all nations serving the Lord with one consent. Haggai follows with a prediction respecting the glory of the house in the last days, which shall exceed all former glory. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house

with glory, saith the Lord. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (ii. 6—9.)

After this we have Zechariah, in whose writings the two lines of prophecy respecting the king, and the restoration of worship converge. We have had the predictions about the restoration of kingly power, and the person in whom they will be accomplished, and the re-establishment of worship at Jerusalem. But a temple implies a priest. Zechariah tells us that the priest and king are one and the same. "He shall be a priest on his throne." (vi. 13.) Nor this only, but the object of worship, which we have had before stated as the Lord of hosts, is now found to be Him who is King. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts." (xiv. 16.) Nor this only;

coming suddenly to His temple, (iii. 1,) and there will be a day of judgment and discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, (iii. 18, and iv. 1,) for which they should be prepared; but before it comes, the prophet Elijah should be sent. He does not go beyond Zechariah in his prophecy, but rather appeals to the people to be ready when all these things should come to pass, thus forming a fitting conclusion to these prophets, as Hosea is a commencement.

Shortly to sum up the outline given above:

Hosea gives the ground of God's dealings with Israel when they had forfeited everything. Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, unfold each some new subject with reference to the day of the Lord and the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. Obadiah and Jonah may be viewed for this purpose somewhat in the light of appendices to Amos—Nahum and Habakkuk as holding a similar position to Micah; whilst Malachi is God's appeal to the people to be ready for His coming.

but now that the millennium, so long promised, has commenced, and all authority opposed to the King, the Son of man, the Lord of the earth, outwardly, at least, has ceased; and the harvest and vintage of the earth having taken place, the time is come for the feast of tabernacles, and these nations shall keep it at Jerusalem. If any refuse they shall be punished. Here the prophecy stops. Beyond this point, the establishment of the millennium, the Spirit of God in the Old Testament does not go, except, perhaps, in Isaiah lxx., lxxvi., where the new heavens and the new earth are spoken of as to be created. If we seek for further information about the events on the earth, we must go to 2 Peter and Revelation. Here, therefore, the Old Testament revelation stops. It has carried us to the commencement of the millennium, but no further.

Malachi now comes, and closes the book of the minor prophets. His prophecy seems characterized more by a warning to the remnant to consider their ways, and remember the Lord is

It has not been attempted to give even a short syllabus of what each prophet dwells on, but only those events which, peculiar to each, show a gradual unfolding of revelation—marking a reason for the position of each writer in the order we have them. How wonderful are the arrangements of the Lord! How marvellous, too, that goodness which has revealed for His people's sake what He will yet do, furnishing them with words suited to their need, (Hosea xiv.,) and describing their position, and what their conduct should be (Habakkuk) in their trying circumstances. As we read of the events of the latter days, we cannot but remember that we are reading of what will take place after we leave this world, events of peculiar interest and importance to Israel and the Gentiles. Yet are they not of interest to us? We shall not be in the great tribulation; we shall not be able to sing "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." But do not these events as now unfolded interest us? Who is to be the leader in it all? For what pur-

pose are these things to take place? He whom we know as Lord is the leader, and it is for His glory all these events will come to pass. We see in these prophecies Zion as the centre towards which all eyes shall be turned; but it is Zion when the Lord is there; and we see Him as the object of the world's adoration, the King of the whole earth, whom we now know by grace, and praise on the ground of accomplished redemption, and with whom we shall be when these events come to pass, reigning with Him over the earth. It is our Lord that is here exalted, our Saviour that is to be worshipped, our God that is the subject of praise. He who has linked us with Himself in a marvellous manner, as our life and head. What, then, concerns Him should not be an object of indifference to us. May all that is connected with His future glory and manifestation as Lord of the whole earth, awaken in our hearts, as we read of it, joy and praise.

whom it can offer its expressions of satisfaction and acknowledgment. The heart filled with the sense of what has been revealed to it of that one, gives expression to its returning homage and gratitude; this is worship. And when we are in fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal life given to us through the Son of God, we are worshipping, and our joy is full.

This order of worship is proper to our relationship to the Father and Son, and to the place of nearness into which we are brought. It was not always thus. The idea of worship, it is true, was maintained in the Mosaic economy by rites and forms, which now are often not surpassed even by believers; but such was not worshipping in spirit and in truth; and, as the Lord explains to the woman of Samaria, the time was then come when "the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Forms and distance were at an end. Souls were now to worship the Father in spirit and in

WORSHIP; OR, OUR PLACE BEFORE GOD.

We have seen that being children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we have been given the Spirit of the Son; that we are in Him a new creation, partakers of the divine nature, and that He is the rule and model of our life, because "the life we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us."

Seeing all these wondrous blessings which flow to us from the grace which has called us into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, let us now dwell a little on our place before God, and the nature and character of our worship. Worship is the expression of a creature in any degree sensible of what his Creator is, and of how much he owes to Him. It is the sense the soul has for and towards one to whom it is inconceivably indebted, and to whom it is acceptable; that is to say, one to

truth; sensibly and in full liberty to express to Him their sense of what He is to them, and in His own intrinsic value and perfection. Now this is not simply prayer, nor is it any other Christian virtue or service. It is the action of one brought nigh to God, and who knows Him as Father, but one to which the feeblest has title and can appropriate; for it is written, "I write unto you babes because ye have known the Father." I may know much truth, and many of my privileges as a Christian, and yet be in an unworshipping state. Why? Because I cannot worship God unless my soul is in the light and unembarrassed by anything which could disturb it. It is not only that I believe in the blood of Christ, but it is the consciousness of being happily before God, knowing Him as my Father; therefore I do not see how one who doubts his acceptance or his sonship, or who has an unpurged conscience, can worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it is only in proportion as the soul realizes and enjoys the place which Christ has

secured for it before God, that it can worship. "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." If I am in the light, I not only have fellowship, but I am at ease in my conscience touching everything which could disturb it, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all sin.

Now, light has a twofold action; one is sensibly to relieve me from what is opposed to it—from darkness; the other to occupy me with what it can show me. The first of these actions of light must, as is evident, be known to the soul before the second can be entered on. I must, of course, be relieved from what is opposed to light, before I can be occupied with what light can disclose to me; and, therefore, I am not in the intelligence of worship until I am in the position where that intelligence can reach me. I must be relieved of every sense of barrier between me and the Father before I can worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and here it is that even pious, earnest souls fail to

"light of the world." Now in these two chapters, which must be read together and properly learned together, the Lord shows the two actions of light; first, in relieving the soul of everything from man which was legally against it; and secondly, in engaging it with light itself—with *Himself*. For He was "the light." The woman taken in sin in chapter viii. and the blind man in chapter ix. are both illustrative of this in different ways. The former is an example of my practical condition among men, as an exposed and legally-condemned sinner; the latter typifies what I am by nature before God; i.e., without sight—utterly blind. Christ as the light of the world deals with both. He does not condemn the one, and He gives sight to the other. The guilty soul under condemnation of the broken law is relieved of the burden of felt condemnation in the presence of Him who is the light, and this is the first part of the action of the grace of Christ known to a soul in relation to God. The mere fact of having life does not ensure this;

reach the climax of blessing. They are occupied in seeking relief from the clouds which intercept their knowledge of the Father rather than in worshipping Him in the full consciousness, that being relieved of everything which could debar them from Him, they are in the Eternal Life, and in fellowship with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. I believe souls often mistake the first action of light for the second; but it is plain I am not worshipping the Father until I am in the second. The clouds, the opposers of light, must be completely dispersed ere my soul can undistractedly be occupied with the blessed object which it is the highest province of light to show me, so as to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Let us look at this subject a little in St. John's Gospel. In John iii.—vii. we have the subject of *life* treated of. Eternal life as God's gift, now brought to us by the Son, is in these chapters set forth; but in chapters viii. and ix. the subject is *light*; and this same Blessed One, by whom the life flows, is also the

it is only in the presence of Christ that the sense of condemnation is removed. The thief on the cross knew it fully. Peter knew it when in the sinking ship the Lord said unto him, "Fear not." It is the soul brought into clear, distinct acquaintance with the work of Christ for it, which His own word to it ratifies. He has borne the judgment of the guilty one, however wretched and self-condemned, in the agony of judicial death; and in the sense of this the soul can now say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and hence, there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Light exposes myself; but it is also to me *the light of life*, and shows me how condemnation has been removed from me through our Lord Jesus Christ; and if I have not the sense of freedom from condemnation, however anxious I may be to obtain it, and even though having life, I am not worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth. Wrapt up I may be, as many earnest souls are, in longing desires after this blessing and seeking

to understand my true position before God; but though all this is very devotional, it is not worship. We have the same distinction as to *life* in chapters iii., iv. In chapter iii. eternal life is acquired on believing, as the serpent-bitten Israelite when he looked at the brazen serpent, lived. But in chapter iv. there is the felt possession of life. It is in him a "well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The soul realizes the sphere and range of eternal life; and consequently the Lord here introduces the subject of *worship*; for the result of such conscious possession must be worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. In chapters viii., ix. the Lord is leading the soul consciously unto the apprehension of His grace, as we have seen. Eternal life, God's gift, had been set forth in the previous chapters. Light, which expresses the state and region in which I come to realize that gift is here treated of; and hence the Lord is the light of the world. These two chapters comprise the history of man's acceptance and

rejection of the gift; the woman and the blind man on the one hand, and the Pharisees on the other. The condemned soul experiences the first action of light in the Lord's own presence, learning thereby from Him that there is no condemnation; not as the Pharisees who, while upholding righteousness, must needs quit that presence for fear of being convicted of sin; but remaining before Him, conscious of having no other refuge. She learns in principle that He can be just and yet the justifier of Him who believeth in Jesus. And before she had known this, before she had experienced this first action of light, could she have worshipped? Surely not: yet do we not see many who would not admit that they are under no condemnation, assume to worship. I would ask such, (not to "distress or embarrass them, but to induce them to see the true place of the believer before God,) *what* they worship? We ought to desire to worship; for the Father seeketh such as worship in spirit and in truth to worship Him; but if I am oc-

cupied with myself and my own state, how can I assume that which is occupation, nay engrossment with God? Hence light first relieves me of what presses on my conscience, having shown me too its real nature and evil; for there is no concealment in light; all is manifested; but I am sensibly relieved of the burden by Him who bore it, and who, while He shows it to me, at the same moment relieves me from it. But until thus *wholly* relieved I cannot worship. If I would engage my attention with some fine scenery, and a fog intervenes, can I gaze on it until the fog is dispelled? I may feel much in anticipation as I see the fog rise, but until it does rise, I cannot enjoy the scene. The sun not only dispels the fog, but enables me to behold the scene. But it must dispel the fog *first*. Now this is in figure what Christ does for us; but this is not all. Chapter ix. teaches us more of His gracious ways with us as the light of the world—the light of our souls.

The first action of light is twofold. We have seen one part of it as exemplified

in the condemned woman: the other part we shall find in the sightless man. Both these conditions are combined in the one needing Christ as the light. Not only must I be relieved of my burden, but I must be given light; and this, too, He furnishes me with. It is His power acting in me, and rendering me sensible of being in a new state. But I am not necessarily *all at once* occupied with what should be the real object of my newly-given sight. This man whose eyes were opened was not, although he "came seeing." Light had not effected its second action on him yet, or introduced him into the region of worship. So with many souls. Sight often occupies them at first with what they *must do*; as in the other case we have seen the soul was oppressed with the evil which it *had done*: and these two occupations are often found in the same person. One time occupied about his sin, unrelieved from the sense of condemnation; and at another making use of his newly-acquired sight to contend with Scribes and Pharisees, as did this

man. That is to say, occupied with questions, entangled with the formularies and ordinances of the law, hampered by systematic religion—for all systematic religion is borrowed from the Jewish legal economy, without which there could be no pretence even to a divine sanction. Now this man could not be said to be worshipping while he was thus hampered and struggling under convictions as to the light itself. Conscious of the possession of sight, and the light no doubt gaining ground in his soul, and confirming him in its sure origin; still, as long as these questionings occupy him, and these forms hamper him, he is not a worshipping soul. But he is now to become one. Light is to complete its office with him. Cast out of the synagogue of carnal worship, outside all these questionings, the Lord of light draws near, and reveals Himself to him; and the immediate and inevitable consequence is, that he worships. And how? His soul, filled with the presence of the Blessed One from whom all his blessing came, and who had declared the

from whom it comes; but, then, they have no intelligence in those gleams, or no abiding peace and joy in their souls; and the fact of their having those momentary flashes only proves what I maintain, viz., that they are entitled to a distinct intelligence respecting their right to so much more through grace, in the steady and unchangeable light of Him who by Himself and in Himself enables the babe to know the Father, and thus constitutes it a worshipper. True worshippers are few, because souls continually mistake the devotional feeling or occupation about one's own spiritual state in some form or other for worship, as if such occupation were one and the same thing as occupation with God! When the prodigal was first brought into the Father's house, he saw how unfit he was personally for such a place, and he thought more of himself than of it or of the great owner of it. But when he gets completely at ease there, he forgets himself, and makes merry with his father. We form a very poor conception of our place with God,

Father, then and there he had fellowship with the Father and the Son, and his joy was full. Christ the light had not only dispelled the darkness, had not only given him sight, but had disclosed to him what was to be the absorbing object and occupation of his vision; and now, "in the light as he is in the light," he knew both fellowship and worship.

Such is the true and happy result of the wonderful action on the soul illustrated in these two chapters. (John viii. ix.) The clouds are all gone—the cloud of condemnation and of legalism; the question either as to what wrong I have done, or what right I must do. The light having cleared them all away, I am consciously occupied with and rejoicing in Him, who has effected so great a blessing for me; and this is my true place as a Christian, and where alone I can worship intelligently. I should not say that gleams of full light do not at times cheer souls who are still undelivered from the sense of condemnation, or who are more occupied with the acquisition of sight than with Christ

(for we are brought nigh unto him,) if we do not see that our worship must be in spirit and in truth; that is to say, we must be sensibly before Him in fellowship, without anything to hinder or intercept our engagement with Him. Many of us, I fear, are like the worshippers under the law: the best of them did everything for the sacrifice, but never could follow the priest into the holy place, much less into the holiest of all. We are occupied only with the sacrifice offered by Christ, but have not acknowledged its effects for us to God's glory. We have not felt and understood that we really and truly have passed through the rent veil (His broken body) into the holiest of all. Have our souls the sense of this? No lower sense belongs to the worshipping soul. There is no question of sin, or no question of what grace is in contrast to law; but all questions being answered, the soul is enraptured with the wondrous acceptance into which it is introduced, and true praise then flows out to God, and God is honoured by such as we are. The Queen

of Sheba exemplified this. Hard questions at first engaged her, but king Solomon solved all these, and relieved her of all personal anxieties, and she could then look around and fill her soul with the variety and magnificence of all his glory; and so filled was it, that there was no more spirit left in her, but to praise and extol him, and to give him the return of her heart for all she had found him to be. (1 Kings x. 1—10.)

Mary walking with our Lord to the tomb of Lazarus was not properly worshipping, for sorrow filled her heart; but when she broke the alabaster box and poured it on His head while He sat at meat, and filled the house with the odour of the ointment, she was worshipping, for He Himself alone occupied her soul; and all her expressions were with reference to Him, and in consonance with His mind, which is the sure fruit of worship.

I may add, that I believe the cause of all our ignorance of the Lord's mind is, not that we do not wish to know His mind, but that we are not in our true

place—worshipping, and therefore cannot receive it or understand it. This state, normal for a Christian, and one professed to be attained to by every Christian, is the one most imperfectly known, and to the ignorance of which can be ascribed all our failure in doctrine and practice, as well as in peace and happiness. How could a man continue wilful in doctrine or practice if he were worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth? The wilful is not worshipping, however devotional. The unhappy or doubting one is not worshipping, however devoted. It was as a worshipper that Joshua must enter Canaan. (See Joshua v. 14, 15.) He had already been introduced into a circle of blessing at Gilgal, but the presence of the Lord commanding worship was the filling up of that circle. It is as a worshipper only that I can learn His mind. Nay, we may say from scripture history, that no soul ever learned the Lord's mind at the moment, but in worship; and therefore we see in the Revelation the natural happy expression of the soul fully con-

scious of its place and portion, and of the mind of the Mighty and Blessed One who accords it.

The Lord grant unto us better to know our place before Him in His grace to us; for when we do know it, and are sensibly in it, we must worship Him who has shed such mercy and favour on us.

FRAGMENT.

Look at Christ's humiliation and at Paul's. In all his tribulation he could always say, Christ went lower down than this; and he could always commit himself to God, as to a faithful Creator. There were other things in which Christ's sympathy was expressed in a different way. Christ never sinned—never had a fretful will, &c.; but He tasted all the bitterness of that in taking it upon the cross. I must realize the cross to understand His sympathy in this. It was when He passed through death for it; and now He can say, "I am he which was dead, and am alive."

JOSHUA I.

In the Book of Joshua we read the history of the taking possession of the land of Canaan, so far as that was carried out; as in the Book of Numbers we follow the same people in their toilsome journey through the wilderness: a journey more toilsome through their own unbelief, but in which a faithful and compassionate God accompanied them all the way, and led them, though by a path of chastening, when they would not go up at once, by the path of faith. Their clothes waxed not old, nor did their feet swell, those forty years.

Both these parts of their history, remark, were after their redemption out of Egypt.

I would trace just now the principles on which the path and service of faith, as represented by the history of Joshua, can be securely and successfully trod.

Let my reader remark—what perhaps he has never noticed—that the conflicts which are recorded in the Book of Joshua are not only after redemption

out of Egypt, but after crossing the Jordan. Now Jordan is generally taken for a figure of *death*, and Canaan of *heaven*; and I do not doubt justly. But how comes it that all is fighting after it, and that the man who appears to Joshua comes as captain of the Lord's host? *War* characterizes Israel's state after entering into Canaan; their *journey*, but through the wilderness. This remarkable feature in the history of those events, which "happened unto them for ensamples, [types,] and are written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world are come," calls us to enquire what the connexion of these events is, and how the passage through death and entrance into heaven leads to a state of conflict and war.

The New Testament makes very plain what is the solution of this apparent difficulty. It teaches not only that Christ is dead and risen again for us, but that we have, in God's sight as united to Him by the Spirit, died and risen with Him. "Ye are dead, [or have died,] and your life is hid with

Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) "He hath quickened us together with him, and raised us up together." (Eph. ii.) Thus the Christian himself is viewed as having himself passed through death and being risen again, because Christ who is his life has. "If ye be dead with Christ," says Paul. (Col. ii.) "If ye then be risen with Christ." (Col. iii.) In this sense we are viewed as having passed through Jordan. We have died, and are risen, and are entered into the heavenly places. Hence we have our conflicts there; for the Canaanite and the Perrizzite are yet in the land. So Paul—"We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, with powers, with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." He is here referring to Joshua and Israel, who had to contend with flesh and blood—we with spiritual enemies. Thus the Christian is looked at as having died and risen in Christ, and called upon to possess the land—to realize the blessings given by the power of the Holy Ghost, whether apprehending and enjoying the unsearchable riches

of Christ, or rescuing from the power of Satan those who are led captive by him.

Before I turn to the practical principles I have referred to, let me draw my reader's attention to the effect of having thus passed the Jordan.

First, there is, and thus only, the death of the flesh, entire death to the world. Israel was not *circumcised* in the wilderness: Israel *was* now circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away. To this, as the place of self-judgment, Israel returned after all their victories. But there was another point: they ate of the old corn of the land, and the manna ceased. The manna is Christ as come down and humbled—Christ for the need of the wilderness. The old corn belongs to the heavenly land—Christ in His heavenly glory. This is all ours before any combat—before a wall has fallen or an enemy is conquered. We possess all the heavenly blessing by a divine title. Then, "the man with the drawn sword"—Christ in spirit—comes to lead us to conflict, but to victory if we walk under His leading.

This leads us to the principles on which victory is to be obtained in the conflict in which we are engaged. All is promised from the river Euphrates to the great sea. But then comes the question of taking possession. We must actively take possession of it to enjoy it. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Nothing can be simpler. You have only to take possession. But that you must do. So with us. Large possessions are before us. All the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours. But there must be the diligent occupation of the heart with these things in order to possess them. Let the reader be assured that there is a large and rich field before him, all that God has given him in Christ, to delight in; and he has received the divine nature (for I speak of saints) to delight in these things.

But here conflict comes in, because these spiritual enemies would hinder us in realizing, in a pure and undistracted heart, what Jesus calls *our own things*; as the things of this world he calls

another man's. But these conflicts, though useful for exercise and the experience of God's faithfulness, are no hindrance to our taking possession; but, while testing our own state, only show how God is with us. Were the falling of the walls of Jericho and the victories of Joshua a hindrance? No.

Holiness and looking to God, in a word separation of heart to God, are required when the captain of the Lord's host came up to meet Joshua. He was to take his shoes off as much as Moses before God in "the bush." The Lord in our midst, for conflicts, is as holy in nature as the Lord in redemption. Hence, as is known, when there was an Achan in the camp God would not go out with them. But, when there is uprightness of heart, the word is this: "There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." What a comfort and strength is this! No difficulty is anything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" I cannot think of, or meet with, a difficulty which for a moment stops my course. I

have to be careful for *nothing*, and, making my requests known to God, in the midst of conflict, *God's* peace keeps *my* heart. And this never fails. "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Not only God does not forsake us, but He does not fail us in the strength, grace, wisdom, needed so as to give firmness and power. In nothing does He fail us. He is always with us, and with us for, and in, the conflict. The Lord will make war with Amalek; but it is in Israel, but *God's* war. Thus divine strength and power with us, in faithful goodness, is the first and blessed groundwork for our hearts in the conflict.

It leads to another principle: *confiding faith, courage*. "Be strong and of a good courage." God calls us to confidence and strength of heart in His strength, for we shall succeed in the work He has given us. This too is blessing. Take courage, for you shall do the work. Why not, if the work be His and He be with us?

But this has a special bearing worthy of all note. You shall divide the land

—"only be thou strong and very courageous;" no drawing back, no being terrified, shrinking before the power of the enemy. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." Satan is there, but if there we have a free courage, God is there, witness of ruin to Satan's instruments, of sure salvation to those who have God with them. There is no question, (if we are grasshoppers, and our enemies giants, and the walls up to heaven,) if *God* be there. Of what consequence was the height of a wall, if it fell at the blast of a ram's horn? What matter that the sea is rough, if Christ is there to make us walk on it? What good its being smooth, if He be not? Now mark what courage is shown in, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that my servant Moses commanded thee!" We need courage to obey. It seems folly. The world is against us. There seems no sense, often, in the prescriptions of

the word of God. Our own fleshly ease is interested in not being so particular. The path is different from all the world. It supposes a living God, who acts and notices all things, to whom we belong and whose will is everything to us. Of this the world knows nothing. To do God's will and simply obey His word requires courage in the face of the world, courage with our own hearts. To this we are called. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all that the Lord has commanded us." It is the courage of faith which looks to God. This is the way of prospering in the conflict. God's strength is employed in helping us in the path of God's will, not out of it. Then no matter where we go, what the difficulties, how long the journey seems, He makes our way prosperous: "Whithersoever thou goest."

This leads to another and natural consequence, but one of great importance, because it not only informs us of the will of God, but keeps us in His presence, and familiar with the ideas,

thoughts, ways, hopes, the whole manner of our God. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein, for thus shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success." Compare Psalm i. This meditation of God's word, of course, makes us know His will. But it does a great deal more. It gives the habitual delight of the heart to be in what God reveals, in what He delights in. We acquire His (that is, the true but divine) way of thinking of things; not the side of the vain show of this world. Our own hearts are formed by and in this divine and blessed apprehension of things. Oh what a light it is, and how does the vanity of this world appear what it is! "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Besides, the soul is kept subject to God in meditating His word: an immense point

a good courage." And then we have therewith the positive assurance, "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

A further principle is brought out in the case of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. It is given to us in these divine wars to combat for others. This is an immense privilege. I have to combat to possess more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ, to realize more of His life and of the knowledge of Him, to have the vineyards as well as the oliveyards of Canaan, and the old corn of the land; in a word, to possess what is given me in Christ. But it is given to us to combat in every way for God's people also. Paul (2 Cor. i. 11) was dependent on the poor praying saints, it might be on some poor bed-ridden widow; for the gifts by which he carried on his active warfare in the Lord's field. He himself was labouring unceasingly, both in prayer and the ministry of the word, to put God's people in possession of their privileges. This is an immense pri-

morally. Nor is this all. It secures the communications of His grace. "I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Owning the word of God is owning God in this world as He has spoken. But I must pass on.

The next ground the Lord gives is, "Have not I commanded thee?" Nothing gives greater confidence than this. "We ought to obey God," says Peter. If I am even going right, but do not surely know that I am doing God's will, the least difficulty casts all into doubt, and all my courage is destroyed. When I know that I am doing God's will, difficulties are no matter. I meet them on the road. But for obedience to God's will, God's power is there; and the heart, knowing that it is doing God's will, has no distrust. Uprightness would fear if it might be self, but uprightness fears nothing, hesitates in nothing, when it knows it is doing God's will. It can appeal to any one if *that* ought not to be done. "Have not I commanded thee; be strong and of

vilege. Not only we are saved, blessed, made partakers of glory, joy in God; but God is pleased to make us partners, co-workers under Him in His own divine privilege of love and of blessing. This is grace indeed! Surely we must know it, as its objects, to witness it; but God's love in us flows forth in love to make it known to others.

Note another thing. If we are doing God's will and work we may reckon on Him for all that is dear to us, and in which we are interested. We could not keep it without God were present. He can keep it without us if we are doing His will and service in love. The two and a half tribes could leave their little ones and all that they had behind, to go armed to the war to help their brethren. No doubt, no fear, no hesitation! Such is the path of faith. It counts on God in the path of obedience to His known will. He has divine wisdom for every step, and divine power. Both are in Christ. We cannot know wisdom perfectly, nor see the end or the bearing of many things. But He who

gave us the word did, and we are guided in the word according to that perfect knowledge.

J. N. D.

THE SALVATION OF GOD.

"The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it." (Acts xxviii.) What a fact that is, that it is "the salvation of God;" nothing less than that great and blessed thing that has been now sent of God into this wide, wide world! God will satisfy Himself, when He speaks in *law*, to speak in a sequestered nook of the earth, and in the hearing of the smallest of all the nations; but when He comes to speak of grace or of salvation, at the end of law, He must let the whole earth hear.

And of salvation He had been speaking from the beginning. The first promise, "it shall bruise thy head," told of it. Patriarchal stories, Mosaic ordinances, prophetic voices, evangelic re-

reach the divine! While neither man's religion, nor man's morality give toleration to the idea of salvation, God, as we see, is occupied with it from first to last. The mention of it, the history of it, the gradual display of it, the exercise of it, illustrations of it in one sinner after another, stretch along the whole volume. He dispenses it now, and calls on us to enjoy it; He will perfect it by and by, and will call on us to celebrate it.

Having, as we said, begun to tell of itself as soon as it was needed, that is, as soon as sin entered, in the very first promise, and having given further and various notice of itself in patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic ages, when the Son, in due time, was manifested, when the Word was made flesh, salvation, so to speak, was presented in a person. God in flesh was named "Jesus;" and this because "he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus is the imperishable name. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is the name which abides in bloom and

cords, all had witnessed it; and now that God was leaving Israel and going abroad, would He go as bearing with Him less or other than this same glorious and precious thing, His own salvation, counselled and accomplished by Himself?

The close of the book of the Acts tells us this; and then all the Epistles, in different ways, unfold the excellencies and the glories of this salvation; and then in the Apocalypse we find this same thing, the salvation of God, celebrated in the heavens and on the earth of the millennial world, in the nations of the blest, and in the ages of eternity.

Salvation is too great a thought for the heart of man to suggest. God must provide us with it. The *religious* mind of man resents it as inconsistent with the obligations he owes to God, and with the relationship and responsibility under which he stands to Him. The *moral* sense resents it as being no security for practical life and righteousness. How deeply at fault they both are! How unequal is the best human thing to

freshness, the unfading title which eternity has no power to efface. Time wears away the rocks, eternity will do nothing with that name, save to celebrate it. "Jesus," or Saviour, was the first word written by the finger of God in the record-book of this world of sin, and it has ever since been kept, like the bow in the cloud, in the freshness of its first hour. It is the unchanging, unchangeable, name. God's salvation, the anointed Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the enduring, pervading, commanding thought. It is not the *unutterable*, but it is the *imperishable* name. Israel under the law found the divine name to be too high, too distant, too sacred for human lips. It was the unutterable name. But the sinner under grace talks of the divine name now, and will for ever.

The salvation of God comprehends a wondrous system of high and glorious privileges, which are all ours, through the faith of Jesus. I have said that it is in the Epistles specially we get an account of this great comprehension. As for instance, we there learn that

divine righteousness, sonship, and the spirit of adoption, the indwelling Spirit, the glorified body, translation in the hour of the Lord's coming, share in the kingdom, and place in the house of the Father, acceptance in the Beloved, the confidence and friendship of the Lord, and inheritance of all things with Him, His own eternity—these are among the high conditions of those who are in the salvation of God.

But while it comprehends all this and more of like excellency, that on which it rests is simple as it can be. It is *satisfaction*—the satisfaction which God has found in the sacrifice on Calvary. This sustains everything. Call our good things by what name we may, justification, acceptance, grace, peace, glory, sanctification, sonship, reconciliation, redemption, or whatever description in name it may carry, all rests on the simple fact that Christ has satisfied God, in that which He has done for us sinners. The rent vail and the resurrection, His seat in the highest heavens, on the right hand of the throne there

wise, faith in the cross waits not to know its rights and privileges and possessions, it is entitled to know them *now*—"receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The judgment-day will have its own business to do, but it is not committed to it to accredit either the cross or faith in the cross. The cross has already led Jesus to His glory; faith in the cross leads the sinner at once to peace and favour and hope and joy,* to the things that accompany salvation, and that witness a present salvation of the soul.

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour," is language which conveys the sense of a present salvation. Mary's song and Zacharias' prophecy, are breathings of the soul over the like blessing. "He hath visited and redeemed," is the burthen of each. Simeon, too, when holding the child in his arms, spoke as one who knew that

* These things form the *condition* of the believer; his *experience* may be below them. He has title to them, though he may read his title imperfectly, as with clouded apprehensions.

in the character of the Purger of sins, and the presence here of the Holy Ghost, are the blessed witnesses of this satisfaction; such august and wondrous witnesses as none can gainsay them on the side of our accuser, and none can exceed them as from God Himself. We are to accept salvation from God because He has accepted satisfaction from Christ.

We have to receive it with all thankful, worshipping assurance. Confiding faith is the due answer to abounding grace. If God have rent the veil, it is obedience in the sinner to enter. If God be satisfied, we ought to be reconciled—consciously saved. Satisfaction sustains everything, as we have said. When I lay my burthens and loads on God's foundations, knowing that they will be sustained there, I am *glorifying*, as well as *using*, those foundations.

And, further, the salvation of God is a *present* salvation. We wait not for a judgment-day to accredit the cross. The rent vail has already accredited it, and so has the resurrection, and so has the mission of the Holy Ghost; and so like-

he was, at that moment, in possession of salvation; and Anna spoke of Jesus to all those in Jerusalem, who were then looking for redemption. In her esteem, that child was the end of their expectations, set for the very purpose of turning hope into enjoyment.

And surely, I may say, the joy that fills all this most precious scenery, which itself fills the opening chapters of St. Luke, is not the joy of hope, but of fruition; not the joy of a probable, but of a certain salvation. Heaven there is seen announcing such a blessing, faith on earth is seen accepting it. And then the passage in Isaiah, with which the Lord opens His ministry, as we get into the fourth chapter of the same evangelist, tells of a present salvation in the same way. The spirit that filled the prophet of old was the spirit which was now uttering Himself through anointed vessels, such as Mary, Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and was of one mind with the glory and the angelic hosts touching God's salvation. For that prophet, like these vessels, like the glory and the

angels, told of a *present* healing, quickening, cleansing, reconciling work, "an acceptable year;" a season or ministry of acceptance for sinners with God, as now really and actually arrived.

All this is in concert. And shortly afterwards, in this same Gospel, Peter illustrates personal engagement of this present salvation — salvation *on the spot*. He discovered himself in the light of the glory. There convicted, he takes his place and character as "a sinful man." But quickly Jesus told this convicted sinner not to fear — His language to all such — and Peter receiving this word, walked forth, or rose up, in the liberty of a present salvation. He feared not, he doubted not. He no longer judged that distance from the Lord became him, but he left all else in the distance, that he might then and there, at that moment and on that spot, in nearness to Christ begin the long and bright and happy future of his eternity. (Luke v.)

And a little further still, a little onward in the same chapter, as though to

bring this matter to the simplest, surest conclusion, we get the case of the palsied man. There, the Lord says, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." And when this offends the religious human mind which instinctively thinks of forgiveness as a future thing, a thing to be reserved for another and a higher court, for the day of judgment rather than for the cross of Christ to decide and pronounce, Jesus has but to repeat the thought, and say, "the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins;" and seals it by healing the man of his palsy. He insists on a *present* salvation. If the prophecy of Isaiah, as we lately observed, were in company with the angels and the glory and the anointed vessels of the Spirit, so are the works and the words of the Son of man now.

It is, indeed, salvation that has come down from heaven to earth, a present salvation, and all join in uttering and celebrating this great mystery. But how, I ask, has this been communicated? What style has accompanied the gift? Does cheerfulness wait on the occasion?

The opening of St. Luke, already referred to, is full of character in connexion with this. All is salvation there; and all is joy in heaven. The angels speak of salvation, and so do the vessels anointed and filled by the Spirit, and rapture of no common measure animates them all in this their service. The glory itself, angelic hosts, and anointed vessels, shepherds, priests, old men, babes, and maidens, and long-waiting, patient saints, are alike summoned to share the joy of that moment, when salvation was coming down from heaven to earth. And I now further ask, has heaven repented of this joy, or changed its tone in the sight or thought of the salvation of God? Let the 15th chapter of that same Gospel give its answer to this. It will tell us that this joy is as fresh this moment as it was in the day of Luke i., ii. If it accompanied the announcement of it at the first, it has ever since, and still does, celebrate the acceptance of it by a poor sinner.

Excellent surely these secrets are! Can we get our welcome to God's salva-

tion sealed by more blessed witnesses? Can we doubt that our title is written out under our eye, clear, large, and simple? No perplexing difficulties as to meaning and force, as to what it conveys to us, when we read it. We cannot mistake it, nor do we want any lawyer to give us his opinion upon it. The morning stars sang together, when of old the foundations of the earth were laid: God's own joy and glory were in the works of His hands, and His delights as with the sons of men; and His creature could not have walked in the garden He had prepared and furnished for him with a doubtful heart. He could not but have read his assured title to be there, rich and bright and plentiful as it all was. It was not too good for him, for the Lord God had planted it expressly for him. And the title of a believing sinner to the salvation of God is written out in the same language, and may be enjoyed with the same liberty and assurance of heart.

Following the thought of God's salvation still for a little longer, I may put

another question. To whom does this salvation address itself?

Poverty and impotency were made to mark the scene that was visited by it at the first, the poverty of Mary of Nazareth, and the impotency of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the childless Abraham and Sarah of that day. And when it comes to be ministered by the Lord Himself, it is only the needy that get it; yea, they who have discovered their need as *sinner*s.

Blessed thought! Sinners are welcome to Christ, but none other.

This we see in the same Peter, the fisherman, of the 5th of St. Luke. In him conscience and faith did their several needed work. He discovers *himself* in the light of the glory which then filled his boat, and then he discovered *the stranger* that could set him at ease in the presence of that overwhelming moment. He was a sinner, and conscience had now discovered that: the Divine Stranger was a Saviour, and faith had now discovered that. The sinner and the Saviour, that instant, began eternity

guilty Adam, as he hid himself behind the trees of the garden. The promise about the woman's seed carried it to him there; he trusted it; he committed himself to it, and came forth; and the Lord God justified his faith, redeemed His own promise, made good His own pledged salvation, and covered Adam with a robe of His own making from head to foot.

It was sent to Noah, who was then in the midst of a world that had been already judged of God, and was soon to have that judgment executed upon it. Noah trusted it, like Adam. According to the word he prepared an ark; and the Lord God put him into it and shut the door upon him; and he was as safe in the midst of the waters of death, as though he had been on the heights of Ararat, or in millennial days, or in the glories of heaven itself.

It was sent to Israel in the heart of judged Egypt—it was sent to Rahab in the heart of judged Canaan. But to both, all its undertakings were fully verified. Israel was saved, and Rahab was saved; though the sword was there

together. The poor fisherman's boat was holy ground, a sanctuary; the synagogue at Nazareth, a little before, with all its religious show of worship and of sanctity, was common and profane.

And thus is it still. We see the link that is formed between God and us. We see the joy with which God in the highest, and all that surrounded Him, or went forth from Him, ushered in the materials that formed that link. Grace and faith have formed it as between the Saviour and the sinner, joy waits on this mighty process on the part of heaven; liberty and assurance are to mark the heart of the sinner, as he enters upon it and takes his place in this wondrous mystery.

And now let me ask, has "the salvation of God," promised and undertaken, and sent forth into whatever scene of judgment it might have been, has it, I ask, ever disappointed the poor, wretched, exposed or guilty sinner that committed himself to it?

At the beginning it was sent after

both in Egypt and in Jericho, to do its work of death and judgment.

And now, after these patterns, and others like them, it has come forth into this wide world of sinners; and no sinner will it ever disappoint, no sinner can it ever disappoint. It is God's—the salvation of Him who cannot lie. The present evil world is as deeply under judgment as the world before the flood was, as Egypt or as Canaan. The salvation of God is near to us as it was then to Noah, to Israel or to Rahab.

It was then, and is still, to be enjoyed by faith. As we read, "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will *hear* it." Faith comes by hearing. It did so with Adam, Noah, Israel, and Rahab. We have, like them, to *hear* it; to receive by faith these tidings of it. We cannot get it by working. We dare not count on it by deserving. It is God's salvation, "prepared," as we read, by Him. (Luke ii. 28—32.) It is counselled, wrought out, revealed by Himself. We have but to gaze and to listen; to be debtors

to the provisions of divine grace for the most ruined and wretched condition in which creature sin and misery can find themselves. And as salvation has thus been *provided* by God, so is it *sent* forth by Him. It has been prepared by Him in the face of all people, and now is it published there. (See Luke ii. 31; Acts xxviii. 28.)

FRAGMENT.

(Rev. ii.)

In coming to the Church of Ephesus, the Lord was coveting fruit from them. It was a thing He desired to find. To Smyrna He says, "I know thy works." And what follows? There was what God saw in them, and what Satan could see in them: "Tribulation, poverty (but thou art rich)." The saint is often the most spiritual when in the most *humbling* circumstances, and the reverse. When David was on the top of the tree, his will was breaking out. Never was

within; and nothing more came out than was within.

Walking with God is the only safeguard of a saved sinner. I would rather come up the day after the company, if I could not go up that day. Perhaps it might be my own fault; but it is better than to go on with others, *without God* leading me. The great thing is to walk in the same spirit as Christ walked; as He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." *Take God's will*, and suffer in it; that is the happy thing. The most precious part of Paul's service was in *suffering*—not in doing. So also Christ's when He went to the cross.

Those who are seen by no one, but suffering God's will, may be doing much more than where there is much to attract with "see here, or see there."

The contrast in ver. 10 is between the *ten days tribulation* and "the crown of life." The second death has no power over the overcomer.

he so near God as in his adversity. We ought to be able to pass through prosperity without loss, being instructed, as Paul, "to be full, and to be empty; to abound, and to suffer need." Paul goes right through to the end of his course, and the end was lost in brightness. We should look to be able also; but generally it is easier to go through the afflictions, tribulations, &c., with the soul right with God. "I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not." Here is the old tale again at Smyrna—profession without reality—saying they are Jews when they are not so; and the effect of their wishing to get a place brings in trial for Smyrna. If a person begins doing things for his own honour, professing it to be for God, it will be sure to end in casting off God altogether. If he begins with God he will end with God. We have need to be jealous over ourselves, whether what we hang outside be according to the true expression inside. The spiritual energy of Paul was such, that what came outside was what was

PHILIPPIANS III., IV.

I follow up a previous paper by sending you some remarks on the third chapter of Philippians, to which I will now add some on the fourth, which has occupied my mind a little since.

Salvation in this epistle is looked at as before the Christian; not as an uncertainty, but as a thing not yet attained. It is the actual possession of glory, the new estate of man, in actual glory, in Christ ascended on high, which alone is in view. Christ has laid hold of the believer for it, but he is looking to lay hold on it. Christ seen in that glory, and the apostle had so seen Him, in fact, is everything. Being thus found in Him is what Paul looks for, for righteousness, as all else, in that day. When he gets actually before God, laying aside everything Jewish that might exalt him, everything human, his only thought is to be found in Christ. This puts the new estate of man in a very striking position. The whole Christian estate is looked at as future, because in resurrection; its being actually attained being

the whole matter in hand. Hence justification, righteousness itself, is seen as actual acceptance in Christ, when we arrive before God. We come before God in Christ. The apostle unequivocally looks for a resurrection-state and glory. Till he has that he has never attained, is not yet perfect. The present *state* of man even supposing he has been quickened of God, is his state as born of the first Adam; not simply because of sin, for the apostle supposes here the Christian to be walking above it, always walking in the Spirit, making progress towards *glory*, but in no way occupied with sin. But he sees the Christian needing to be brought into this new state identified with Christ in glory. If he had the whole righteousness which the flesh or the first Adam was capable of, and of which the law was the rule, this was only the first man, not the second; he would not have it. It was not Christ, God's righteousness by faith.

He had seen Christ the second man, the last Adam, accepted in glory. He had been laid hold of to be conformed

to this, this wholly new state and condition of man according to God's righteousness. It had displaced all else in his mind. He could be content with nothing else nor less. The two were incompatible; and he could not have the old man's place, even if it were righteous, and the new man's too. He counts all these things which honoured and accredited the first man, the self, Paul, as loss and dung. The risen glorified man is before us. It is not however here considered as that which has justified us; that inasmuch as we have died with Christ, who made atonement for us, and that we are risen with Him according to the value of that work in virtue of which as of His person He is risen, we are justified, and our acceptance witnessed before God. It is not with this view of judicial acceptance the resurrection is viewed here; but as a new state, into which in its full result, we are to enter, including of course divine righteousness, but the whole new state of glory. This puts the new estate into which Christianity brings us in a very strong light.

The old man, the whole old estate is done with in the apostle's mind, righteousness and all; and his mind is fixed on the new, that is on Christ Himself; but this as involving his own place in glory, in having part hereafter, in "the resurrection from among the dead," as Christ was: "That I may win Christ." "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead." (Εἰς θάνατον.)

This leads us directly to the great principle of the chapter: the earnest undistracted following after this glory, after Christ Himself, and heeding nothing else, counting all as worthless for its attainment. The former chapter, we have seen, presented Christ in His humiliation, leading the heart to a like manifestation of graciousness in our path and ways with others here below. This gives that energy of spiritual pursuit, from the second glorified man being set before our eyes, which sets us above the world and every motive in it, and everything which added importance to the old self, so as to give its just and

heart-enlarging object to the new man, and make us heavenly-minded, and withal undistracted in our christian course.

It is one of the beauties of Christianity, that it gives, through our perfect reconciliation in Christ, the pure peacefulness of affections perfectly happy in an existing relationship, and with it the highest object of hope, which urges to unceasing activity. These are the two forming elements of human nature for good; both, in the highest, in a divine way, are found in Christ.

But to pursue our chapter, which takes up the latter of these principles.

We have the fullest element of satisfying glory for ourselves, the prize of our calling above, the resurrection from among the dead; yet all selfishness is taken out of it. What clothed self with honour is, as we have seen, all loss. It helped to set up the old man. The Christian's object is Christ, which implies getting rid of the first altogether. It exalts man, but not *self*. When modern infidelity would exalt man, it simply exalts self. Christianity exalts

man, even to heavenly glory and divine excellency, but it sets aside self wholly. "What was gain to me," says the apostle, "I counted loss for Christ." Learning is gain for self. To be English, French, &c.: to have mine own righteousness as a reputation in the world, or a title with God, is self. I am what others are not. The world wants these motives—of course it does. It has no other. Energy is produced by them, but there is no moral advance. Self remains the spring, the centre, of human activity.

"Self-love (we hear) but serves the virtuous mind to wake,

As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake."

A larger circle may be produced round self, but self remains the centre still. We can see this even in religious things.

"Master, that thou shouldest give us to sit, one on thy right hand and another on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." This was self; a good place which others would not have. None of this is found here. "That I may win Christ," the highest blessing, the blesseddest affections,

but all transferring the heart from self to Christ.

But see further. It transferred the affections to what in itself was supremely excellent, to an object which was the adequate object of delight to God the Father. God has given to us to delight in what He finds His sufficient object of delight in too. What a tale this tells of our true reconciliation to God! Not merely judicial reconciliation to God, which was needed, but of the elevation of our moral nature to the measure of divine delights and fellowship with Him; though, of course, ever recipient, and glad to be so from love, He ever the divine giver: but in Christ the one object of delight. In the creature, though there may be a suited nature, as evidently there must, yet the moral state of the soul is formed and characterized by its objects. Here we are made partakers of the divine nature and have divine objects. But this is not *now* in rest. That will be our heavenly state. We are living in the midst of a world by which Satan seeks to seduce us by

acting on the old man. While there is thankfulness and courage because Christ has laid hold on us, yet Christ before us in hope, leads out the affections in energy; and while it has begun by delivering us from selfish recurrence to our own importance, leads us now on in superiority to worldly objects by the absorbing attraction of Christ. We are kept humble by the consciousness that we have not attained; energetic in sanctified affections because we have Christ to attain. Delivered from the world by the absorbing power of a divine object acting on the new man. This gives singleness of purpose, and thus undistracted power, while the judgment is formed solely on the way things bear on Christ. Everything is thus estimated in the highest way by a perfect criterion, and that in the affections, though indeed, in moral things, true judgment cannot exist without this.

Further, though it be in no way the chief or highest element, there is, when the world does come before us, the power of contrast. For all this, surely

the action of the Holy Ghost is needed; but I speak of the way it operates, not of its gracious source. This gives, moreover, superiority to difficulties. This is the force of "by any means"—not a doubt, but whatever it may cost, whatever road I may have to take, so as I attain, I am content; yea, I can rejoice in suffering and death—I shall be so much the more like the Christ I am desirous of attaining. Note here, he seeks the power of resurrection first; that, knowing the divine energy of this new life, which takes him in spirit out of the present one, the sufferings or death of the first, as the fruit of devotedness to Christ, were only conformity to Him. And thus, even if it were by such means as death itself, he should attain to the glory of the new state into which Christ had risen. (Not new indeed to Him personally, but to man, to the human nature, which in grace He had taken and carried back with Him into glory.) This gave its full character to His walk as to its daily energy. Having this state of resurrec-

tion from among the dead in view, he never could count himself to have attained in this life, nor to be perfect; for for him to be perfect was to be like Christ in glory. He followed after, that he might attain and apprehend that (lay hold upon and possess it) for which Christ had apprehended him. Two things ensued; he followed nothing else, had no other object. But this was not all. He did follow this earnestly and undividedly. It was not merely that he disapproved of certain things and was inert, but the absorbing power of one had delivered him from all else. But this, while it took his heart off the others, fixed it on this. But this object on which his mind was fixed was always before him, not attained; every day brighter to his spirit, but not possessed. This kept him looking straight forward, and never occupied with the ground he had passed over. He forgot the things which were behind, and reached forward to those things which were before, pressing towards those things which were before. The man who would stop to contemplate the

The saint glories in dying to the world. He who lives in it, in spirit, is the enemy of that. The end is destruction. One thing remains, to carry out this hope of the Christian to completion—Christ's coming. We have these hopes, "this treasure in earthen vessels." Christ shall come and change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like to His glorious body. Then what we have had in hope, in desire forming our souls after it, will be actually accomplished in glory. We shall be like Christ and with Him.

Such is the character of energy which delivers from, and gives the victory over, all that is in the world, setting our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, making Christ Himself, as He is on high, the bright and blessed object of our souls. The fourth chapter, as this has run to some length, I reserve for another paper.

It tells us of the calmness and superiority to circumstances which characterizes the Christian in this world through faith in Christ.

J. N. D.

ground gone over in a race would not get on in it, would soon be passed in it. Self would come in; the manna would breed worms; the heart be off its object.

This gives another marked effect of this energy of the single eye. It looks exclusively at what is heavenly. Its calling is on high, its hopes and thoughts fixed on that; not looking, says the apostle, on what is seen, but on what is not seen. This gives a heavenly temperament and habit to the whole man. His conversation is in heaven; His relationships of life are all up there. There is thankfulness and elevation in this. It is God's calling; His calling us above, (*aww*), and in Christ Jesus. The heart is intelligent as to its source and way. I do not dwell on what the apostle puts in contrast. Minding earthly things, men are fixed on what can cause no progress, on what takes them off what is heavenly, what is pure and divine. But it goes further; they are enemies of the cross. The cross was death to this world. It marked the place of what was divine and heavenly in this world.

A SERIES.

No. 7.

PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.

In considering the subject of sanctification, it is important for us to take into account the primary meaning of the word as used in Scripture. Sanctification in its principal and ordinary meaning signifies the actual conveyance by which anything on earth is devoted or passed over to God, of which we have abundant examples in the Old Testament with reference to men and animals. The firstborn of man and beast, for instance, were to be "holy unto the Lord;" that is to say, they were to be devoted or consigned to Him as His possession. Consequently, when we find the word "Sanctification" in the New Testament, it is no new idea to the mind of Scripture; and is there, too, used in this, its primary signification, but with a deeper moral obligation on those thus sanctified or set apart, because consummated in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Hence we find in Hebrews

x., "By *which will* we are sanctified;" and again, "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." These Scriptures teach us that we who had been strangers and enemies to God are now by His will set apart and passed over to Him, and therefore this is called "Sanctification of the Spirit." No practical experience can ever raise us higher, but practical experience lets us into the wondrous blessedness of this our position. God, in His grace, *has* sanctified us unto Himself, for Christ is of God made unto us sanctification, as well as righteousness and redemption; and when the Lord unfolds what would be His heavenly desires for His disciples, He prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." That is, that they might enter into the practical blessedness of their position. That position was such an one that He could say of them, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified truly." His was positional sanctification; for

it. No amount of acquaintance or experience of divine sanctification improves in the least degree his own nature, but according as he learns the grace of God, and therefore, if faithful, the older and longer he is in the school, the more he will know of what sanctification introduces him to; and thus he will have more practical resource to baffle and stifle the ever varying and daily increasing subtlety of his own evil heart. I believe the activities of nature, which sorely tried a young Christian, would prove comparatively trifling to an advanced one; but on the other hand, the subtle and suited ones addressed to the older would have overwhelmed the younger; so that if the experiences of sanctification increase, the necessity for them increases also.

Having said so much of this subject in general, I shall now dwell a little on the mode and process by which our souls are experienced therein. When we are worshipping, we are properly enjoying the result of our sanctification, and, therefore, that which leads us into wor-

moral, He did not need. It was going to the Father, setting Himself apart in the heavens in separation from all here. And this—His exaltation—His positional sanctification, would necessarily conduce to our full sanctification, because of our association with Him as seated in the heavenlies, outside and above it all. *This* it was that He desired and prayed to be known by us practically. The moment God draws us unto Himself we belong and are set apart to Him; and we never can have better sanctification than what He, according to His will, has there and then made over to us in His beloved Son. This, as well as all the blessings of grace, are gifts and not exploits, but the experimental blessedness of the gifts cannot be known to anyone, unless he learns the value and greatness of it. Although when called, he is really sanctified and set apart to God, and "the consecration of his God is upon his head;" yet he requires to be kept in the power and responsibility of the blessing, in order to be in conscious possession of

ship; or, when we have declined from it, restores us thereto—must lead us into the sense of our sanctification, of which it is, as we have said, the result. Now for our souls to be happily led into worship, and for them to be restored to it after failure or falling, are of course two distinct things. The first is the higher; and the latter, as we know, by far the most common and frequent with us: but in either case I believe the mode or process by which we are brought into sanctification is what the apostle expresses in Eph. v. as the "washing of water through the word," and what the Lord performs in John xiii. when He washes the disciples' feet.

The moment we fall from our near and separated place with God, from the place of our worship, and where we realize His appropriation of us to Himself, we are defiled; and the first step in restoration is the washing of our feet, or washing us with water through the word. On this order of practical sanctification, i.e., that which we are led into in restoration after failure, I would first

dwell for a little, and detail the order and blessing of this wondrous service in the soul of one sanctified unto God, and who has been a worshipping Nazarite, but who has now defiled the head of his consecration.

We find two distinct offerings under the law which describe to us the two classes of defilement into which we may fall; the one is the offering for leprosy, (Lev. xiv.,) and the other that of the red heifer. (Num. xix.) I consider leprosy as the sin of my nature acting openly in the flesh: and what has reached that point of activity, that it is not only injurious to myself, but to others; it is contagious. I am a bad example, affecting others by my evil, though it does not assume the malignant stage until there is a protracted or violent expression of the workings of nature. For this order of defilement two birds alive and clean were offered, while the red heifer was the provision for that of another order. It was for all manner of defilements which spring from association or contact—that which is, in one

practical sanctification, and additional grace imparted to preserve me from the like in time to come. The sin of which we have thoroughly repented before God, and from the defilement of which we have been truly restored, is ever the sin we are the least likely to fall into again, at least in that particular line. I do not say but that, as the same nature always exists, it may and does break out in lines very kindred; but I think it will be found that the actual and identical line of evil is feared and avoided. Abram does not go down again into Egypt, though he does to the land of the Philistines.

I now desire to trace in detail how a soul is restored; for when restored, he has entered on practical sanctification. Leprosy, I have remarked, is sin acting in my flesh, and by example injurious to others. Peter's denial of the Lord partook of this character, as also does unchecked anger or evil speaking; but I need not enumerate the many sins that come under this head. The *word* of Jesus and His *look* convicted Peter.

sense, *outside* myself—what I contract from circumstances, influences, and the like. There are also two delays or difficulties to a soul which may be conscious that he is not in a worshipping state—one is, that he does not see his sin or defilement; and the other, that he is unbelieving in adopting the means of restoration. There is often difficulty in discovering how I have been defiled; but if I seek the Lord and listen to His word, I am sure to be corrected; and if I obtain a knowledge of Him in His work and grace, my soul passes into the freshness of acceptance. Sensible need of His grace always precedes sensible relief from it. If I feel that I need His mercy when I draw near, I find the throne of grace, where I obtain what I need. If I really feel my need, and am convicted by His word, I have in the spirit of my mind renounced and abandoned my evil ways; and in looking unto God, thus convicted and separated in heart and judgment from my former way, I find through Christ the throne of grace, where there is a renewal of my

These two—the *word* and the *look* are always connected, for unless the soul hears the word under His eye, there is not true conviction. When there is true conviction there is repentance; and where there is repentance there is clear discontinuance of the evil, or what is typically expressed by “healing.” (Lev. xiv.) The evil influence is gone, the claim of sanctification is renovated in the soul. Chastening may be needed for this process, but when “healing” has set in, the soul is turned to the Lord; and then is the process of cleansing, which, as detailed in this chapter, typifies the experience in the soul of what Christ is for it. Two birds were taken for the leper that was to be cleansed, one of which was killed over running water, and the other, with cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, was dipped in the blood of the one which was killed, and the leper sprinkled seven times and pronounced clean. That is to say, Christ having passed through death but now risen, proclaims to me as Priest, through the Spirit, the seven-fold or perfect assur-

ance that I am clean. My eye is engaged with Him, the risen One, for my justification, as the leper with the living bird. The soul enjoys and is revived in what Christ is for it now before God, and the sense of distance or judgment is removed. I enter into fresh and greatly enhanced appreciation of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ; but though I have full confidence in His reception of me, still, as we see with Peter, there is something more required, as is typified here, before he takes his place as fully restored. The leper could return to the camp before he could return to his house; though on re-entering the camp his appearance bore evidence of his separation from his former self—his clothes being washed and all his hair shaved off; yet, after seven days, every particle of hair is again shaved; his own conscience is assured of the ground of his acceptance expressed by the offerings on the eighth day, and he receives from the priest a personal, confidential assurance of his full restoration; his ear, his right hand, and his right foot

God; hence the Lord sanctifies by cleansing us with washing of water through the word. This is ever the first step. He speaks to me through His word, and then the Spirit presents to my soul, according to the nature of my defilement, the ground of my restoration; for Jesus Christ the righteous is my advocate with the Father, and therefore I confess, and am forgiven, and "cleansed from all unrighteousness."

Now, in the red heifer I think is typified the cleansing of the defilement which we imbibe from evil association and contact, because of our susceptibility to evil and natural inclination to it; and hence the ashes in the running water expressed in type the sense which the Spirit of God conveys to the soul of Christ's judgment for sin; a judgment executed, and now passed and over, and in which was included everything in nature, from the cedar to the hyssop, but of which the ashes are the evidences; the sense of this being reproduced and certified in my soul establishes me in exoneration from personal defilement.

being marked with significant tokens of the same. The blood and the oil with which each of these parts were touched, I understand as the purification and practical consecration of the whole man in the activities of his nature, to God; and to express the sense in the soul which Peter enjoyed after his conference with the Lord in John xxi.; where, while He distressed him as to the question of his love, He re-assures his heart by asking him to tend His sheep and to follow Him; which Peter could not have done unless the whole question between himself and the Lord had been settled. Nothing so restores a person to the sense of a place of nearness once his, and which he has forfeited by transgression, as to be entrusted again; and then it is the believer feels, that not only is he cleansed before God, but that the Lord deals with him *as clean*; "he shall be clean," is the word for the leper (verse 20) after all this process which we have noticed. Practical sanctification has necessarily this double sense, that "I am" both *to God*, and also *for*

Each of the offerings in the Old Testament presented some distinct line in the great antitype; but we must always remember that He fulfilled them all at one and the same time; and, therefore, while we are looking at Him as the antitype of one, the Spirit is, in fact, engaging our souls with the antitype of all; so that while the leper is engaged with, and learning afresh in his soul the depth and perfection of Christ's work for him, his eye being set on the living Christ, he is also consciously receiving purification from the water of separation, because he has been defiled by contact with his own nature. Whether our sin be an open outbreak of the evil of our nature, or defilement contracted from the evil around us, the first entrance into our sanctification is by cleansing. We are restored into happy consciousness of the virtue of our Lord and Saviour for us; and all this is comprised in His washing our feet, and must necessarily be the beginning of our practical sanctification, because we cannot be before God unless cleansed; but now being

cleansed, sanctification progresses. I have dwelt long on the cleansing, because I apprehend that it is ignorance or uncertainty about this which hinders many souls from entering into and enjoying their sanctification. In order to have the sense of this cleansing, it is, we may thankfully say, by no means necessary that I fall into sin or contract defilement; but as cleansed, whether learned in the way of restoration after failure, or in the more honourable and blessed way of estimating my sin in the light of God's presence without yielding to it, I am in sanctification; and trouble, whether it be that of heart, or service, or tribulation from the world, all these only contribute to establish me in sanctification, for in each and all I find myself dependent on my Lord: and hence He prays in John xvii., "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now here I learn the power that authorizes my sanctification. Unless cleansed, I could not take that ground; but now, through the truth, I find that I am detached from the world and attached to God.

and not merely title and relationship in an opposing scene. It is positional, I repeat, as Christ's was when He said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified thoroughly." By virtue of association with Him in this, His positional sanctification, we are "sanctified thoroughly;" that is to say, our Saviour has gone to heaven, above all the ruin and evil here, and now by His Spirit He associates us there with Himself. And this is the practical efficacy of the doctrine set forth in Eph. ii., that of being seated with Him in heavenly places. I am "thoroughly sanctified," for my "citizenship is in heaven; from whence I look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change my vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" and the working of the assured anticipation of being like Him leads me practically into the same purity which He is in, ("He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure,") as knowing myself not only contrary to the world in nature and title,

The truth has declared to me the Father, and I cannot therefore be of the world. The world knows me not, (the born of God,) as it knew Him not. The more I realize that I am born of God, the more I must not only be separated from all that is contrary to God, but I must also be consciously in my new relationship with God; and this is practical sanctification. The action on my soul of the wondrous truth that God is my Father in a world at enmity with Him must necessarily expose me to all its enmity and opposition; so that this sanctification, the more I enter into it, entails on me the sense of the world's evil oppressing me; because I am maintaining my title before God according to His own revelation to me. This, the practical sanctification, because of sonship or title, introduces my soul into my proper path on earth, always a sorrowing one, and therefore attended with more suffering than joy here. But there is another mode of sanctification, fraught with nothing but joy and entire separation unto God; and this is *positional*,

but out of, and apart from, it by association and hope. This is full, practical sanctification. The believer finds himself not only separated to God by title and the claims of relationship, but he also finds that by position and in association with his Lord and Saviour, he is unto God and for God in distinct, sensible separation in spirit from what is contrary to God, looking for full deliverance in a glorified body and in likeness to Him whom when we see we shall be fully like.

In conclusion, I would recapitulate the how and the when the believer is in practical sanctification. I use the word "practical," I repeat, to show that I do not make sanctification depend on my own attainment, but, being sanctified by God's will, I desire to know the blessing of it and therefore call it "practical."

Well, then, the first part of this blessing, the entrance into known sanctification, is, as we have seen, the cleansing, the consciousness that I am made clean every whit. If this is not known, the power and blessing of sanctification cannot be enjoyed; but cleans-

ing being assured to the soul, *then* I realize my sonship, and the claim of my relationship to God—most happy realizations in themselves, but exposing me, as I walk in the power of them, to the keen sense of the antagonism of all that is in the world, which I exasperate the more, and necessarily feel the more as I maintain my title. And many, many Christians make this the sum and end of their sanctification; that is, they do not see that it calls them to anything further than maintaining themselves in title as God's children in the world; therefore the more holy they are, the more they suffer, and find no place of relief; and this it is, no doubt, that has suggested to some, positive and corporeal exclusion from the world. From this loss and suffering they would have been preserved, if they had apprehended the *position* which they are now called to occupy with Christ in virtue of His positional sanctification; and then, in conscious association with Him, the holy desires in them would find unchecked expression; and they would feel in themselves that both according to God and

"First and the Last" implies something before there was a beginning, and after there is an ending.

Christ comes to this church in this divine character, "the First and the Last," because the Church is looked at as *divine*. The heavenly character of the Church is another thing—contrasted with the earthly dealing with the Jews, not brought out until Christ has taken His place at God's right hand. There is another thing also connected with this: there are certain persons got into the heavenlies, without being the Church. The Church is more than heavenly; it is divine—the mystery, His body; and it shows forth thus what Christ has been. It is a higher thing to be able to say, "I am a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" than to say, "I am of the heavenlies." So here, Christ as the First and Last connects Himself with the Church as Son of God: and it is a higher thing for the Christian to be able to say, I am united to Christ the Son of God, than Christ the Son of man—though He is both.

before Him, they were "thoroughly sanctified."

May we one and all apprehend the grace of the blessed God, and praise Him through Christ Jesus our Lord.

FRAGMENT.

Rev. ii. 8—11.

The peculiarity of the church of Smyrna is, that it preserved its character before God. There is something very blessed in this state indicated. The end signifies that they would be able to go through death for Christ's sake; and therefore the promise is, that they should not be hurt of the second death, but have a *crown* of life. The character in which Christ comes to them is remarkably blessed. There is none so high as that of the "First and the Last," because it is that which is connected with the Person of the Lord. His title of Alpha and Omega is connected with testimony, the expression of the "Word which was made flesh," &c. The "beginning and the ending" is connected with the human character; but the

GIL GAL.

(Joshua v.)

If we take the Book of Joshua to be typical of the position of the Church as presented in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ," and consequently, in order to the practical enjoyment of the blessings of this position, brought into conflict "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places," we shall see how important a place "Gilgal" holds in relation to this.

The children of Israel are not at this time in Egypt, the type of the world or a state of nature; nor in the wilderness, the fitting expression of the believer's life of trial in his passage through the world; nor are they yet quietly established in Canaan, the shadowing forth of heavenly rest. They are entering the land under the guidance of Joshua, not Moses, (for the law cannot give possession of the inheritance,) and are about to commence those conflicts, with-

out which the land of promise could not be theirs in possession and enjoyment. For in the Book of Joshua it is to be noted that it is not so much the rest of Canaan that is in prominence, as the conflicts of the people, ("the wars of the Lord,") which were the necessary condition of their possession of the inheritance.

In sovereign mercy God had visited the people in Egypt, breaking the yoke of their bondage, and by the blood of the passover separating them for ever both from Egypt and from its judgment. In application this is redemption from a state of sin, and from God's judgment against sin, by faith in the blood-shedding of Christ: for it is said, "Christ our *passover* is sacrificed for us." So that at the outset of our pilgrimage, and before we have taken a single step in our heavenly journey, trust in the blood of Christ is our full and absolute security against the judgment of our sins—a judgment which will come upon the world on account of sin. Next follows "the salvation of the

Lord," as it is expressed, in bringing the people through the Red Sea, with the utter destruction of their enemies in it, and so placing the sea as an impassable barrier between His people and Egypt. To us this is the passage, by faith, of our souls through death in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that His death and resurrection should be placed by God Himself between us and all the power of the enemy, in token of eternal deliverance from it, and giving also the character of that deliverance, as well as final separation from the world that lies in wickedness:—"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, *through the faith of the operation of him who raised him from the dead.*" Then comes the wilderness, characteristic of the journeyings of the people, and a figure of the trouble and temptation which the people of God find in the world while passing through it as strangers and pilgrims.

Under Joshua a new scene opens. It is the passage of the Jordan effected for Israel by the ark of the covenant going

down into the midst of the river when it overflowed all its banks, so that "all the Israelites passed over on *dry ground.*" A wondrous and blessed picture of Christ in His death exhausting all the power of death, and thus making it the ally of his people, and the means of their entering, now by faith, and finally in person, into their heavenly inheritance.

The Jordan must be crossed before Canaan can be possessed even by the people to whom by God's appointment it belongs. There must be in the Christian not only the faith which associates him with the power of the death of Christ as the ground of his justification before God, and the pledge and security to him of eternal redemption; but there must be an entrance by the power of the Spirit into that death and resurrection as the means of bringing him into his heavenly position, and as the power by which alone it can be realized. "If ye then be risen with Christ," says the apostle, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set

your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." This, be it remembered, is not simply laying hold of Christ's death as the power of redemption, and the ground of peace and security: it is an exhortation to the practical entrance of the soul into the death and resurrection of Christ, as participants in it, in order to the affections being placed on the proper objects of the heavenly life and heavenly position into which we have been brought by Christ.

But the Jordan thus passed, what is the first thing that meets us on the Canaan side of it? It is Gilgal: where by means of the circumcision of the people the Lord could say, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." At Gilgal they are delivered from every badge of Egypt and its bondage, to enter as the redeemed people of Jehovah on their inheritance. The obvious lesson to us is, whether we have learnt it or not, that every trace of worldliness is a reproach to those who are called to be a heavenly people. However, circumcision in its spiritual

application is plain. The apostle says, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh.*" But this is in connexion with being dead and risen with Christ, as the following part of the chapter shows; where the apostle unfolds how far "confidence in the flesh" extends, and how much it includes; and then shows how all is displaced as "dung" and "loss" by the excellency of the knowledge of a dead and risen Christ. The flesh can have nothing to do with that heavenly life into which we are introduced by Christ. It is that which attaches itself to the things of this world, and cannot rise above it; hence there is nothing left for it but that mortification, of which circumcision is the typical expression.

During the whole of their wanderings in the wilderness, the people were not circumcised. And in truth, it is not in the sorrows and trials of a life of pilgrimage, nor in its mercies either, however it may be the result of redemption,

that we get the power to put aside all that attaches us to the world. This life must be lived, it is true, and there must be faithfulness in it; but where this is the case, it leaves the traces of Egypt still upon us, and does not rise to the sphere which is proper to the heavenly life, to which redemption brings us. It is in practically entering by God's Spirit into the truth that we are dead and risen with Christ, that we get this power. In Colossians iii. 1, we have the exhortation, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," &c., founded on the statement in the previous chapter in which the true force of *circumcision* is given. "Ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein *also ye are risen with him,*" &c. (Col. ii. 10—12.) "If ye then be risen with Christ," it will be seen, is in immediate

sequence with this. Moreover the following exhortation, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," &c., is founded on the statement, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This, then, is our "Gilgal." All enjoyment of our special portion in Christ, all spiritual power to overcome our enemies, hangs on this.

But this is not all that Gilgal presented. It was there that they kept the passover, as it is said, "in the plains of Jericho." The passover, as observed in Egypt, was the symbol of deliverance from surrounding judgment, while the people eat it in haste with girded loins, ready to depart on the morrow from the land of their bondage, to which they were never again to return. Before Jericho, it was God's table prepared for His people in the presence of their enemies. It was at the same moment the commemoration of their redemption from Egypt, and of all the mercy that had resulted from it in the displays of divine power and goodness at the Red Sea, and in the forty years of the wil-

derness, and which had now planted them in Canaan. Redemption from Egypt and the rest of Canaan are brought together by it. For us, it is the heart turning back again to the cross to see the linking together by it of redemption and heavenly glory; to learn how that wondrous death of Christ which at first met us as deliverance from wrath and condemnation, is the groundwork of all those after displays of divine mercy, which are involved in being "quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made sit together in the heavenly places in Christ."

But conjoined with the passover, they "eat of the old corn of the land," and the manna, the bread of the wilderness ceases. Before a single city is taken, and the enemy apparently remaining in unbroken strength, the people are quietly enjoying the fruit of the land of Canaan. Thus Christ, when the soul is in the power of its heavenly place and portion, is fed upon in another character than that in which He was presented in His

path with us here on earth. As incarnate, "the bread which came down from heaven," the soul finds the preciousness of seeing Him, whom it is called to follow in his course of subjection and divine perfectness, as a man on earth. It is its stay and strength, amidst the trials and difficulties of the way, to see how Christ, as a man, was found in every sorrow and circumstance into which the believer can be brought in his path, in the world, of faithfulness to the Lord. But as "risen with Christ," a risen Christ in heaven becomes the necessity of the position in which we are set. He must now be fed upon in His proper character of a heavenly Christ, and in heaven; and as having brought us there too. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

In Egypt the view of Israel was bounded by the deliverance of the passover. At the Red Sea their horizon was enlarged; and a song of triumph was raised when from its shores they

saw the salvation of the Lord. In the wilderness they saw still further, and proved the exhaustless resources and the patient goodness of their God. But at Gilgal, when the Jordan was passed and their feet pressed the promised land, all was brought together in one grand panorama, as they "kept the passover" and "did eat of the old corn of the land." And surely it is not to dismiss the cross from our sight, or to lightly esteem the bread which came down from heaven, when we speak of being in heavenly places and feeding upon a heavenly Christ. No. It is from this point, and from this point alone, that what Christ has done for us, and the way in which he has been presented to us, can be seen in their proper elevation and their due significance.

But there is still something further which characterizes "Gilgal." The twelve stones which were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, where the priest's feet stood with the ark, were pitched in Gilgal. For the people were brought into the land and the memorial

of their passage through the Jordan was set up before their circumcision. But if their title to the land was thus made good by divine power, their enjoyment of it was inseparable from their passing through the land in self-appropriation and the ejection of their enemies by the victorious power of God. So every believer, as a divine truth, is dead and risen with Christ, through faith in Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." But this is a very different thing from its practical realization through the power of the Holy Ghost. The entrance of the heart in joy into the place to which the wondrous death of Christ gives us a title is inseparable from the use of that death, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the mortification of the flesh and of all that is contrary to a heavenly life. And this again cannot be dissociated from those conflicts with spiritual enemies, of which the wars of Joshua are but a type. Gilgal must be our camp, as it was Israel's, where we must "put on the

whole armour of God." God was there in all His strength against the enemies of the people. And so the apostle urges, in connexion with putting on the armour, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." And he closes the exhortation by the words, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Because prayer is the acknowledgment of dependence and weakness; but it is the direct means of bringing in the strength of God.

But that which gives Gilgal its special practical character is the circumcision of the people, by which the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. "The Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day." Circumcision took away from the people the last trace of the bondage from which they had been redeemed. They are now manifestly no longer the slaves of Egypt,

but the citizens of Canaan, bearing in their own persons the mark and seal of separation to the Lord. In like manner, that which corresponds to a heavenly position is that we put aside all that marks our character as belonging to this world. This does not consist in throwing off all natural affections, or in the negligent discharge of natural obligations, under the pretence of the heart's occupation with higher things. It is not asceticism; though it is the putting aside of the habits and tastes which connect us *morally* with the world, in order to be under the power of those objects which address themselves to the heavenly life, as risen with Christ into another sphere, where He Himself is.

Gilgal is the place of the enjoyment of accomplished redemption; of feeding upon a heavenly Christ; of the witness of the power of His death and resurrection, as bringing us into heavenly places; as well as the place of strength for spiritual conflicts. The camp of Israel was at Gilgal, to which Joshua and all the people returned after their conquests

in Canaan. So, whatever spiritual victories we may gain they will soon cease, or be exchanged for discomfiture and dismay, if there be not the constant, habitual mortification of the flesh.

The consequence of Israel's leaving Gilgal is seen ultimately in the condition of the people in the Book of Judges, where it is said, (Judges ii. 1,) "The angel of the Lord came from Gilgal to Bochim"—the place of weeping. And how surely has the humbling parallel been brought out in the history of the Church! The enjoyment of Canaan exchanged for bondage to the Canaanites! The place of victory and joy surrendered for the place of vanquishment and tears! It was not said in the history that the Lord and His strength were linked with Gilgal; but it came out too clearly when, through departure from it and unfaithfulness, His presence and sustainment were lost. And if, in application to a narrower circle, it be asked, How is it that heavenly truths have so little power, in those by whom they are professed, to produce a heavenly

life, and are so little accompanied by spiritual power and separation from the world? the reply must be, Because there is so great an estrangement from Gilgal. It is impossible to live a heavenly life, or to enjoy the heavenly portion in which grace has set us, if we neglect to "mortify our members which are on the earth." The Lord Jesus Christ has converted death into an instrument and means by which we may disengage ourselves from the claims of the flesh and all that is a hindrance to our heavenly life. As it is said, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is thus practically that the claims of the flesh are to be met and set aside. If I am dead to sin, I shall not be living any longer in it. If I am dead to the world, the world will become dead to me. All that makes its appeal, and makes it successfully too, to one who is "living in the world, becomes powerless in regard to one who is using the death of Christ so as to reckon himself to be dead. But

this is common-place, every-day work. It makes no show, and brings no credit. The mortification of the flesh is not outward activity. Neither is it the *display* of spiritual energy. But it lies at the basis of all true spiritual strength, and is a *sine qua non* to all real service for Christ, and all possible enjoyment of our place as risen with Him.

There are two lives, if I may so speak, that the Christian is called to live by virtue of his association with Christ. There is the life of faithfulness here amidst the trying scenes and circumstances of this world, in which he is to walk as Christ also walked. In this he may be doing the same things as other men, but doing them from an entirely different motive and with an entirely different end. No doubt it is by the heavenly life that the true character is impressed upon our life of faithfulness here in the world. For the Lord Jesus was always a heavenly man in circumstances which marked His sojourn here on earth. Still this life, of which we speak, has a necessary con-

nexion with the world, and its energies are called into action by the circumstances that characterize the world. But there is another life that is specifically and essentially heavenly. This life owes nothing to this world. Its source and origin is heavenly. Its springs of enjoyment, its resources and objects, its sphere and final end are all heavenly. There is nothing of this world that enters into this life. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Now there are a thousand things that the heart may get entangled with, which are not exactly the evil lusts of the flesh, which, if they do not outwardly mar the faithfulness of our walk in the world, do entirely prevent the realization of that heavenly life to which we are raised, and in the sphere of which we are set by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If then we have so by the power of the Spirit passed through death as to have our life in heaven, with the Jordan as our frontier and Canaan as our home, let us not forget that our conflicts must

expression, "We are of faith," is the starting-point for the exhibition of the whole wondrous array of the examples of its power which this chapter is occupied in producing.

Such a confirmation as this was especially needed by the Hebrews, disposed as they naturally were to attach undue and unwonted importance to outward and sensuous things. The natural mind universally is especially open to such appeals; but the Hebrews were surrounded by innumerable temptations to turn back again to these outward distinctions, and to be occupied again with the importance of ordinances and ritual observances, &c., which for a time had been displaced by the power of faith. But this power was now evidently on the decline. How seldom is it found in its true vigour! However, if faith be swerved from, which is the essential position of the gospel, the apostle shows that not only is the ground of Christianity surrendered, but the very characteristic distinction of all those who in every age have been acknowledged of God

be there too. Gilgal was Israel's camp; but while circumcision stamped its name upon it, and gave it significance, there were grouped around it the stones of memorial out of the midst of Jordan; the keeping of the passover in the plains of Jericho; the eating of the old corn of the land; and the wondrous presence of "the captain of the host of the Lord."

THE PRACTICAL POWER OF FAITH.

(Hebrews xi.)

"We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe [are of faith] to the saving of the soul." This is the brief and emphatic conclusion to the exhortations and warnings presented in the 10th chapter of this epistle. It is also the basis and groundwork of all that is unfolded, concerning the action and illustration and triumphs of faith, in the well-known chapter that follows. The peculiar force and pregnancy of the

is surrendered too. For he adds, "By it [that is, by its possession] the elders obtained a good report"—were attested or borne witness of.

In the first living example of its power, which he adduces, he shows that, after sin had entered into the world, the only possible link of man's connexion with God and ground of righteousness is that which faith supplies. In the subsequent examples, he as clearly lays open that the path of faith is the only possible pathway for the people of God through a world of evil, and is the only solution of its difficulties.

How faith is wrought in the soul is not the purpose of the apostle here to show. This may be learned from other sources, where we are taught that it is by the power of God's Spirit through the reception of the divine word. Here the distinctive points which are most strongly insisted on are its absolute necessity and its operative power.

The first verse of the chapter has been considered by some as presenting a

logical definition of faith; but this is hardly so. It is rather a description of its power and province—the way in which it acts in those by whom it is possessed. The definition of faith is given in the passage, “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” It expresses its nature—that which makes it what it is. There may be every possible variety in the action and energy of faith, but it is this which constitutes its essence; and nothing can be more practically important than that this should be clearly established in the mind. Because it is that which alone gives the word of God its due importance, by linking God Himself with the word.

In general statement, the first thing that is presented in the chapter is the action of faith in regard to future and unseen things: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It gives to the discoveries of revelation, on which hope is based, an apprehended reality, a fundamental existence to the soul, which

it may be said not alone with reference to the scope and purpose of the heart swayed by the power of faith, but with regard to the perceptive faculty, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are *not seen*.”

The province of faith in regard to unseen things having been thus presented, it is next declared that creation comes within the scope of its cognizance. Not creation in its order and arrangement and vast extent—this the eye of man can contemplate, and science be occupied in unravelling. But creation as to its *origination*, which was the great puzzle of antiquity, and furnished a field of speculation where philosophic wisdom wandered, “in endless mazes lost,” can alone be apprehended by the power of faith. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” The simple record of the first chapter of Genesis, we are thus told, is a record that can alone be scanned by the eye of faith. To unbelief it is a

leads to the patient waiting for the things promised, and an unswerving expectation of their accomplishment. The apostle (Rom. viii. 24, 25) taking notice of hope as regarding that which is unseen and future, says, “We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

It would, I fear, startle some Christians, to be told that they were “saved by *hope* ;” conscious as they would be, how little hope was an element in their salvation. But how much do we all need the effect of that prayer of the apostle, “Now the God of *hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may *abound in hope* through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is the demonstration or absolute conviction of their existence and character—their substantiation and embodiment to the mind within. So that

legend of impossibilities. To science it is an insoluble enigma; though it is ever busy in investigating the footprints of time, and attempting thus to invalidate what it cannot comprehend; or to declare that the simple statements of this record must be taken only in a mythic sense. To faith it is the lifting of the curtain of primeval ages to disclose the working and the majestic power of God. I repeat the declaration: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God [who “spake, and it was done,”] so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear.” So simply is the question about the eternity of matter set at rest! With so strong a hand are all the theogonies, whether ancient or modern, set aside! When I read the declaration, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” if I reason, I of necessity disbelieve; because reason cannot reach up to the being and the power of God. Faith alone discerns that “God is.” But then the difficulty vanishes; because I have God acting, and God revealing His acts.

I learn, then, "through faith," that the order and vastness and glory of creation are the effect of the powerful word of God. I learn, too, that the materials of this universe—its "elements," as they were wont, learnedly or ignorantly, to be called—received their being from God. Creation is not the mere impress of His hand to give order and beauty to a chaos that existed without His will and independently of His word. If untold ages had already run their course when that condition of matter was reached which is described by the earth being "without form and void," it only shows that the mind must travel back through the void of these untold ages until it reaches—"THE BEGINNING." Because "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

To most who may be expected to read these thoughts, perhaps, it will be matter of surprise that so much has been said about faith as the clue by which alone the mind can be guided through

the mystery of creation. Because simple minds formed by a habit of deference to the divine word may think that they scarcely find in it a mystery at all. That is because the secret is out. And the light of the divine word meeting with faith, the road is travelled with a confidence that never raises a question. But oh! if this clue were once withdrawn, not all the wisdom of man in all ages would be sufficient to guide a single soul through the hopeless labyrinth! Such is our indebtedness, even as to a knowledge of creation, to the inestimable word of God!

Faith is next presented as having to do with man's moral condition, and is seen to shed its light upon the question of righteousness before God. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh."

Adam is passed by in the series of these examples, and is only presented in the divine word as "the figure of him

that was to come." But this omission must not be construed into a proof of his continued or final alienation from God. By his act sin had entered into the world, and death and judgment became man's doom, and another is fitly presented as the example of righteousness brought in through sacrifice and grace, and the exercise of a faith which looked to God according to the light of the revelation He had made.

The details of the history, it is admitted, are brief and few; and the measure is not stated of the light possessed. But the elements of a judgment are strong and clear; and a special interest attaches to this first man standing forth on the dark background of sin, and condemnation, and death, and finding acceptance and an attestation by God that he was righteous. The exercises of his soul as a worshipper are not given; nor are the throes of conscience through which he might have passed, unfolded; but his faith is declared.

All that we see in the history is a man standing in the consciousness of the

ruin and separation from God that has been produced by sin—himself and his parents, exiled from Paradise, the home of innocence, now the denizens of the earth that has been cursed with barrenness on man's account. The bread which he eats in the sweat of his face is the witness to him of his mortality; and he acknowledges that death is the righteous sentence of the judgment of God. He brings a lamb for a sacrifice—"of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof"—he sheds the blood of his victim, and places death between himself and God. It is the expression of the faith he had as to his own condition, and the desert of sin before God, and of the way of deliverance from it: and we are told that he was thus accepted. "He obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Doubtless it was the faith of the offerer that stamped the sacrifice of Abel as more excellent than that of Cain. But there is more than this in it. In the selection of the offering there was declared the heart's submission to the solemn dis-

covery made concerning sin by the revelation of God. In Cain's offering there was not only the witness of the absence of faith in him who brought it, but the rejection of the light of revelation which alone adequately disclosed man's ruin and God's way of deliverance. "Abel obtained witness that he was righteous;" but *God testified of his gifts*. So through Christ we have the personal attestation that we are righteous—"justified from all things"—"made the righteousness of God." But this righteousness takes its character entirely from the worth and excellency of Christ's offering Himself to God. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In moral character, we know from Scripture that Abel was the opposite of Cain; and on this ground his presence became insupportable to him. As it is said, "Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother, . . . because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." None who are not strangers to

get it in connexion with the *person of Jesus*. The sweetest part is, "Do it in remembrance of *me*." That you and I should be in the wilderness to remember Jesus—to sympathize with Him in His death and sufferings! This is the place in which we stand in connexion with Him. That He can look on us poor saved ones—sinners that we are, though saved ones—and say to His Father, There are a few gathered in my name remembering *me*! And that is joy to Him, to the heart of the Lord, and a refreshment to Him. And He can thus joy in our joy at the remembrance of what He has done for us. It is bearing affection to Him, personal remembrance to Him is the sweet thought and assurance—not mere doctrinal knowledge. Very often we find much personal love to the Lord, when there is very little clear understanding of truth. We could not do it intelligently, without seeing the love of Christ.

the truth will question the energetic power of faith in transforming the character; but prior to this the question to be answered is, "How shall man be just with God?" And blessed, infinitely blessed, is it to read the inspired statement, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

(To be continued.)

FRAGMENT.

1 Cor. xi.

There is something deeply affecting in the plea which our Master put before us, in connexion with this supper, in the appeal He makes to us—to do it "in remembrance of Him." It is a commemorative act; an act showing that our hearts have *personal affection to Himself*. "This do in remembrance of *me*." I am sure our souls feel the poverty of doctrine, in comparison of truth, as we

A SERIES.

No. 8.

OUR POSITION AND CALLING.

I have endeavoured, in preceding numbers of this series, to trace our translation from a condition of death in sin to one of life and of nearness to God in Christ. I now desire to examine and set forth the nature of the place and position to which we have been translated, by which terms I mean the material sphere appointed us of God, by which our position is characterized. At one time Canaan was the appointed place for God's people, and their position there was necessarily earthly, the temple in Jerusalem being the centre of service and worship. No one would assert that Jerusalem in Palestine or the site of the temple was the centre of service and worship *now*; but many who are forced to acknowledge the fact of the former place being done away with are very inapprehensive as to what has been given instead; in a word, as to where the place of the saints is *now*. This is a most

important question; for a peculiar position once given to the saints of God being lost, unless I can determine definitely the place appointed for them now, I cannot arrive at the nature and character of their position. To this great question then I reply in a word, that the place of the saints now is not earth, but heaven; and consequently abounding on all sides with contrasts to the former one, or Canaan. Nay, so peculiar and distinct is this new and heavenly place from the former or earthly, that if it be not known in itself and preserved inviolate from intermixture with the other and its arrangements, the power and blessing of it will be lost; and if the principle of it be not established in practice, no conception of it, even if it be a true one, can be abiding. Hence, not only the great importance of a correct apprehension of this subject for our individual blessing, but we shall find that it is because of ignorance of it, that there are such dark and confused notions, as well as such a low order of walk among the saints now.

tion with respect to the other. While to the Old-Testament saints there was revealed a heavenly glory, destined for the earth, their hopes were never detached from earth. Mount Zion, or the city of God, was to them the climax. The Lord had chosen Zion, and although the hopes of the faithful doubtless stretched beyond the Zion of their own day to the far more perfect and glorious manifestation of it yet to come, still it was so truly the spot chosen of God that until it was set aside, and that only for a time, there could be no disclosure of any new point of centralization for the saints. Thus even the beginning of the New Testament opens no new place to us. The Lord Jesus came unto His *own*; and, if St. Luke's Gospel be carefully studied, it will be seen that every offer was made to Israel, and that in their own land, before any decided rejection of them was adopted. The Lord's being personally rejected was not even enough in God's mercy to demand their cutting off; for what brought their guilt to the unpardonable point was the citizens "sending

When there are two places, one earthly and visible, the other heavenly and invisible, the one known and acted before men, and within the grasp of the natural mind, the other spiritual and unintelligible, unless to the spiritual, and only to be grasped by faith, it is easy to understand how even the Christian may descend from the spiritual to the natural, and then be reduced to make out a system owning something of the former, but mainly clinging to the latter. Such an intermixture is a mongrel, each element spoiled and diverted from its true meaning; and once the teachers in the Church had fallen into this error, misapprehension and misappropriation of the earthly for the heavenly standing was systematically established.

Unless we see how the earthly has been superseded, not only as to site and centre, but as to the whole system and position, and also the divine purpose in thus setting it aside, we shall never confine ourselves to the heavenly, or retain that apprehension of it which would place us above confusion or misapplica-

a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us;" and this was done at the death of Stephen. It will be remarked that in all Peter's sermons before that event, he speaks of the Lord's return, and the times of refreshing from His actual presence, intimating that He was ready to return to the land with His heavenly glory, as Enoch foresaw His coming; and Jesus as still "*standing*" was revealed to Stephen before his death. The rejection of Christ being now consummated openly and avowedly by the Jews in Jerusalem, wrath had come on them to the uttermost, and the Lord forsook His own inheritance and abhorred it. The husbandmen had killed the only Son, and now the vineyard must be taken from them. But is the same vineyard given to the saints now? Certainly not. Hence the revelation to Peter when God would open the door of mercy to the Gentiles. Clean and unclean beasts are presented together in one sphere. The sphere was certainly not earthly, for the sheet came from

heaven and was received again into heaven. I adduce this to show that there must be some sphere where Jew and Gentile could meet on common ground, which could not have been in Palestine, the earthly vineyard, unless through circumcision or keeping of the law. Immediately following the revelation to Peter, Paul is called and introduced at once into heavenly glory, from whence Christ identifies Himself with His people on earth; and of this Paul is sent "to be a minister and a witness." Hence what was committed to him is called the gospel of the glory of Christ.

But Paul, too, lingers over Jerusalem, and all beautiful was this in him in its way, and in keeping with the long-suffering grace of God; therefore he does not distinctly reveal the new place of the saints until he is shut up in the prison at Rome, having appealed to the emperor, the ruling head of the fourth power, for a justice denied him from his own nation—the Jews.

It is in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the apostle first distinctly details

the nature and consequences of this new place. He had been introduced to it years before, when caught up, as he says, into the third heaven; (2 Cor. xii.) but he does not unfold the knowledge of the mystery of it until he writes to the Ephesians from the prison in Rome. The epistle opens with spiritual blessings in heavenly places; and then the apostle presents to us how Christ has been "raised up and made to sit down at God's own right hand in 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, mark! it is to us-ward who believe, the self-same power by which Christ has been raised up. Just as the good Samaritan set the recovering sufferer on his own beast, so is each believer now wrought on by the self-same power of the Holy Ghost as that which raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at God's right hand in heavenly places. Consequently, inasmuch as the same power works in us as worked in Christ,

the head, so are we brought into experience by faith of the exaltation of the Head, and that in the sphere to which He has been exalted.

It is not so much because we have the life of Christ, as because He is our Head, and in virtue of our peculiar relationship to Him; but of this more another time. The truth is simply this:—Christ our Head is raised to a certain place, and the power which exalted Him to that place has wrought in us, His members, to set us there also. Wherefore it is said, "You hath he quickened and raised up, and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places." Christ being rejected, and earth—as the place of His home—being for the time given up, He has found a place in the heavens; and that place being *His*, is *ours* also. Therefore He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." The fact of His being there was the preparation of the place for us. We must bear in mind that Christ, being rejected on earth, was called of the Father to sit down on His throne; and that when subsequently the

testimony of the Holy Ghost was rejected, the nation and territory of Israel was given up according to the Lord's words, in Matthew xxiv.; and hence, after the death of Stephen, the door of mercy is opened to the Gentiles, and Antioch (where the disciples are first, by divine direction, called Christians) supersedes Jerusalem.

The rejection of the Lord being now complete, the earthly house "left desolate," (Matt. xxiii. 38,) and the natural branches of the olive-tree broken off, (Rom. xi. 17,) He appears in the glory to Paul, and sends him to preach—what? The blessings of the land? Not at all; but "to be a minister and a witness *both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.*" (Acts xxvi. 16.) He was to preach, not the "gospel of the kingdom," but the gospel of glory, that glory in which he had seen the Lord, now rejected from the earth; and the things which were subsequently revealed to him when he was introduced into the third heaven. Thus, all hope

for Jerusalem being annulled, Paul, the minister and witness of these things, unfolds in the Epistle to the Ephesians, how that Christ has been raised up and made sit down at God's right hand in heavenly places as head of His body—the Church; and this position of Christ our Head must necessarily, because of our relation to Him, describe our position. Consequently the apostle proceeds with that declaration, "You that were dead in sins hath he quickened and raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ." This is the place now provided and prepared for the saints. And, as it is clear to any sound mind, that the position which had its centre in the Holy Land is annulled, we cannot know that we have any position at all, and shall be liable to all kinds of spiritual vagaries, unless we hear the apostle Paul, and understand the revelation made known unto him, and through him unto us, as to what *we* (i. e., the saints of the present dispensation) are called to *now*. It would carry me beyond the limits of this paper to show how the

go to prepare a place for you." Now I cite this passage and expression of our Lord, not to deduce therefrom the doctrine of our place, but to show how His *heart* reached out to a place in the heavens for us; and that His going there, so far from being a moment of distance, or forgetfulness, was, on the contrary, the very event which assured our occupation of that place also; and in this sense it was a preparation for us. In other words, this affection of His heart thus declared corroborates the doctrine and finds scope for itself fully when we see the doctrine, which it could only do in a very limited way if the heavenly places were not revealed. Again, the Lord says, in John xvii., "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified;" now, unless there were some place above and beyond the world where He could associate us with Himself, how could this intention and desire of His heart possibly be realized? Thus, although these breathings of Christ's heart as to His desires, intentions, and purposes for us, are by no

earth as a whole was under judgment, so that no other part of it could be substituted for the land of Israel; but if we once admit that the people of that land, once chosen of God for His peculiar inheritance, had so deliberately rejected the Heir that they had been cast off, and therefore the distinct place with which God had for ages connected His words been superseded, we are forced to come to the conclusion, either that the heavenlies are now our place, or that we have no distinct place at all.

I have dwelt on how the apostle connects the saints with their Head, and, as a necessary consequence, establishes them with Him where He is. But there is also another side of this question as to our place and position, which it is equally blessed for us to consider. It is how the affections of Christ's heart, apart from any doctrinal outline or precept, ranges and fills the heavenly limits described for us by the apostle. He says, when about to leave His disciples, "In my Father's house are many abodes, if it were not so I would have told you. I

means to be regarded as points of doctrine, still it is most blessed to see how all the doctrine enunciated by the Apostle Paul suits and fits in to them, so to speak, in true consistency. Nay, more; that the one explains and substantiates the other, so that if we do not hear the apostle, the utterances of Christ's heart will be very meaningless to us. Again. St. Paul writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Here it is distinctly stated *where* our citizenship is, and that not as a future but as a present thing; so positively present that we are to be considered as not merely looking for heaven, or expecting to go there after death, as is too much the limits of the faith of Christians of this day, but as by faith there *already*; and as there looking for an additional blessing—even that our Lord should come from that region in which we are by faith with Him now, and "change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, by the power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

If we bear in mind that our Lord, as Head of a new creation, has sat down at God's right hand in the heavenly places, He being the pledge and root according to the mind of the Father, of the full development of all this creation in heaven and earth, that we are attached to Him by the Spirit as members of His body, His flesh, and of His bones; so that all distinction between Jew and Gentile is lost, nay, that the Jew is on as new a ground as the Gentile, so that if the newness has admitted the Gentile with the Jew, it is a gain to the Jew to be received in common with the Gentile; for "through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father;" if, I repeat, we bear in mind all this, and how we are united to Him by the one Spirit in heaven, we can readily understand that we stand together in the self-same Spirit *down here*. If our position is that of being seated together with Christ in heaven, as members through the Holy Ghost with the Head, we are, on account of this, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and continue in this spiritual unity

though a captive in Babylon, surrender his earthly hopes. Nay, while marking his separation in food from the unclean Gentile, he accepts and uses all the power and honour of the world conferred on him. Was he wrong? Not at all. Why? Because he had nothing but an earthly place. Whereas if his place had been a heavenly one, he would plainly have been inconsistent, for he was expressly connecting himself with the power on earth as one of its citizens, which truly he felt he was, and sighed for the day when he should be restored to Jerusalem. Whatever a man's place may be, the better the man is, the more must he desire to improve it; nay, the more truly elevated and refined he is, the more will he seek to conform all in his place and sphere with which he has to do into the same order of taste and excellence; and on the same principle, the more righteous a man is, the more he will seek the regeneration and improvement of the earth, unless he knows that it is no longer his place or sphere, and that it cannot, until it is purged,

down here. But this spiritual unity can never be understood unless our position with Him in *heaven* is seen and apprehended. Nothing can have a more practical effect on us than a true knowledge of our position; for if my position as a saint now is a heavenly one, the first deduction from this is, that earth as it now is is not my place; and the fact of heaven being accepted as my place instead of earth will very seriously affect me in all my ways on earth; and my own soul's relation to God must be very distinct and close, in comparison to what it would be if my position were an earthly one. Let us consider for a little more closely, how a heavenly position affects my walk on earth.

The earth, we have seen, and ultimately the land, was the sphere where God purposed to shed His blessings on man, which all the faithful looked for, even after power had passed from Israel to the Gentiles; for when Israel had failed, the power which God had entrusted to them passed over to Nebuchadnezzar. Now Daniel, a faithful one, did not, even

be the scene of divine blessing as it once was. Here it is where so many true Christians and righteous souls of the present day are deceived and misled. They feel the world's ruin, and while tasting in their own souls the joy of God in the beauties of holiness, they think that earth must be their place till their death, and that *then* they will get heaven: a very subtle delusion of Satan. For if I do not get heaven until I die, I must of course have earth; and if earth be my place, I must act in reference to it. And it is with this feeling that Christians set themselves to improve the earth as much as they can with that class of improvements which suit earth, and are thus so far earthly-minded in their notions and purposes. They would probably adduce Daniel as an example of a godly man accepting and using the power of the world to serve his cause. Now a heavenly man walking on the earth would only offer to earth for its improvement what would suit heaven and lead to it, and his influence would be according to the order

of his own elevation. You may tell the intrinsic nature of the mind of anyone by the effect it produces, for the effect will always be in correspondence with its own moral power. Thus the very best man whose place is earthly, even though it be only for the present, cannot in moral influence go beyond what would be the best thing for earth, while the heavenly man influences for heaven, and nothing short of that.

If then the believer's position be in heaven, as I have endeavoured to prove, and he has not learned it, how sad and disproportionate to the mind of God must all his best labours and intentions be, and how balked and hindered must he be in comprehending the responsibilities of a calling of which he is grossly ignorant; for it is not only that he does not follow the right one, but he is pursuing the wrong one as if it were the right. I suppose nothing could be more ludicrous, if not profane, (worse than Israel calling on Baal) than to define in words the anomalous position of many saints now. They must have some

place: they cannot have two places at the same time. They do not expect heaven until after death; therefore they have a sort of tenant-at-will position on earth and are without any positive place given to them yet. A very unhappy state this, and one in which they cannot understand the Epistle to the Ephesians, nor the use to themselves of the revelation made to Paul when caught up into the third heaven, which was, I believe, in order that he, as a servant, might introduce us into the place prepared for us by our Lord, who as Host is there to receive us *now* by *faith*, as He will *hereafter* receive us there to Himself *personally* and for ever.

Thus briefly have we seen that if we do not know our position there must be eccentricity in all our course; however good may be our intentions, our strength will be misdirected and our testimony unprofitable. What then is the other side of the question? How will the knowledge of our position affect our souls? I have already observed how the heart of Christ claims to have us by

faith with Him in His own place, as the only refuge for the troubled heart, and the only effectual sanctification from this evil world. If then His love and purpose claim this, how can I respond to the claim or enjoy the fruition of it if my position does not tally with this claim of His heart? Impossible! I can never know it unless I reach the spot where the claim is satisfied; and Christ's love is not satisfied either as to my heart or personal walk, unless I am by faith in the place where He is; and therefore if I am not, I cannot know the blessing of responding to His love, because I have not reached the spot where it is satisfied, and to which it has extended with regard to me. But there is another thing: If I have no place outside of the world or this earth, which is the theatre of Satan's power, for he is the "prince of the power of the air," I must at best—because in the enemy's camp—be always apprehensive of danger, without ever enjoying the blissful serenity of peace. True, I may expect that the God of peace shall bruise Satan

under my feet shortly; but still, if I have no place but the sphere in which Satan is dominant, however I may feel acquitted from sin before God, I can never feel in the joy of complete supremacy over Satan. I may expect to get across the Red Sea, and to escape from the hand of Pharaoh, but I cannot in known triumph sing the song of Moses; and if not, how can I the song of the Lamb?

But mark the contrast! If I have a place now in heaven with Christ my Head, when I realize my position there, I am *above*, and not merely *preserved from*, all the power of Satan; for then, through faith, I am conscious of being raised "far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come." In a word, I range in full supremacy with Christ over everything, entering undisturbedly into the fruition of His love; so completely and entirely have I in spirit escaped from Satan's assaults when I have thus ascertained my true place.

It is true, that all his efforts and energy are brought to bear on my soul, seeking to enter into and to possess this land of rest. The seven nations of Canaan in their opposition to the possession of the land by the children of Israel, were as nothing in comparison to the relentless, violent, and unceasing efforts of the wicked spirits in heavenly places to deprive the saint now of the possession of his place there. And the reason of this opposition is very simple; for there alone can the soul enter into (though still in the body) the extent of the love and service of Christ, and at the same time feel itself in unclouded brightness, above and beyond all the power and assaults of Satan.

The Lord give us grace earnestly to study our position; for in proportion as we know it by faith shall we "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called."

even angels have to search. "Seen of angels." If they want to learn what God is in the character of life and light, they must learn what Christ was upon earth.

"In Him was life." This was His nature. There never was a created being of which we can say, "in him was life." We have no life in ourselves. As believers, Christ is our life. Life is *in* Him—ours is derivative, being from Him. Because He lives, we shall live also.

This life is distinct from the Holy Ghost, which Christ Himself did not get officially until He was baptized, and so life and the Holy Ghost are separate things to the believer. This is seen in the difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Colossians. In the former there is not merely life, but the Holy Ghost sent down as earnest of the inheritance and the power of service; while in Colossians, where life itself in connexion with the Head is the subject, we do not get the Holy Ghost once mentioned, but simply the new man.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chap. i. 1—5. These verses are abstract—not history. In verse 5 we have a very singular statement. The light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. Now, naturally, light cannot shine without putting aside the darkness. The light thus shining then is a very out-of-the-way, non-natural thing. As light, it is an immensely deep truth, that while God is light Himself, yet when we look upon it as it is here revealed in the world, it is *for men*. In the Greek the last clause of verse 4 is a reciprocal proposition. "The life was the *light of men*." It is not for angels, but for men. God is revealed in a way especially suited to man. It is mercy, grace, patience, &c., with which angels have nothing to do. Here then we see God revealed as the light of men and no one else. Abstract godhead is light for every one and everything. Here it is God revealed as the light of men, and after Him as thus revealed

Verse 9 simply means that Christ being here, the light was not for Jews merely, but for every man—the world. Not that every man would positively see it—we know they did not—but it came for them, with an aspect towards all.

In the first part of this chapter we get what is before Genesis. When Genesis begins we have the word already, for in the beginning the Word *was*. The divinity and personality of the Word are very carefully spread out. In the beginning *was* the Word—when everything began *it was*; for it did not begin—it had not beginning. Then "the Word was with God." There I get, as far as 'our ideas and language go, personality—"the Word was God." There I get divinity. In verse 2 we get another thing, which the Fathers, as they are termed, did not understand, but were quite wrong as to it; namely, eternal personality. As to the term *personality*, I do not think much of it; but I know of no better. Human language is defective here.

The force of the term "Word" is that which expresses God's mind. Christ was the only living expression of truth as it is in God. The Word was the expression of God, but it is not language, but a person. The Greek word *λογος* does not mean merely *Word*, but the thought also. Word, thought, and expression of thought are all indicated in Greek by the term *λογος*.

Image and likeness. The term *image* does not express so much as likeness. Image carries with it more the idea of representative—as the image of Jupiter, which is more that which is representative of him—not his likeness. Whereas likeness may not be representative of a person, but conveys to us the idea of what the original is like. Man stood in Eden both as the image and likeness of God. He was the centre of a system—in this sense representing God—for all creation centred up in Adam. Man was the image of God, not of the Word as such, although he is a type of the latter.

In this chapter we get first what the

Word is in His nature and person; (ver. 1, 2;) then we get Him as Creator, (ver. 3,) where we see Him as the maker of everything in the most absolute way.

The anti-nicene fathers were not at all orthodox. Heathen philosophy got amongst them. They were really the corrupters of the simplicity which was in Christ. Their notion was, that the Word only came out to be a person at the creation. Justin Martyr even said, that it was impossible that God should become a man. This was the result of an attempt of man to philosophise on the nature of God, to explain which is impossible.

Verse 4. *In Him was life*. That is, in its very nature life was *in Him*. We have life as given to us by God, but *in Him* was life, and this was the light of men. This light is not the light which Paul says, in 1 Tim., "No man can approach unto." This was abstract Godhead—which is and must necessarily remain inaccessible light. But in the Word, the light is seen as the light of men—light shining out for men. It shines out *to*

sinner, and, if they receive it, also *in* them. Believers ought to exhibit it. In 1 Tim. vi. 16, the light spoken of is quite inaccessible (*ἀπρόσιτον*). It is such that not only no man, but no being, (see Greek) can approach unto. This is quite different from what we have in John i. 4. In the first part of the verse in Timothy the word man is left out. It really means "no being." It is unrevealed divine light—what God is in Himself in the abstract. In the second part of this verse, "man" does come in; but the apostle is simply confirming and applying his statement; bringing it home, as it is called.

Now this light which has come out, which is revealed, the WORD, is for man; it is not adapted to angels, although they, no doubt, may see it, but it is for, fitted to, and takes its character from man. Grace, mercy, patience, love, is its character. Showing God to be connected with man in a way in which He could not be in connexion with angels. This gives man a wonderful place among the creatures of God.

These first five verses in John i. have a kind of covering character to the whole gospel. Up to the end of the eighth chapter, we find the light manifested, but men unable to use it. In chapter ix. we find Christ giving eyes in order that the light may be seen. Before this the light does not shine so as to dispel the darkness. Power is needed to work upon man and not merely light. We see here the moral effect of the light as revealed among men. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all: there could not be darkness where He was, but there might be blindness: so here, the darkness comprehended it not. In chapter ix. we find Christ giving eyes to see the light; without this all was of no use. It is a most remarkable fact to see this light shining and the darkness comprehending it not.

Verse 6. It is very noticeable here, how that verse 5 drops from abstract statement into history. "The light shineth" but the "darkness *comprehended* it not." Hence we get in verse 6 history commenced. God not only sends light

but sends a witness to bear testimony to the Light. Here we get the activity of God's goodness still dealing with the responsibility of man, supposing, of course, grace to make it effectual. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came to bear witness," &c. Verse 9 should be read, according to the best Greek authorities—"That was the true Light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man."

It is a remarkable witness of the great grace of God, that He sent not only the true Light, but a witness to the Light—a witness, as it were, that the sun was shining; not only putting it there to shine, but sent to tell us to look at it. This shows us God's grace and the hardness of man's heart. At the creation, the light that shone needed not a witness to it. It was there, and man saw it; but then *man* was good.

In verse 10 we find that the world would not have Him. Although the world was made by Him, yet it knew Him not. Hence we get an entirely new thing brought in. "To as many

as received Him, to them *gave He power* to become sons of God," &c. Here I see how I get the power. Through receiving Christ I get life-giving power. It is not in myself at all. John is very absolute in his statements, because he deals with the truth itself. Hence we get absolute Calvinism, or rather absolute *grace*. Now here man is nothing at all—has nothing to do with it. Man may receive the Word—believe it—but *Christ* gives life. It is a *gift*. When we get to the root of the matter God is seen in action, and man is nothing. Still there is man's responsibility. Outwardly, as to man, it is either a good will or a bad will, but secretly and really the life comes from God. We here get another thing—life by receiving the *Word*: hence it is we are sons. Before Christ was revealed there might be life, but there could not be sonship. This was only brought out when the Son came into the world and was received. The expression, "power to become," is a bad translation: it should be, "right or title to be sons of God."

This verse also goes outside the Jews: it embraces all that believe. Those who are here made sons are so in contrast with the fleshly relationship which was found in the Jew. This gospel generally set things in contrast with Judaism, as may be seen in almost every chapter.

We get in this gospel no allusion to Pentecost amongst the Jewish feasts that are alluded to, because Christ here always gives us things upon earth. The pass-over was on earth, and He will be on earth at the feast of tabernacles. Christ was in heaven at Pentecost.

"Believe on his name." His name expresses what He really is. To us that name is "*Jesus*," which is not an official name, but a personal one. It is by this name we are saved. In the Gospels "*Christ*" is always an appellation—"the Christ." It became eventually a personal name and is so used frequently in the Epistles of the New Testament.

(To be continued.)

ERRATUM.

Page 217, of last No., for "theogonies," read cosmogonies.

A SERIES.

No. 9.

THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST.

If we do not understand our position as saints with Christ in heaven now, we can never understand the Church as to its constitution down here, or the nature of our membership with it. I therefore proceed with the consideration of this interesting subject; premising to my readers that I take it for granted that they understand their position and calling with Christ in heaven, as I have endeavoured to set it forth in the preceding numbers of this series.

The Church is peculiar to the New Testament. However the people of God may have been united under one government or viewed as a body politic; yet, as a "*church*," according to the force and meaning of that word, they never were. True, the word "*church*" is used by Stephen when speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness; (Acts vii. 38;) but I suppose that no one will as-

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sert that the chosen or elected "assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spake to him in Mount Sinai," bears any resemblance to that "assembly" which the Lord announces in Matthew xvi. 18, that He will build on Himself. "On this rock will I build my church." Before I comment on this remarkable passage, just let me say that an assembly, or a selected congregation, as the word *ἐκκλησία* expresses, is always characterized by the nature of the power or person used in congregating together the component parts. An *ecclesia* must always be formed by some leading principle—some influence acting on the parts and inducing them to form in company.

The subject to which I desire to confine my attention in this paper is the Church, as comprising the body of Christ. To the wider signification of the house of God, which is popularly called the professing church, I do not here allude. And if we keep simply before our minds the body of Christ, we must see that the "assembly" which

forms it necessarily could not exist before He was manifested. He is said to be now *Head* to this "assembly" which is His body; and this plainly teaches that the assembly now formed and known as His body must be subsequent to His own manifestation in flesh; i. e., He must have appeared in a body before it could be said that He was Head of a mystical body, called also an assembly or church. And not only must He have been manifested in flesh, but He must have died and risen ere that body could be set in resurrection-life with Him. He, as risen to the right hand of God, is now Head of the assembly which is His body, and therefore this assembly must, I repeat, have been formed subsequent to His ascension, in order to occupy the relation of body to Him who is the ascended Head to it. If this be not admitted, we shall be involved in endless confusion about the Church, simply because we shall mistake the origin and relations of it. If I attempt to comprise all the saints, from the beginning downwards, in the Church,

I shall in the attempt be driven to say, not only that Christ's body existed before His own manifestation, but that it was founded, and as an "assembly" gathered, on a principle and by an agency wholly different to what it is. For it must be admitted how different was the principle on which was gathered the assembly in the wilderness, and that which is composed of the saints since Christ's resurrection. And we have seen that every assembly is determined by the principle and agency through which it is formed. The saints before Christ's manifestation live by Him, and will for ever rejoice in His presence, being raised by Him to enjoy heavenly glory; but to include them in the Church, His body, is impossible. For to be in any such relationship, He must have been in heaven as the ascended one first, and the Holy Ghost down here on earth attaching the members of His body to Him the Head in heaven, which beyond all controversy could not, and did not, occur until after our Lord's ascension. For then only, as we read in John vii. 39 was the Spirit

given as consequent on His ascension and glorification. I may be told that many saints now, who are indisputably gathered as of this body, know nothing of it, and therefore that ignorance of any one's destined place is no argument that he could not be set in such a place. This is true. Ignorance does not debar me from what I am entitled to by the purpose of God, and therefore no amount of knowledge in any saint before the resurrection of Christ could alter his position as to the point we are discussing, or make that a fact which was not a fact until after the Lord's resurrection; nor could the Spirit of God put any soul into the relation of member to Christ before Christ had by His own act warranted it.

I have already referred to our Lord's words to His disciples when on earth, wherein He notified that the building of His Church was still future, and that it was to be built on Himself as the rock against which the gates of Hades should not prevail, thus distinctly implying, with reference to this new body about

to be formed, that the judgment of death (as I understand the gates of hell,) should not prevail against it; and it is evident that this could not have been verified until after His resurrection. Now this is the first time in Scripture in which mention is made of the church of this dispensation, and when any idea is for the first time suggested to us in the word, it is important that we cease not to refer to it, but study it from *thence*, and import the elements of it into every other passage which anywhere may be found to relate to the same idea and subject. The fact is that we often apply the word "Church" and give it a meaning which we have gathered more from indistinct allusions or types than from the first direct record about it. Types there may be, and are, but I must not identify them with the fact which they typify. For instance, I may say that the family of Bethany typified the Church; but I have no warrant for calling it the Church, which I find, by the Lord's own words, that He could not build until after His resurrection. And hence,

was to sit on David's throne. Surely in these discourses there was nothing to lead the saints beyond an earthly hope and a Messianic glory. And still more so in Acts iii., where Peter connects their full blessing with the "times of refreshing" from the actual presence of the Lord. Here, then, we have the Church begun without any heavenly position as yet revealed. But this was necessary:—for the first members of the Church being gathered at Jerusalem, it was necessary to defer disclosing to them the full purpose of God concerning them, until their nation had rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. All the thousands then gathered in Jerusalem were, no doubt, baptized by one Spirit into one body, and exhibited then more practical union than has ever been seen since; though, as yet, they were only instructed in the glory of the millennial day. And this we can easily conceive—even that the Holy Ghost should begin to form the Church on earth, with its Head in heaven, though as yet untaught as to the position it should occupy until

though it was from Bethany He parted at His ascension, I must follow the course of the Spirit, which descended when He ascended, or I shall not see how the Church was set up.

In a previous paper I have shown that the Church is heavenly; but before this was revealed, the people of God, the apostles even, looked for an earthly hope; for the latter said to our Lord, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"—plainly intimating that they did not expect a heavenly home with Christ: and if they had, where were all the promises to Israel? For it was necessary that every such promise should be first offered, before Israel and the land were finally abandoned. Consequently, we find that the apostles were told to await in *Jerusalem* the promise of the Father; and after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when they testified of "the latter rain," spoken of by Joel the prophet, it was of no heavenly position they spake, but of the fact that Christ, according to the prophecies of David,

the day of the Lord should come. Gathered *out* of rebellious Israel, they were for the moment in Jewish circumstances—in the temple, until the death of Stephen, when the nation having rejected the witness of the Holy Ghost, its doom was sealed.

Now on the death of Stephen, it will be remarked, a general break up at Jerusalem ensued. Not only was the gospel in consequence carried into Samaria, but Saul, one of the witnesses of the death of the first martyr Stephen, and who was thus legal evidence of what his nation had done, is called of God in a miraculous manner, to learn His mind and the fulness of His grace in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Saul of Tarsus, relentlessly persecuting the Church, is arrested by the light of the glory of God, and then hears from the risen Lord of His own identification with the people whom Saul was persecuting on earth; and he finds himself in the glory with Jesus, and hence is commissioned with a gospel distinct and peculiar from that already preached; for he was to be

a "minister and a witness both of those things which he had seen," (even those which I have now noticed,) and also of "those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Let us keep before our minds that the Church, the body of Christ, did not exist before the resurrection of Christ, that it dates its foundation from thence, that it was first formed by the Holy Ghost in Jewish circumstances, the materials being gathered out of Israel, and that when the nation had rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, heaven was opened—Jesus received Stephen to Himself, thus declaring that the glory of heaven would be given to them who were cast out on earth. But still more: the nation having sealed its own condemnation, and the house being left desolate, the Lord discloses through Saul of Tarsus the place where He is Himself in glory, announcing to him, nevertheless, that He is one with His people on earth, and therefore the glory was open to them through Him. The great interval between earth and heaven was spanned,

the last testimony to his doomed nation; lingering over its ruins, if I may so say, according to the intense love of his own nature. But when he has learned from the ill-treatment he, in his own person, received from it and its judges, that all is ineffectual, and that the naturally-disparaged Gentile has more justice and mercy, (for he is forced to appeal to Cæsar,) he is led as a prisoner from Jerusalem to Rome, and from his Gentile prison, is now a personally-fitted vessel to set forth in writing, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the full purpose of God respecting the Church formed on earth.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are told that Christ is now Head of His body the Church, and that each member is, by the same power which raised Him, quickened and raised up and made to sit together with Him, in relation to Him, the Head, and in relation to one another, as of one body; for there is one body and one Spirit, and we have been all baptized by one Spirit into one body, besides each drinking of the same Spirit.

and the chief of sinners was introduced to the Saviour, the Lord of heaven and earth, in the scene of glory, and then commissioned to go and be a minister and a witness of the things he had seen. With Saul's ministry, accordingly, a new era is begun for the Church. First, to Peter is unfolded in chap. x. that God can put all kindreds of race together in a common position without their being "common or unclean;" and forthwith Peter preaches to the Gentiles; the Holy Ghost manifestly sealing the testimony, and declaring that they were one body with the Jews already called out. After this, Antioch supersedes Jerusalem. The enmity of "the citizens" rises to its height; Herod the king kills James and imprisons Peter; but as the enmity develops itself, so does the independence of the Church of all earthly position show itself. In a word, the rest of the acts of the apostles is but a history of God's marked forbearance towards Israel, through the intervention of Paul, to whom the heavenly position was revealed, but who is used to give

Now if I know that by the Spirit I am placed in relation to the body (for "God has set each of us in the body as it hath pleased him") with Christ in heaven, I can find it easy to understand how I am kept by the Spirit in relation to the body down here.

The Holy Ghost, as we have seen, formed the assembly at the first, but the saints then did not know their peculiar relation to Christ in heaven, as members to a Head risen and seated. They were, so to speak, on the line for this fuller knowledge, but it had not been revealed as yet. Now when it is revealed, the saints can understand how natural and consistent it is that they, who are set together with Christ in heaven, as a body in relation to a Head from whom each member derives its nourishment, are held in relation to one another down here; and thus the baptism by the Spirit into one body is spiritually apprehended. It is not merely the fact that we are all regenerated by the one Spirit, but that we are set in a peculiar associated, reciproca-

ting relation to one another, as the body of Christ our Head. When the Lord is pleased to set Himself forth as in any particular relation to us, it is our blessing to receive and understand what He communicates. Now He has never before declared Himself as Head of a body. He holds, blessed be His name, many relations; but now for the first time is it revealed that He is Head of His body, the Church, concerning which there are mysteries undeclared till now. There being but one Spirit and one body, it is by the same Spirit the saints are held together down here in positive membership. However scattered or carnally separated, they are kept in relation to the one body, as units of it, because the Spirit is one; and as He ministers with reference to Christ the Head, He must retain the members in the one body, though they, unless spiritually, can never know of this wonderful and universal bond. We cannot, with the natural mind comprehend how, if one member suffers, all suffer with it. But if I receive what

heart of Christ, and He ever maintains in His ministries the oneness of the body, though we know that many saints do not enjoy or understand the blessing of this truth; still He nevertheless acts according to the mind of the Head, and with instinctive regard to the membership of the saints to one another. The natural mind cannot understand it, but it is revealed to faith, and we know in ourselves, in proportion to our spirituality, how truly this corresponds with our spiritual instincts. I must not only admit that I am presented in unity with the saints in heaven, but also that I am by the Holy Ghost held in relation and membership with every saint on earth, as being through Him of the body of Christ. The Lord as Head keeps His eye on His body as one; not in the fragments or piecemeal that man sees it, and the Holy Ghost retains each in his instinctive relation to the rest, and to the Lord in spite of all the carnality in them, which perverts their comprehending and responding to it. It is a fact for faith, and if not received, there

the Lord reveals to me, as to the close and inseparable union and relation of Himself and His body, I can readily comprehend how all over the universe the Holy Ghost holds every saint in corporate membership, not visible or even known, save to the spiritual, walking by faith in the light of this truth. The Holy Ghost is now on earth, sent down to connect each gift of the Father to Christ with Christ in heaven. Out of the world which rejected the Son of God, He is gathering a distinct company of saints, called the body of Christ, because peculiarly related to Him as His Bride, which He will present to Himself by and by to share with Him His sovereignty over earth in the day when, as the last Adam, He shall renovate everything from the ruin entailed on it by the first Adam. If the first Adam settled in the old world with a bride formed for himself, so will the last Adam, in a supreme degree, establish Himself in the day of His reign with *His* Bride formed from Himself. The Holy Ghost is ever acting with reference to the

can be no energy of soul to respond to it, and therefore the gain of it cannot be known.

Let us briefly consider what is the gain to our souls of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church on earth, baptizing the members into one body. First. If the saints are not now brought to God by the one Spirit they can have no communion with one another, for it is by one Spirit we both, Jew and Gentile, have access to the Father. Mere life, though the same in quality and power, could not give sensible, reciprocating communion; nor could I by mere life be affected by the changes and alternations in the closest family ties. As to the people of God aforetime, there was no intention or possibility that they should be in this spiritual bond; i.e., that the action of one should affect the whole. The sin of Achan, and such like, affected the congregation nationally, but there was no spiritual suffering on account of it. If the Spirit be not holding all the members in one body now, the idea of a spiritual communion

between them must be unreal. For it is not enough that I should believe that as I am quickened by the Holy Ghost I can therefore have communion with all the converted. Conversion is an individual thing, and there could be no link between one converted man and another, save only that each had received like mercy from God. There must be a link, not only of a blessing common to all, but one corporately acting on all; and this only could be by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I may not be able to comprehend how each converted one by the work of the Holy Ghost is kept by Him in bodily relation to the rest, and therefore as two or more are in the Spirit, they are proportionately sensible of communion, of which they could not be, nor could they be affected by it, if not baptized by one Spirit into one body. And let me add, that it is from ignorance of this subject, while retaining the name of it, that we know and cultivate the communion of saints so little. It is also clear, that if in this communion one with another, all the natural hin-

that while everyone acknowledges the truth as a doctrine, few know or understand what it is in reality. In former times it depended on the building—the tabernacle or the temple; *now* it depends on the Spirit building together the members of Christ's body for a habitation of God. If the Spirit be not the ruling agent, and recognized as such, there can be no happy, worshipping perception of God's dwelling among us. And what would be the effect on our souls of realizing sensibly this wondrous fact of God dwelling with us, and making us an habitation for Himself? Would any manifestation to the external senses, such as there was in olden times, be equal in any degree to the deep, wondrous sense of the presence of God by the Holy Ghost to the soul now? Types and shadows having passed away, it is plain that it is only by the Spirit we can be His habitation now. We have used names and satisfied ourselves with them for realities; but we know what it was when the ignorant and unlearned, having the secrets of his heart made

drances are gone, whether Jew or Gentile, so that nothing which might have reached me as a man can now touch me—all enmity having been removed by the cross of Christ, and I, through Him, by one Spirit, having access to the Father, in spite of any position in which I had been. How blessed and helpful this must be!

Secondly. If the saints were not moulded together and fashioned by the Spirit there would be no habitation for God now. Buildings may be devoted to God's service, and we may invest them with reverential sanctity, and all the time we may overlook our ground or authority, or the mode by which God would dwell among us. This feeling is so received in Christendom that believers often fall into the current idea without ever ascertaining whether it be really so, or how it could be so. Is there a habitation for God now? Yes, certainly—not a visible one as in the days of the tabernacle and temple, but not the less known by those who seek and wait for it. The stumbling-block to many is,

manifest under the ministry of God's servant, should fall down and own that God was in you of a truth.

It would be the same now in proportion to the faith of those who meet in Christ's name, for the Holy Ghost has never forsaken His work, though we have lost sight of His purpose and have had no faith in Him; so that the defectiveness of our knowledge and perception of the blessing of being God's habitation is traceable to our unbelief, and we must confess that God's word is true, and that the reason of our ignorance and loss of this wondrous blessing—even the sense of being God's habitation—arises from our meagre apprehension of the Spirit's work towards the members of Christ's body down here. God does not dwell now on earth but in the building of the saints; and the saints cannot build themselves together. The fact of their being "lively stones" does not enable them to connect themselves with others. The Spirit is the cement, and *He* binds the already lively stones into a spiritual house for God.

If I see by faith the Spirit of God down here, and His special work in the saints, I am let into this knowledge of how God dwells with us, and I am also given by the Spirit to taste of this great and richest blessing. If I do not see the Spirit's place and work, whatever my desires, or pretensions, or assumption, I know nothing of what it is to be part of the habitation of God now. How important, then, that we should simply believe in the Spirit's place and work with reference to the whole company of saints on earth! And how the non-apprehension of this accounts for the state of many Christians! For unless we see the unity of the Spirit and maintain it, we forego our vocation.

Lastly, if we do not see the Spirit in the body holding the members in relation to one another, we cannot understand the place and value of the ministerial gifts. The gifts of the Spirit are given for the whole company on earth, "for the perfecting of the saints." The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal. No gift is

given to any member for his own separate use, or for the use of any separate congregation, but with the view of edifying the body of Christ. It is important to be clear on this point, because if I do not see the place and responsibility of the ministerial gifts, I must necessarily limit its usefulness, and in many ways divert it from its power and efficacy. If the Spirit be only individual, then the gift is individual; but if the Spirit builds together the saints on earth, then the gifts of the Spirit are for one just as much as for another; and all with a view for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. Now, if a servant of God has a gift, and exercises it either independently of the edification of the body, or only for a section of the Church, then that servant is not honouring the Spirit, nor is he ever able to use his gift with true energy. He may be a devoted, zealous man, but He never can edify the body of Christ, for the simple reason that he is not in the mind and purpose of the Spirit. He may be

used for conversions, and for many good works, but he will never be used for the "perfecting of the saints," which is the main object of the Spirit in His service down here. If any one has the gift of an evangelist, and does not see that he is in the circle of the members of the body, controlled by the Spirit of God in that circle, as well as blessed by Him, such an one may be used in conversions, but will the converts take or seek the ground of the Church of God? I believe they could not, though truly members of the body of Christ. I believe that the reason why so many converted ones ever remain unperfected and unbuilted together is, that their ministers have not ministered to them according to the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit's mind and purpose has been lost sight of, and therefore the fulness of blessing is denied them, until they, through grace, seek for a ministry which owns His work and purpose.

In a word, if I believe that the purpose of the Spirit of God is to edify the body of Christ by ministerial gifts, "until we all come in the unity of the

faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," I must admit that every gifted member belongs as much to one member of the body as to another. He may be set in this place or that, and be tied there by circumstances; and the place to which he is tied may, by God's ordering, be that which stands *most* in need of His particular gift; but if I see that the Spirit is treating of the *whole* body, then I must see that His gift is for the *whole*, and not for a part; for He does not act with reference to a locality, but for the edification of the body; and the gift which suits the saints in a locality belongs to the body, and has its value in any part of it.

O for more grace! For the more grace is given to us, the more readily shall we believe and enter into the wondrous riches of God's mercy toward us; and instead of rejecting the mysteries of His grace, we shall pray the more earnestly that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened, that we may know His ways with us.

JACOB AT BETHEL, PENIEL,
AND BEERSHEBA.

Much gracious illustration of the love of Christ towards us may be found in the story of the Patriarch at these three places, or on the three occasions which they furnish. And each of them has its own lesson and comfort for us.

At Bethel (Gen. xxviii.) Jacob is a saint *under discipline*. His sin in deceiving his father had brought a rod upon him; and he was now an exile from his father's house, soon to be a drudge in the house of an injurious master in a strange and distant land.

He was now lying by night under the broad heavens, with the stones of the place for his pillow, and his travelling stick as his only companion. But the Lord meets him, as He always can meet His people in the place where they are accepting the punishment of their sins. He does not however remove the rod. He does not send him back to his father's house, undertaking to make all there comfortable to him again, but allows him still to pursue his wearisome, solitary journey. He does not take

ever thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Jacob must still be under the rod, an exile in a strange land, but the God of all grace will be there with him. This was love "in deed and in truth."

At Peniel (Gen. xxxii.) Jacob is in another character before us. Not as at Bethel, a saint under discipline for moral evil, but a saint *in an unbelieving spirit*, calculating and fearing, though religiously, when he should have been trustful, and calm, and satisfied. The fear of Esau had ensnared him, and he had surrendered confidence in God to that fear. He had not morally offended, as before at the bed-side of his father, but he had backslidden in spirit from God, reasoning, and praying, and laying his own plans instead of exercising peaceful confidence in God and a believing remembrance of His undertakings and promises.

The Lord cannot be indifferent to this. Surely not. He searches the reins and the heart, as He notices the

away the rod. This is never His way. But He promises to be with him under it, to give him His presence in the distant place of his exile and bondage, and never to leave nor forsake him till He bring him back to the land of his fathers, his own pledged and promised inheritance.

This was so, and this is one of the perfect forms of love. This was love, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. The Lord (to speak as men speak) did not spare Himself trouble or consult for His own ease, but looked simply and merely at the condition of the one He loved and ministered to it. Just like His way afterwards with the camp in the wilderness. When by their unbelief Israel made themselves wanderers in a barren and thirsty land for forty years, the God of glory in the cloud went about with them. He left them not, but was a wilderness-wanderer with them for forty years, as now He becomes a sojourner with Jacob in a distant land for twenty. "I am with thee," says the Lord to Jacob, "and will keep thee in all places whitherso-

hands and the feet. He discerns between joint and marrow, between thoughts and intents, (Heb. iv.,) and cannot be indifferent to this backsliding in spirit, this departure from the simplicity and the quiet of a believing mind. He therefore contends with him. In the gloom of midnight He comes forth to wrestle with him. But withal, by the secret, in-working virtue of His Spirit, He restores His soul also. He revives faith in the heart of Jacob—commanding, triumphant, princely faith; so that Jacob faints not under this rebuke, sharp and peremptory as it was; but he is led again in the path of righteousness and beholds the face of God again in unclouded joy of heart, singing of his blessedness as he goes onward.

This was love, divine love again, though in another form. The Lord was consulting for Jacob's condition, and ministering to it accordingly, faithfully and practically. And this again is love "in deed and in truth." It is not loving "in word and in tongue," as amiable human nature often does, as some of us know to our humbling; but "in deed and in truth," as God must and does love.

At Beersheba, after all this, (Genesis xlv.) this same Jacob is seen in another character, another relationship to God. He is not, as at Bethel, an erring saint under discipline; nor as at Peniel, a saint in a backslidden state of heart for the time, calculating on his own resources, instead of using God's; but here at Beersheba, Jacob is a saint in *healthful jealousy of heart over his own ways*, fearful that he has already taken one wrong step, and pausing godlily ere he take a second. It is interesting and instructive to ponder this.

Jacob had been already persuaded that Joseph was indeed in Egypt. This we see at the close of the preceding chapter. And this persuasion had, very naturally, set him on the way to Egypt at once. "Joseph my son is yet alive," said he; "I will go and see him before I die." But now, on reaching Beersheba, he pauses. Beersheba was the southernmost point in the land, that looked right down towards Egypt; and as, with that land full in view, he begins to bethink himself afresh, and to remember the God of his fathers in connexion with it. He pauses, and offers sacrifices to the God of Isaac. A godly fear, which ever works repentance not to be repented of, seems to seize upon his spirit. It is not again the fear of man, which brings a snare, but the fear of God, which is the

beginning of wisdom. He pauses. He seems to remember that Egypt was forbidden ground. His grandfather, Abraham, had been defiled there, and sent out of it back to the land which he himself was then leaving, humbled and dishonoured. His father, Isaac, had been warned not to go there; and, according to this, it seems he offers sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac.

This was beautiful in its season. This was the exercise of the godly mind. He had listened to nature ere he set out, but now he must sift and challenge the way of nature in the light of the Lord. And under this awakening of his soul, this action of a quickened, sensitive conscience, he makes his appeal to God. And, blessed to tell it, the God of Bethel, and the God of Peniel, will approve Himself, in the riches of His grace and the perfections—the divine perfections—of His love, the God of Beersheba also. He appears to His saint that very night. If the saint, having used the two-edged sword, and having had his very thoughts and intents exposed to him, had likewise used the throne of grace and applied himself to it, the blessed God would surely let him know that He was sitting on that throne to show mercy and render help in the time of need. (Heb. iv.) He appears to him that night, and quiets the uneasiness of his heart, comforting

him with the assurance that he may continue his journey down to Egypt without fear or hesitation, for that He would be with him, give him a sight of Joseph, bless him in that land, and bring him up out of it again.

This was love again in its divine quality, love "in deed and in truth," love that consulted for its object. Yea, and all these are samples and witnesses of immediate, individual, personal love; that love to one's very self which the heart of the Lord both entertains and exercises. Are we conscious of it? Is it among the gifts of grace? Surely, indeed; though we taste it coldly and with some suspicion, it may be. It is more, as I may express it, than the *public* grace in which we stand, as in company with "all saints." At least, it is beside that. It savours of the white stone, which the overcomer is to receive at the hand of Christ in the day of the kingdom. (Rev. ii. 17.) These cases at Bethel, Peniel, and Beersheba witness this immediate, individual, personal love of which I speak. May we enjoy it by simple faith! It is no strange thing. Paul carried the sense of it about with him wherever he went, as we see in Gal. ii. 20.

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE— A PATTERN.

When God was pleased to dwell in the midst of Israel, He revealed the manner and order of worship which He could accept. In this He is unchangeable. Circumstances may and have altered the manner of worship; but it is God who has directed the change, and made known to His people how He would now have them come before Him as worshippers. There never was at any time, after the Lord Jehovah tabernacled in the midst of Israel, power or license given to men to worship Him as they would. He was the object of worship, and He directed the way of approach into His presence. The idea, so frequently expressed, that men may worship Him as they think fit, provided their creed be correct, is foreign to the word of God. God has not said so; and what is man that he should regulate of his own accord how he will worship the Almighty One, who has made Himself known now to His people in

the character of Father. It is a mighty privilege that man can worship God, that God will permit him to come into His presence. Is man, the recipient of this privilege, to say how it shall be carried out? Shall the child or the father prescribe the manner of address suited to the position and relationship existing between them? Shall the servant or the master declare what language and demeanour is suited for the former in the presence of the latter? Shall the creature or the Creator lay down the mode of worship and method of approach to Him before whom the very angels veil their faces? What man would not do to men of like passions with himself, he thinks it not out of place to do to God. But He has given no such license. It behoves man to learn what He has declared on this point, to search and see how he is to draw nigh. Before the Lord Jesus came God would be worshipped at Jerusalem. The Lord made known that the place and manner of worship would change. "The hour cometh

the Lord had appeared on Mount Moriah. There He had chosen to dwell, and there from henceforth was the place of worship for all Israel till the Lord came. But the sanctuary on Mount Moriah has been destroyed. No spot on earth has been chosen in its place. There is no sanctuary now but that which is above. The temple of God is in heaven, the ark of the covenant is there, (Rev. xi. 19,) the golden altar is there, (Rev. viii. 3,) the high priest is there, (Heb. iv. 14,) and the worship must be in accordance with the position of the sanctuary. That which Moses erected, we are told, was but the pattern of things in heaven. "For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." (Heb. viii. 5.) From this pattern no deviation could be permitted. So, too, when David prepared for the temple to be erected by Solomon, he gave to "his son the pattern of the porch and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner

when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 23, 24.) Spiritual in its nature and true in its way, such is the character of acceptable worship now.

If God has prescribed the manner, He has also made known the place of worship. It must be in the sanctuary, wherever that is. Of sanctuaries the word of God knows but two, the heavenly and the earthly; and as man cannot worship God how he will, no more can he worship Him where he will. There *was* the sanctuary on the earth, there *is* the sanctuary in heaven. True the earthly sanctuary varied in its locality. But God never appointed two sanctuaries on earth at once. When the temple of Solomon was dedicated, the tabernacle of Moses passed away. It had done its work. The presence of

parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God and of the treasuries of the dedicated things. . . . All this, said David, the Lord made me to understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." (1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12, 19.) God in both cases ordered the form, and Moses and Solomon only carried out what had been appointed. But why this accuracy? Why this copying in the tabernacle of what Moses had seen? Why was no latitude allowed to the skilled workmen, Bezaleel, and Aholiab, and all the wise-hearted under them? Because the tabernacle and its furniture represented in various ways what none on earth, except Moses, had seen, the glory and excellency of one to whose perfection no art of man could add—the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the midst of Israel, as they encamped in the wilderness, was a space,

curtained off from the rest a hundred cubits by fifty. On the north, south, and west side no entrance could be found. The curtains of fine-twined linen, five cubits (about eight feet) high, aptly denoting the holiness of the place where God dwelt, effectually prevented any one gazing into the sacred enclosure. If by chance any one had got a sight of the court from a neighbouring eminence, what would he have seen? An oblong tabernacle, covered with badger-skins, presenting certainly nothing attractive to the eye as seen from without. To the priest within the tabernacle the case was very different, but to those without there was no beauty in it. So to those out of Christ there is no beauty in Him. On the three sides of the court nothing was seen but the fine-twined linen curtains. On the east side how different the appearance presented to Israel. There was the entrance, and instead of the plain, fine-twined linen, a hanging of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen marked the door. "For the gate of the court shall

of the court could see the entrance of the holy place; but the curtain before it concealed from their view all that was within.

To the brazen altar all could come. It was for the need and use of all; hence it stood at the entrance of the court, as the first object that those who came there must see, proclaiming by its position that none could come within the sacred precincts, and walk in that hallowed enclosure, without passing that altar. The way was by the altar. On it were offered the sacrifices and offerings; at its foot the blood was poured out; while on its north side stood the offerer, as the priest sacrificed what he had brought. By sacrifice alone can man enter into the place where God dwells—the sacrifice of Christ, as shadowed forth by the altar and its victim. Ere he can come into God's presence, expiation must be made, as the blood poured out abundantly testified.

But while all in Israel could and must come to the brazen altar with their sacrifices and offerings; all could not

be an hanging of twenty cubits of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, wrought with needlework. (Ex. xxvii. 16.) Man was not left to devise the entrance for himself. If God separated the court of the tabernacle from the rest of the camp, He directed where the entrance should be, and of what the hangings should be composed. At the east end—and beautiful in its colours of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen—what does this mean? The court separated from the camp points out the holy nature of the place where God dwelt, and the entrance at the east end may teach us by whom man could go in, even by Christ the door, the branch or dayspring, *ἀνατολή*, but Christ as the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, Son of man, crucified, His heavenly character, sovereignty and death shadowed forth apparently in the colours of this curtain.

Entering through the door, three things are seen—an altar of brass, a laver or sea of brass, and the tabernacle beyond. Those that stood at the door

enter the tabernacle of the congregation. The priests alone had the right of entrance there. And to do that, it needed, not only expiation, but cleansing. When first consecrated as priests, they were washed all over; and ever after, as they entered on their work, whether at the altar or within the tabernacle, they had to wash their hands and feet in the brazen sea. (Exod. xxx. 20.) Cleansing, then, they needed as well as expiation—the two parts of the work of Christ on the cross. Out of His side flowed blood and water. (John xix. 34.) "This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 John v. 6.) The altar and the sea tell us of these two things: the altar, that without shedding of blood is no remission—proclaiming by the sacrifice offered thereon that God could accept a sacrifice for sins, yet showing by the animals constantly slain that the real sacrifice had not yet been offered; the brazen sea, that man needed not merely an expiation for sin, but cleansing from it, ere he could enter the

house of God, and minister in His sanctuary. The laver probably typified the cleansing from defilement in walk by the word; but all that is here insisted on is the need of cleansing for those that ministered.

Beyond the laver was the tabernacle, with its curtained entrance of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen—the very same in texture and colour as that of the door of the court; showing that, as no entrance could be found into the court except through the man Christ Jesus, into the tabernacle there was no other door but Himself. All this the people could see, but they could not enter the holy place. But when the priest went in, what a scene presented itself! Without in the court the altar and the laver were of brass; here all was of gold. Gold around, and curtains above, and a vail in front. Gold, portraying divine righteousness; the curtains and vail, the manhood of the Lord. On the left and on the right he saw gold: but above, covering all, was the manhood of the Lord displayed in

the blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen. So far, they resembled the entrance-hangings; but there is a difference, and a marked one. On these curtains, and on the vail which hung before the most holy place, were cherubim of cunning work. All that belongs to the Lord is not made known to men at once. The sinner needs a revelation of the Lord in grace; the saint, or worshipper, can dwell with delight and interest on what belongs to His person. The sinner seeks for what is given him in Christ; the saint desires to know what is given to Christ. The former is occupied with his needs, and how Christ can meet them; the latter, having learnt all that, can be occupied with what belongs to his Lord. So to those outside in the court the only manifestation of the Lord was as He appears in grace. He is the door. By His blood and death expiation and cleansing are effected. But once within the tabernacle, the intrinsic character of divine righteousness meets the eye in the gold on the walls and furniture of the holy place;

and the power which belongs to the Lord Jesus as the one who has glorified the Father is taught in the curtains and vail.

On the curtains are cherubim of cunning work. Wherever cherubim are mentioned in Holy Writ, they seem to have reference to the exercise of judicial power. God's throne whence judgment comes forth is supported by cherubim. (See Ezekiel.) "He rode upon the cherub and did fly." (Psalm xviii. 10.) The place of His presence on earth, from whence He gave commandments to Moses, was between the cherubim. (Ex. xxv. 22.) The cherubim with the flaming sword debarred the approach to the tree of life after Adam's sin. (Gen. iii. 24.) If the blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen tell us of the manhood of the Lord, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, King, yet to be crucified, the cherubim on the curtains and vail would seem to teach that to this one belongs the power of judgment. "For he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness,

by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 31.) "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John v. 22.)

But why were the cherubim not seen without on the hangings of the door. What sin-convicted soul can bear to think of judgment against sin? He knows he deserves it; but the thought of it overwhelms him. But tell of it to a soul that has found peace through the blood of the Lamb, which has passed from death unto life, which knows it will not come into judgment, because the Lord has borne it already, it can hear of it unmoved by fear. To one at the altar and in the court the grace of God in Christ is declared; to one inside the tabernacle, pardoned, cleansed, and walking separated from defilement, the prerogatives of the Lord can be displayed. If divine righteousness was symbolized by the gold, the power and authority to judge all that fell short of that was seen displayed in the cherubim on the curtains and the vail.

But what else was there to see? A

candlestick, a table, and an altar, and all of pure gold. No alloy, nothing that was not pure, could be accepted as befitting the place. In God's house, where He dwells, purity must be the characteristic; for He is pure.

The candlestick with its seven lamps was there to give light in the darkness; the table was there to receive the bread laid up before the Lord; while from the altar ascended, morning and evening, grateful incense to the Lord of hosts. But what had these to do with the worshipper—the priest who trod the floor of the sanctuary? Did these only set forth the character of Christ: or had he not an interest in them? Assuredly he had. The candlestick spoke of the light by which he could walk, when the darkness of night fell on all around outside. Christ is the light for His people. As He has life in Himself, and He gives life, so He is light and can give it. He is the true light, and “whosoever believeth in him shall not abide in darkness.” But, besides light for guidance in the sanctuary, food is wanted to sus-

he found in the court; what he wanted as a worshipper he found in the tabernacle. But God ordered each thing, and he found it suited to his wants.

One thing more claims attention in the holy place—an altar of gold, on which the high priest burnt incense, morning and evening. Every morning and evening a lamb was offered up on the brazen altar in the court, as a burnt-offering. Every morning, when Aaron dressed the lamps, and every evening, when he lighted them, he burnt incense upon the golden altar. (Exodus xxx.) Thus, in connexion with the daily sacrifice, there was the daily incense; teaching that the worship of God's people needed incense to make it acceptable to Him. And what is that incense? The merits of Christ. We see in (Rev. viii. 8—5) the incense offered up with the prayers of God's saints, and we learn their acceptance by the answer accorded. And what perfume was it that was used thereon? God had arranged what it should be; He Himself made known the mixture. (Exod. xxx. 34—38.) Man

tain those who minister. This, too, God provides. The high priest lighted the lamps, the high priest placed the shewbread on the table. (Lev. xxiv.) God provides for His priests both light and food. Christ answers to their wants in both capacities. From the table the priest was fed with the loaves which, placed before the Lord, He had accepted. The priest could feed in the sanctuary, but it must be on what God had ordained. But the priest did not eat of the same bread as that which was taken in before the Lord. The Lord did not have for His portion a part of what the priests eat; but the priests eat the very bread which had been taken in before God, and which He had accepted. So we, through grace, feed on Christ, the accepted sacrifice, the Son in whom the Father is well pleased. What a feast for us! How all the priest needs he finds provided for him, and just as he needs it. In the court he had the altar and the brazen sea, within the tabernacle he had light and food. What he required ere he could become a worshipper

could not use it, however fragrant, for his own pleasure. It was most holy to the Lord, “a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy.” Of each separate ingredient no quantity is mentioned, but equal quantities of all; nor is it stated how much was to be made at once. For who shall measure the quantity needful for us? Who shall estimate the sweetness of the merits of the Lord? Who shall say that one ingredient is more needful than another? All, then, that we find in the holy place tells of Christ; and the priest admitted there to minister, finds the high priest has trimmed and lighted the lamps, arranged the shewbread on the table, and burnt the daily incense on the golden altar. With these the priest had nothing to do, but to receive the benefits that resulted therefrom. He had to sacrifice for the people outside, and to offer the bread of his God. (Lev. xxi. 17.) Within the sanctuary he could minister, “and eat the bread of his God.” (Lev. xxi. 22.)

Behind the golden altar hung the

gorgeous vail, hiding from the view of the priest the most holy place, as the holy place had been screened from the gaze of those who had access only to the court. Behind that vail none but the high priest could enter. He, and he alone, could go into the very place where the throne of the Lord was established on the earth, the mercy seat between the cherubim. How each step of the way, from the entrance of the court to the most holy place, reminds us of Christ as the only entrance, and the unfitness of man for God's presence. Within the court any of the children of Israel could come with their offering, and stand by the brazen altar whilst it was being sacrificed; within the holy place the priests alone could go; and within the holy of holies none but the high priest could enter. But the vail has been rent: we can see into it. The flesh of Christ was the vail. Rent on the cross, no vail now divides the two chambers. Admitted as priest into the holy place, nothing can hinder us from seeing the most holy place, and entering

looking to one another toward the mercy seat. (Exod. xxv. 20.) And what did they there see—the law? No; that was covered up by the mercy seat placed on the ark. The gold of the mercy seat typifying divine righteousness? Doubtless. But something else was there. On that which typified the unsullied, untarnishable righteousness of God, marks of blood could be seen. No stain could be discovered in that righteousness, for it is perfect, it is divine. Yet there were marks of blood—the blood of atonement. How beautiful was this! The supporters of God's throne, emblems of His judicial power, whose acts are based on the law deposited within the ark, look to the blood of atonement, by which expiation was made, and man could righteously be received into God's presence. Here indeed "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Of what are these two, the ark and the mercy seat, typical? Christ. In the ark were deposited the tables of the covenant. If Israel had kept the covenant they had

it likewise. When the high priest entered once a year on the day of atonement, he came with incense in his hand and the blood of atonement; the incense to cover the mercy seat while he drew nigh with the blood, that he die not. Acting thus by divine appointment, he could not feel at ease in that place. But we can go there with *boldness*; not like the high priest, to sprinkle the blood on and before the mercy seat, and then to come out; the blood has indeed been sprinkled, therefore we can draw nigh with perfect confidence, for sin has been put away. And since the vail has been rent, we can see, as it were, right into the holy of holies. What was there then? All around was gold; above were the curtains of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, with cherubim of cunning work; before the high priest stood the ark and the mercy seat with the cherubim overshadowing the latter with their wings. Here was the dwelling-place of God—"He sitteth between the cherubim." (Psalm xcix. 1.) These with outstretched wings had their faces

entered into with God, (Exod. xix.,) the blessings annexed to its observance would have been theirs. But they sinned and forfeited all; and the very tables were broken, symbolical of their failure in keeping it. New tables were given and laid up in the ark. Israel had failed. All blessing on the ground of their obedience was at an end. But One was to come who would keep the law perfectly. In the ark were the unbroken tables laid up. In the ark were they kept intact. In Christ we see them perfectly fulfilled. "Thy law is within my heart." He, and He alone, could observe all that the two tables had enjoined, and by virtue of His obedience the blessings Israel forfeited the remnant will yet enjoy; and by virtue of that same obedience we enter into blessing likewise. Not that He kept the law vicariously. But He kept it, He magnified it. It was holy, just, and good. He observed it. Showed Himself, by keeping it, to be the Lamb without blemish and without spot, the only sacrifice God could accept, but which

having accepted, we, believers in the Lord, enter on all the blessings which His obedience can procure. If the ark, with the tables of the covenant within it, was typical of the Lord, not less so was the mercy seat above it. He is the propitiation for our sins. (1 John ii. 2.) He is also the propitiatory or mercy seat. (Rom. iii. 25.) (*ἱλαστήριον*, not *ἱλασμός*.) In Him God can meet with the sinner, and the sinner meet with God.

Wherever we go, then, in the court or tabernacle, we see what speaks of Christ. By Him alone can an entrance be gained to the house of God. He is everything to the sinner, as He is all that the saint wants. We never get beyond what He is for His people. We can never reach a position where we have no need of Him. "In him all fulness dwells," and "of his fulness have we all received." (Col. i., John i.) The sinner must enter through Christ into the court, the worshipper into the tabernacle by Him, and as he goes through the holy place we find Him supplying

all his wants; and when he reaches the furthest point in the tabernacle, the meeting-place between him and God, there he finds the same person. It is Christ in the most holy place, as it is Christ in the court, and Christ in the holy place. In the innermost recesses of the sanctuary, as at the entrance to the court without, we meet with the Lord Jesus, different, indeed, in manifestation, yet withal the same in person. The sacrifice for sin, the food and light for the priests, the needed and accepted incense. When the priest was offering up the daily sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering without in the court, the high priest was engaged at the altar of incense. Between "the evenings" was the lamb to be sacrificed; (Exod. xxix. 41, Hebrew;) between "the evenings" (xxx. 8) was the incense to be burnt. As the smoke ascended from the altar without, the cloud ascended from the altar within. No mere priest could thus minister at the golden altar; one only can render worship acceptable before God. Christ is the Lamb—the merits of Christ

form the incense—Christ is the High Priest.

Divine righteousness was seen portrayed all around within the tabernacle, but overshadowing it was the curtain, which told of the Perfect Man, the Heavenly One, about to suffer.

The ark and the mercy-seat tell their tale of the Lord. And what a tale it is! The Perfect One who never sinned, sprinkling His own precious blood on the mercy seat; Himself at once the propitiatory and propitiation.

If such was the earthly tabernacle, what is the heavenly? What the earthly shadowed forth, that we have in the heavenly. It is Christ everywhere: the way, the truth, the life—the only means of access to the Father—the living bread—the light of the sanctuary—the Intercessor. But just as of old God ordered the form and fashion of the house, and the manner of worship, so now. If we worship in a different manner, it is because God has altered it. If we worship in a different place, it is because He has changed it. And as

they worshipped according to His directions, so must we now. He has given rules: (1 Cor. xii.—xiv.:) we must follow them. It is God's house we belong to; it is God's temple we worship in; and it is God's mind we must conform to. We worship in the heavenly sanctuary. The power of the blood maintains us there. God's justice is satisfied; His holiness has been vindicated. The sinner is not consumed, nor the saint terrified; for Christ has satisfied God, and given confidence to man.

"WITH ALL THY GETTING, GET UNDERSTANDING."

The great desire of God is that we should understand every act and leading of His grace toward us. Human parents do much for their children without ever making known to them their intent and pleasure, and therefore much of the lives of the children are spent in misunderstanding the parental treatment, and endeavouring to escape from

it, instead of in co-operation with it. Very different is the way of our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessings, I believe, whether it be place, gift, or anything else, are often postponed and delayed, until we are intelligent enough to see their value. The Lord unfolds to His servant the gift according as he attains ability to comprehend it, and God acknowledges the exercise of it, and gives scope for it according as the servant has intelligence or subjection to follow simply with his mind therein. In order to "think so as to be wise as God has dealt to each the measure of faith," (Rom. xii. 3,) a man must know the measure; and therefore, if he is "skilful in the word of righteousness," he is grown up and able to discern between good and evil. If I am able to discern, I understand God's dealing with me, and get the blessing of it; and if not, I am only a babe, and unskilful in the word of righteousness. I have need of milk: solid food is unfit for me. I am alive, but I have no sense or intelligence of God's ways with me.

planation of any marked visitation from Him to us. This is the way of God with us in either chastening or blessing, but we see it more plainly and markedly in blessings. It is "to him that hath" that "more shall be given." The man who had made most got in preference to any who had made less. God, I repeat, unfolds according as we are prepared for it; and hence circumstances are constantly used to prepare us for a due appreciation of His blessings. Thus Paul, in the prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were through circumstances prepared, the one to reveal the heavenly glory as from heaven, and the other to reveal the Lord's glory on earth. When Jonah lost his gourd, he was able to understand God's feelings; and when thus *prepared* to hear them, they are imparted to him. God wants us to know the way whereby we go, and to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. I do not believe that any soul, no matter how great its acquisition of knowledge from the Scriptures, has really got on beyond its

Now a want of this sense must debar me from the communication of God's mind and purposes. You would not talk to a babe about its inheritance; you would only speak and open your mind to it according as it gained sense to understand. This I believe God does in a special manner; and that, not only with regard to blessings, but in the same way, though in a lesser degree, in chastening. I do not say that He does not chasten unless we understand the good of it, or that we always do understand it; on the contrary, I believe that He often chastens to vindicate His own care when His child does not notice it at all; but what I say is, that unless we are exercised thereby, no good comes of it, and no soul who knows His love will be satisfied to let His chastening pass by without understanding it. If an earthly friend indicates any coolness or distance towards me, do I not, in proportion as I love such an one, seek explanation of it? And just so with regard to the love of Christ; in proportion as we value it shall we seek for an ex-

intelligence of God's ways *with itself*; so that it is in proportion as I understand God's ways *with myself* that I have been taught of Him. If I understand His ways with me only in the wilderness, then I am in the wilderness; that is to say, the wilderness is the measure of my attainment and advance. If in heaven, then I am in the same sense in heaven, and so on.

I dare say some of us have observed very often how some spiritual desire like a flash of light has engaged the soul; but though the enjoyment of it be remembered, we find that we practically have not reached it; and the reason of this is, that we are not prepared for it. I have no doubt that the grapes of Eshcol are often tasted by us, when we have a great deal of exercise to go through, and intelligence to acquire before we reach Eshcol. Caleb, after tasting the grapes, needed forty years of preparation ere he was in actual possession of Eshcol: and surely his heart must then have acknowledged God's gracious way with him. And when

he was in full possession—when he comprehended the nature, order, and value of the blessing he had so long before tasted of, he could *then* sing “with understanding.” It is when we reach Eshcol that we see how necessary it has been for us to go through so much exercise and toil of spirit; for there it is that we comprehend the excellence of the blessing, and are in it too. To be in the place of blessing, you must not only prize the blessing, but you must also feel that you are suited to the place, and, as a necessary consequence, separated from what is unsuited to it. It is not all in a moment that we see how our idolatry stands in the way as a barrier to our reaching the place or the possession of the grapes, the taste and excellence of which we feel we appreciate. And chastening may often fall on us in order to remove the obstacle and prepare us.

There can be no basket of first-fruits, (see Deut. xxvi.,) unless we understand our blessings and possess them. Hence the prayer, that Christ may dwell in our

hearts by faith, that we, “being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height,” &c. The Lord give us to understand the nature, order, and value of His blessings, that we may be prepared to enjoy them suitably!

FRAGMENT.

The Church in the glory, that is to come, will have all the glories of Christ laid open to her. There will be no distinction between Christ and God, for it is “the throne of God and the Lamb.” All the glories, all the relations between them, will be open to the Church, for she is *with* Him there, as His Bride. The earthly people who behold Jehovah in the temple will not know the Lord as Bridegroom in the heavenlies, which is a higher thing.

The Smyrnian Church is recognized as in a position to see the blessedness of this; and thus the character in which

Christ comes to her is perfectly spiritual and moral. They were brought into sorrow and humiliation, but they were in a state capable of having sympathy with the mind of Christ. *Taste for truth depends upon the state of your own souls.* There are some states of soul in which the circumstances connected with Christ take most hold of the soul, and others in which the Person of Christ has most attraction. The calibre of a person's soul may be known by what he most delights in of Christ. The Laodicean state of the Church is met by the promise of sitting on *Christ's throne*, to those who overcome. Christ speaks of Himself to John as the first and the last; which was dead and is alive again. So here to Smyrna. What was comfort to John would be comfort to them. There is an answer in the Person of Christ to all the circumstances.

CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.

If there be one thing of importance now, it is christian devotedness. I do not separate this from christian doctrine, but found it on it. I do not surely separate it from the presence and power of the Spirit, one of the most important of these doctrines, for it is produced by it. But christian devotedness founded on the truth, and produced by the power of the Spirit, I believe to be of the utmost importance for the saints themselves and for the testimony of God. I believe surely that doctrine is of deep importance now, clearness as to redemption, and the peace that belongs to the Christian through divine righteousness, the presence and living power of the Comforter sent down from heaven, the sure and blessed hope of Christ's coming again to receive us to Himself that where He is we shall be also, that we shall be like Himself seeing Him as He is, and that if we die we shall be present with Him, the knowledge that risen with Him we shall be blessed not only through but *with* Christ, the deep, prac-

tical identification with Him through our being united with Him by the Holy Ghost; all these things, and many truths connected with them, held in the power of the Holy Ghost, separate us from the world, shelter the soul by the spiritual possession of Christ glorified, the conscious possession of Christ, from the cavils of current infidelity, and give a living spring to the joy and hope of the whole christian life. But the expression of the power of them in the heart will manifest itself in devotedness.

Christianity has exercised a mighty influence over the world, even where it is openly rejected, as well as where it is professedly received. Care of the poor and the supply of temporal wants have become recognized duties of society. And where the truth is not known and Christianity is corrupted, diligent devotedness to this, on the false ground of merit, is largely used to propagate that corruption. And even where infidelity prevails the habits of feeling produced by Christianity prevail, and man becomes the object of diligent, though often of

perverted, care. The testimony of the true saint surely should not be wanting where falsehood has imitated the good effects of truth. But there are higher motives than these; and it is of the true character of devotedness I would speak.

I accept as the general rule that, any special call of God apart, Christians should abide in the calling wherein they are called. This is only the place of their walk, its motives and character are behind. These are summed up in one word—Christ. He is at once the life and the object or motive of life in us, giving thus its character to our walk. "To me," says the apostle, "to live is Christ." There are two great parts of divine life of which devotedness is one. Both are infinite and unspeakable privileges for us and both perfected by, manifested in, Christ. The one God Himself, the other the actings and display of His nature, as love, the divine witness of His nature which is love. This was seen in Christ. His communion with His Father was perfect, as was His desire to glorify Him. Life to Him here

below was life "*δια του πατερα*." But He was the display, at all cost to Himself, of divine love to men. These could not be separated in His soul. His Father was His continual delight and object, His exercise of love and display of His Father, the divine nature by it, constant and perfect. But this was His devotedness. Another principle must be added to this to complete those which governed His walk: undivided obedience to His Father's will, His having that will for His constant motive. Love to the Father and obedience to Him gave form and character to His love to us. And so it is with us, only that He Himself comes in as the more immediate object, but this in no way hindering the display of the divine nature in love. "Be ye *imitators of God* as dear children, and walk in love even as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Note here the fulness of motive and character which is shown, and how high and blessed that motive and character is. We are followers and imitators of

God. We walk in love as Christ loved us. It is the exercise of divine love as displayed in Christ. There is no stint in it. He gave Himself. Nothing short of Himself, wholly; a principle often repeated as to Christ, His love to us, for He gave Himself for us. Yet God was the object and motive constituting its perfection: "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." It is thus we are called to walk, to imitate God, to follow Him as He displayed Himself in Christ.

If it be blessed to joy in God, who is love, it is blessed to follow Him in the love He has exercised. Yet as displayed in Christ as a man, it has God Himself for its object: and so with us. The love that descends down from God working in man, rises up always towards and to God as its just and necessary object. It can have nothing lower as its spring, towards whomsoever it is exercised. All the incense of the meat offering was burnt on the altar, however sweet the savour to others. This constitutes, as I have said, its essential character and

excellence; nor do its just actings in us come short of its actings in Christ. "Hereby," says John, "know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." There is no question of any cup of wrath for us. Here Christ stood, of course, alone, but all self-sacrifice displayed in Him we are called upon to display, as having His life, Himself, in us.

But I will consider this a little more methodically before I press it hortatively on my brethren.

As to reward, *as motive*, or merit, it is clear that any such thought destroys the whole truth of devotedness, because there is no love in it. It is self, looking like "James and John," for a good place in the kingdom. Reward there is in Scripture, but it is used to encourage us in the difficulties and dangers which higher and truer motives bring us into. So Christ Himself, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." Yet we well know that His motive was love. So Moses: "He endured as seeing him who

is invisible, for he had respect to the recompense of reward." His motive was caring for his brethren. So reward is ever used, and it is a great mercy in this way. And every man receives his reward according to his own labour.

The spring and source of all true devotedness, is divine love filling and operating in our hearts: as Paul says, "the love of Christ constrains us." Its form and character must be drawn from Christ's actings. Hence grace must first be known for oneself, for thus it is I know love. Thus it is that that love is shed abroad in the heart. We learn divine love in divine redemption. This redemption sets us too, remark, in divine righteousness before God. Thus all question of merit, of righteousness, is shut out, and self-seeking in our labour set aside. "Grace," we have learnt, "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ." The infinite, perfect love of God towards us has wrought, has done so when we were mere sinners, has thought of our need, given us eternal life in Christ when we were dead in

sins; forgiveness and divine righteousness when we were guilty; gives us now to enjoy divine love, to enjoy God by His Spirit dwelling in us, and boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ, the judge, is, so are we in this world. I speak of all this now in view of the love shown in it. True that could not have been divinely without righteousness. That is gloriously made good through Christ, and the heart is free to enjoy God's unhindered love: a love shown to men in man. For the very angels learn "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." This knits the heart to Christ, bringing it to God in Him, God in Him to us. We say nothing separates us from this love. The first effect is to lead the heart up, thus sanctifying it: we bless God, adore God, thus known; our delight, adoring delight, is in Jesus.

But thus near to God and in communion with Him, thus not only united, but consciously united, to Christ by the Holy Ghost, divine love flows into and through our hearts. We become ani-

mated by it through our enjoyment of it. It is really "God dwelling in us," as John expresses it; "His love shed abroad in our hearts," as Paul does. It flows thus forth as it did in Christ. Its objects and motives are as in Him, save that He Himself comes in as revealing it. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord; not the less God, but God revealed in Christ, for there we have learnt love. Thus in all true devotedness, Christ is the first and governing object; next, "His own which are in the world;" and then our fellow-men. First their souls, then their bodies, and every want they are in. His life of good to man governs ours, but His death governs the heart. "Hereby know we love because he laid down his life for us." "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again."

We must note, too, that as redemption and divine righteousness are that

through which grace reigns and love is known, all idea of merit and self-righteousness is utterly excluded, so it is a new life in us which both enjoys God and to which His love is precious; which alone is capable of delighting, as a like nature, in the blessedness that is in Him, and in which His divine love operates towards others. It is not the benevolence of nature, but the activity of divine love in the new man. Its genuineness is thus tested, because Christ has necessarily the first place with this nature, and its working is in that estimate of right and wrong which the new man alone has, and of which Christ is the measure and motive. "Not as we hoped," says Paul (it was more than he hoped,) speaking of active charity; "but ye gave yourselves first to the Lord, and to us by the will of God."

But it is more than a new nature. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; and God's love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. And as it springs up as a well in us unto eternal life, so

but it fixes the heart on God's love in a constraining way. Every right feeling in a creature must have an object, and, to be right, that object must be God, and God revealed in Christ as the Father; for in that way God possesses our souls. Hence Paul, speaking of himself, says, "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." His life was a divine life. Christ lived in him, but it was a life of faith, a life living wholly by an object, and that object Christ; and known as the Son of God loving and giving Himself for him. Here we get the practical character and motive of christian devotedness—living to Christ. We live on account of Christ: He is the object and reason of our life; (all outside is the sphere of death;) but this in the constraining power of the sense of His giving Himself for us. So, in a passage already referred to, "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, if

also living waters flow out from us by the Holy Ghost which we have received. All true devotedness, then, is the action of divine love in the redeemed, through the Holy Ghost given to them.

There may be a zeal which compasses sea and land, but is in the interest of a prejudice, or the work of Satan. There may be natural benevolence clothed with a fairer name, and irritated if it be not accepted for its own sake. There may be the sense of obligation and legal activity, which, through grace, may lead further, though it be the pressure of conscience, not the activity of love. The activity of love does not destroy the sense of obligation in the saint, but alters the whole character of his work. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." In God, love is active, but sovereign; in the saint it is active, but a duty, because of grace. It must be free to have the divine character—to be love. Yet we owe it all, and more than all, to Him that loved us. The Spirit of God which dwells in us is a Spirit of adoption, and so of liberty with God,

one died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again." They live to and for that, and nothing else. It may be a motive for various duties, but it is the motive and end of life. "We are not our own, but bought with a price, and have to glorify God in our bodies, which are his."

What is supposed here is not a law contending or arresting a will seeking its own pleasure, but the blessed and thankful sense of our owing ourselves to the love of the blessed Son of God, and a heart entering into that love and its object by a life which flows from Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence it is a law of liberty. Hence, too, it can only have objects of service which that life can have, and the Holy Ghost can fix the heart on; and that service will be the free service of delight. Flesh may seek to hinder, but its objects cannot be those the new man and the Holy Ghost seek. The heart ranges in the sphere in which Christ

does. It loves the brethren, for Christ does; all the saints, for He does. It seeks the all for whom Christ died, yet knowing that only grace can bring any of them; and "endures all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." It seeks "to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" to see the saints grow up to Him who is the Head in all things and walk worthy of the Lord. It seeks to see the Church presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. It continues in its love, though the more abundantly it loves, the less it be loved. It is ready to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The governing motive characterizes all our walk—all is judged by it. A man of pleasure flings away money; so does an ambitious man. They judge of the value of things by pleasure and power. The covetous man thinks their path folly, judges of everything by its tendency to enrich. The Christian judges of everything by Christ. If it hinders His glory in oneself or another,

devotedness to Christ, and this must be in looking to being with Him. I dread great activity without great communion; but I believe that when the heart is with Christ it will live to Him.

The form of devotedness, of external activity, will be governed by God's will and the competency to serve; for devotedness is an humble, holy thing, doing its master's will; but the spirit of undivided service to Christ is the true part of every Christian. We want wisdom: God gives it liberally. Christ is our true wisdom. We want power: we learn it in dependence through Him who strengthens us. Devotedness is a dependent, as it is an humble, spirit. So it was in Christ. It waits on its Lord. It has courage and confidence in the path of God's will, because it leans on divine strength in Christ. *He* can do all things. Hence it is patient and does what it has to do according to His will and word: for then He can work; and He does all that is done which is good.

There is another side of this which we have to look at. The simple fact of un-

it is cast away. It is judged of not as sacrifice, but cast away as a hindrance. All is dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. To cast away *dross* is no great sacrifice. How blessedly self is gone here! "*Gain to me*" has disappeared. What a deliverance that is! Unspeakably precious for ourselves and morally elevating! Christ gave Himself. We have the privilege of forgetting self and living to Christ. It will be rewarded, our service in grace; but love has its own joys in serving in love. Self likes to be served. Love delights to serve. So we see, in Christ, on earth, now; when we are in glory He girds Himself and serves us. And shall not we, if we have the privilege, imitate, serve, give ourselves to Him, who so loves us? Living to God inwardly is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly. All outward activity not moved and governed by this is fleshly and even a danger to the soul—tends to make us do without Christ and brings in self. It is not devotedness, for devotedness is

divided service in love is only joy and blessing. But we are in a world where it will be opposed and rejected, and the heart would naturally save self. This Peter presented to Christ and Christ treated as Satan. We shall find the flesh shrink instinctively from the fact and from the effect of devotedness to Christ, because it is giving up self, and brings reproach, neglect and opposition on us. We have to take up our cross to follow Christ; not to return to bid adieu to them that are at home in the house. It is our home still, if we say so, and we shall at best be "John Marks" in the work. And it will be found it is ever then—"suffer me *first!*" If there be anything but Christ it will be *before* Christ, not devotedness to Him with a single eye. But this is difficult to the heart that there should be no self-seeking, no self-sparing, no self-indulgence! Yet none of these things are devotedness to Christ and to others, but the very opposite. Hence, if we are to live to Christ, we must hold ourselves dead, and alive unto God.

through Jesus Christ our Lord. And in point of fact if the flesh be practically allowed it is a continual hindrance, and reproach and opposition are then a burden, not a glory. We have with Paul to "bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies," and so to have the sentence of death made good in ourselves. Here the Lord's help, through trials and difficulties, comes in. But we are "more than conquerors through him that loved us." Nothing separates us from that love. But if we come to the management of our own heart, we shall find that this "always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus" is the great difficulty and tests the inward state of the soul. Yet there is no liberty of service nor power but in the measure of it; only, remark, we have this power in the sense of grace. It is the power of the sense we have of His dying and giving Himself for us, which by grace makes us hold ourselves as dead to all but Him. Outwardly it

may be comparatively easy, and so is outward labour when self and Satan's power are not felt in opposition. But to have Christ's dying always made good against self, detected by the cross, supposes Christ to be all in the affections. The true power and quality of work is measured by it—the operation of God's Spirit by us. This is the one way of devotedness in God's sight, and God's power and the having the mind of Christ in the service we do render. This only is life. All the rest of our life, not to speak of loss or judgment, *perishes* when our breath goes forth. It belongs to the first Adam and to the scene he moves in, not to the Second. It is only the life which we live by Christ which remains as life.

Its motives and character are twofold: The cross and Christ in glory. The love of Christ constrains us in the cross to give ourselves wholly up to Him who has so loved us, given *Himself* wholly up for us. The winning Christ and being like Him in glory gives energy, and the spring and power of hope to our path.

But how constraining and mighty is the first motive, if we have really felt it! Yet how lowly. It makes us of little esteem to ourselves in the presence of such love. We see we are not our own but bought with a price. Nor is this all. The sense of the love of Christ takes possession of the heart, constrains us. We desire to live too to Him who gave Himself for us. The perfection of the offering and the absoluteness and perfectness with which it was offered, alike His love to us in it, has power over our souls. "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." The sense that we are not our own deepens the claim on our hearts, yet takes away all merit in the devotedness, so wise and sanctifying are God's ways! How does the thought too of winning Him make all around us but dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Him! What is all compared with pleasing Him, possessing Him, being with Him, and like Him for ever! It puts the value of Christ, as the motive, on everything we do. It

leads to true largeness of heart, for all dear to Him becomes precious to us, yet keeps from all looseness of natural feelings, for we are shut up to Christ. What is not His glory is impossible. It puts sin practically out of the heart by the power of divine affections, by having the heart filled with Him. Practically the new nature only lives with Christ for its object.

It applies too, remark, to everything, because we have to please Christ in everything. Dress, worldly manners, worldliness in every shape disappears. They cannot be like or agreeable to Him whom the world rejected, because He testified to it that its works were evil. The tone of the mind is unworldly, does not refer to it, save to do good to it when it can. The place of the Christian is to be the epistle of Christ. Christ's thus possessing the heart has a circumscribing power. The motives, thoughts, relationships of the world do not enter into the heart. But Christ moving all within, and all being referred in the heart to Him, it carries

out its own character in Him out into the world. Kept from the evil, it is the active exercise of good that is in Him, the love of God; the heart shut up to God, but all the blessedness of God going out in the measure in which the vessel contains it. This love is active. Christ "has purified to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Christ's love was active, but it is guided by the mind of Christ. It loves the brethren as Christ did; that is, has its spring in itself, not in the object; but feels all their sorrows and infirmities, yet is above them all so as to bear and forbear, and find in them the occasion of its holy exercise. It is alike tender in spirit and firm in consistency with the divine path, for such was Christ's love. It has another character: whatever its devotedness and activity, it is obedience. There cannot be a righteous will in a creature, for righteousness in a creature is obedience. Adam fell, having a will independent of God. Christ came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and in His highest devotedness His

path was that of obedience. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." This both guides in devotedness and keeps us quiet and humble.

Our conclusion, then, is simple undivided devotedness to Christ; Christ the only object, whatever duties that motive may lead to faithfulness in; nonconformity to the world which rejected Him; a bright heavenly hope connecting itself with Christ in glory, who will come and receive us to Himself and make us like Him, so that we should be as men that wait for their Lord; His love constraining us, in all things caring for what He cares for; Christ crucified, Christ before us as our hope, the centres round which our whole life turns.

There is another point I may do well to notice, which makes the plain difference between devotedness and natural kindness. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which

is in heaven." The Lord does not tell them to let their good works shine before men; elsewhere He says the contrary. But their profession of Christ is to be so distinct that men may know to what to attribute their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. What is wanted among Christians, is that through grace they should be Christians devoted, plainly devoted, in all their ways, devoted in heart and soul to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 247.)

Before He rose from the dead, and ascended on high, Christ *alone* was anointed with the Holy Ghost. After He had died for us, He received it *for us*; but it could not be for us until He had atoned for sins; but it is important to see that *then* He received it *for us*.

As to the Holy Ghost, it was a question discussed between the eastern and western churches whether He proceeded

from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son. But the question is simply a theological one, and it is not worth while taking up either side—in one sense, they are both right.

In answer to a question on John xiv., as to the Holy Ghost, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," it was remarked that there was one very unhappy thing in our translation of the New Testament—the pains-taking change of words in English to represent the same word in the Greek. The passage quoted is an instance of the evil of this; for its force seems to be that the Holy Ghost was already *with* them, but would soon be *in* them: but the true meaning is, "He shall abide with you, and be in you," i.e., "He shall not leave you as I do now, but remain with you; and more even than that—He shall be in you." It is really descriptive of what the Holy Ghost would be when He came. He would abide with them, and not leave them.

We have an instance of the same thing in our translators in John v., as to the word "damnation."

Ver. 13. Those who are said to be sons are further said to be born of the will of God—the will of man and of the flesh having no place.

Ver. 14, &c. In this verse Christ is seen in His own proper revelation, but as the fulness to us. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” The other parts of this passage are parentheses. Verse 17 continues what John the Evangelist says. The expression “grace for grace” is cumulative, meaning grace upon grace.

The verse should be, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of *an* only-begotten from a Father,” &c. Here it is the kind of glory that the apostles saw that is mentioned. It was the glory of an only-begotten from His Father—it is the character of the glory which they saw. They saw Him in sonship-glory, and in only-begotten sonship-glory. This glory is His; in it He is entirely alone. None but Himself can be *only-begotten*: it is personally His alone. It is not

here “the glory which thou hast given me I have given them.” In John xvii. we get both ends, so to speak, of His glory; for in one sense He takes His glory again as man. But there is an aspect of His glory in which none can partake with Him.

He dwelt among us *full* of grace and truth, and of *His* fulness have we received. I cannot say I am full of grace and truth; I have received of Him. We get the same thing that is in Him, but in a derived way. He is the source and centre, and we shall always see something in Him far above us, and which will give the heart delight. The nearer we get to Christ the more shall we see this. There is, however, something more for us than even sharing His glory—we shall be *like* Him when we *see* Him as He is. I see *then* the glory and blessedness in which I am found in Him. What I have is His, and therefore I value and bless Him.

We are partakers of the divine nature, but we are not divinity. There are two Greek words used for the divine nature,

θεότης and *θειότης*. The former really means divinity, and applies to Christ alone; the latter is such as may be used of us—godlike, divine. I could not say that in me dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead (*θεότης*) bodily, it would be blasphemy; but Christ could, because He was *θεότης*. I can, however, say I have the divine nature (*θεία φύσις*) by faith. But this is very different from Godhead. As Son He was divine (*θεότης*). This is seen in the transfiguration where we see the two glorified ones in the same glory as Christ, but directly there is a thought of classing them essentially together, then there is a testimony to His divine nature, and the other two disappear. It is a very important thing to see clearly the difference between the divine nature in us and in Christ; we shall find the word of God very clear and exact on this point. I must have the nature of Christ to understand divine things, and to partake of His glory; but I must distinguish between His nature and His person, for when I get to His person He stands essentially and entirely

alone. “We beheld,” i.e., they apprehended that Christ was before them as a Son from His Father. This does not so much refer to what the apostles apprehended in His lifetime on earth, when they were dull; but is their apprehension of what they saw as they looked back upon it by the help of the Holy Ghost, and understood what it was they really did see. Before the Holy Ghost came they had not true apprehensions of it. The whole life of Christ was a moral manifestation of His glory. Even the miracles in John are presented as manifesting His glory, and this glory was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. The miracles of Christ have a very deep character, there are heaps of things to be noticed of them. There was in them something more than the outward act of power—even divine grace and love to man in his lost and ruined condition. There are also Christ's character and spirit to be seen in them. This is most remarkably seen in His raising the son of the widow of Nain, and still more at the grave of Lazarus.

Ver. 17. We get contrast here. The law was given by Moses: it was not sent—it was given. A person comes. When God did not come, He gave a law. Law is not a revelation of God's character: it is absurd to apply it thus to God. It is not a transcript of God's character, but of the creature's character. How can "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" apply to God? He has no neighbour. Law expresses the perfection of the creature—not God. If it were fulfilled on earth, we should have a heaven upon earth. Christ even was not simply perfect according to the law, but a great deal more—He loved sinners. Giving oneself up for others is not loving my neighbour as myself merely, but better than myself. I am bound as a creature to love my neighbour as myself; but Christ was not bound to die for sinners. As a Christian I have to act as He acted. What He did went much further than the law. Still He came to do God's will. "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Hence all that will became duty to Him. So

scribe a line of conduct by which I learn what my duty is, and it claims judgment; but Christ comes when law has been broken, and judgment must be condemnation, and He brings with Him grace and truth. Truth is not judgment, although it leads us to judge ourselves. The truth comes *about* something. So in this case. The devil and man looked very amiable until Christ came and put matters in the right light—brought in the truth. I must not forget this, the truth is *about something*. Now when the truth comes it is with grace, otherwise it would upset us; and it is an immensely important fact that truth and grace are come. If I have Christ I have everything needed for the knowledge of God, of Satan, of man, and of the state of my own soul, and I have perfect grace with it. The truth itself is not here the question, as that is abstract, still Christ was the truth. Yet the truth is something about another thing. God is not the truth, but the One from whom the truth comes.

(To be continued.)

with us. We are creatures, and as creatures we owe it to God to do all that His love requires of us. It is quite wrong to be afraid of the word commandments. God has His commandments for His children to keep, so also has Christ. It is not law in the scriptural sense, but still it is commandment. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and therefore if I love I do not want law, but I do want commandment, the expression of God's will. Christ was not a lawgiver, although He gave commandments. Moses was the lawgiver—law came by him. We have to do with obedience, but not with law. I do not call my Father a lawgiver, although He gives me commandments and I obey them. I am subject to Him. So the saints are under subjection to Christ.

Grace and truth came by a person—Jesus Christ. Here we get a perfect contrast. Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ—by a person. In fact, God Himself came and brought grace and truth. The law is given to me to pre-

A SERIES.

No. 10.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH.

Having considered the constitution of the Church, let us now examine the testimony committed to it, remembering in the first place that the Church is a unique body, singular and unconnected with any divine system preceding it. From not clearly apprehending this great fact, the door was opened to the introduction of many things from the Mosaic economy which eventually were insisted on with the weight of divine authority. The Church was not in existence save in the purpose of God until the resurrection of Christ; but God was not without a people. Israel was His earthly family, but quite distinct from this new body—the Church—called into existence after the resurrection of Christ. Now the eleven apostles belonged to, and had the hopes of, this earthly family; and yet we know that the Church was "built on the foundation of the apostles

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and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone;" and we shall see as we proceed how, while belonging to both, they passed from the one to the other, so to speak.

The commissions given to the apostles embody and set forth to us all the varieties and character of the testimony incumbent on the Church, so we shall do well to consider them. I propose to divide them into three orders, premising this, that each of the orders being then incumbent on the Church is so still; nor can the people of God evade the responsibility which they are placed under by the truth committed to them through the apostles. I distinguish the three orders thus:—

1. The commission given to the eleven.
2. The commission given to Paul.
3. The commission given to John.

Or this, the truth committed to it through the apostles, the Church is responsible and ought to be the witness.

In the commission given to the eleven (Matt. xxviii.) there were two parts; the one relating to the world at large,

viz., "Go ye into all nations and disciple them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" the other relating to the instruction of the disciples, viz., "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you to the end of the age." Now the terms of this commission are binding on the Church. It is true that the eleven at first confined their testimony to Israel; in their own land too, and this was only consistent with the promises of God to them; for the apostles were natural branches of the olive-tree, (the vessel of testimony for God on earth which Israel hitherto had been. See Rom. xi.) and therefore they testified in the land of the olive-tree of the title of the rejected Christ to the kingdom of God on earth. But instead of the nation as a whole receiving this testimony, some only—"such as were ordained unto eternal life"—received it; and thus the effect of the testimony was ecclesiastical and not national; for "believers were added to the Church,

and continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They with unity of purpose and heart maintained the testimony set forth by the apostles; they owned the title of their absent Lord, and were waiting for Him to come and reign. This was the unanimous and happy testimony of the believers gathered out of Israel; the effect of this testimony declared the purpose of God, whatever was the amount of the apostles' intelligence on the subject; for souls were drawn out of the mass and gathered into one company, baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost, and that was the Church. The apostles were the natural branches and their testimony was one becoming the natural branches; but when the nation finally rejected the testimony at the death of Stephen, the concentration of it is broken up, it is carried beyond Judea; and the judicial excision of the natural branches of the olive-tree is begun.

THEN it is that we get the second commission. Saul of Tarsus, the wit-

ness of his nation's guilt in slaying Stephen, is now introduced into the presence of Jesus in the glory, and hears from Him *there*, that He is identified with His suffering saints on earth, and is *then and there* commissioned to be a minister and a witness of the things he had seen, and of the things in the which the Lord would appear unto him. Now those things which Saul had seen, constituted the gospel of the glory of Christ. To him is announced that not only was the glory with Christ Himself the place where Christ's rejected members like Stephen would be received, but that in the glory, the sinner was now to make his first acquaintance with the glorified Christ. The glory with Christ was to be the starting point of the saved sinner, as well as the end and goal of the martyred saint. And when the light of life first dawned on the soul of Saul of Tarsus, even then, was the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus at the end of his course. And besides this, Saul was to be a minister and a

witness of the things in the which the Lord would appear unto him. Doubtless the place of the saints in heaven, in the peculiar relation of a body to Him the Head, was among the things in the which the Lord appeared unto him, and they are distinctly detailed to us in the epistle to the Ephesians.

It is evident that the testimony, after the call of Saul of Tarsus, is of a different order. Before his call, Christ's title to the kingdom, and heirship founded on His resurrection, and a waiting for His return in the day of His power, was the first testimony. To this was added at the death of Stephen, that the glory where Jesus was, would receive them whom the world rejected, because they testified of the glory of the ascended Jesus; and this was coincident with the death of Stephen, for the resources of grace were unfolded as the violence of man exposed itself; but from that moment the judicial excision of the natural branches had set in. The testimony of the eleven, however, still continued; and if the natural

branches were broken off, it was that others—wild ones—should be grafted in, who would do—mark! *what the natural branches had failed to do* in the country and soil, if I may say, of the olive-tree. The saints who had been gathered out before the death of Stephen would not have relaxed or deviated from their faith in the title and coming of Jesus, or from the expression of it (which is testimony), because the glory where Jesus was, was shewn to be the place of the rejected witness whom the nation of Israel would not suffer to live or testify in their land. Nor again, were these same saints distracted from their first faith and testimony because Paul discloses to them that the glory with Jesus is the beginning of a sinner's acquaintance with Him, as Stephen had shown that in the same glory was the end of it. These souls, far from relaxing their faith in Christ's title to the kingdom and of His coming in power to reign, were only greatly established therein as well as edified, by the new disclosures made to them through Stephen and

Paul. There was nothing lost or revoked of the truth already committed to the Church, and which comprised its testimony; for according to the truth committed, so was the testimony. To Peter also was it now revealed that the distinction between common and unclean, which a Jew maintained, was not observed in heaven with God. *There* all, (common or unclean according to earthly standing) were on an equality. It was not a question of *place* but of *rank* which was disclosed and determined by the vision to Peter; and he, thus instructed, is sent to preach to the Gentiles, with this additional truth—even equality of rank, belonging to his testimony. But to Paul was committed the *place* of the saints (and this we shall find in his epistle to the Ephesians) as none other but in heaven with Christ; and, moreover, that they are there in the peculiar relationship to Him of a body to a Head; in a word, the second part of the commission to Paul. "Even those things in the which I will appear unto thee," is there declared. Even the

scope and range of the grace of God to the Church; and we are told that the power which wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, works in us to effectuate in us with Him what has been accomplished in Him, the fountain of life and power. And consequently the apostle presses on the saints "to walk worthy of their vocation." It is most important for us to remember and zealously to maintain that every truth committed to the Church is by grace in the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus; and, therefore, if we are members of His body, the Church, the grace of life in us must instinctively reach out after the truth belonging to it officially and naturally; and we must have in us the elements of power which would enable us to be witnesses of what has been committed to the Church. I do not say that we should have equal power in the times of declension, and failure, and ruin, as in the days of the Church's vigour and first estate; but I maintain that the *same* grace is available for me, the feeblest member in the darkest day,

as for any in the brightest days of the Church; the only difference being that the grace is not so strong or so developed in me as in my elder brethren. The instincts are the same; and though I have a confusion to contend with which they knew nothing of, and which hampers and thwarts me at every turn; yet if I walk truly, be this the darkest day, in that grace which in ages to come the Church shall testify of, and by which each member is now introduced into the blessings of life and relation to our Lord Jesus Christ, I must have, in and through that grace, whether I understand it or not, the elements, virtues, and instincts, which essentially belong to it. No saint has a right to say, "I cannot be a testimony," though he may sorrowfully admit that he is a very feeble one; but the reason of this is that he is so weak in grace. "Make the tree good and the fruit shall be good." In the grace given to the Church is the power to testify; but the testimony can only be in proportion to the grace; the external expression can truly

feature of the scriptural institution. And not only this; human aid in the way of learning was called in to supply the felt need of spiritual instruction, and before long the Church lost the idea of its peculiar and unique calling, and borrowed from the Jewish economy, not only forms and doctrine, but became a state system: "of the earth, earthly." So that the Church, as the body of Christ, built on Him, consequent on his resurrection, the witness of his rejection and coming again, was no where recognisable.

True, there arose reformers from time to time; but, though godly men, (and, no doubt, the grace in them was dissatisfied,) they never regained in doctrine the true position of the Church as with Christ in heaven. They did not take a true spiritual standing; and though they preached justification by faith, and, in later years, the presence of the Holy Ghost, yet they never saw themselves set apart with Christ in a new creation, as citizens of heaven; or that they had no earthly place, nor hope

be only in accordance with the standard metal within. Every one is a testimony according to his grace; and if the grace were developed in each soul according to the instincts imparted to it of God, because of our relationship to Christ, we should certainly testify distinctly of the truth committed to the Church. There can be no question that it was so in the early Churches. The expression of the truth became feeble when the Church by alliance with the world and union with unbelievers, disqualified itself for the expression or testimony which depended entirely on an inward spiritual grace.

Forms were adopted in order to retain a semblance of the testimony or expression of that which became the Church; but so totally impossible is it to imitate life except by life, that even the public acts of the Church, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, lost their true meaning, and though retained in form with great tenacity, yet they are now so diverted and perverted from their first meaning, that they do not express a

respecting earth during the rejection of its Lord. Those reformers broke from the worldly trammels of a state religion, but they never discovered the heavenly place of the Church; and, therefore, with their best intentions, their testimony was defective, and their position on earth so occupied them, that they had to invent systems and government for themselves. And still more, they in doctrine rarely escaped from the law; for though they preached grace, yet, not seeing clearly that they were "dead to the law by the body of Christ," they did not reckon themselves to be dead before God, and consequently the law still addressed them, "for the law hath power over a man so long as he liveth."

Now the Apostles Paul, Peter, and Jude, who lived in the first days of the Church, foresaw the coming ruin, and their counsel to the saints we may divide into three headings:

1st. They were to maintain the truth committed to them after the example of Daniel, who, though in Babylon, and Jerusalem in ruins, prayed three times a

day looking toward Jerusalem. At all costs, they must continue in the things they have learned; they must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered;" and they should have these things always in remembrance. No excuse, no palliation—no matter what the condition of ruin into which the Church had sunk—for remission or neglect of the truth committed to them.

2ndly. Separation from defiling associations is insisted on as the only *door* of escape. Because in the great and widespread ecclesiastical laxity, the faithful one finds himself associated and in communion with the impious and profane, and he must therefore purge himself from these vessels of dishonour and associate with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. ii. 21.) Or, as Jude puts it—"Building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Or, as Peter—"Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

which were revealed the truths that would edify the saints unto a knowledge of God's purpose and calling, and therefore necessarily demanded of them to be expressive of the same, because they were by the power of such truths enabled to do so. We have seen that the purpose of each revelation was to confirm the saints, and as they were confirmed, they testified of God's grace in a world which had rejected the Lord of life and power. We have glanced at the history of the Church from its rise until the whole mystery of its great and exalted relation to Christ in heaven is unfolded through the Apostle Paul; and we have seen how soon failure and corruption crept in, and how the saints are admonished to act when the house of God was no longer a testimony of the light and truth committed to it. But in the commission to John, as recorded in the Revelation, we have something still further made known to the Church; for in that book quite a new era is presented to us. Light is given of God in order that I should escape from the

Lastly. The coming of the Lord—being with Him in the appearing; (2 Thess. ii. 1;) waiting for the crown of righteousness in the day of His appearing; (2 Tim. iv. 8;) or, preserved unto His heavenly kingdom; (2 Tim. iv. 18;) is presented as the only sure rest and hope of the heart. So in Peter—"The power and coming of his majesty;" and in Jude—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, as already awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." In a word, when the failure and declension of the Church were before the minds of the apostles, what they pressed was, the maintenance of the truth—separation from all evil associates—and a simple and eager waiting for the Lord's presence and power.

I have now only to notice the third commission, the last order of testimony, committed to John, which I shall do briefly. We have traced the commissions to the other apostles and to Paul, in

darkness; and as I do, I am a witness of the light. In the Revelation the Church is presented as sinking to the state of final removal. It is seen there first threatened with the deprivation of its great function as Christ's candlestick on earth; (chap. ii. 5;) and at last as spued out of his mouth. (chap. iii. 16.) Now I do not think that this was revealed before John's time. He, let us remember, was a natural branch of the olive-tree, and to him is shown the wild, grafted-in branches in utter failure as to answering to the trust reposed in them, and still further, to him it is revealed that the trust would be recalled, and the Church set aside as no longer to be seen on earth, and all that pretended to it (now become Babylon) would eventually be swept from the earth, and that at length the green olive would be planted in the house of our God, the natural branches grafted in again on their own olive-tree. The testimony constituted by, or derived from, the Revelation amounts to this, that the faithful seek the place of overcomers, as we see that all the blessings promised

to the seven churches are conferred on the overcomers only. This testimony was a new one for the saints, and one indicating the state into which the house of God had sunk. But more than this: they were to know and maintain that the Lord walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, as represented in Rev. i.; that personal knowledge of Himself suited to the need of any assembly could alone afford strength and guidance to any to be overcomers, and connected also with this fact; that this especial ministry should be communicated, not necessarily through gifts, as the Church in her first state had known, but *angelically*, i.e., by *ἄγγελος** or special messenger; and finally is disclosed the fearful end and doom of Christendom, the manifestation of the

* This seems to be the most consistent view of the angels of the churches, that they represent ministry generally under Christ, and that not so much in the way of abiding gift as being near enough to Christ in devoted faithfulness to enter into His thoughts and mind. Hence, whoever did this would at the time be Christ's *ἄγγελος* or bearer of His message.—ED.

we see how far we have fallen from the Church's true estate, and not *fear* to see it. The one who honestly aims at any elevation shrinks not from surveying the ascent. In fine, let us see what we are called to, and may we adhere to the divine admonitions for the day of declension, seeing our place to be that of overcomers to the last for His name's sake.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 352.)

When the Word came—Christ—He brought the truth about everything with Him—it was in Himself—He was the Truth, what He said thoroughly made known what He was. In Him I get the truth about God, about man, about myself, and about Satan. The error with which Professor Maurice set out was confounding the truth with God.

There is another thing—rectitude of heart and the truth always go together.

Church in her millennial glory and the glory of Christ consummated on the earth.

What a fine and blessed testimony for the faithful, even though as to the structure of the house of God, the carved work was broken down with axes and hammers, and that which should have been a lowly plant on earth should now in its wide-spreading branches lodge the denizens of the air!

May our God give us grace to see and own the large and wondrous truths which He has unfolded to His Church, as to her own proper standing because of His grace; and may each godly member know and feel in himself that the grace acknowledges responsibility to the whole range of truth committed; and that as he has grace, he is witness even individually of its power and principles, never admitting that he is irresponsible, though he may be feeble, and therefore expressing only according as he has grace, and assuming nothing beyond it; for we are not called to forms and ceremonies, but to power. And withal, may

This is seen in Christ, who was Himself the Truth—it was in Him—and He was it; but we must always know in part. In Christ alone was there perfect reality, sincerity; and we have sincerity in so far as we have Him. Where Christ is not there is no sincerity—that is reality. There may be what men call sincerity, where the heart is dark, and has been badly taught; but in this case there cannot be reality, for the truth only is *real*. There may be ignorance, but ignorance may be culpable, for it might have been prevented. It was the case with the Jews: they remained ignorant of Christ, because of the state they were in; hence He said, "They had both seen and hated him and his Father." Yet in grace he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they *know not* what they do." So Peter says, "Brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as also did your rulers;" but surely this ignorance was highly culpable, however sincere they may have been in it. Paul also said that what he did against Christ was done in ignorance and unbelief; but

he does not palliate, but himself confesses that he was the chief of sinners. Yet in his natural state he was sincere as men speak—following his conscience.

It is impossible that the truth can be separated from the grace in this verse, because it was God revealing Himself in Christ. God is love; therefore, if God revealed Himself there must be grace. Truth given without Christ coming personally would be judgment. God may give a law without revealing Himself, but directly He says "Came," then grace and truth must come out. The evangelist puts grace first, because doubtless he felt it was what really suited his own case. After the death of Christ grace reigns.

Ver. 18. Here we get Christ as *the* only-begotten Son. It is not, He *was* in the bosom of the Father, as though He had left it, but, "is in the bosom of the Father." There He is even when upon earth, and even upon the cross it was true. He was always in the nearness of intimacy indicated by the expression, "in the bosom of the Father."

person really to apprehend infinitely what the wrath of God was. I apprehend that at that time Christ was fully occupied with what He was bearing—infinite pain—which He infinitely realized. God was to be glorified on account of sin, and only such a One as He could do it. Still it is a very deep mystery, and it becomes us to be very careful in speaking about it. We find, however, that the time Christ was upon the cross was most distinctly clouded. There is a period before the three hours of darkness and a period afterwards, when Christ on the cross uses the term "Father." He does not use it during the three hours of darkness: during this time He appears to be entirely occupied with God—bearing wrath; everything is shut out but what was passing between Him and God. It is exceedingly terrible this three hours of darkness. It is this terrible character of bearing wrath which makes it so dreadful to think, that in His life Christ was bearing wrath. Christ sympathises with the judgment He was bearing, feeling

On the cross He was, of course, not *enjoying* this relationship, but bearing wrath. The expression, "from the bosom of the Father," is rather inexact, for Christ never left the bosom of the Father. The passage, "Son of man which is in heaven" connects the manhood with the divinity; the Son, was in heaven, and that Son was a man upon the earth, therefore might it be said, "Son of man in heaven."

On the cross, Christ was under wrath, and therefore—although He was then doing something on account of which the Father would in a very especial sense love Him—yet then He could not be enjoying the relationship between Him and His Father. In one sense, the Father never loved the Son so much as when He was upon the cross. This was what was in the Father's mind, not what was in Christ's, who could not be enjoying His relationship and drinking the cup of wrath at the same time. He gave Himself up to drink this cup. On the cross He was entirely occupied in bearing the wrath: it required a divine

that it was right. See Psalm xxii. Christ really bore this wrath before His death, and when it was all done He gave up His life. After the bitter cry—My God, why hast thou forsaken me!—we see Him calmly giving up His spirit to His Father. The depth of death, looked at as the wages of sin, had been gone through during the hours of darkness. We see first, all man's wickedness in His crucifixion fully brought out; then darkness—darkness and wrath—God forsaking Him. Afterwards, having borne this wrath, He comes out and occupies Himself in fulfilling the rest of the scripture which had to be fulfilled in His death. The expression, "It is finished," shows us that just then He was departing because everything was done. It was a most blessed time for Him, for the bitterness of death was past—He was going to Paradise. He must actually die in order that the blood and water might come out for us. We never could enter into what Christ entered into upon the cross, therefore it was that He went through it *for* us.

We have no revelation of what He passed through during the three hours of darkness: we could not understand it, it was between Him and God alone.

In John's Gospel we never get Jesus dying, as it were, but simply His going out of the world to His Father. In John we get a divine person acting for us; in the other gospels, a man suffering for us.

His dying bodily was the giving effect to all that He did, in order to make it accessible to us.

He hath declared Him—not revealed. The word here used *ἐξηγέομαι* implies rather more detail. It is the same word which occurs in Luke for relations, and means to tell, narrate, recount, make known. It is a different word to that used in chapter xvii. 26, "I have *declared* unto them thy name and will *declare it*." In verse 18 of our chapter the word is used in the sense of relating what He knew of the Father. It would, perhaps, be better here to say, "Of the bosom of the Father," than "In the bosom of the Father." This verse closes

the revelation of what Christ was. Now in verse 19 we get into history. Verse 15 is a parenthesis concerning the Baptist's testimony to Christ, who comes after John as to His appearance in the flesh, but is preferred before him, has the precedence of him, because He was before him. John distinctly apprehends this. Verse 16 should be read in connection with verse 14.

Ver. 19—28. We have here the Baptist's testimony as to his own position, and as to what Christ was. This carries us up to end of verse 28.

Ver. 29—34. The Baptist here says, "Behold the Lamb of God which *taketh* away the sin of the world." He does not say *has taken* away. The expression is abstract, and represents the entire bearing of Christ's work before God. Everything that God does now, it is in respect of sin; whether it be grace or judgment, it is in respect of sin. Well, the result of Christ's work will be that all will be totally changed, sin will be gone, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness; that is, Christ will be found to have taken away the sin of the world; for as the result of His work all God's dealings will be founded upon righteousness. The full effect of this will not be seen in the millennium, for then there will be sin to be dealt with, but not in the new heavens and earth. "Taketh away" has not in this verse the sense given in the margin of our Bibles—"Beareth away." It is not a sacrificial term. It has been said by some that on account of what Christ has done no man will be condemned for sin as such, but because he did not believe in Christ. This is totally false, for God will judge men for sins. Christ said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall *die in your sins*." The other doctrine is the result of trying to make God agreeable to sinners instead of sinners agreeable to God.

(To be continued.)

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth."—Eph. vi.

VOL. VIII.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1864.

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GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

REMINISCENCES OF A LECTURE ON LUKE XII.*

Torquay, Nov. 12th, 1863.

THAT which characterizes this chapter is that in it the Lord Jesus is bringing in the light of God upon everything in this world, everything that in any way connects itself with His people's passage through it. He takes up all they would have to meet with in their course, up to its very end, and brings in the light of God upon it. He marks the false profession of religion by which they would be surrounded, the hostility of the world, by whom He had been rejected, the fears

* Whatever truth and force may be found in these recollections must be ascribed to the lecturer, their defects to the defective memory of the writer of them.—ED.

and cares of His disciples, the testimony they were called to bear, the pursuits and aims of men, the gracious care of God on behalf of His own, marking here a morass, where men sink and perish, and there showing the bright issue of a heavenly course, mapping out in infinite goodness every part of the road His disciples would have to travel. And there is infinite grace in this. For it is not only bringing in the light, which makes all things manifest, but it is infinite grace in the Lord Jesus so to interest Himself with the path and circumstances of His people in this world as to take up everything for them, in order to bring in the light of God upon every step of the way, which He so wonderfully marks out for them beforehand.

The first thing that is presented in the chapter is the warning against the leaven of the Pharisees. "He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." This is one of the more common and grosser forms of evil, and

have been borne, would be brought fully out. What they had spoken in the utmost privacy would in the most public manner possible be proclaimed. And they were not acting rightly, or according to the truth of their position, if they were not prepared for this.

He next warns against being afraid of the power and hostility of men; for He well knew the hatred which the world would always bear to those who were witnesses for Him. "I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him." He would thus displace their fear by a greater fear; the fear of man by the fear of God. For after all, the power and wrath of man were limited to what he could do to the body; while the power and anger of Him whom they were to fear reached the soul. It is a lower motive, no doubt; but He guards us against un-

does not therefore call for much remark. It was a false profession of religion, a zeal for outward forms and observances, without any reality or conscience. It was worthless: it would not bear the light. The evil and folly of it are shown by the declaration that everything is to be brought into the light. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." This is general and shows the worthlessness of that which is warned against. But He adds to His disciples: "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." He shows them that there is nothing which will not eventually be brought out into the full daylight, and have its real character thoroughly manifested. Everything will be brought openly out. They are to act on the conviction that nothing will be allowed to remain concealed. All will be disclosed. Their testimony also, in whatever obscurity it might

faithfulness through the dread of the consequences of man's wrath, by showing the more terrible consequences to which unfaithfulness would expose us from God's displeasure.

But there was much more than this, and higher motives to be addressed. There was the gracious care of God which extended, whatever the hostility of the world, to the counting of the very hairs of their head. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God." But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." What a wonderful thing it is to be thus going through the world in the consciousness that, whatever the danger, or opposition, or malice of men, God's gracious interest and care for us is so constant and minute that He counts the very hairs of our head! There is nothing more wonderful than this, and when realized, it gives a heavenly tone and confidence to the soul that makes the path always bright, and reduces to a

matter of indifference the mere outward circumstances of the way.

He now comes to that which was the disciple's true position and calling, which was to manifest God in the world, as He had done at all costs. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." It might cost them dear before men, but He would acknowledge them before the angels. And there was the alternative. It was the confession of Christ, whom the world had rejected; for the awakening of faith in those who owned this confession, and for condemnation where it was rejected when the light of God's judgment would confirm the testimony they had borne. It would bring to those who were faithful, whatever pain and trial it might induce, the confession of the Son of man when He should be manifested in power and glory. Moreover, He places His disciples in a certain sense above Himself in connexion with their testimony.

encouragement to our hearts it is to be thus told that "if *you* speak they are more responsible, if they reject it, than in rejecting *me*!"

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" He was not come to set the world in order now. He *will* do that by and by, and will set judgment in the earth and order it in righteousness; but His business was with men's souls now. "And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." This is a warning to the multitude. And He then adds the parable of the rich man. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my

"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Blasphemy against the witness given would in their case be worse than blasphemy against Himself. That might be forgiven; it has been indeed to the Jews as a nation, and will be at the end; but whosoever spoke in blasphemy against the testimony of the disciples blasphemed against the Holy Ghost: this would never be forgiven. It was the Holy Ghost speaking in the disciples, in their witness, and this would bring more dreadful consequences than even blaspheming the Son of man himself. Such is the wonderful position that He puts His disciples into in regard to the witness they were to bear in the world! And what an amazing

fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease: eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, *Thou fool!* this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" He thus brings in the light of God upon the principles of the world, which men are acting on before us every day. It is not the worst aspect of the world, its unrighteousness and oppression; but its schemes and projects, its pursuit of riches and enjoyment in the present life. It is a perfect picture of what men are seeking, what they are spending their energies and anxieties upon. It is a provision for the life that is passing away. And that is it which especially characterizes the world. But what is there here that is a provision for the soul? The aims and pursuits of men are thus brought in only to be shown in their hollowness and set aside. God says, "You are fools!" The very objects of the world's pursuit, that which men are commended

for, which gains them respect and esteem, the Lord brands as folly. And to the men who are giving their life and energies to the pursuit of these things He says, "You are fools!" "What have these things to do with your souls?"

This is the world! And with such contempt are its aims and pursuits dragged into the light and dismissed. They are only noticed to be blown upon!

He now turns to His disciples. "He said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." He notices thus these ordinary circumstances of life, because in truth a great part of life is made up of eating and drinking and caring for what we shall put on. But He teaches His disciples that all these things are the objects of their Father's care. He feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies—much more will He care for them. Though they are the things that are connected only with this life, and things which

things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He reminds them of their relationship to God, which of necessity would secure to them His care in their earthly circumstances, while their hearts were called to be set upon higher things. And He adds, "Seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Their position in the world that had rejected Him would be such as to demand the exercise of trust in God, nor would it be possible to maintain it without; but on the other hand, He presses upon them that so far from their hearts being occupied and distracted with fears and cares about the things around them, they themselves were the objects of God's thoughts, and that He had counsels and a plan about them. They may trust in God, for they were of great value in His sight, however poor and worthless in themselves. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." But while declaring this plan and counsel of God about them,

perish in the using, still God's care is not shut out from them. He says, "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls!" Besides this, He shows them how fruitless is the care which shuts God out. "Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" His care is seen in nature around them, in feeding the fowls, and in clothing the lilies. Do they suppose it will not be exercised toward them? "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these

He reminds them that they must be content to be "a little flock." The world that had rejected Him must not be expected to favour them. They must reckon upon being few and despised. The hearts of men generally would be occupied with anything rather than that kingdom which is so opposed in its characteristics to everything that commands the estimation of the world; and in truth will only be introduced by its judgment. But it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. They would possess it as their inheritance with Christ. They would reign with Him when the kingdom was established in power. Meantime they were to be occupied with the heavenly treasure thus brought to light. "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, nor moth corrupteth." In the prospect of the kingdom their position on earth was to be that of strangers and pilgrims, having their treasure in heaven. Because where

their treasure was their heart would be also. People who have riches and worldly possessions may say that their hearts are not on these things; but the Lord says, "Where your treasure is, there *will* your heart be also." If your treasure is on earth, your heart will be on earth. If your treasure is in heaven, your heart will be there. The treasure commands the heart, wherever it may be. If a Christian is possessed of riches, he may, of course, use them in the service of the Lord; but it is a serious responsibility, and always a snare, because the heart is so prone to value these things—to make them its treasure. If I had, for example, a thousand a-year instead of not a penny, the temptation would be that I should *like* to have a thousand a-year instead of not a penny: and so far it would take my heart out of heaven. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

These three things, then were to influence their hearts and set them free from the seductions and influences of the world. It was their Father's good

pleasure to give them the kingdom. They had their treasure in heaven; and there was the expectation of the Lord's return. This last is now presented and enforced. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

Until the Lord came they were to be found watching. Their whole position was to manifest the fact of their continual expectation of His return. The character of their waiting was to be like that of servants at the hall door, with their hand, as it were, upon the latch, that when their master knocked they might open the door at once, without a moment's delay. This is a figure, of course, but it expresses the force and effect of a constant present expectation. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his *waiting* for His Lord. Merely holding the coming of the Lord as a truth or doctrine is not

that which is here expressed, but the personal, daily waiting for the Lord Himself. Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But this is not the point. It is, Am I waiting for Himself day by day? Is this the horizon that bounds my daily hope and expectation? It was that which stamped its character on the Thessalonians and on Paul himself. They were "waiting for God's Son from heaven." And though the apostle had a special revelation that he should depart, he does not suffer it for a moment to detach him from the common position and hope of the Thessalonians, to whom he was writing; but says, "*We* which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord."

People are saying, 'It is true that they did expect the Lord's return in that day, but they were mistaken. He did not come; and those who expected Him died, and, it is plain, did not realize their hope. It was simply a mistake.' This is the use that infidelity is making of the word of God; and Christians even

are infected by its spirit. But no! This expectation put them in the very position on which the Lord pronounces His blessing, when He comes. It made them have their loins girded about for service, and their lights burning, and themselves like men that waited for their Lord. They did not lose this character by dying. Their expectation gave its impress to their whole course on earth, and was the spring of that faithfulness and service which receives the Lord's approval when He comes. He had said, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." The departure of any before He came did not sever them from this blessing, nor hinder their being joined together in the realization of the hope they had cherished. The object of Thessalonians iv. is to explain this.

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth

and serve them." As if He had said—"I cannot help your being called to watch and wait now. I am waiting too. You *must* be girded up in watchfulness now and service in the midst of evil; but when that is done with, and I come again, and have things my own way, you shall watch no longer, but take your rest; and I will gird myself, and come forth and serve you. It shall be my business then to minister to your happiness, when watching and waiting shall have no more place." I need not remark on the exquisite grace of this!

"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

This also shows the need of constant watching and expectation; for at last the coming of the Lord will be sooner than He was expected. "The Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

till I come." There was the watchfulness, with girded loins, which would be rewarded by rest and a place at that blessed feast when the Lord Himself would come forth with *His loins girded*, in infinite condescension and grace, to serve them. And there was the faithfulness in His service, which He declares shall be rewarded by having rule over all that belongs to Himself in glory. It is the double aspect of the blessing which will be the result of faithfulness at the Lord's coming.

But there is the other side of the picture:—

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

It was the absence of the overruling expectation of the Lord's return, instead

"Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath."

To this inquiry of Peter concerning the application of the Lord's instructions He replies by referring him to those to whom He had committed duties and the responsibility of service during His absence. There were those to whom the trust of stewardship was committed, and they were to be found in submission to their master's will and authority, faithfully ministering to the wants of His household. As the Lord said to Peter, "Feed my sheep;" "feed my lambs." Watchfulness and service were to characterize the disciples during the absence of the Lord, in the constant expectation of His return. "Occupy

of the heart and desire going out towards it, that opened the door to the unfaithfulness and usurpation of authority, and the indulgence of the spirit of the world which is here depicted. The servant said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," and in the history of Christianity, when the Church began to say, "My lord delayeth his coming," it sunk down into the world, and the coming of the Lord was counted as a heresy. The Church did not say that the Lord would never come; but "My Lord delayeth his coming," showing that the immediate expectation of his return had lost its place in the heart. And the parable of the ten virgins shows that it is the very same testimony that called the Church *out of the world*, at first to go forth and meet the Bridegroom, that awakens it from its slumbers at last—"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

There was no immediate expectation of the Lord's return, and this gave occasion for the relaxation of the bonds

of obligation. There was the withdrawal of the heart from the wholesome sense of being under the authority of Christ, an authority which, at any moment, might be exercised to take account of our doings, and which makes us feel that we are but *servants*, and thus keeps the soul in due subjection to the Lord. It was the putting off to a distant day the expectation of the return of his master, that led the unfaithful servant to give licence to his own will, and to usurp authority over his fellow-servants, and "to eat and drink and to be drunken." This is just hierarchism, with its assumed authority, and its worldly spirit. But responsibility will not be escaped. Those who have assumed the position of servants, and have taken a place ostensibly as ministers in the Church, will be judged as servants, though strangers in heart to the Lord, who will judge them, and appoint them their portion *with the unbelievers*.

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself,

neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." A heavier punishment will be adjudged to those who, from their profession and advantages, assumed to know their Lord's will, without doing it, than to those who were ignorant of that will, but were, nevertheless, living in evil, which the Lord must judge when He comes. It is the difference between the professing Church and the world. Moreover, if persons are to be treated as guilty in proportion to the advantages they have received, who will be so guilty as those who profess to be ministers of the Lord, if they do not serve Him in the expectation of His return?

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?" The effect of bringing God into the world

was to produce trial and conflict! The Lord had to feel this, that His very presence here amongst men had already produced that effect. The fire was already kindled. Though He came in perfect grace, His presence brought in the light, and this was insupportable to men. It detected the condition of their hearts and produced, in spite of their profession of the knowledge of God, hostility and rejection. Still His love was perfect and divine. But it could not go forth and have free scope, until His death had opened the way for its exercise. And in the presence of conscious rejection He says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Nothing could turn aside His infinite love! The grace that was in His heart might be driven back, as to its living exercise amongst men, whilst He was here on earth; but it was only that His death might open a channel for its exercise in a power commensurate with the love that gave occasion for its display.

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

"From henceforth!" What a condemnation of the world's condition is here disclosed! "From henceforth"—from the time of the Lord's coming amongst men in infinite goodness and love—was there this terrible result! His presence in this world, though in perfect lowliness and grace, was sufficient to kindle this fire and to provoke these divisions and conflicts. The passage is almost literally quoted from the Prophet Micah, and it is given as a picture of the most dreadful, moral condition of Israel by the prophet. It is well to read the passage, that the heart may perceive the

full force of the Lord's declaration, "From henceforth," &c. "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house." (Micah vii. 5, 6.)

But how terrible is it to think that this state of things should be produced by the presence and love of the Lord Jesus, and should be still produced by His testimony! For in this respect men will as little bear the powerful witness of Christ and true faith in Him, as they would Christ Himself.

"And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and

tianity, it may be asked, *Is this right?* While, by the light of the Scriptures there ought also to be an ability to discern this time.

I take up the remaining verses, though they relate to the position of Israel as the consequence of their rejection of Christ, in order to complete the chapter, and that we may have it all before us.

"When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite."

Were the people ever so blind, one thing was certain, that they were in the position of being brought before the judge; they were on *the way*. If through their rejection of their Messiah, they were once delivered up, they would not come out until the chastisement of God was fully executed upon them,

why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

In this appeal to the people the Lord draws their attention to the character of the time in which they were living, and to the signs by which it was marked. Everything hung upon a just moral estimate of this time, and they had the scriptures to guide them in their judgment. If they had had as much interest in what was then passing before their eyes, as they had in noting the face of the sky and of the earth, in order to guide their worldly business, they would have been able to discern this time. But there was another ground of appeal.

There were moral characteristics in what was passing before them, that, apart from the Scriptures, by the mere force of natural conscience and judgment, they ought to have been able to pronounce upon, and of themselves to have judged that which is *right*. There is this ground of appeal; and of many things it may be asked now, *is this right?* For example, when infidelity is being taught in the place of Chris-

until they had "paid the very last mite." As in Isaiah it is said of Jerusalem, "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

The Lord grant that we may go through this world in faithfulness to Him who died to deliver us out of it and to give us our portion in that world into which He is risen, looking daily for His return to bring us into the inheritance His love has provided for us! May there be that confidence of heart in all the circumstances of this life that springs from the sense of God's care and interest about us, and the certainty that we are of value in His sight, and that He would, in His infinite grace, have us to reckon ourselves of value to Him, even in the midst of this hostile world. And above all, may He make us faithful as those who are waiting for Him, pursuing the path His wisdom has traced out for us, but always with this bright expectation before us, as men who are waiting for their Lord! It will be no joy to any that He should come and find them in the earnest pursuit of the things of

this world, or heaping up its riches; for there should not only be the individual hope, but a testimony to the world that He is coming. Individual faithfulness to Christ in the place His love has set us in is the first thing our souls should seek, and then love to Him and to souls will naturally flow out, and the more earnestly in proportion as we enter into His thoughts about what the world, through which we are passing is, as well as that world to which we are going.

The night is far spent and the day is at hand:
 No sign to be look'd for; the Star's in the sky;
 Rejoice then, ye saints, 'tis your Lord's own command;
 Rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.
 What a day will that be when the Saviour appears!
 How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!
 A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,
 A rich compensation for suffering and loss.
 What is loss in this world, when compared to that day,
 To the glory that then will from heaven be reveal'd?
 "The Saviour is coming," His people may say;
 "The Lord whom we look for, our Sun and our Shield."

coming again. Jesus "gave thanks;" not I conceive as we do, for things temporally; not for having the table supplied by the providential care that supplies our every need; but there was a far deeper thought in His mind. He saw His death and what that would bring His disciples into. Death is nothing pleasant in itself: it is always terrible; but He saw what that would lead His disciples into; and "he gave thanks." My death is to become your life, your bond of union, your cause of rejoicing; and for this He gave thanks. And we have the blessed privilege of responding to the mind of Christ, in standing out for Him. "This do in remembrance of me."

APHORISM.

"Extremes meet. Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors."

FRAGMENT.

(1 Cor. xi.)

What is that claim of the Lord Jesus upon us, which most effectually subdues the will and touches the heart? It is the claim which His supreme and unchanging love brings home to us; a claim that is especially renewed as often as we are gathered in His name to show forth His death. Our ability to respond to that claim will be just in proportion to the power we get through the Spirit of entering into the joy of the Lord.

We should always remember that it was not by tradition from the disciples, nor from the record of the gospels, but by a direct revelation from the Lord in the glory, that Paul received his instructions about the Supper. Our call to this comes from the glory, and is a proof to us that Jesus is in the glory, and there still cares for us and watches over us. We are not to do it only as a command, not to keep it in remembrance of the appointment of the paschal supper; but in remembrance of His death and

THE HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION.

Heb. iii. 1.

A high priest. This tells a tale of God's grace and His people's failure. Of God's grace, because it implies a certain relationship instituted by God, and existing between Him and His people. Of His people's failure, because otherwise there would be no need of a high priest.

The relationship is founded on accomplished redemption. It was after Israel had been redeemed that the priesthood was instituted. Redemption having taken place, a settled thing, which nothing could alter, God made known he would dwell in their midst. Hence a sanctuary was to be built of the form and pattern prescribed, and for service in that sanctuary, an order of priesthood was appointed. For if God was to dwell in the midst of Israel, holiness must characterize their walk and their camp; (Lev. xix. 2; Numb. v. 3,) otherwise communion between them and the Lord,

enjoyed on the basis of redemption, must be interrupted. God could have no fellowship with sin. But when that communion was interrupted, on the part of the congregation or an individual, as the case might be, the offenders, whoever they were, had to present themselves at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with the sacrifices for the priest to offer. The sin or trespass offerings being brought as the law prescribed, the victims were slain, the blood was shed and sprinkled on the altar of burnt-offering, or before the Lord, as the case required, (Lev. iv.) a token at once of what the sinner deserved—death, and a recognition of that which alone could put away sin. Then forgiveness for that act was declared, and restoration to communion was effected. These offerings and the priesthood were for Israel. The Gentiles had no share in them as Gentiles. For them no priesthood had been appointed by divine command. For them no scapegoat went yearly into the wilderness bearing their sins into a land of

neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John x. 28.) If the carcasses of those who refused to go up to Canaan at the earnest entreaty of Caleb and Joshua fell in the wilderness, the nation, nevertheless, entered the land of promise. Israel sinned at Mount Sinai, and worshipped the golden calf. God's anger was kindled, and he threatened to destroy them. But would the whole nation have ceased to exist before Him? No, for He adds to Moses, "I will make of thee a great nation." (Exod. xxxii. 10.) Again, when they sinned as referred to above, the Lord declared, "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee, (Moses) a greater nation and mightier than they." (Numb. xiv. 12.) All that generation might have been cut off for their rebellion, but the seed of Abraham would have remained, and the promises made to the patriarchs fulfilled to their descendants. The nation could not wholly perish, for the Lord had redeemed it. And this fact furnishes Moses with a plea to urge

forgetfulness. These appointments were for God's people, His provision for the redeemed ones.

Redemption once accomplished, nothing, as has been observed, can alter it. A glorious truth this. But the maintenance of intercourse between the redeemed and the Lord, depends on the walk of His people, and when that fails, on the divine means of restoring it. We see this clearly illustrated in Israel. Each individual act of sin or trespass required certain offerings. But more than this, we see, on the great day of atonement, the whole congregation before the Lord, represented by their offerings, who needed atonement to be made, and thereby their communion to be maintained for them. When comparing them with us one great difference must be remembered—they were redeemed as a nation; we as individuals. Hence, among them, individuals could perish, though the nation could never cease to exist; whereas, of believers now, redeemed individually, the Lord spoke: "They shall never perish,

on their behalf: "O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand." (Deut. ix. 26.) So the remnant in the latter days will urge this same plea before the Lord. "Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed." (Psalm lxxiv. 2.) Nor is this confined to Moses and the remnant; the Lord, too, when remonstrating with Israel, (Hosea vii. 13; Micah vi. 4,) records the fact that He had redeemed them. So the beautiful prayer framed by the Spirit of God for the remnant in their great trouble yet future, thus speaks: "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer." And "We are thine: thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." (Isaiah lxiii. 16, 19.) Thus, amidst all their backslidings in the wilderness, their grievous sinfulness in the land, the fact of redemption is acknowledged by God, and remembered by the people.

It had been accomplished once for all. The pascal lamb had been slain in Egypt, the blood sheltering from judgment sprinkled on the door-posts, and the people had passed in type through death, which overtook their enemies, and stood on the east shore of the Red Sea, a nation in the enjoyment of redemption. For all this no priesthood was required. They came to Sinai ere Aaron and his sons were set apart for their office.

Redemption completed did not imply the preservation of the people from failure, nor their fitness to be in the presence of the Lord. Hence priesthood was instituted, and the various sacrifices for sin and defilement, as well as the day of atonement, appointed. It was not a question of redemption that day shadowed forth, but atonement—atonement for a redeemed people. The high priest entered into the holy place with the blood “of others,” “for himself and for the errors of the people,” (Heb. ix. 7.) and “to make an atonement for the holy place, because of their uncleanness, and

because of their transgressions in all their sins; and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them, because of their uncleanness.” (Lev. xvi. 16.) Repeated every year, the services of that day spoke of that blood-shedding which alone could put away sin. But it was the need of the putting away of sin, and the knowledge of forgiveness, and the maintenance of communion, which they set forth. It was not redemption. Israel commemorated the latter on the 14th of Nisan; they remembered their need of the former on the 10th of Tisri.

With us the case is different. There is redemption, and there is atonement and forgiveness. But the sacrifice, by which the former is secured, is the same by which the latter is assured. “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb. ix. 12.) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Eph. i. 7.) For us both are accomplished; with Israel it was not so. The sacrifices continually

offered, brought sin to remembrance, but could not put it away. (Heb. x. 3.) Redemption then and remission of sins are distinct, as the history of Israel shows, though now accomplished by one and the same sacrifice. As High Priest, Christ has entered in once into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption, carrying in His own blood. We know then both redemption and forgiveness. Israel had the pascal lamb speaking of the former as accomplished, and the day of atonement shadowing forth the latter not yet for ever assured. Is not this the condition of many souls now? They believe themselves to be children of God, yet cannot say they have “no more conscience of sins.” (Heb. x. 2.) The normal condition of Israel before the Lord came they accept as their rightful position after He has died and risen again. A great mistake, and a grievous dishonour to Him, who, as our High Priest, has gone into the holiest once for all, and remains there. Aaron was admitted into the holiest on earth for a

brief space once a year. The Lord maintains his place in the heavenly sanctuary for ever. Can the question of sin put away be still unsettled, and the High Priest remain within the sanctuary? Assuredly not. They knew Aaron had been permitted to enter within the veil and had been accepted by his coming out and showing himself to the people. We know our High Priest is in heaven itself, in the presence of God for us, by the Holy Spirit sent down from above. (John xvi. 5, 7; Acts ii. 33.)

Having an High Priest, fulfilling the type of Aaron and his successors on the day of atonement, entered the holy of holies, but with His own blood, and sitting now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having purged our sins, what remains for Him to do? He sits on high because He has once for all offered up the sacrifice which could, and has, put away sin. Is there anything else for the Lord, as High Priest, to accomplish? Nothing for the putting away of sin, but much for the comfort and sustenance of His people.

This leads to the consideration of the *present* work of the High Priest. Sin put away, forgiveness assured, eternal acceptance in Him announced—wonderful as these truths are they do not exhaust the list of blessings we receive now from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a finished work, there is a work still going on. We have entrance into the holiest of all by His blood, but we need the services of our High Priest continually for worship, failure, and temptation.

As in Israel, when the priest was engaged at the altar in the court each morning and evening, offering up the appointed daily sacrifice, the high priest had his place before the golden altar in the holy place; and as the smoke ascended from the brazen altar outside, the cloud of incense went up from the altar within; so the intercession of the Lord Jesus, to render our worship acceptable to the Father, is continually required. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices

Let us now look at the *present* work the Lord carries on, as unfolded in this epistle.

In chapter ii. 17, 18, we get the first mention of the High Priest: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." What a statement! A man having brethren, and made like unto them in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. And of this One it has already been said, "By whom he made the worlds." (Chap. i. 2.) Are His brethren partakers of flesh and blood? So is He. Are they in circumstances of suffering? So was He. Are they liable to death? He has passed through it. His brethren! Who are they? The whole human race? Scripture never tells us that. Children of men? Yes; but not all the descendants of Adam. It was

acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii. 5.) And again, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." (Heb. xiii. 15.) If we need the High Priest for worship, we need Him not less for failure. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii. 1, 2.) How amazing the grace which, not only pardons and sets us as children before our God, but provides for failure too after we have known the Lord. His care and watchfulness never cease, for His people need them continually.

But is He an advocate suited to our wants? Is He qualified for the work? Has He been called to this office by divine appointment? Where does He exercise it? What does He do for us? These are questions which the Epistle to the Hebrews answers. (Chap. ii.—viii.) Then we have the ground on which He can exercise this office, and the work as High Priest He has *already* accomplished. (Chap. ix., x.)

the seed of Abraham He took hold of; not his children by natural descent, but those who are really his children. (John viii. 39; Gal. iii. 29.) It was not by His incarnation that men were admitted to this relationship with Him; but by His death and resurrection. (Psalm xxii. 22; John xx. 17.) His brethren are the sanctified ones. "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii. 11.) It is not here a question for whom He died, but for whom He is High Priest; for His brethren, "the people," i.e., those who stand before God on the ground of redemption—for these He is High Priest. And "having suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Mark, "He *suffered* being tempted." Do we? It is not suffering arising from the consequences of yielding to it, that He never did, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled; but suffering from being tempted. Tried in every way by temptation, yet never failing, He knows what it is, and

therefore can succour them that are tempted. What words of comfort! Tempted as man once, now High Priest above, and able to help "the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

Where does He exercise this office? Chapter iv. tells us: "Seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He who is now in heaven, Jesus, is the one who was tempted as man down here. But why is He there? Because there is the only sanctuary now recognized by God. Nor is this all. Not only have we His place of service stated, but His ability to sympathize made known. Here is something fresh. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. The high priest in Israel, compassed with infirmities, would, doubtless, be able oftentimes to sympathize with the people. But the Lord has no infirmity, and is where no trial or sin can ever come; yet He can be touched with the feeling of

our infirmities. Whence then has He learnt to sympathize? Aaron and his sons would, the longer they lived, be the better fitted for this part of their priestly work, as each day they experienced something more or something fresh, of the trials incident to humanity. Their experience would increase with the duration of their priesthood. He was perfected in this before He became High Priest. Theirs would be always partial, but His was not. A tried and tempted Israelite might find the High Priest able to enter into his trouble, having passed through a similar one himself, but he might not; and though what he suffered might be nothing more than that which is common to man, the high priest might never have experienced what he complained of, and hence his full sympathy be withheld. But here is One who will never be found a stranger to the position His people may be placed in, by the temptations permitted to assail them; One who can always fully sympathize; for He has been in all points tempted as we are.

As He can help, so He can sympathize. Man can sympathize where he cannot help: Aaron might help where he could not, from want of experience, sympathize. But He who can help the tempted, can fully sympathize with them also. Do any ask when the Son of God became acquainted with all the sorrows of humanity consequent on sin, and the sufferings of those who are tempted? The next chapter, vi., answers, "In the days of his flesh." And the same chapter unfolds another important point, His authority to exercise the priesthood. His ability to help and sympathize having been set forth, the question is now set at rest how He came to take the office. Did he assume it of His own accord, or was He appointed by another? "No man taketh this honour unto himself," we are told, "but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So Christ glorified not Himself to be made high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for

ever after the order of Melchizedec." (v. 4—6.) His authority being established beyond a doubt, the Spirit of God dwells on another thought, which the Psalm quoted, (ex.,) introduces, the excellency of this priesthood, yea, its surpassing excellency. (vii.) God appointed the Aaronic priesthood, He also instituted the Melchizedec priesthood. The Aaronic was first in order of time, but is superseded by reason of the superiority of the other. Aaron died, and his sons after him, but He lives for ever. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedec, and, as the apostle argues, Levi, as it were, paid them in the person of his forefather. Melchizedec, as the greater, blessed Abraham the less; not Abraham Melchizedec. The priests of Aaron's order were appointed without oath. But of Him the Lord sware and will not repent, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." The superiority of this priesthood is therefore conclusively established. He liveth for ever as priest, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost

that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them," vii. 25. An unchangeable priesthood, such is His office; hence able to save to the uttermost. No position His people can be in is beyond His power to save, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them. There is one point more to be noticed, and that is its royal character. Melchizedec was king and priest, so He who is appointed after his order is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens as priest and king. What a contrast between the life on earth and the place He now occupies." "Made perfect through sufferings;" (Chap. ii. 10;) "offered up supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death;" "learning obedience by the things which he suffered;" now at the right hand of the Father, there to save to the uttermost. And why? Because He ever liveth to make intercession. It is intercession, not redemption, though grounded on it. But He saves by inter-

ceding. It is not the offering up of a sacrifice, that He has done. He lives to intercede. It is in this way the high priesthood is now exercised. It is this His people need, and needing, never fail to have. We have not to ask Him to intercede. He lives to do that; and as He told Peter, (Luke xxii. 32,) so He assuredly acts. It is the result of His intercession that His people are restored; for them only is He represented as interceding. He died for sinners, He intercedes for saints. Souls not understanding this, (His present work of priestly service,) think that each sin requires a fresh application to the blood to wash it out. He has taken His blood in once for all to God. It is ever there, so He can effectually intercede. It is not a sacrifice they need to be again offered up, it is not the blood to be applied to their souls, but the intercession based on the atonement. Their ignorance of this mars their enjoyment of the truth, and hinders that peace of soul all His people may possess; but, blessed be God, it cannot

hinder Him in His work. What His people need, that He does. Yet we have no right to be ignorant on such subjects when He has made it so plain.

What comfort, then, from the priesthood of the Lord, based on the redemption through His blood. Able to sympathize—the depths of that sympathy can never be fathomed. Able to save to the uttermost—the extent of His power none of His people can measure. Unfathomable and illimitable they are. But this we know, and this should suffice—We have a High Priest able to help, able to sympathize, able to save.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 380, Vol. VII.)

It is because of sin that wrath comes. To deny this is to deny the word. If all that is meant is, that now God is dealing with the world in simple grace, there is nothing to object. But now, sin is the occasion of all His dealings

with the world; grace, mercy, and even providence, which has the character of patience towards the wicked, all have reference to the sin of man.

In this gospel, where grace towards the Church is so fully and distinctly brought out, the gospel towards the world is also much spoken of; it is always, in fact, the world-aspect we get in John, in contrast with the Jews.

It is not here "Lamb of God," in the sense of the Lamb suited to Him, but has more the idea of relationship, God's Lamb, as Abraham said to Isaac: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb," &c.

Ver. 31. "I knew him not." John did know Christ prophetically, hence he said to Him when He came to him to be baptized, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But he did not know Him as the Son of God until the Holy Ghost pointed Him out. The fact of John sending two of his disciples to Christ to enquire concerning Him, (see Matt. xi.,) is collateral proof that John did not fully know who

Jesus was. As in the first eighteen verses we get the testimony of what Christ was Himself, in 19—34 we get John's testimony to Christ, which was that He was the Son of God.

Ver. 35, &c. Here we get another thing—the gathering to Christ of the remnant of Israel. This is the present historical result of the manifestation of Christ among the Jews. First we have the gathering to Christ through the instrumentality of the Baptist, 35—42; then the gathering of Christ Himself and His disciples, 43—51; then the third day, a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There appears to be five days mentioned here: there are two days of the Baptist's testimony in Judea, a testimony first of darkness — “there stands one among you whom you know not;” (ver. 19—28;) then a testimony of light—“*Behold the Lamb of God.*” (Ver. 29—34.) These two days are preparatory to the others; in them the sphere of the subject is larger—it is the world—but there is no gathering going on. In the three days, of which the

marriage in Cana is one, Christ becomes the centre round which others gather. In verse 35 John begins to gather to Christ: he sends by his testimony two of his disciples to Christ. Then verse 40, Jesus begins to gather Himself. All this gathering is among the Jews—it is the remnant. In chapter ii. we have the third day, when Christ comes to a marriage in Cana.

A question was now put as to the real force of verse 29, in answer to which it was said, God is now, on the ground of the work of Christ, dealing in grace. This verse refers to the result of Christ's work. Infants are not at all concerned in it especially. It shows the value of the work of Christ, not the application of it. It is not that what people call the guilt of original sin is removed. God is not dealing with men about this, but He will take even this up at the end in judgment; but what is here meant is, that Christ is the one who will eventually remove all sin from the world, so as to make it clear of all evil, and a dwelling-place of

righteousness. Now, on the ground of the work of Christ, God is not imputing their trespasses to men; and upon the ground of Christ's being the taker away of the sin of the world, we can say to all men, “Come, for the blood is upon the mercy-seat.” It is not merely from the men of the world, but from the world itself, that sin shall eventually be taken away. It is important to understand that I can go to every man in the world and invite him to come to God; but I can say to the believer, “There is something more to tell you, even that He has borne your sins in His own body on the tree.” “Taketh away” is a more correct translation than “beareth away.” In the passage “The living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe,” it is God in His providence as the preserver of all men, and especially of those who believe. It does not refer to salvation from sin at all.

It is very clear that God loved all and Christ loved all. Hence He says, “For my love I got hatred.” Christ

died for all, gave Himself a ransom for all. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” He is the universal point of attraction for all. We should keep to this—it is *for* all. The blood is upon the mercy-seat for all. When Paul says, “I beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,” I get there the action of the Holy Ghost urging men to come to God. Sinners are besought to be reconciled by Christ's ambassadors, but it is very remarkable to notice the following statement of the apostle: “For he hath *made him to be sin for us,*” &c. He does not say, He hath made Him to be sin for every man, speaking indiscriminately, as he besought them to be reconciled. No; he speaks of his own realization and blessing in company with other believers. It is a very important thing to keep clearly in mind the distinction between beseeching men to be reconciled to God on the ground of what Christ has done, and that special application of His work which enables the soul to say, “For he hath made him to be sin *for us,*” &c.

We get the same distinction in figure under the law. There was the blood upon the mercyseat as a propitiation before God for sin, on the ground of which any soul in Israel could draw near to God; and, again, there was the high priest confessing the sins of a peculiar people over the head of the scapegoat who becomes thus a substitute for the people. The difference is between propitiation and substitution, and error is frequently connected with ignorance of this difference. We find this error in a good deal that is going on around us. It is owned by some that Christ gave Himself in devotedness and love to God for us, but directly substitution is brought in they deny it "in toto."

As to the preaching of the gospel to the world, the first fact I would present to men is, that God was here reconciling the world unto Himself. This strikes at the heart. God unmasks in the person of Christ what the sinner really is, but at the same time shows the fullest grace. Then I can say there has been a perfect atonement offered;

us. He has a perfect right to take what course He chooses. We cannot take up the question of God's justice. If the question was the result of a real difficulty in the mind, it might be suggested, that it is of more importance that God's character should be vindicated than that the world should be saved. God always acts for His own glory.

To return, however, to our chapter. When we get into the historical facts which were going on at the time, from the 35th verse, we get what did not occur before "the Christ;" for it is in Israel that the Son of God is found. This was during the first day of gathering. At verse 43 the second day commences. Philip is found by Christ, he finds Nathaniel. Here we find a difference. Christ says, Follow me. Philip gathers to Him. Christ is the centre. It is not here, however, of sinners in the world, but of a remnant in Israel. Christ owns Nathaniel as an *Israelite* without guile. He says without guile, although his heart is full of prejudice, and he does not know Christ.

come to God through it and you will be received. If any come, to them I can explain what the blood has done for them that believe. A great deal of what we call preaching the gospel is really speaking of the effect of Christ's work; we are really in the epistles. I think that the more we keep to the facts which display God's love, the more power there will be. God is now beseeching through His servants. He has, so to speak, humanized the means of salvation. In His own nature God is abstract. He dwells in light in which none can see Him, and to which none can approach, but He appeals to us through man and in man. But I should take care not to think for a moment that I can *persuade* any one to come to God. No, the work is God's alone; *He* beseeches *by* us.

As to the question, "How can you reconcile the fact of God's loving the world and not using His own power compulsorily to bring it to Himself," it may be answered, first—We have no right to judge God, but He will judge

Nathaniel's being under the figtree refers to his being in Israel. Nathaniel owns Him as the Son of God and King of Israel. The ground is completely Jewish. Nathaniel seems to have owned Him in the character in which he is spoken of in Psalm ii.

Verse 51. The word in this verse "hereafter," should be "henceforth." It is astonishing how not seeing things intelligently makes it impossible for a translator to give the true sense. There is the same mistake in the passage, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven;" it really should be, "Henceforth ye shall see," &c. This verse (51) means that Christ was even then the subject of angelic attendance, which those who, like Nathaniel, by faith discerned in Him the Son of God and King of Israel, should henceforth see Him also as the one upon whom heaven opens and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. It refers to the time of Christ's earthly life. The Son of God was, as it were, Jacob at the foot of

the ladder. He is not, as is generally thought, the ladder, but is at the foot of it. Heaven is opened and angels are going up and down from and to Him. Heaven is opened upon Christ on earth as an object; until He was there there was no object on earth upon which heaven could open. In the case of Stephen in Acts vii., we get another thing. Heaven is opened to him, and he sees an object up there for us—the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. When heaven opened to Christ there was no object up there to Him, but He was Himself the object of heaven upon earth. He was heaven's object here, and now for us heaven is opened, and He is our object up there. Jesus is there, an object to fix our attention in glory, even as He was the object of heaven's attention when He was upon earth. It is a very important and blessed thing to see Christ upon earth the object of heaven. Here the Holy Ghost bears testimony to Him, and also the angels. It is not man which is the object, but the new Man,

He hath not skill to utter lies,
His very soul is in his eyes;
Single his aim in all, and true,
And apt to praise what others do.

No questions dark his spirit vex,
No faithless doubts his soul perplex,
Simply from day to day he lives,
Content with what the present gives.

Scarce can he stand alone, far less
Would roam abroad in loneliness;
Fast clinging to his mother still,
She bears and leads him at her will.

He will not stay to pause and choose,
His father's guidance e'er refuse,
Thinks not of danger, fears no harm,
Wrapt in obedience' holy calm.

For strange concerns he careth nought;
What others do, although were wrought
Before his eyes the worst offence,
Stains not his tranquil innocence.

His dearest work, his best delight,
Is, lying in his mother's sight,
To gaze for ever on her face,
And nestle in her fond embrace.

O childhood's innocence! the voice
Of thy deep wisdom is my choice!
Who hath thy lore is truly wise,
And precious in our Father's eyes.

Spirit of childhood! loved of God,
By Jesu's Spirit now bestowed;
How often have I long'd for thee;
O Jesus, form thyself in me!

And help me to become a child
While yet on earth, meek, undefiled,
That I may find God always near,
And Paradise around me here.

From the German.

Christ. Puseyism and infidelity, and almost every system of error, look upon Christ as one who is to help the old man, instead of seeing Him as the new Man, who has gone into heaven, where He has become an object for us. The reason of this is, that Christ in heaven brings into view the ruin of the old man, and man needs to be convinced of sin in order to receive it. It is therefore the more important for us distinctly to see in these days where so much is made of man upon the earth, that the word takes up a man in heaven.

POETRY.

"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Dear soul, couldst thou become a child
While yet on earth, meek, undefiled,
Then God Himself were ever near,
And Paradise around thee here.

A child cares nought for gold or treasure,
Nor fame nor glory yield him pleasure;
In perfect trust, he asketh not
If rich or poor shall be his lot.

Little he reckes of dignity,
Nor prince nor monarch feareth he.
Strange that a child so weak and small
Is oft the boldest of us all!

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

There are four terms applied in common to believers in the New Testament—children, (*viói*), brethren, saints, and priests. The two first express our relationship, as believers, to God and to one another; saint characterizes our walk in the world; priest, official position before God.

Saints by calling, our walk is to be regulated as befits such. (Ephes. v. 3; Phil. i. 27; Rom. xvi. 2.)

As priests, believers have other duties to perform, and another character to sustain, which furnishes additional motives for holiness of life. Priests! this designates, as we have said, official position before God, having access into His presence, and privileged to offer sacrifices which He can accept. None but Aaron and his sons among Israel could discharge the priest's office. The Levites had the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, the priests that of the altar and sanctuary, and the stranger

that came nigh was to be put to death. (Numb. xviii. 1—7.)

But the priestly service was not confined to the brazen altar; there was the golden altar, at which none but a priest could officiate. Twice in the history of Israel do we read of the priests' office being desired or invaded by others than the sons of Aaron, and each time the aspirants to the privilege met with signal punishment from the Lord. When Korah and his company aimed at the priesthood, Moses commanded them to come every man with his censer to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and Aaron to come with them. All should appear before the Lord, and He would decide whom He would accept for this office. They came as appointed, and offered incense; and the fire of the Lord consumed them on the spot. Again, when Uzziah the king, in the pride of his heart, drew nigh to the golden altar, he was met by the priests and sternly rebuked: "It appertaineth not to thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the

sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense." And the leprosy breaking out on his forehead, proclaimed the sanctity of the priesthood and the sin of invading its prerogatives. God must choose His priests—for they are priests unto God. He chose Aaron and his sons in Israel. (Exod. xxviii. 1; Numb. xviii. 7.) He has chosen all believers now. By virtue of relationship to Aaron all the males of his family were priests; by virtue of union with the Lord all believers are priests now, as the song in Rev. i. testifies: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

If, then, we are priests, what are the sacrifices we have to offer? 1 Pet. ii. 5 tells us—"Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What these are Heb. xiii. 15 states—"The fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." And where is the sanctuary? where the place of ministry? Outside the camp,

though within the veil. By Christ alone can we offer these sacrifices. (Heb. xiii.; 1 Peter ii.) Outside the camp, the place once recognized of God as His dwelling place; and inside the veil, whither the blood has been carried, is the present place and position of priests. When Israel broke the covenant at Mount Sinai by making the golden calf and worshipping it, Moses removed the tabernacle of the congregation outside the camp, and thither went all who sought the Lord. So when the nation had crucified the Lord Jesus, and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the place for true worshippers was again outside the camp. Another thing to be noticed in this priesthood is, its double aspect. "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter. ii. 5—9.) A

holy priesthood as to its aspect towards God; a royal priesthood as to its aspect towards men.

A third point to be noticed is, the privilege of intercession, that which the ministry of the golden altar typified. The Lord "ever liveth to make intercession;" and His people are permitted to intercede for one another, and for those without. (Eph. vi. 18; James v. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.)

Such in brief is the nature of the Christian priesthood as exercised on earth, resembling, in some degree in its features, the priesthood established in Israel; but, unlike that, it is not limited to this life. It is carried on in heaven, as Revelation shows. When the door is open in heaven in chapter iv.—after judgment has been passed on Christendom, and before judgments are poured out on the world, and those connected with it—the evangelist sees the saints in heaven—symbolized by the twenty-four elders—seated around the throne, unmoved amidst the manifestations of its majesty, the lightnings, the thunder-

ings, and voices; though not unmoved, as has been observed, when the voice of praise is heard. Then, rising from off their thrones, they take the attitude that befits them. They sit no longer, for they are about to offer sacrifice. Yet they stand not as ministering at the altar, but fall down before Him who sits on the throne, cast their crowns before Him, to whom, in grace, they owe them, and pour forth from their lips the feelings of their hearts in adoration of the Creator of all. In the next chapter we see the saints again occupied in the priestly service of praise. It is not God as the Creator, but the Lamb as Redeemer, that is now the subject. When He is seen bearing the marks of His sufferings, "a lamb as it had been slain," they again take up the strain: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev.

or in their hands; (Rev. xv. 2;) all of whom shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Here again, when the Lord is mentioned, the kingdom is introduced, and priests and kings. But to return to chapter v. We get something more stated about the royal priesthood. The Lord is now about to commence that direct dealing with the earth which shall issue in the establishment of His kingdom. Hence the saints, having intelligence of the mind of God, do not simply speak of the royal priesthood as in chapter i. but state the sphere of its exercise, "they shall reign on the earth." Another feature is to be noticed, indicating the priestly office of the elders. They have every one golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. They present the prayers to God. Throughout the millennium the priesthood lasts. (Chap. xx. 6.) The priesthood of the tribe of Levi is limited to this life. (Heb. vii. 23.) The priesthood of believers it is plain is not. Death, which terminated theirs, has no power to cut short ours.

v. 9, 10.) Before God, as Creator, the saints act as priests; before the Lord, as Redeemer, they make mention of the kingdom and priesthood. They have a kingdom, they are a royal priesthood. Each time the priesthood is mentioned in Revelation it is in connexion with the Lord, and the kingdom is associated with it. In chapter i. when the Lord's official title "Prince of the kings of the earth" is declared, the saints praise Him for His love, and go on to speak of the priesthood and the kingdom. In chapter v. we see the kingdom is connected with the redemption He has accomplished. Again in chapter xx. 6, when Satan is bound at the commencement of the millennium, we read the blessedness of those who share in the first resurrection described as (1) sitting on thrones, to whom judgment is committed: (2) the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; (Rev. vi. 9;) and (3) those which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads,

Differing then in this respect from the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation, it differs from it in other essential points. Their place of service was without the veil, ours is within. (Heb. x.) They fed on the food of the altar, so do we. The meat-offerings and the trespass-offerings were theirs, after the stated portion had been burnt on the altar. The peace-offering they eat of with the worshippers after the Lord had His portion burnt on the altar. The sin-offering, too, under certain conditions, was theirs, as the trespass-offering. We, too, have a sacrifice to feed on—that which these different offerings typified. They had the type, we the antitype; but "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." (Heb. xiii. 10.) The sin-offering, whose blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation, to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire." (Lev. vi. 30.) The Lord is *the* sin-offering, and we can feed on Him, nay, it is what is provided. Another differ-

ence to be noticed is, they were priests of a ministration of death, we of the ministration of the Spirit. That was ushered in in glory, this subsists in glory. That has passed away, this remains for ever. (2 Cor. iii.)

If such is the nature of the christian priesthood, and its excellency surpassing that of the former dispensation, what should be the characteristics of those who exercise it? It is a holy priesthood. (1 Peter ii. 5.) None but those who are holy can approach a holy God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," was the command of God to Israel among whom He dwelt. What less should characterize those who are admitted to the service of the sanctuary? The priests of old were formally set apart for their office by a service, which shadowed forth the need of separation from all defilement. Chosen by divine appointment from amongst the redeemed nation, they were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there washed all over with water, and then clothed with the garments for glory and beauty.

strange fire on the altar. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me." (Lev. x. 3.) Though their brothers were dead, they, anointed with the holy oil, were not to uncover their heads, nor rend their clothes, on pain of death. The priests set apart for God's service were to have His mind. Others might carry forth the dead bodies, and the whole congregation mourn for them, but they were to show no signs of grief, nor leave the precincts of the tabernacle. For the proper discharge of their duties and that they might be able to discern between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean; they were not to drink wine or strong drink. Nothing of the joys of this world, or any stimulus they could give, would fit them for their service. Once washed all over they were never thus washed again. Once consecrated, Eleazer and Ithamar were priests till death. But each time they entered the court of the sanctuary for service, they had to wash their hands and feet in the brazen laver, showing that, though formally set apart, cleansed,

(Exod. xxviii. 40—xxix.) The sin-offering having been first offered, followed by the burnt-offering, the ram of consecration was killed; and on their right ear, thumb, and toe, blood was put, (the rest being poured out on the altar,) in token that their obedience, their work, and their walk, should be such as befitted those brought into connexion with the altar. Next, they and their garments were sprinkled with the blood that was upon the altar, mingled with the anointing oil, foreshadowing the unction of the Holy Ghost by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. Thus consecrated they feed on the sacrifices, God's provision for them, for the seven days of their consecration, never leaving the tabernacle of the congregation. On the eighth day they took their place, and waited on Aaron as he ministered according to divine appointment. Ere that day closed, a lesson had been taught them of the need of strict adherence to the Lord's commands, by the death of Nadab and Abihu, so lately on the mount feasting before God, for offering

anointed, and consecrated, they contracted constant defilement, which needed continual application to the water provided for the purpose.

Leviticus xxi., xxii. further illustrates the holy character of the priesthood, divers things which caused defilement being pointed out. Any one with a blemish could not minister before the Lord; yet, as a priest, he eat of the sacrifices. But uncleanness, till removed by attention to the ordered ceremonial, debarred them this privilege. They could not eat of the holy things till they were purified. Blemishes they could not help nor put away. Defilement was different. In many cases they might avoid it. In all they could purify themselves. Blemishes, however, though they could not avoid them, prevented the exercise of their office, showing again that imperfection could not be accepted before God.

Another feature of the priesthood in Israel was the position of the priests with reference to the rest of the people. Taken from among them, they had a special place assigned them in the camp,

"before the tabernacle towards the east." (Numb. iii. 38.) They had also certain cities given them in the land. Disqualified from inheriting the land like the other tribes, or "having any part among them," (Numb. xviii. 20,) the Lord was their part and their inheritance among the children of Israel. A dress, too, was assigned them by divine appointment: coats, and girdles, and bonnets. (Exod. xxviii. 40.) Thus they were distinguished from the rest of the congregation. Their priesthood was given them as "a service of gift;" (Numb. xviii. 7,) consecrated for it, their food, place of encampment in the wilderness, and cities in the land, with the dress that appertained to their office, marked them as a peculiar people, separated from all around, even from their brethren of the children of Israel.

The ceremonies for consecrating the priests, as well as their position in Israel ever after, teach us lessons. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Such is the condition of believers corresponding to the consecra-

tion of the priests. But as they needed to wash their hands and feet, we need to wash our feet to cleanse them from defilement continually contracted in the passage through the world. They were, moreover, anointed. So are we—anointed with the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20.) Before they could be anointed the ram's blood must be shed. Before we could receive the unction of the Holy Ghost the Lamb of God must shed His blood. That blood has been shed, and by virtue of it we as believers are anointed. As members of the priestly family, special injunctions were given to guard them against that which would hinder the discharge of their office. As members of the body of Christ, the great High Priest, the needed instructions how to walk are given in the New Testament. See especially 1 Cor. vi. and Eph. iv. 21; v. 12, where duties are inculcated, and sins warned against, because, as members of Christ, we are members also of one another, and no longer partakers with the ungodly Gentiles. The defiled priest could not eat

of the holy things till cleansed, so Christians, if defiled by sin, must seek restoration and cleansing by the word ere they can again enjoy the privileges of their position before God. The priest was a priest, even when defiled. Nothing could alter that position as long as he lived. We, too, are priests through union with the Lord Jesus. Nothing can change this. It is our birthright, may we not say, as the priesthood was that of Aaron's descendants. But our enjoyment of its privileges, and power of service will depend on our walk. If the heart has gone astray do we not feel shorn of our strength like Samson, when shaved? But restored through confession of our fault, like Samson, when his hair commenced to grow, the power of service is restored. Till the latter takes place the power is sensibly diminished if the heart is not altogether dead. Happy that it is so; that, conscious of our weakness, we are led to ascertain its cause in the presence of the Lord, and through His grace and intercession seek for restoration.

What instruction too in the peculiar dress of the priests! No one could mistake them. Their dress would proclaim who they were. Are we thus distinguished? Have we so put on Christ that men can see and take knowledge of it and know us as those set apart for God's service? The dress of the priests, as they are called, in the Roman and Greek churches, leaves no doubt on any who see them who and what they are. Are we so distinguished? What men would associate with a class of professing Christians, in reality belongs to all believers. All are priests. Need we guard against the supposition that because all are priests, and capable of offering sacrifice to God, all are able to lead the praises of others? There are those given to help the saints and to minister to them, resembling in some degree the Levites of the former dispensation. It was the office of the Levites, Heman, Jeduthun, and Ethan, with others of their brethren to lead in song. (1 Chron. vi. 33—47; xxiii. 30—31; xxv.) So in the assembly, whilst all can offer the sacrifice of praise,

all cannot lead the praises of the congregation. Every believer as a priest needs no one to come between him and God; he has access to the mercy-seat by the Lord Jesus, and out of the fullness of his heart can praise our God. But it is one thing to make melody in the heart, (Eph. v. 19,) and quite another to strike the note and lead the rest in worship.

Holy then is the office of priest. Holiness should characterize those who are called to it. But there is another characteristic—"the showing forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." Partakers of the divine nature we are to manifest it. The world can take cognizance of this. We may praise God in the heart: we should show forth His virtues in our walk. Light and love, these two characteristics of the divine nature (1 John i., iv.) should be manifested in us. The world once could say, See how these Christians love one another. It is a feature it can see and admire. It cannot see the heart, it may

not hear the hymn of praise as it ascends to God from the solitude of the chamber, or from one alone it may be, in the midst of a crowd. The personal communion between the soul and God may go on unknown to those around us; when no mortal ear can hear, the hymn can still be sung, and the heart be occupied in the priestly service of praise. But light and love, if carried out in the walk, holiness of walk, and therein conformity to God, and love to the brethren because God has loved us, are features of the Christian, which the world can see and estimate; "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 14—16.) "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 35.) This characteristic, the showing forth of His virtues, is connected with the kingdom, "a royal priesthood, to show forth," &c.; so believers are exhorted (1 Thess. ii. 12) to walk worthy of God who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.

This subject, but briefly touched on, might be expanded to great length. But the practical question for all is, how far we are acting in accordance with the place given us before God? Are we walking in that conscious separation from all evil which befits the members of a holy priesthood? Are we showing forth his virtues who hath called us into His marvellous light? It is a position given us in grace. Well might the apostle Peter say, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He had spoken in the first chapter of the heavenly inheritance reserved for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Great as this is, it does not exhaust the grace of God shown us. He had spoken in the first chapter of the Christian's inheritance, now he speaks of the Christian's privilege, and gives three illustrations of it: first, "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," &c.; second, the foundation-stone has been laid in Zion, so that "he that believes shall not make haste;" third, "Ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood," &c. The *first* of these privileges the nation of Israel never possessed, and never will. The *second* is spoken of in Isaiah in connexion with the latter days. The *third* was promised them in Exodus on condition of keeping the covenant, which they shortly afterwards broke before leaving Mount Sinai.

That all the redeemed should be a holy priesthood, able to offer sacrifices as priests, was a thought never given to Israel. There were priests appointed for the people, as we see in Ezekiel xl.—xlviii. will be the case in the days yet to come. For the descendants of Zadok will be priests, according to God's promise to Phinehas. But, though appointed by divine command, they never, as we have seen, had entrance within the veil, unless in the person of the high priest once a year on the day of atonement. We have entrance there with boldness always. What grace then to us, the Church, composed of Jews; who never had this privilege even as priests, and Gentiles, who once were afar off,

now brought nigh, both now on common ground by the same blood and the one sacrifice.

Next, what was promised to Israel, as a resource in the latter days, we have now. The foundation stone has been laid. Isaiah xxviii. 16 shows when it will be applied to the remnant. When "the Lord shall be for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of the people." The mass of the nation are corrupt, and, seeing the overflowing scourge advancing, make a covenant with hell and death to escape it, but they cannot. "The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Any barrier man may erect will be carried away. Is there, then, any firm standing ground? There is. Because the foundation stone has been laid in Zion, and those that believe shall not make haste. Standing on it they have a secure footing, and can wait God's time for deliverance. That foundation, the apostle declares, has been laid, though Israel have not acknowledged it,

the earth. They forfeited the conditional blessing through breaking the law. They will enjoy it when the law is written on their hearts. "Ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God." (Isaiah lxi. 6.) Chapter lx. describes in glowing terms the future glory of Jerusalem, when she shall be called, "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (Ver. 14.) Chapter lxi. describes Him by whom all this shall be brought about. Further on we get, lxii., the Lord interceding with Jehovah for the accomplishment of this blessed state; and the remnant (ver. 6) who will be raised up to intercede for it. Chapter lxiii. commences with the Lord having overcome His enemies in order that the salvation might be accomplished. From lxiii. 7—lxiv. 12, we have the intercession of the remnant related, that prayer which is answered in the re-establishment of Jerusalem, the millennial blessing of the nation, and their position as priests in connexion evidently with the kingdom. But this is clearly future. The Lord did come, as Isaiah

and the remnant will not know it till the latter days of the nation dawn. When he wrote, the Jewish Christian could see everything on which he had formerly built shaking, shortly to be dissolved; Jerusalem to be trodden down, and the nation again to be exiles in foreign lands. But here was a resting place, a sure foundation to build on, which would never fail. Building on the Lord they would have all the promises, though in a higher sense than Israel had looked for them. The unbelieving might stumble at it. But there it was, and all who believed could rest secure.

Thirdly, what God promised Israel conditionally, that we now possess—the royal priesthood. The strangers to whom Peter wrote, scattered abroad, away from the land of their birthright, could, nay, did, possess this promise. They were, he writes, a royal priesthood. What Israel forfeited they had through grace. True, Israel will have it made good to them, but it will be when the kingdom of the Lord is established on

lxi. 1, 2, quoted by Him in Luke iv., shows. But they cast Him out; the blessings are therefore delayed. But now says Peter, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, and to be trodden down of the Gentiles till their time should be fulfilled, thus delaying the accomplishment of the happy condition predicted in Isaiah. Nevertheless, those who now believed on the Lord had the blessing at once, not in its full enjoyment but in assured possession. And what the believer from among the Jews then possessed we have likewise; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. All they have we have, for we are one in the Lord. To these three the apostle adds a fourth privilege, what Israel will one day be, as foretold in Hosea ii. 23, that believers are now.

Such, then, is our priesthood, its duration, and its character. It is a holy calling; it is a privileged place; to us a gift. How far are we living up to this calling? Those who ministered at the

altar must be holy—no lower standard is accepted now. We may fail, and assuredly we do, but the standard remains unchanged—it cannot be lowered: “Purifieth himself even as he is pure.” Gracious indeed is our God in making provision for our failure in the constant intercession of our High Priest above. But that cannot relieve us from the responsibilities of the office. We are to be holy, for God is holy. May we each and all enter more into His mind about this; and whilst exercising our priesthood in the happiness of heart the Spirit gives, praising the Father for what He has done for us and given us; interceding for others and looking forward to the full understanding and full enjoyment of the priesthood in connexion with the kingdom; let us never forget that this place of nearness demands holiness of walk, separation from the world, and consecration to God.

forgiveness, but in resurrection, ascension, and glory. This is the beginning of the dealings of God with me in Christ in the cross; not as manifesting me in Him, that would be as of His confessing body on earth. Beginning at the cross, there is a ladder of fulfilment of the thoughts of God towards me. To regard my course as merely commencing with a conviction of mercy, as God began with me in sense of judgment, leaves the cross so little as an effectual object of faith, that the whole dealing of God and the intelligence of His ways is arrested; and should it not arrest us in the intelligence of His ways, it does so as to all thought of progress of the soul in light. Another mischief is, that it causes us to look to such a manifestation to our souls of the grace of God in the cross, as the only sense and certitude of forgiveness, and the consequence is, my assurance in Christ is easily assailed or displaced to make way, perhaps, for that which is not true as such, and myself kept back from real communion. But if under the sense of judgment,

WHEN HAS A BELIEVER RECEIVED HIS PARDON?

SUBSTANCE OF A LETTER.

OUR conversation yesterday has brought to my mind that which may be serviceable in truth and serviceable to conscience.

First, as to truth, or rather God's dealing by it, so to speak. I have lately clearly seen the mischief of counting forgiveness from the time of the revelation of grace to our souls. So very many date God's mercy from this as quite to affect in the Church the condition and growth of grace in a very extensive way. The cross is revealed to the soul as the answer to judgment. But more: Christ is (if any advance at all is made) revealed, who is not only dead, but risen and alive for evermore. Righteousness is revealed as presenting us to God, and we have access to God in believing; but if the cross begins my career in grace and not my apprehension in God's good time; of His grace to me in it, I am led to a much deeper use of it. I am presented to God not only in

I by grace have believed in the cross as the putting away of my sin, and of the sins of others who have by grace believed on the Son of God; and referring my acceptance to the time of this act of God and to His estimate of it and of those seen in Him; the cross becomes to souls, livingly coming to Christ, the power of God in the crushing and purging away of sin. I am dead in Christ, and in whatever measure sin still lives, it is still met in the power that the death of Christ ever has; and thus it is sin has no more dominion over me, for I am under grace. Great as is the blessing of the peace that is supplied in clear views of our standing before God in Christ dead, risen, and glorified, the fruits of the work of Christ are to be ours, and other assurances with it.*

A case within the knowledge of the writer would, though in part, strongly illustrate the effect of the difference as to assurance. F. G. had been a Roman Catholic, innocent in life, and became, by terrific preaching of hell, oppressed al-

* See 1 John ii. 5, 29; iii. 7, 14, 18, 19, 24; v. 4.

most to death. His deliverance through the word was full and wonderful. For two or three years afterwards his joy was unbroken; and when it lost its brightness he thought all must be gone with it. The writer was with him at the close of his life by consumption. He expressed himself thus: "Death is a black and terrible thing; oh! that God would give me some of the joy I had at my conversion."

A brother of experience passing by the place where our sick brother was, when told of the above, said: "It will put him into a legal state." A few days proved the truth of it. He lost all communion. It was gracious, most gracious of the Lord that Satan was not allowed to touch the question of salvation in his mind in the least degree. He called it "the triumph of faith." No service in the word or in prayer altered, however, the case, and he felt it most bitterly, and entreated most fervently in vain. On the writer's telling him one evening that he was about going to a prayer-meeting, he said: "Pray for *me*." On joining the

brethren, the case was related to them, and a deep interest felt, and much pleading with God followed throughout the time they were together. On coming to him on the morning following, the first words he said were: "*Vos prières ont été exaucées, ne me parlez que de la croix.*"* The morning of his decease he said to the writer: "If any one ask about me, say that I would not be otherwise than as I am."

Now this is a history exemplifying one part of the subject; but it is not of the same importance as that which touches the injury done to the advance of the soul and its fruits according to the word. The writer has found the extreme difficulty of welding on the most necessary truth on souls that had been converted (if they were so) at revival preaching. They finished there, even when it is sincerely believed they had received Christ. They preferred to continue to attend these meetings to any other opportunity.

* "Your prayers have been heard; speak to me only OF THE CROSS." He had relinquished his desire of his joy as his peace.

Another mischief of believers not seeing that to date their forgiveness at the cross and death of Jesus, is that it takes away from the ordinances their true character. The writer knew cases in which they were carried no further than to look at them as representative of the course their own souls had gone through. This was to the writer then manifestly false. But even if not in this measure of false use, what has been expressed above leaves them still in a false position. They were appointed in respect of the position and confession of the Church on earth and for earth, and receive as such a substantial character. This is necessarily lost in the case supposed; and some mystical and confused notion adopted in its place, when nothing can be more clearly applicable to the reality of position given to the Christian in Christ on the cross—risen with Him, and warring the warfare of his new confession. They are a reality. The character of an ordinance is essentially separative, and of a *people* where fellowship comes in, as it is in the table of the Lord.

A SERIES.

No. 11.

B A P T I S M.

Our last subject of consideration in this series was the Testimony of the Church. We may now proceed to consider the different leading expressions involved in the testimony. I would begin with baptism, confining myself to the elucidation of the subject, and not treating of the question as to *who* are the proper recipients of baptism; the determining of *that* point I would leave to the enlightened conscience.

As a preface let me remark, that the more commonly any truth of God is received and adopted in the world, the more carefully must any honest enquirer after that truth exclude from his research any construction given to it by the world, or even by the most pious and learned expounding it for the world. Our only course, one that the servant of God ought never to have deviated from, is to disengage our minds from everything man has said on the subject, and

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apply ourselves to the word of God, as if we never had heard of the subject before. It would reveal one of the mysteries of the mind if one could trace the prepossessions about the truth of God, with which Christians come to the Scriptures; in fact they too often do so more to establish their own convictions than to derive convictions therefrom.

These remarks apply, I think, peculiarly to baptism, for no truth has been so popularized and adopted by the world, and none on which there has been so much controversy and dogmatism among men. Now I desire to dismiss entirely every preconceived thought on the subject borrowed from man; and apply myself to see how it is declared by the word of God.

Baptism is first brought before our notice by John Baptist and is introduced in connexion with his ministry as if every one at once understood what it meant. It was not a novelty which required to be explained, but a practice in such common vogue that when adopted by John in his ministry

of John declared that they separated themselves from their present failure, and from that moment were waiting for remission of sins; so when they had heard Jesus, they glorified God, inasmuch as that they had reached that for which they had prepared themselves.

If a Gentile were baptized in order to become a Jew, he knew that the rite determined his past and his future, and therefore had a deeper significance to him than if he had only baptized after coming from the market in order that he might eat bread. The rite was the same in both cases, but the claims consequent on the subject of the rite lent a different significance and weight to it in each case. In either or any case the rite of baptism is a dissociation from present engagement; but it is the ground I enter upon therefrom, which determines my liability and the extent of my responsibility on account of it. The nature and extent of my separation from my present engagement must be determined by the ground for the entrance on which I am baptized. By baptism I

every one knew the import and intent of it, and it is from not understanding this practice in its common and general use that we do not easily seize the import of it when attached to John's ministry. Baptism was simply using water as a symbol to declare a dissociation from what I was in, in order to leave me free for entrance into another order of things. John is called Baptist because his ministry is characterized by baptism. He comes as between the law and the prophets, and Christ. He calls on Israel by baptism to declare separation from all that was contrary to their proper ground, which in repentance they reached, looking for the remission of sins, and consequently they who were baptized of John when they heard of Christ justified God. (See Luke vii. 29, 30.)

Now the other side of the baptism necessarily expressed the demand for which the recipient of it was freeing himself. He first freed himself by baptism, and then the responsibilities were begun. Those who were baptized

free myself to enter on it, but the nature of the ground entered on, and the responsibilities undertaken, must necessarily define the extent to which I may distance myself from my former self.

There were then necessarily two sides to baptism—the new ground and the old; the former declaring the extent to which the latter was abandoned; baptism declaring the abandonment. The disciples baptized, but it is evident with different demands to those of John, for Christ had come; yet, the declaration in the baptism was the same, for the recipient declared himself freed from present standing, in order to engage in a new one; which new, I repeat, gave a character to the baptism, for it entailed certain claims on account of which he entered baptism, declaring that in order to put himself under those claims he had detached himself from his former engagement.

Although baptism was a well-known rite, that of John was a new thing among God's people, for hitherto they had been called on to reform *as they*

stood; now they are called to renounce their failure, just as much as a Gentile was called on to renounce his, in heathenism, when he desired to enter on Jewish ground. In order to fulfil all righteousness, the motive for baptism, our Lord took His place with the repentant remnant, not, I need hardly say, to recover from the low ground which the unrepentant occupied, but in grace to identify Himself with those; the poor of the flock who had recovered lost ground; i.e., repentant. Now after He had risen from the dead, and had all power given to Him in heaven and on earth, He authorizes the apostles to go and disciple all nations, (the commission to them being as unlimited as His sway was universal,) baptizing them to the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In a word, man was called to surrender himself to Him who had now entire claim on him. Christ had died for all, therefore all were proved to be dead; and now risen, He had full claim over the dead, and Lord of all; and therefore by His apostles

must be renounced, and to do this I place myself in His death. *If I have faith* I rise out of it in newness of life, to walk in the name of the Lord; but *whether or not* such is the ground on which I place myself. Literally in baptism I assume to dissociate myself from that which interferes with the association I am about to enter on; consequently, when baptized in the name of Christ, I must in the outset place myself in His death, where all of myself is put an end to, and from whence alone I could start in His name. The baptism of John fell far short of this, because, as we have seen, of the different ground on which its recipients entered therefrom; therefore the baptism of John was insufficient to express the baptism of the Lord. (See Acts xix.) I am only saying here what the baptism of Christ entails; I do not say that every baptized person understands it in this full way. But we shall best arrive at the true import of baptism by examining the passages where it is spoken of in order. First, then, in Mark xvi. 16,

calls on all men to own His claim and be baptized in the name of God as now for the first time fully declared. All who were baptized in this name renounced their own.

Now when it is understood that it was the death of Christ which gave Him this claim, it must be seen that every one who submitted to His baptism placed themselves in His death, admitting His claim because of it, so that baptized *unto* Christ, they were baptized *unto* His death. The ground which Christ's baptism imposed on me was death, because His death proved that all were dead, and therefore when I owned this in baptism I placed myself, not in ~~any~~ of that which caused His death, but in His death I start with renouncing all. In the baptism I declare that I drop myself in His death; I find, that if I would assume His name, which is my duty—He is both Lord and Saviour—I must place myself in His death, and must renounce that which would interfere with the profession I am assuming; so that my entire self as son of Adam

we read, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Now it is evident it is not baptism that saves, but that baptism was the expression of separation unto Christ, which true faith would maintain. In Acts ii. 38, we find Peter saying to the anxious souls, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Here we see that the recipients of baptism professed to separate from old ground, and to take new for a certain expected end, viz., for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If they repented, and in the name of Jesus Christ abandoned the ground they were on for the remission of sins, they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; the baptism would be declarative of their renunciation of old ground, and of the reality of their profession in assuming new. In Acts viii. 12, we find that when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized

both men and women. Simon the sorcerer was also baptized, but on none of them had the Holy Ghost as yet fallen. All we can gather from this passage is that they who submitted to baptism put themselves on new ground by dis severing themselves from the one they were on, and were as yet without the power of the Holy Ghost to keep them in it; and in which *one* (Simon Magus) was not kept.

The next passage is verse 36 of the same chapter. "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" says the Eunuch to Philip. He feels that there is now no hindrance to his assuming new ground on the clear renunciation of the old, which baptism would imply, and which was, in fact, the way to the new, and presumed that there was no obstacle thereto.

In chapter x. 47, we find Peter saying, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" In former cases they were baptized *in order* to receive the Holy Ghost; here

separate himself FROM himself; washing away his sins professedly, not in order to clear himself before God, but to express his dissociation from his former standing in his sins, (as he stood on earth,) and consequent freedom to enjoy his new one, calling on the name of the Lord. Thus Ananias exhorts him to arise and declare by baptism his dissociation from it.

In chapter xvi. 15, we find that Lydia being baptized and her household, *thereon* besought Paul, and those with him, to enter into her house, which, I think, supports the idea of the complete exclusion from a previous state, which baptism declared. Further on in this chapter, we find that the jailor was "baptized and all his straightway," intimating again the completeness of the change which now existed. Baptism properly set free from everything in order to connect the recipient with a new profession, which new profession gave a character to the renunciation. Consequently, when we come to Acts xix. we find that John's baptism will

they had already received it, so it is plain that baptism placed the recipient on new ground professedly, although he already possessed, before his baptism, all the qualities of that new ground. The rite, then, was to class him with others of the same standing; and this same standing the apostle here in demanding baptism claims for the Gentiles, they having received what the Jews were baptized for, and what the Samaritans were baptized for.

The next passage I would refer to occurred earlier, though not related till chapter xxii. I allude to the words used by Ananias to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Now we know that Saul had already seen Jesus in the glory; the Saviour had been there revealed to him, and therefore he must have known that there was no charge against him before God; and that before Him he had nothing more to do. But he was to stand professedly apart from himself, and his own standing as a man; he is called on to

not do for the Lord's. The former only entailed on me that I surrendered any ground which interfered with looking for remission of sins; the latter declared I surrendered everything which the assumption of His name involved. I might not have understood this at the time, but the more I entered into the responsibilities of the profession, which I avowed to take consequent on baptism, the more I should understand the import and exclusion from other and former things which baptism involved.

Now when I come to Romans vi. 3 I get the true meaning of baptism looked at from the resurrection-side of things. Paul explains and determines it according to the gospel committed unto him, and therefore in its true signification to the Church. Paul was not sent to baptize (1 Cor. i. 17)—the twelve *had been* sent—but he takes up baptism and explains its true spiritual meaning, and therefore says, "As many as have been baptized unto Christ have been baptized unto His death. Mark! it is *not* said "unto His resurrection," but simply

unto His *death*. Baptism declared the separation which the death of Christ determined. In being baptized unto Christ, I necessarily declare myself no longer connected with that which His death determined in judgment, even my old man. How could I be baptized unto Christ, and stand in that which was judged in the death of Christ? "If Christ died for all, then were all dead;" thus no one could assume His name or profess to do so; but in the act (whether knowing it or not) which made him responsible for renunciation of what the death of Christ determined. The death of Christ has declared us all, as the seed of the first Adam, morally dead; and hence any one baptized unto Christ necessarily makes the death of Christ the line of demarcation. Nothing which caused or needed that death could the baptized one assume to retain, and therefore baptism to such an one declared renunciation of everything interfering with the profession of Christ and which His death judged. He bore death, the judgment on the first Adam;

that I have the resurrection. ("In whom you have also been raised," &c.) The baptism only expressed my burial with Him, my thorough dissociation from everything which His death determined. I can place the old man in the water of baptism, but it is plain I do not profess to raise it out of it. It is "*faith* in the operation of God who hath raised Jesus from the dead," which raises me in Him.

I think the passage in 1 Corinthians xv. 29 confirms what I have advanced, viz., that baptism simply declared the character of renunciation implied by the profession about to be assumed—"What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?" I understand this as showing that the baptized took the place of dead ones, and that the argument is, that if they took the place of dead ones, had they done so without any ulterior hope? Would any one give up present existence professedly who never expected any better? The present might be very indifferent, but it was better than nothing; and skin for

consequently I, a child of Adam, could not assume His, but by first putting myself in His death to lay aside all that for which He bore judgment. How could I take His name, and still admit the existence of that for which He died? I declare myself apart from it in baptism, and this only the death of Christ truly does for me; therefore baptism morally reaches to it. It does not imply resurrection. Faith in the baptized one connects the soul with the risen Jesus, and makes good the profession assumed in baptism, but that is going beyond baptism, for it is not unto His resurrection we are baptized, but unto His death. It may be said that the passage in Colossians ii. 12 connects the idea of resurrection with baptism, but I think if the words be carefully weighed a different conclusion will be arrived at. The apostle had said that they were circumcised in the circumcision of Christ, and if circumcised with Him, I am also raised up with Him, baptism having expressed the fact that I was buried with Him. It is *in Him*, not in baptism,

skin, all that a man had would he give for his life; *therefore*, if the resurrection were past, this was an inconsistent standing.

There is only one other passage which I think it necessary to refer to. (See 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.) Here to me it is very clear, that the water is death and the ark resurrection; and it is introduced here because the apostle is pressing on saints that they should not suffer for sins, inasmuch as Christ had once suffered, and that professedly in baptism they had taken the ground of death; His death, out of which they were saved by His resurrection. It was not mere washing away the "filth of the flesh," as under the law, but it was radical, *out of death*, into resurrection; and, *therefore*, with the testimony of a good conscience before God. Instead of suffering for sins I am practically with the *επερωτημα*, (question asked and answered,) of a good conscience as before God touching sins.

Thus briefly I have attempted to gather from Scripture what the true

meaning and import of baptism is, and I trust the Lord will lead His people to study the subject, in order that they may put it in its right place, and know in their souls its full moral bearing unto the praise of His grace who has "begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead." Amen.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Chap. ii., iii.)

(Continued from page 380, Vol. VII.)

In this chapter we get particulars as to the third day. In chapter i. we have from verse 35 two days of testimony, during which we see a Jewish remnant gathered; and now in chapter ii. we get the third day, in which we get two things—a marriage and a judgment; the marriage is at Cana in Galilee, the judgment is in Jerusalem, where Jesus drives out those who were defiling the temple. In the chapter, however, we get intimation that after all the temple

Our way is to be cleansed by taking heed to the word.

As to the judgment, it is the Lord whom they sought suddenly coming to His temple, according to Malachi. He did not, however, present Himself thus, but coming to it He finds these things in the temple, and therefore puts them out. The cleansing is by judgment here. He *puts out* those who defiled the temple. Thus have we in figure the two things which characterize the third day—the marriage of Christ with the remnant, when He will turn the water of purification into the wine of joy; and the judgment, by which He will put away those that defile God's house. The Jews asked for a sign in proof of the authority on which He did this; and He refers them at once to Himself. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

It is beautiful to see the two things in this chapter, but they are morally instructive as well as figurative. The present separation of Christ from the people is seen in what passes between

was only "empty, swept, and garnished," for He was the true temple. The whole of this and the following chapter comes in before John is cast into prison, so that we learn that, before the commencement of Christ's ministry in Galilee, mentioned in Matt. iv., there was a dealing of His with those of Jerusalem. The scenes in John's Gospel are mostly laid in Jerusalem, but in Galilee in the other gospels.

The miracle of turning the water into wine, in connexion with the marriage at Cana, is a figure of the marriage of Christ with the Jews—His recognition of that people as His own in the latter days. Its taking place at Cana sets forth His taking up the poor remnant of His people and leaving those of Jerusalem. When this marriage takes place, He will change the water of purification into the wine of joy. Water was set there for purification. It is a figure of the *word* which, in His absence, is here for our purification, not as the wine of joy. We are said to be "washed with water by the word."

Himself and His mother. When she comes He would not have to do with her, but the hour is coming when He will have to do with her. Still we find He went down with her to Capernaum. Having really done with the people after the flesh, He says to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee;" and yet although thus separate from her He goes and dwells with her. We have the same thing in Luke, when he was twelve years of age. When He provided for His mother at the cross, it was in a certain sense the hour when He should do so. Going away Himself He provides for His mother as a thoughtful, dutiful son would do.

In the end of this chapter (ii.) we get into a transition. When He was at Jerusalem, many believed on His name when they saw the miracles which He did; but now He will not have it. Man may sincerely believe many things in the flesh, but this is what Christ will not own. Come here in a *divine* character He will not take Israel up on the ground of the flesh. That kind of

faith which can be in man naturally He will not have—in fact it was valueless, even as far as man was concerned. Jesus did not commit Himself to them, although they had an honest conviction that the man who did all these miracles must be what He said He was.

Chap. iii. Then comes Nicodemus on the same ground, but with his conscience exercised. He comes apart from the world “by night.” The Lord meets him with what was needed (by Israel it is true, but also) for everybody. Christ here clearly shows that He is not come to fall in with Judaism, but He brings out at once that God needed something else. Christ would not teach flesh. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The original word is weakly translated “again;” it really means “*anew*,” from the beginning (*ἀνωθεν*, from above, from the beginning; *anew*). The real force of the expression is apparent from the answer of Nicodemus, who took it to mean a new birth. Now without this new birth, the kingdom of God could

death of Christ, I see that the flesh contains no such thing as good. “The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be.” It was condemned by the death of Christ as a *sacrifice* for sin, by what He bare for us, in our place. This, therefore, settles *what* and *where* it is. A true heart is often harrassed by the presence of the flesh, but there is deliverance when I find that God *has condemned it by Christ's death* on the cross, and that I have got another spring of life, on which the fruits of the Spirit grow. Now in the third chapter of John we get the thought that an entirely new thing is needed, and that it came down with Christ, was manifested in Him. It was with Him before He came down into the world, but it came down to us in Him, acting, it is true, in man's faculties and feelings, but still a *new* life. The thing is that we *must* have a nature capable of enjoying God. The Holy Ghost is, of course, required to reveal God, but when He is so revealed, I must have a

not be *seen*. Christ could not teach the old nature, or at least would not. The flesh or old nature is never spoken of in the Old Testament as such. In Genesis vi. 3 we get, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh;” but this striving was between the Spirit of God in the ways and words of the godly, and the evil course of the ungodly. The spiritual nature in contrast with the flesh we do not get in the Old Testament. We do not read of any such conflict as this in one man of old. The full character of the flesh in man is brought out in the New Testament. It was in the death of Christ that sin got its condemnation. This brought the flesh fairly out—put it in its own place. Law never brought it out thus. It is true that the moment I get to know that the law is spiritual, then I get fully upset, condemned. “I had not known lust unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” But even this did not condemn sin in the flesh, because I am still hoping that I may do better. But when I see the

nature capable of receiving and enjoying God and the things of God. For the character of this new life, see John's Epistles and also in Galatians. It should also be remembered that our life is not its own source, it is not *the* fountain, nor even *a* fountain, but a communication, quite derivative. It is not said that life is in me, but in Christ from whom I have it, have it in Him.

Verse 5. The bearing of this verse upon the life is, that water represents the application to us of the word of God, and that the Spirit is the divine communicator of life. Water is a common figure of the *word*. “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” The word is the instrument by which the Holy Ghost works. It is that which appeals to men, and made effectual by the Spirit, purifies the person—the individual. The person is not a different one,* but a new life which

* A distinction must be made between the life and the person—but here human language is defective, and care must be taken not to push matters too far.

was not in any sense there before is put into him. We are thus begotten again, connected with which there is the washing of the person from the impurities connected with the old life. The result of the work gives us the fact of a new thing in us, but that it is not of us, but derived from another, see verse 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Verse 7, &c. *All must* thus be born again—not Jews simply—but all. To see the kingdom of God is to apprehend it, to enter it, is more the idea of going in, taking a place in it. One might see it before it came, but one could not positively enter it until it was set up.

Verse 12, &c. Here Christ mentions the distinction between earthly and heavenly things. The new birth belongs to both. New birth was requisite for the earthly blessing of the Jew as Nicodemus ought to have known. Still the heavenly things in principle begin with the new birth, but as to their actual historical introduction, we do not get

different to what He is in heaven to us now, much more to what He will be to us in the glory. In the millennium the Jews do not see Christ as the light of the heavenly city, but they see His light through the city, through us. There is however, a manifestation of Him outside on earth which they will see, but this sight of Him will be very different from what we shall see of Him in heaven.

New birth depended, for us, on the death of Christ. All blessings come to us from that death. We get life through a Christ that died and was raised again, and we get it *in the power in which He is risen*. This is that which distinguishes the saint of the present dispensation. We are blessed in and with Christ. *Death and resurrection are our portion, even His death and resurrection*. We are not simply blessed through His death and resurrection, as the Jews will be at the latter day.

From verses 14—17 we have, as it were, the two sides of truth. Verse 14 brings out the necessity on man's side

them till after the cross. Hence, when Christ comes to speak of the cross (ver. 14) He drops the kingdom and talks of eternal life, without which there could be no enjoyment of what is heavenly; but this revelation of what is heavenly brings out the complete ruin of what is natural; for so far from man being capable of enjoying what is heavenly, he is perishing, so we get the wondrous statement of the Son of man being lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. The thought of perishing is deeper than the question of the kingdom. There was a *must be* that man should be born again, and there was a *must be* that Christ should be lifted up. Everything for man depended on this; even the Jews get their earthly blessings in connection with the heavenly man. But the Jews never get to that fulness of blessing which belongs to the heavenly people. Even in the millennium the Jews will not have the vail rent. They will not see Christ even as we now see Him by faith. They will see His manifestation on earth, but this is very

for Christ's being lifted up,* "The Son of man *must be* lifted up, that whosoever believes might not *perish*." In verse 15 we find the other side, even that God in the greatness of His love has given His Son for us. These are the two sides of truth, necessity in man and love in God. Eternal life is precisely the same as everlasting life. The difference is one instance of the bad habit in the translators of the Authorized Version in using different words to represent the same word in Greek. The literal meaning of the word translated *perish* is utterly marred.

Verse 17, &c. Here we get this great truth that God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to express His grace towards man. Hence is brought out man's sad condition, for the world would not have Him. The word *condemn* here is very unhappy; it should be *judge* the world: "He that believeth on him is not judged, but he that believeth not is judged already." The thing is that Christ did not come to judge the world, yet in one

* The lifting up of the serpent seems to allude to the cross in the fact of Christ's being *made sin* for us. The serpent was made like to that which had bitten the Israelites. So that very thing through which we were perishing—sin—Christ was made, and as such lifted up, that whosoever believeth should be saved.

sense He did judge. He was light, and the fact of His coming was necessarily judgment. But still His purpose was grace. If a man do not believe he is judged already, for his very rejection of Christ manifests his condition, proves him utterly lost; hence

Verse 19. "This is the *judgment*, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light." His presence ~~had the effect of judging; although He did not come to judge.~~ There is a difference between condemnation and judgment. Judgment supposes an action of judging, but condemnation is simply telling out the sentence. It is here that if God judges the result must be condemnation, for man is a sinner. If I were the maker of this table, and I examine the table for the purpose of judging its real character, I am in reality judging myself as a workman; so if God had judged man as He made him, He would have been judging Himself. But if man has departed from God, then God judges him, and it must be condemnation. This principle goes further, explaining why it is God will not judge the new life, because it is of Himself, and He cannot judge Himself.

All these verses up to verse 22 are addressed to Nicodemus, although, as John generally does, he gets into great general truths.

with joy, although, as to man, none will receive Him. But while no man naturally receiveth the testimony, yet it is said, "He that hath *received* his testimony," showing us that divine grace has come in. Merely human belief Christ would not have. (See close of chap. ii.) To receive Christ's testimony, evidently supposes something quite new in the heart, and in connexion with it we have the words of God and the Spirit given. And further, the Father having given all things into the Son's hand, Christ as the Son appearing on the scene alone, life in Him, but wrath abiding on those who believe not.

Christ did not begin publicly to preach until John was cast into prison. (See Matthew and Mark.) Christ was teaching and working miracles, but still He did not offer Himself as the Messiah, saying as He does in Luke, "Now is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

It is John the Baptist that speaks in these closing verses. It was not John's every-day preaching, but so to speak, his dying note. Some have said that the language of these last verses is that of the Apostle and not of the Baptist, and have grounded upon it an objection to the gospel. But the notion of such is that man is the author of the gospels and not God.

Verses 22—36. Here we get John the Baptist giving place to Christ, and rejoicing that he has to do so. He especially testifies that Christ is from above—from heaven—and hence *that no man receiveth his testimony*. A very solemn statement. John's spirit here is very beautiful—the Bride is Christ's. To see gathering to Christ going on was a great joy to John, but there are some interesting details here.

The question arises about purifying between some of John's disciples and the Jews. It was a question about Christ and John, and, with a very low thought of the case, many went to Christ and left John. But John answers those who come to him about it, by showing that he is not the Christ, yea, never pretended to be. It was the One who came from above who was above all; but if this is so, there remains another solemn thing, and that is, if Christ came from above, no man receives His testimony. We have here also John's abdication, he gives up to Christ in solemn contrast with the Jews, who *give up* Christ. How different the spirit of the two! The Pharisee and John's disciples both seemed stirred up at the thought that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. Not that He Himself baptized, but His disciples baptising gave currency to the report. This John met by giving way to Christ

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

It is affecting to think that the darkness and error, the corrupt wanderings of the human mind and consequent estrangement from all true knowledge of God, which it was the purpose of the gospel to dispel, and which it did dispel wherever it was effectually received, and put to shame even where the light only externally shined, should find their way back again, through the corruption of the truth, into that very sphere of light from which by its brightness they were originally expelled.

It is scarcely possible to conceive the extent to which every true notion of God had become eclipsed, and every fragment of traditional truth had become overlaid with error, and how every notion of religion only served more effectually to debase the heart, and in many instances to nourish directly its grossest lusts, when the gospel came to shed its light on all the forgotten and perverted relations of man towards God, and of God towards man. For the gospel, as light,

dispersed the surrounding darkness, as well as revealed the way of deliverance from Satan's usurping power over man by a God of infinite goodness coming down to man in compassionate love.

In the narrative of the gospels, we find in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from His atoning work, the perfect light in contrast with the darkness of the world, and in conflict with it: "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." To this the system of Judaism, now become formal and effete, presented no exception: for "the light [which was in Israel] had become darkness."

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the planting of churches as so many spheres of light, through the power of the truth and the operation of the Holy Spirit, apart from the deadness of Judaic ordinances, and the darkness and corruption of surrounding heathenism. In the earlier epistles, which are occupied in unfolding and establishing the divine foundations of the Christian faith, the abominations of heathenism are only

would be the character of the last days of Christianity as a profession here in the world. In doing this it is striking to notice that the Spirit employs almost the same terms as those used in depicting heathenism in the Epistle to the Romans, to which allusion has already been made.

In the Second Epistle of Peter, where the same ground is gone over as that in Jude, the instruments of this evil are more especially before the Spirit's mind; and false teachers, answering to the false prophets of a previous age, are denounced as bringing in destructive heresies and corruptions, which are represented as spreading wider and wider until arrested by the hand of judgment. The practical application to believers is given in the words, "Seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

In the Epistle of John, Antichrist, or the Antichrist, is foretold as coming, and the "little children" of the epistle

glanced at or sketched in brief but wonderful outline, and condemned; as in the first chapter of the Romans. In Ephesians ii. their condition Godward ["dead in trespasses and sins," applies alike to Jew and Gentile] is summed up in the energetic words, "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 in the later epistles, the very evils of heathenism, which in the earlier ones had been so emphatically denounced, are presented as having obtained a lodgment in the Church, and the very worst forms of moral corruption are presented as having their development in the bosom of Christianity itself.

In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians the evil for the most part is matter of prophetic testimony, though the apostle could then say, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." But in the Second Epistle to Timothy, it had so far advanced as to give occasion to the apostle to describe what

are warned that already "there are many antichrists." This, even in John's day, gave to the profession of Christianity the characteristic of "the last time." Because there, where the claims and authority of Christ should alone have place, the corruption had already begun which would issue in the development of Antichrist himself. But in John these corruptors of the truth are exhibited as leaving the holy association of the Church and going out as deceivers into the world. In Jude, on the contrary, they are presented as having "crept in unobserved," and remaining in, so as to endanger the apostacy and consequent judgment of Christianity as a responsible profession in the world.* Both, alas! are true.

In the prosecution of his subject Jude adduces, as examples of warning, the

* When Judaism became apostate by the rejection of Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit God gathered believers out of it into the Church. When the apostacy of Christianity has actually come, the saints will have been gathered out of it into heaven. See 2 Thess. ii.

people of Israel, the apostate angels, Sodom and Gomorrrha and the surrounding cities of the plain; and in application he shows that the judgment he was announcing had been marked out beforehand, as that which would fall on these "ungodly men." Moreover, he declares that Enoch's prophecy would have its accomplishment in the judgment of these men whom he traces through the whole course of Christianity, from the time of their introduction in apostolic days until its close in the coming of the Lord with His holy myriads to execute the judgment announced.

It is a very common thing in commentators to treat these scriptures as referring only to the old heresies of the early ages of the Church and thus, of course, to cut off the continuous use of the warnings and instructions they contain. But the smallest attention to this epistle will show that there has been no such lapse in its instructions. The "ungodly men that had crept in unobserved" the apostle declares were corrupting the profession of Christianity

God apart from holiness of life as its legitimate fruit. For what can man, with an unchanged nature, do with "the grace of God," which, as a doctrine, he acknowledges, but in one way or other, corrupt it? It is only the renewed man that understands how "the grace of God which brings salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope," &c. But these men not only denied the holiness of the grace of God, but also the rights of our Lord Jesus Christ in His sovereign unlimited authority.* They would not own subjection to Him as the only Master (*δεσποτης*) and Lord. But where there was not walking according to the flesh the apostle could say "the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing

* One error seldom travels alone.

when he wrote, and that they, in their corresponding types, would be within the limits of its profession when the Lord comes to execute judgment on all the ungodly. Nothing, therefore, can be more evident than that they are there now. And it is most important as regards our walk with the Lord through the world, that we should be able to recognize them as there. The evil would, doubtless, become more developed in its course, but the elements of it were so marked when Jude wrote, that the Spirit could trace it on, and depict it in its final consummation and judgment.

The first thing that is noticed of these ungodly men is, that they turned "the grace of God into licentiousness," and denied the authority of Christ as the only Master and Lord. The grace of God was not denied, but it was turned into an occasion for the indulgence of the flesh and dissoluteness of walk. It is not formal infidelity, however it may issue in that and coalesce with it. It is the acknowledgment of the grace of

into captivity *every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"

But it is apostasy that is warned against though this is its commencement.

The tendency of any principle that is not of God can never be known, nor even suspected, apart from the light of the divine word. The Spirit of God sees things in their commencement and their final issues. At first those who are denounced in the Second of Timothy are marked out as persons that "creep into houses and lead captive silly women." But these beginnings of error are shown to result in the utter corruption of Christianity in "the last days" and "perilous times." And in this epistle (it ought not to be forgotten by us) the first point of divergence from the truth is marked as consisting in laxity of conduct in connexion with the profession of grace, and the refusal to submit the heart and will unreservedly to the authority of Christ. But the non-recognition of these claims of Christ, which are absolute, is the assertion of

the right to pursue my own will. But this is the principle of direct and absolute apostacy. "The king shall do according to *his will*."

The examples of apostacy that are adduced are exceedingly solemn, and they can only be lightly contemplated by those who lightly esteem the authority of the word of God. Learned men occupy themselves with discussions as to the sources whence these examples were derived, but to the simple mind there will be little difficulty. Whatever floating traditionary notices of truth, amidst the general wreck of the knowledge of God after the flood, were preserved, God could use. And that many of these notices were existent is plain, however much they might be mixed up with the corruption and fable that abounded in the leading nations of the Gentile world. But God could arrest and fix these elements of truth, which seemed to be held in solution by the corruption with which they were associated; and He has doubtless done so here, and also in that part of the

learned or ignorant, if they are not guided by the word and the Spirit of God, but the dreams of their own imaginations? The power of God is not in these, nor the restraints of His grace, in a renewed nature; consequently there is no curb to licentiousness, nor any yoke or chain for the pride which disdains the restraints of authority and spurns with irreverence and contempt everything that is above itself. "They defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

This haughtiness in a fallen and impotent nature is contrasted with the spirit of an archangel, and condemned.

The head of the highest order of created beings of which we know, when in conflict with Satan did not assume, as belonging to himself, the right to bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "*the Lord rebuke thee*." That is, in this loftier nature, just in proportion to his nearness to God, there was the reverence which is ever due from a created being to the Creator, which was absent from these proud

Second Epistle of Peter that is similar in purpose to that of Jude. There seems to be nothing more futile than the discussions of commentators as to which epistle was the prior written and to be considered original, and which quoted from the other. These traditions, from the days of Noah, were all floating in the common mind, mixed up with all sorts of fable and perversion; but the Spirit of the Lord could separate them and direct the mind of each writer to that which was suited to the specific object of each epistle. If man's mind is viewed as inditing Scripture, the difficulties connected with the subject are endless; if God be the author all difficulties vanish.

But there are other characteristics to be noticed of these "ungodly men." In verse 8, they are called "dreamers," indicating that, as not being guided by the truth, all their thoughts and speculations, their hopes and confidence, were but idle dreams. For what are the thoughts of men's minds in regard to the things of God, whether they be

men, who were near to God in profession, but strangers to Him in heart. Nothing so hardens the spirit as occupation with religion without the heart having been brought to God by it.

"But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." Whatever things they did not know, that could not be brought within the range of their understanding, these things they utterly contemned. It is the error (wile enough) of reducing everything in God's revelation to the standard of human reason, and speaking against everything that pretends to rise above it, as coming from a higher source. Man's mind is the measure of all that he will receive in a revelation from God! But what these same men know naturally, as the unreasoning animals, in these things they perish. For what has man in the highest reach of his nature that does not perish? It is not that man in his nature is here reduced to the scope of a beast's knowledge, but that,

in his own sphere, with all that he possesses naturally, he perishes in the pursuit, and the possession, and the enjoyment of these things. "Man that is in honour and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish."

In pronouncing their woe in verse 11, three new examples, taken from the historic scriptures, are cited as together giving the embodiment of the principles by which these "ungodly men," yet professing Christianity, were swayed.

"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." "The way of Cain" is natural unbelief, accompanied by hatred of righteousness: the first developed form of evil in man, after the fall. It is nature proudly refusing to own the ruin of sin, and to take God's revelation as the only means of man's knowledge of his relations toward God; with, that which always follows, hatred of those who are in the enjoyment through grace of the divine favour. "Balaam" is the embodiment of the

principle of religious corruption. He possessed the truth, but used it for corrupt ends. It was not the rejection of God's revelation, but the employment of the light he possessed without the exercise of conscience, and without seeking God's ends. He used the light only for self-advancement, and as the means of securing his own advantage through it. "He loved the wages of unrighteousness;" and hence, notwithstanding his pretended *seeking to God for guidance*, he did not scruple to use his knowledge to corrupt directly the people of God. In the Revelation, when speaking of some who held the doctrine of Balaam, it is added, "who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." "Corah" was a Levite who joined himself with the heads of Israel in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, seeking to usurp the kingly and priestly authority which God had in their persons set up. It is a type of the last phase of apostacy; when the ecclesiastical and civil power

will be found in open revolt against the kingly and priestly rights of the Lord Jesus Christ; like the beast and the false prophet of Revelation. The three examples present the progressive character of apostacy, and the principles by which it is wrought, and the foreshadowing of the judgment which will fall upon it in connexion with God's final revelation.

Then follows with intense energy the further description of these men. They were spots in their feasts of charity, (or perhaps sunken rocks endangering shipwreck;) clouds without water; trees without fruit, twice dead and plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, &c. They were present in their feasts of charity—the agapæ or love-feasts of the early Christians. It was with no godly purpose, however, of cultivating feelings of holy fellowship; for they were only feeding themselves without fear in the pastures of the faithful.

But judgment would overtake them,

as Enoch's prophecy (ver. 14, 15) showed. For the Lord with His holy myriads would come and execute judgment, and convict all that were ungodly amongst them, &c.; showing that the evil which began in apostolic days would be present within the scope of the profession of Christianity when the Lord comes to judgment. Other scriptures show that the true Church, the body of Christ, will have been taken out of this scene by Christ before this takes place; as it said, "when Christ who is our life shall be *manifested*, we shall be manifested with him in glory;" and also in this prophecy of Enoch, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment," &c. When judgment is executed the saints come with the judge.

But the unbridled licence of the tongue, which is next noticed as a characteristic of these ungodly men, should not be passed over without remark. There were the hard speeches of these ungodly sinners, who were saying, in principle, "Our tongues are our own,"

who is Lord over us?" There were the murmurers and complainers, the great swelling words of those who had men's persons in admiration for the sake of profit, and the mockers of the last times, when there would be a confluence of all the evils warned against in the epistle.

It is a dreadful picture of the various features in which the self-will and self-exaltation of man will eventually display itself in connexion with the profession of discipleship to Him who emphatically said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of ME, for I am MEEK and lowly in heart," and which, in all its essential features, we are warned is working now. But the evil having been foreseen and described, in its actual coming in, only serves to confirm the faith of those who are guided by the divine word, and seek to walk in subjection to the light it gives.

It remains but to notice, in the warning part of the epistle, verse 19: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." This is not a separation for any purpose, holy

or otherwise, from the professing body; but while they were in it, as "spots in their feasts of charity," they drew a line of distinction around themselves—perhaps by a claim to the only prescriptive right to minister in the Church as in the line of succession from the apostles—but the Spirit of God disowns altogether their claim by saying, they are "natural men (*ψυχικοί*) not having the Spirit." The contrast to them in every point is presented in the exhortation to believers, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." With them was the power of true holiness, or separation to God, as it is said, "they were sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." The faith they held was "their most holy faith;" and so far from not having the Spirit, they were to be found "praying in the Holy Ghost," &c.

Having gone through the subjects of

warning in the epistle, it is exceedingly comforting to notice how the Spirit of the Lord, in thus denouncing the evil, while traversing the whole course of apostacy in order to warn the more solemnly by the examples it affords, preserves untouched the blessing and standing of believers, and says not one word that could rightly disturb the confidence, or the true grounds of confidence, of the feeblest saint in the family of God.

This is presented with divine perfectness in the commencement and the close.

In the commencement there is the distinctive address of the epistle. It is to those who, having been called, were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." They were in the effect of Christ's prayer in John xvii. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." And thus sanctified and kept, they were exhorted "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." The apostle's purpose was to write to them of the "common salvation," but he was turned aside from that by the presence

in their midst, as a professing body, of the germs of that evil which we have already noticed, and which gives its special character to this epistle. It was now no longer a question of enlarging the boundaries of their faith, but of zealously guarding the divine deposit they had already received. It is a great thing, when the tide of corruption sets especially against the integrity of divine revelation and the living association of believers with God through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He should be able to say to us, "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name."

"The faith once delivered to the saints" is the sum of christian truth, as presented in apostolic teaching, the record of which is preserved to us in the New Testament, and especially in the Epistles. This they were to contend for, or, in other words, were to maintain inviolate, at all costs. It is by this faith which was once for all delivered to the saints that the soul is put into direct communication and association with God.

The conscience is purged from guilt and there is the living action of the new man in a recognized relationship with Him. For we are begotten by the word; and there is a real life of God through union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Where this living power is not known there is no safeguard for the soul. It is not that God will not keep His own but that which gives a vital power against error, in the living possession of all that divinely meets the need of the soul, is not present. Error finds its place in the heart that is not at rest in God—the heart that has something yet to *seek*, and is not in the position where it has only to enjoy and to advance in the knowledge of that which is possessed. The Apostle John says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And it may be added that it was their most holy faith on account of its bringing the soul into association with God in the light even as He is in the light.

scriptures; here it is presented in a practical way as the only power of communion with God, the blessed link of connexion with Him as the source of light and holiness when all was being corrupted around.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God." This is the true element of the present life of God in believers and is the result of their building themselves up in their most holy faith and praying in the Holy Ghost. By the occupation of the heart with the blessed revelations God has given of His character and of His infinite grace in Christ Jesus, and by turning, under the influence of these truths, to intercourse with God, from whom the truth comes, the soul is kept by the power of the Holy Spirit in the brightness of that love which is characteristic of God and which never changes however little apprehended by us in its divine perfectness. But this can never be known by the mere workings of the human mind nor indeed in any other way than through the faith of the believer in the divine word and in the

It is a ruinous thing to stop at the truth of doctrine as doctrine and not to go on to the blessed reality of the truth in the enjoyment and responsibilities of that position in relationship with God to which the truth is designed to bring us.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost" assumes the normal position of the believer to be that of having the Spirit, in contrast with those who are characterized as "natural men having not the Spirit." But it is not the doctrine of the Holy Spirit here, but rather the recognition of the known and blessed privilege of those who are born of God, that they are "born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit," and have the indwelling of the Spirit, as the blessed link of their communion with God. Neither is it the laying the foundations of the faith nor enlarging its scope for the general profit of the saints. On the contrary, the perfectness of its revelation is assumed, and the exhortation is to maintain it incorrupt. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is abundantly given in other

operation of the Spirit of God in the soul.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Deliverance was to be looked for out of all around them that would be judged, into the full enjoyment of that eternal life, which is at once the present and future inheritance of the saints. It was mercy in the sense of deliverance from the apostasy and corruption which the coming of the Lord would judge, but much more so in the sense of having been morally separated by grace from what was so contrary to God, and truth, and holiness, in that wide spread sea of evil which under the guise of Christianity was pouring its waves around.

This completes their own personal position, but there was something else. If we have the truth for our own salvation and joy, and the light for guidance along our heavenly road, we have it also that we may be witnesses for God and for Christ, as long as we remain in the world. Hence, in the midst of evil, which cannot be restrained, charity is

still to have its exercise; not indeed by the relaxation of the holiness of our own walk, but in the ability which walking in the light gives to help others who may not thus be in the light. But there is a difference to be made between those who are deceived and misled by others, and those who are discerned to be themselves deceivers and active corrupters of the truth. Towards the one compassion is to be exercised; but with the other there is to be no kind of association, but in any attempt to deliver them, there is to be the exercise of that fear which is the only preservative of the soul from their contagion. "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The apostle now turns in heart and address to God as the only unfailing stay and safeguard of His people. He may warn, and exhort, and encourage, but the power of evil would over-pass every barrier, were it not for the sustaining and restraining hand of God.

rise to these warnings were already in the midst of their assemblies, and were seen by the ken of the prophetic Spirit in darkening features going onward until arrested by the coming of the Lord to judgment; still he can say, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

There is no mischief that a will not subject to Christ is not capable of; and there is no remedy for the evil in the Church of God, but in the full recognition of Christ's absolute rights over us. He is more than Lord. He is Master, (*δεσποτης*), with absolute, unlimited authority. God has "given him power over all flesh;" and "He is the only Lord and Master." But there is nothing that gives such rest to the heart as the full recognition of this absolute supremacy. There is a supreme will, an absolute authority, to which

"His eyes run to and fro in all the earth to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward him." For whatever may be the power of the enemy, or the broken condition of the Church here in the world, the power of Christ does not cease to be exercised in its behalf; and it is certain that God has linked the well-being of every soul that trusts in Him with His own eternal counsels. It is not only, as the apostle Peter says, that their inheritance is reserved in heaven for them, but believers, as heirs of the inheritance, are "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." "God is faithful," says the apostle Paul, "by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ."

But how wonderful is the issue of the exercise of that power and grace to which the apostle turns as to the source of all his confidence for the saints! Apostacy has been the subject of his epistle: examples the most solemn have been passed in review for the warning of the faithful: the evils which gave

we must *needs* be subject. But who is this absolute Master, with unlimited rights over us? It is God, and the Lord Jesus Christ! Then, I reply, my destinies for time and eternity are in the only hands to which my soul, if it could choose, would absolutely entrust them.

"My times are in thy hand,
Father, I wish them there;
My life, my soul, my all, I leave
Entirely to thy care."

Until this is practically owned, the will, in one way or another, will seek to assert itself. But what of necessity is the moral character of a will in action that does not implicitly bow in everything to the Lord Jesus Christ, this epistle has fully shown. An independent will is of necessity an opposing will. But the exhortation of the Spirit to us (and all our blessing hangs upon it) is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the

form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen."

FRAGMENT.

The very place which Christ holds, is inseparably connected with God's love to some one else. If He is the *firstborn*, it is among many brethren. Could any one of us have held such a place, our stress would have been upon the first-born—I am the firstborn. Not so with Christ. If He is the firstborn, it is to bring His *brethren to God*. What would all the pre-eminence be to Christ

"He bringeth forth his fruit in the season." "I am the true vine; ye are the branches." Here is the full thought even with regard to God's earthly purposes. There is nothing before God, but one single Being, as the Root and the channel of all blessing. Observe, that the provision has been made for us, and it is always so; when mercy comes in, it is on the ground of that which is in us, not being that which God can like.

The peculiarity of the blessing connected with this Root is, that there is *culture* and *success*; unlike Luke xiv., where all the culture so sadly ended in failure and disappointment. Success! "All things work together for good to them that love God." Is this truth fresh in our hearts with respect to God's dealings with us now? Each of us has some peculiar trial, some thorn in the flesh it may be, rankling and festering; but seen in the light of this truth, we may not, we cannot call this otherwise than "good."

if it separated from God? Eve, in order to gain the pre-eminence, risked the loss of God; but Christ being from the Father was associated with the Father, and when seen pre-eminent in glory, it will be in full communion with God.

The delight of Christ is, to bring all the fulness of God's character to bear upon every little crevice in our hearts.

What is that which is most precious to Christ? That, through Him, God would make known to the "many sons" all the fulness of His heart, the riches of His grace.

How comforting, too, is this love of Christ's heart with reference to the poor Jews, who are becoming more and more the subjects of interest in all that is taking place on the earth.

Every trait in the divine character, everything which was morally glorious in God, shined out in Christ. As seen in Psalm i. light in the midst of darkness, the Son of man gave the thorough indication of the character of God.

He would not be alone in the glory.

JEREMIAH AN EXAMPLE.

How instructive it is to remark the instruments God uses wherewith to accomplish His designs. As His resource when all had failed, by which He could show Himself just and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, surpasses all that man had conceived, or could have dreamt of, so often when He works, the instruments selected are just those which man would have rejected as utterly unfit for the occasion. But those very instruments, when taken up and fitted for the object God has in view, bring out His power and redound to His glory. Of this Jeremiah is a striking instance, who, naturally timid and retiring, is yet made by the Lord as bold as a lion, and able to do and to brave what the stoutest heart might well have shrunk from.

To testify against evil, to expose the wickedness of a generation, and declare the sin of a people, is ever a difficult task to the creature. It shrinks back at the bare thought of it, and well it may, for what power has the earthen

vessel in itself? But if the Lord is with it, if He deigns to use it, weak and fragile in itself, in His hand it can become a "defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls." (Jer. i. 18.) One thus situated is brought into opposition to the current thoughts and feelings of the world, making him clash with the opinions, maxims, and habits of those who, whatever they profess, are really opposed to God, and under the power and authority of the great enemy of the Lord. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James iv. 4.) It must be a work of faith, and the work of faith attests the impotency of the creature, and the power of God. For if confident in its own strength, and assured it can overcome by its own power, it seeks not elsewhere for assistance; but if the task assigned is felt to be too great, it can only go forward in the strength of another. And if it then turns away from all earthly sources, and looks alone to God, it walks by faith. And the walking by faith is the going contrary to that which nature would

ministry, the Lord had sanctified him, and ordained him a prophet to the nations. This announcement, so comforting and cheering to one who has learnt to trust the living God, failed to support Jeremiah. He was occupied with his weakness; he saw that; he felt that. He could give no heed to the words, "I formed thee, I sanctified thee." He urges objections, "I cannot speak, for I am a child." His youth he thought a reasonable objection to obedience to the divine command. His inability to speak is in his eyes a fitting reason why the Lord should not send him; yet the Lord had ordained him from the womb for this work. How often do we see similar conduct in God's children, perhaps have experienced it in our own case. God calls, His servant objects. There is a difficulty, an obstacle which we have discovered that God has overlooked; an obstacle which must prove a most effectual hindrance to compliance with His will. He cannot speak, he is a child: as with Jeremiah, so with Moses; objections of

dictate, the incurring that which worldly prudence would avoid, and the doing that which a regard to personal comfort and ease would counsel the individual most strongly to leave alone.

Weak and timid as a child is Jeremiah as presented to us in chapter i., when the prophetic commission is announced to him. "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child." (Ver. 6.) Such are the first accents of the future prophet which burst on our ears. He stands aghast at the task assigned him—"A prophet unto the nations." "I am a child," he says. Did not the Lord know this? Assuredly He did; for He had already said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee; I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." His commission now delivered him was clearly no after thought. The One who sends him forth to the nations had formed him from the belly, and sanctified him from the womb for this very work. Before Jeremiah entered on the future scene of his prophetic

personal inefficiency are urged. Has God made a mistake? How could He? He has formed him. It is well to be thoroughly sensible of our own weakness, and to feel that we cannot do anything of ourselves. "When I am weak, then am I strong." But it is never right to make our sense of weakness an excuse for disobeying God. We cannot be too sensible of our nothingness, but let us be as fully sensible of God's all-sufficiency. Obedience to God is always right. God had called him to the office, however unfit he felt himself for it. Doubtless, humanly speaking, he was unfit. If man had been selecting a suitable person, it would probably not have been Jeremiah. Jesse never thought of presenting David before Samuel. Samuel thought Eliab was the one God had chosen; but till David came they could not sit down to meat, and when he came the Lord's anointed stood before them.

In objecting Jeremiah was wrong. Conscious of God's express command objections could have no place. Besides

what good was gained by this? Could he turn aside the Lord from His purpose? Sooner or later he must obey. Jonah, dismayed at the work given him to do, attempts to fly to Tarshish to avoid its execution. He could delay its commencement by his disobedience, but he could not change God's counsel concerning him. Go he must, and go he did. Israel in the wilderness shrunk from personal conflict with the nations of Canaan. The war was delayed for forty years, but had to be encountered at last; and the very enemies which their fathers feared to meet, the children had to overcome. Jeremiah endeavours, but in vain, to change the mind of the Lord. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" The prophet's failure gives occasion for the manifestation of the Lord's graciousness who allows his servant to reason with Him, not to change His mind, but to be overruled by assurances of His help and protection. "Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee

thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." (Ver. 7, 8.) If his being a child is no valid objection to his employment as prophet, neither is his inability of speech to be an hindrance for the work. "And the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." (Ver. 9, 10.) What a commission is here! To nature most appalling, to faith God's will, and that is enough.

But his work does not end here. He might have discharged the office of prophet to the nations without once coming into contact with the subjects of his prophecies, by sending them to the different nations by the hand of messengers, as he did in some cases. (Chap. xxvii. 2; li. 59—64.) What follows, however, cut off all hope of seclusion. He must face men, prophecy against Judah, and

announce judgments against Jerusalem. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to deliver thee." (Chap. i. 17—19.) From this there could be no escape. If he drew back the Lord would confound him before them. If he went forward it would be to incur their hatred, and encounter their opposition. "They shall fight against thee." To stand still was impossible; retreat was out of the question; to go forward is all he could do; and "I am with thee to deliver thee," is all he had to trust to: but that was the word of His God.

His message was to be one of reproof and judgment, though many precious

promises were mingled with the announcement of coming wrath. There are some who seem to take pleasure in predicting evil, and foretelling the judgments which impend on their adversaries. Had Jeremiah been one of this class, he might have found his difficulties in some degree counterbalanced by the pleasure of foreseeing the confusion and misery of his oppressors. But he was a man of a different stamp. In accordance with the spirit of the dispensation under which he lived, he could pray for the punishment of his enemies. (Chap. xv. 15.) Yet we find him grieved to the heart at the evil he was the medium of predicting. (Chap. iv. 19—26; viii. 18—22; ix. 1; xiii. 17.) In no way, then, was the office of prophet congenial to his nature. Naturally timid, he shrank from conflict with the wicked; and when uttering the word of the Lord, foretelling the punishment and misery coming on his people, his gentle soul is pained, and the spirit of intercession, which arose from the depths of his heart, is only checked by repeated injunctions from the

Lord to refrain. (Chap. vii. 16; xi. 14, 15; xiv. 11; xv. 1.)

From the beginning to the end of his ministry he is obliged to face the ungodly part of the nation, and even to enter the king's house, and there deliver his messages of woe. He is continually put forward and made by the Lord to take a most prominent place in his country's history. How does he comport himself in this, to him, unwished-for position?

His first public acts are to press home on the conscience of the nation, if possible, a conception of the enormity of their guilt. From chapter ii.—xii. he is occupied with setting before them their iniquities, which may be summed up under three heads—general corruption, idolatry, and covenant breaking.

From chapter ii.—vi. he unfolds their general corruption, crying in the ears of Jerusalem—The Lord had only done them good from the earliest period of their national existence. They had requited Him with the blackest ingratitude, having forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for them-

selves cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water. From the Lord they had turned to Assyria, and when that failed, they had looked to Egypt for help. Their glory they had changed for that which did not profit. Idolatry was established, with its concomitant vices, for which the prophet reproves them. (Chap. ii. 27; iii. 9; v. 7—9.) The Lord's word was disbelieved. (Chap. v. 12.) They were rebellious. All classes were corrupt. Providential dealings had no effect. (Chap. iii. 3.) "As a fountain casteth out her waters, so Jerusalem casteth out her wickedness." (Chap. vi. 7.) No shame could be seen on their face, not a blush on their cheeks. (Ver. 15.) Reprobate silver would they be called, because the Lord had rejected them. (Ver. 20.) Among such was Jeremiah placed "as a fortress and tower to know and try their ways." (Ver. 27.)

From chapter vii.—x. the prophet is sent to speak to the men of Judah in the house of the Lord, to show up their abominable sins carried on whilst calling out, "The temple of the Lord, the tem-

ple of the Lord are these." (Chap. vii. 4.) They were hypocrites. They could steal, murder, commit adultery, burn incense to Baal, and come to the Lord's house, saying they were delivered to do all these things.

Their idolatry is then denounced. But in this they were not alone. The heathen were guilty of it likewise, therefore a message is sent to them by the "prophet to the nations," announcing (in Chaldee) (Chap. x. 11) that "the gods who have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." After this we have the contrast between idols and the Lord God brought out, (x. 14—16) and judgment is prayed for on the heathen, "for they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate."

But if Judah was guilty in common with the Gentiles of idolatry and its accompanying vices, there was a sin peculiarly their own—they had broken the covenant. This is next charged against them. (Chap. xi., xii.) God

has therefore forsaken His house, left His heritage. (Chap. xii. 7.) Prayer for them is now of no avail. (Chap. xi. 14.) Yet afterwards the Lord will be gracious. The nation shall be restored, but in the meantime those who have provoked His anger will suffer for it.

These three grand charges having been pressed on them, the prophet is next shown, under different figures, the certainty of the Lord's rejection of His people. The girdle marred at the river Euphrates, (chap. xiii.,) is explained to mean the bringing down of their pride. God "will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together." (Ver. 14.) He will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy. By the occasion of a dearth, the prophet learns again, when desirous to intercede, that the Lord will not accept it now, and even if Moses and Samuel stood before Him, He would not hear them. The sword, the famine, death, captivity will be their portion, and nothing now remains for the faithful but separation from the ungodly. (Chap. xiv., xv.) The two

next chapters (xvi., xvii.) bring out in full relief how far the separation is to be carried; not merely separation in heart, but in act. (Chap. xvi. 1—8.) Difficult indeed must such a path ever be, but the faithful are strengthened by the assurance of blessings to those who trust in the Lord, and the curse that should follow those who trusted in man. (Chap. xvii. 5—8.) The potter's vessel marred in the potter's hand, and the vessel broken by the prophet in the valley of the son of Hinnom before certain of the elders of the people and elders of the priests, illustrate God's power and right to do as He will with His people, and the certainty of their being broken before Him. (Chap. xviii. xix.) Chapters xxi.—xxiv. comes in the royal house of David, its punishment, and the future glory attaching to it. Shallum, Josiah's son, will return no more, nor see his native country again. Jehoiakim will be buried with the burial of an ass; Coniah, a despised and broken vessel, should die in Babylon. Zedekiah will be childless, yet the family of

hands, and all must submit to him, for so had God willed. The prophet is now placed in a very difficult position, he must exhort his countrymen still in Judæa, and these already in captivity, with the nations around the land, to accept the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar. But it would be only for a limited time. Afterwards Israel would be restored, and be again governed by their own rulers, and David their king be in their midst. This is the leading subject of chapters xxvi.—xxxiii. From xxxiv.—xl. we have illustrated the different ends of those who profess, and those who practise, obedience. Those who manifest profession without reality are destroyed; those who are obedient have life. Jonadab should never want a man to stand before the Lord for ever; and Baruch's life is given him for a prey. The concluding portion is occupied with the predictions against certain nations, two of them descendants of Ham, the others descendants of Shem.

Throughout his ministry we see the prophet brought prominently forward,

David shall not be cut off for ever. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." (Chap. xxiii. 5, 6.) But this was future, and is future yet. At the time Jeremiah lived, how different the scene! In the midst of unrighteousness of kings, prophets, and priests this prophecy comes, a bright spot in the surrounding darkness. Before, however, it could be realized, and the reign of righteousness commence, a general judgment of the nations must take place. The cup, drunk first by Judah, must be afterwards drunk by all, and by Babylon, the scourge used of God to carry out His purposes. This is the subject of the following chapter (xxv.)

Another part of the book now commences. The sovereignty departing from Judah was to be transferred to Gentile

the consequences to himself it is not difficult to guess. Four times is his life in danger. (Chap. xi. 19—21; xxvi. 11; xxxvi. 26; xxxviii. 4.) The hostility of the people is not confined to threats. Once is he put into the stocks, (chap. xx.) twice into dungeons, to be kept in prison, when delivered from the pit in the house of Malchiah, till Jerusalem was taken. (Chap. xxxvii. 16; xxxviii. 6, 13; xxxix. 14.) The book ends with the prophet in Egypt, carried captive thither by Johanan, and the remnant left in the land. Truly he was a man of woes. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." (Chap. xv. 10.)

What a place for him to occupy. From the thirteenth year of King Josiah to the flight of Johanan into Egypt, for a period of more than forty years, was Jeremiah before his people, reproving them and warning them of

coming judgments. On several occasions their rage against him was openly manifested; yet he persevered in spite of all. A good illustration of his boldness and faithfulness is afforded us in chapter xxvi. 14, when his life was threatened by the priests, the prophets, and their partisans among the people. There is no drawing back, no cringing, no temporising. "As for me, behold I am in your hands; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you." Death he is ready to meet, anything rather than withdraw his words, or refuse to utter what God had commanded. How different his words here to what we have in chapter i. There he feared the faces of men, (i. 8, 17,) now he only fears God. He speaks as directed and leaves the issue with the Lord. He suffered much. He suffered from foreseeing the calamities which were coming on his country: he suffered in showing her calamities when they came. He suffered from his countrymen, who 'rewarded him evil for good and hatred for his good will.' From the heathen monarch, the destruction of whose king-

secret of his success. He obeyed God unhesitatingly, and brought all his difficulties to Him with the simplicity of a child. When first called to his office, as we have seen, he questions before he obeys; ever after he obeys before he questions. He learnt his lesson of obedience at the commencement of his ministry. Have we learnt ours? Grievous to him, indeed, were the messages he had often to give, but he delivers them as received; hence his boldness. Assured it was the word of the Lord, he goes forth to encounter the opposition of priests, prophets, kings, and people. No matter who opposes, or who may threaten, he must speak, and he does. See him in chapter xx. after he has come out of the stocks, put into them by Pashur, the governor of the house of the Lord, for predicting the desolation of the city: he has felt the power of man for his faithfulness to God. When let out the next day he repeats the unwelcome truth, directly charges Pashur with prophesying lies, and calls him Magor-missabib. Then see him before

dom, and capture of whose metropolis he foretold, he received nothing but kindness. (xxxix. 11; xl. 4.) From his own countrymen, some bright examples excepted, as Ahikam and Ebed-melech, he experienced nothing but bitterness, hostility, and persecution.

We see in him the feebleness of the creature and the strength which God can give. He failed sometimes. Who is there but One who could tread such a path without failure? But if we refer to this it is not to make a spectacle of human infirmity, still less to sit in judgment on the prophet. If any take pleasure in such a task let them perform it, taking care that he that is without sin should cast the first stone at him. For ~~as~~ his failure, weakness, and natural ~~timidity~~ of character are occasions for illustrating what the power of God can do; how He can fit the most unlikely instrument to human eyes to perform the greatest work, and how the agent least ~~suited~~ apparently for such a service may ~~be~~ enabled effectually to perform it.

This leads us to the consideration of the

God: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me (or persuaded), and I was deceived (persuaded): thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Chap. xx. 7—9.) Before the Lord he unfolds his thoughts and fears. Before men he is bold as a lion, the brazen wall and iron pillar. Before God we see him pouring out his complaint, confessing his hesitation, setting forth his troubles. He unbosoms himself to the Lord. This gives confidence. For the Lord, before whom and to whom he speaks, was with him "as a mighty and terrible One; therefore," he says, "my persecutors shall stumble and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not

prosper; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." (Verse. 11.) With this confidence he can sing unto the Lord, and exhort others to do the same, on the ground of deliverance accomplished, "He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers." (Ver. 13.) With Jeremiah the path of obedience is the only safe path, and he walks therein in faith: obedience carries him forward, faith keeps him up. Obedience did not bring him into an easy place. It did not put away difficulties. It seemed to create them, but it always afforded a way of surmounting them. To go forward was the command to Israel at the Red Sea; here their obedience was tested to trust in the Lord to open the way; here their faith was tried, so with Jeremiah, and with all God's people. The only safe principle is obedience on the ground of faith. He went through difficulties, suffered imprisonments, had his feet made fast in the stocks, passed some time in the dungeons, sank deep in the mire. He suffered this and much more because he was obedient; he could

imprison, they could attempt his life, but never take it. Pashur should die in Babylon. Hananiah must die that same year he prophesied, and he did just two months after his prediction, (chap. xxviii., 1, 17,) because he taught rebellion against the Lord. Shemaiah the Nehelamite should not see the good the Lord would do to Israel, nor have a man to dwell among his people. (Chap. xxix. 32.) But the Lord's promise to Jeremiah never failed. "I am with thee to deliver thee." (Chap. i. 19.) Few though these words are, how much was conveyed by them. The presence of the Lord to deliver him. Into a strange land he would go. With the remnant of the people he would share the affliction of his nation. But who could break the iron, even the northern iron and brass? (Chap. xv. 12.) The Lord made him a brazen wall, which could not be broken.

A man of sorrows truly he was. Yet he had a joy in spite of his circumstances and even in the midst of his greatest trials. His joy was the word of his God. That which seemed to

trust the Lord, and therefore he could look each difficulty in the face, and go forward; not that his faith never failed. In this very chapter we have an instance of failure. (Ver. 14—18.) But the principle that he acted on was obedience, and he found it one which could stand every test to which it was subjected.

Again, see him in chapter xxxii., when told to buy the field of Hanameel, the son of Shallum, his uncle. He does not understand it, but he buys it according to the word of the Lord. After he has bought it he asks the Lord about it; and He, who always responds to His people's faith, answers him with words of comfort, telling of the blessing yet in store for the nation and places the prophet so truly loved.

In all this there is much instruction for us. The prophet, when obedient, finds God always faithful. He had promised his enemies should not prevail against him. This always came true. They could oppress, they could afflict, they could threaten, they could

outward eyes the cause of his troubles afforded him solace in these troubles. "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." (Chap. xv. 16.) But if the word received into his soul gave him joy, it was the instrument which separated him from the surrounding evil. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation." Personifying the faithful remnant, he expresses what they suffered. But grievous as their position was, it was the place of testimony and the sphere of influence. What follows shows this. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the

wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." (Chap. xv. 19—21.)

We see what the word of the Lord was to him. According to it he walked in obedience. From it he drew comfort and joy. By means of it he was separated from the evil around him. What the word was to him, that it should be to God's people at all times. Is it so with us? He went not by his thoughts, his feelings, his surmises. He walked according to the word as soon as he was assured it was the word. Nothing more is required of us. It is to the word, the doctrine, we are to give heed, the doctrine, according to godliness, the word of God's grace. That word separated him from evil. Does it so act on us? It should: but if we are to walk in obedience to God's word it must be in separation from all that is contrary to it. Comfort there will be from the word in the assured presence of the Lord, and the joy which the truths He has made known give to the heart which feeds on them; but separation there must be. How often is the bait held out of greater

influence at the price of unfaithfulness. Too rigid conformity, it is said, to the word of God offends some. A little relaxing, a little yielding to the opinion of others will enable personal influence to have its due weight. Such are man's thoughts. How contrary to these are God's. So chapter xv. 19 and 2 Timothy ii. 21 show. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared for every good work." We cannot want more. Here is influence indeed. Be as God's mouth, a vessel meet for the master's use, and prepared for every good work. But this can only be reached by separating from all that is contrary to God.

May the Lord give to all His people the desire to know what this is and to act on it. Obedience to God's word is the safeguard in days of evil. That leads to separation, a painful and difficult path, but there is then found a joy from the word which was unknown before. And we can only be happy, only be

strong, only be influential when walking by faith in child-like obedience to the Lord's revealed will.

THE TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 1—11.)

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord.

thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

The first thing suggested to the mind in reading this wonderful scene might be, How exceedingly unlike are we to Jesus. He was the only Man who ever trod this earth in whom Satan had nothing. How much he has in us; and if we know it not, it is because of the darkness of our minds. Jesus was tried in many ways, but always found perfect; as here, when tried by Satan; also when tried by man in the case of the scribes and Pharisees coming to Him to entangle Him in His talk; and last and worst, when tried by God in the last scene on the cross! Not one failure is in Him. Satan's temptation was of a threefold

character, like as it was in the garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But how differently is it met! Satan knew, if this was the Messiah, he was both God and man, so he puts his temptation accordingly, so as to place the Lord in a dilemma; He must deny one of the truths, either His power as God, or His subjection as man. Eve was tempted to disobedience in the midst of surrounding abundance, but the Lord Jesus was faithful when in the urgency of nature's wants He was only pressed to use convenient food. The Lord answers him meekly, and takes His place amongst the failed family of Israel by quoting from Deuteronomy, the book of the failure. The second temptation partakes of the character of the lust of the eye, which includes more than the desire of the objects of beauty, to gratify the eye, which are in the world. It goes farther, it cannot trust God's word, it *wants a sign*. The Holy Spirit is not known by the world because it *seeth Him not*. And here the devil tempts Christ to prove by a sign whether He was the Christ or

therefore it would be quite contrary to the nature of the dispensation, if we took the adornment of these things according to the flesh and the world, to which we wish to show that we are dead.

In the next place we must remember that we are set in the midst of a *groaning creation*; and more than that in the midst of a *ruined Church*. And do those adornments which befit the house of joy and the house of the Bride seem suited to such a condition as this? Could Jeremiah have adorned himself with the adornment of the world when he was entering into the ruined and fallen state of Jerusalem? No. When he was feeling the call for his head to be waters, and his eyes to be fountains of tears he would find no temptation ever to take up these adornments.

In the third place the necessity of the time should urge us to give all our adornments to the need of others, both of that of the Church and the world.

Lastly, the Lord Jesus took the place of uncomeliness in this world, which is sufficient to mark it as our right path.

not. But though he comes with God's own promise to Christ in the Psalms, he finds no particle of this lust of the eye in Jesus. He would not tempt the Lord His God to give him a sign that He was with Him. He believed, he *knew* He was. He again took his place among the failed ones. But when the devil comes with the last temptation, the Lord answers Him quite differently. He calls him Satan, which means *adversary*. The other two temptations had been as the accuser, "I do not know whether you are the Christ?" But this last, "If you will fall down and worship me," proclaimed him God's enemy, aiming to possess what alone belonged to God; and immediately the Lord's indignation rose, and He answered, "Get thee hence, Satan."

WHY MAY WE NOT ADORN OURSELVES?

Because it would be quite contrary to the character of our dispensation, which is that "the body is dead," and that we have died together with Jesus; and

A SERIES.

No. 12.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE LORD'S TABLE.

In undertaking to enter on the above most interesting subject, I am, on the one hand, impressed with the gravity of it, and therefore approach it with caution; while, on the other hand, I look to the Lord to keep me in accordance with His word; and the blessedness of the subject assures me that the more we seek the mind of the Lord in reference to it, the more gain and blessing will redound to our souls.

By baptism we have seen we profess that the death of Christ is our starting-point. Now if we accept this in faith, we find ourselves, as to earth, in the place where our Lord died, and it is as we realize this that we come to understand the import and value of the Lord's Supper, whereby we "shew forth His death until He come."

It was when the Lord's death was at hand; the very night in which He was

betrayed, that He first engaged His own with this supper. He, though still living with them, was on the eve of departing. He was going to leave them, and the scene in which they were, through death; and with this death, of which He was in full contemplation, He would connect them in this most solemn and united way. What else could He connect them with while they remain here and He remains absent? What else but that, which, *as to place*, severed Him from them (death being the portal through which He left the earth), especially when that which He was to pass through was for their eternal gain and blessing in association with Himself? They were to remain here; He was by death departing from them; and hence His heart demands of them to remember Him *as He LEFT THEM*; and that was His body broken and His blood shed for them. Mark! how specially it is noted for us, that on the "*night in which he was betrayed*" He called His disciples around Him for this purpose. Now is disclosed the terrible fact that

First, there is personal affection to Himself attaching the heart in remembrance of Him in the scene of His death till He comes; allowing nothing else to fill up the interval from His death to His coming, which is all, in this sense, a blank to us. If we speak of ourselves here, it is with reference to His death; and if we would turn our eyes here from it, the only point He presents to them, is His coming from whence He sat down on high. He was rejected from the earth. They who in their hearts would not have Him to reign over them, were condemned as enemies. The days had come in which the Bridegroom was to be taken away from them, and what could His disciples—those who knew and loved Him—be but widows in heart? They could not but "fast in those days." Mary Magdalene felt the blank; for though repaired to faith at God's right hand, it was *never repaired here*. The heart true to Him, and not partaking of the spirit of His enemies, who refused His rule, must own His Lordship in connexion with things here,

there is no escape for man but in the death of the Christ. At one and the same moment—at one and the same point—the dire ruin of man and the infinite love of God are to meet, and there alone find what completely suits both one and the other. It has come to this—the Son of the Blessed must die, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." And for those who know His service and enjoy His love, what would be their true and happy link or expression in the scene where all this occurred? What but His death, through which all who believe on Him are judicially severed from everything which caused it. Hence, in this world, where everything being against God conspired to cause the death of Christ, on whom the judgment of it was laid, it must of necessity be the great place of the saints as on earth to remember Him in His death; to connect Himself with all His people in united, solemn remembrance of Him, in that act by which they are judicially delivered from the judgment on all that with which they are surrounded.

and be ever reminded of Him in His death. Who can for a moment survey the evil and contrariety to God in all around him, and not be reminded that the death of Christ, which the same evil perpetrated, is the only escape from divine judgment on it all? and as this is pressed on the soul, so is the Lord in His death brought before it. Himself in all His love and mercy comes freshly before our souls, and the more we know the hope of His calling and the riches of His inheritance, the more deeply do we, in deep devotion of heart, remember Him in that hour in which He rescued us from all man's evil, and made a way through the rent veil into the brightness of our Father's presence, where He now is, and we with Him, and from whence He calls us to remember Him in the scene of His death down here.

But still further. While calling to remembrance Him in His death for us, our souls are carried afresh by the Spirit which leads to remembrance, into the sense of the efficacy of it before God for us; so that we can afford to judge our-

selves in the light of it. Nay, the more clearly I see that judgment has been borne for me, and the more fully my soul is in happy remembrance of Him who bore it, the more easily do I judge myself, and according as I really discern the Lord's body I *must* do so. His body being broken was for a purpose—the blessed purpose of delivering me from the bondage of corruption; consequently, as I enter into the reality of the one, so must I know in myself the necessity and value of it. In dealing with the things of God, there is no superficial action. The Lord's supper is the Lord's call to us—His disciples on the earth where He died, and from which He is now rejected—to remember Him as the One who gave His body to be broken for us, and His blood to be shed; and as we do so by faith through the Spirit, our souls are not only brought into sensible remembrance of Him in the act as a cheer and strength to the heart, but we are brought to realize by faith sensible contiguity to Himself and that personally in connexion with His death.

appearance of responding to the call and mind of the Lord, while in heart there was no such thing; hence there was no self-judgment while there was an ostentatious partaking of that which, if done in truth, must have occupied the soul with the great transaction in which judgment for all sins was effected, and therefore giving it fresh liberty to judge itself as the remembrance of Him who was judged in death for it, was the more vivid to it. Eating unworthily was eating without apprehension of that great act of judgment—with indifference, as if it were a common supper. But its being the Lord's supper, as in everything, the greater the blessing if received according to the mind of God, the greater the judgment, if assumed to be received, but with indifference—so here. If partaken of unworthily—with indifference—I am guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. I am made liable to a forfeiture and judgment proportionate to the blessing I have slighted. Not only have I lost the blessing which the apprehension of the judgment borne by Christ

For not only is our heart invigorated by the occupation of our link to Him, but the value of His work is revived to our conscience, and we judge ourselves *pari passu* as we discern His body which was broken for us. It is not a mere remembrance and cheer to the heart, but the great effect and value of His death for us operates so as to place us in happy remembrance of Him in His death. His death judged all in me which caused it, so that it is my practical relief from everything in me contrary to God; and therefore the more fully and truly I remember Him in that act, the more fully must I see that I, as I am naturally, am judged; and therefore, the relief as to my conscience is to accord the judgment borne in His broken body, and judge myself. If I did not see the judgment in His broken body, I dare not judge myself; but if I see it, I must apply it; for it is as I apply it that I truly realize and know the value of it.

* And here came in the "eating and drinking unworthily?" There was the

in His broken body and shed blood would have yielded me, but I have incurred a serious penalty. (1 Cor. xi. 30.) And it could not be otherwise. If I answer my Lord's call, I am in faith reminded of Him giving His body to be broken and His blood to be shed for me; and as I am occupied with Him in this great transaction, my conscience is free, and empowered to discern myself, because I discern the Lord's body. I judge myself in the light of His death, where all judgment was passed for me. I practically comprehend the ground of self-judgment; a moment of pain surely, but only a moment, that insures an entrance into one of no pain, but a fuller realization of the value of my Saviour to me. On the contrary, if I eat and do not remember Him in His death, I am neither occupied with the magnitude of His love for me, nor with the effects which, at the moment, flow personally to me from it; and therefore judgment from the Lord comes on me; it may be on my body—weakness, sickness, or death.

In 1 Corinthians xi. the supper is for all, but with individual exercise. The first thing is, I must hear the Lord calling me to eat of His supper. The Lord having called me to do so is the only title I ought to assume, and the only one the Church ought to acknowledge; and not without this solemn assurance on both sides ought any one to present himself to eat of the supper. It was no light thing when first instituted. If the first communicants did not quite understand all that was involved in the act which they celebrated, they at least were impressed with a deep sense of their relation to their Lord at the moment; and even if Judas were present, it is not too much to say that the scene aroused his nature and made him a more ready prey to Satan.

If the Lord has called me to remember Him, I am assured in myself of my title, and can happily and eagerly respond to it, and the Church cannot disallow it, unless I act inconsistent with my title and disqualify myself by

deeply what a Saviour He is, and the joy unspeakable there is in the Father's presence as presented there spotless by Him to the satisfaction and delight of the Father, must in a deeper and a fuller way remember His Lord when He gives His body to be broken and His blood to be shed, and therefore the supper must engage a soul bright and full of a present knowledge of Christ in a far more significant and comprehensive way than one only just looking to Him as a refuge, or restored to the sense of it. I am sure the latter may be sincere and engrossed, but in no degree remembering the Lord as the One who comes to the supper from the inner circle of God's presence, from the joys of the Father's favour to remember of His Lord on earth, how He died for him, and gave him title to, and a place in, all that scene from which he passes to remember his Lord's wondrous act on earth. I think this most important. Great spirituality only conduces to a deeper entrance into the foundation of all our blessing, or rather as it is here, into remembrance

what they can see. But this part of the subject I reserve till I come to that of testimony in connexion with the supper. I confine myself now to the individual condition suited and necessary in any one partaking of the Lord's supper.

First, he is called of His Lord to remember Him in His death, and he could not be called to remember Him but as knowing Him. All the disciples knew Him, and it is the soul that knows Him best, and has entered most fully into all He has consummated and secured to it according to the heart of God in the riches of His inheritance, who can with the truest and deepest appreciation, and satisfaction of heart too, revert to the scene of His death, and see Him in it establishing and securing all that blessing in which He now is, and from which he can estimate in some degree the greatness of the act by which he has been brought into it. I do not say that a babe in Christ may not in deep reality remember Him in His death, but it is evident that the one who knows him best, who has learned most

of Him as He opened our way into it. He calls me to remember Him in His death; but the better I know Him, the more I am in fellowship and nearness to Him in the circle of glory, the more I appreciate the call, and the more I invigorate my heart in remembering Him in the only scene on earth which marks my connexion with it; for it alone, like the blood of the paschal lamb, severs me from the judgment on the earth. No just idea of the Lord in His majesty or value can be acquired, but as He is known in glory; and the idea I get of Him there lends a character to my remembrance of Him in His death. I do not *acquire* it in His death. I bring it with me into the remembrance. The remembrance acquires a depth and a tone from my present knowledge and appreciation of my Saviour. It is not in the remembrance that I get the knowledge; I get there that which recounts my title to the joys which I have already found in my Lord. I believe it a mistake, and one which has led to great corruption, that the

Lord's supper in itself produces the knowledge or any condition of soul in me. The remembrance of Him in the supper renews the existence of a fact, and the blessing of necessity is determined by the fact. The fact imported to me in the remembrance of the Lord's death is that of His great love for me; but it is as I know Him and the results of the fact that I import into my remembrance just and true ideas about Him. The remembrance in the most blessed way authenticates my right and title to the endearing acquaintance which I through grace have made with Him; but it is not in the remembrance that I get the acquaintance, it is the latter which gives a character and depth to my remembrance.

How can I remember but in proportion to my knowledge and appreciation of the Person and ability to enter into what should engage my remembrance? If I do not know a person who has done some great act of service for me, how much will the remembrance of him in that act contribute to my knowledge of

presence; and that above where He is, and not down here where I am, that formed my condition and which will characterize my walk. Thus in the same way it is not the remembrance of the Lord's death at the supper which forms my condition, (I am not comparing the supper to walk or to service, but merely applying the principle,) but my condition, as I remember, gives a character to the remembrance. I may be but a babe, and though I know little, I am full of my Saviour. Well, then, my remembrance of Him will be according to my condition of soul. Another may be realizing his fellowship with his Lord in heavenly places; and having made acquaintance with Him *up there* in the glory, as Paul did, will he not, as led back by his glorified Lord to the scene of His death, bring into his remembrance an apprehension which the other, however true, knows nothing about? In neither case did the remembrance, while confirming and assuring the condition, produce it. And here the word, "Let a man prove himself and so let

Him personally? None at all, though it may awaken my gratitude; but if I know Him, and in proportion as I know Him, will my remembrance be characterized by what He is. And so if I look at the Lord *only* in His death and expect to get *there* power or delight in my remembrance, I shall find myself mistaken. I must bring to my remembrance, like the disciples, all the interest and depth of my acquired acquaintance; and according to the fulness of my acquaintance will be the depth and interest of my remembrance. It is the condition I am in previous to the remembrance, which will characterize it, rather than the remembrance generating the condition—though, of course, it establishes it.

Let me explain. If I go into the presence of God the light rebukes me, and according as it acts on my conscience I am formed to its claims. My condition is improved—I know in myself the effects of the light. If I walk in the effects of it through grace, I do not lose my condition; nay, I confirm and consolidate it, but it was the power of God's

him eat," applies to the condition I am in when I come to eat. It is not said what the condition should be, but states the fact that a man should know his state before he did eat; that he should prove himself—certify to himself his own spiritual existence. It did not imply any course of preparation as involving any period of time; it simply required that a soul should be, so to speak, master of its own state, i.e., acting in full consciousness not only of title but of its mind and interests. It was to come to eat deliberately, knowing what it was about; conscious of whose it was and how it was, alive to its own position, and with this true sense of itself, it was to enter on and engage in the solemn act of partaking of the supper.

We now come to the second part of our subject. The first and greatest, as we have seen, brings our Lord personally before us in death for us, connecting our souls with Him in that act, and thus in a practical sense assuring us of the great foundation of all the blessing we enjoy

through Him. But there is another, which is properly included in the first, and which we have already touched on, but which is not spoken of by the apostle until he takes up the subject of eating and drinking unworthily. If I had eaten worthily it would have been secured in my condition of soul; and he then shows that the one eating and drinking with indifference has not judged himself, which necessarily implies that if he had eaten worthily he must have done so. If I had discerned the Lord's body broken for me, I must have judged myself; because my soul must, in that case, be occupied with Him in His death where judgment was effected for me. And if I partake of this supper without apprehending the Lord's body broken for me and His blood shed for me, I entail judgment on myself, because if I am not occupied with the great transaction of His death—remembering Him in it, I am not awakened to a sense of how judgment has been effected for me, and without this I cannot judge myself. In the light of it, self-judgment is accepted

As I have already remarked, though all the saints are regarded as coming together to the same place, yet it is the state of the individual soul which is considered here. At the supper, it is the individual experience in company with all the saints there; the individual condition being the true ground of preparation for strength in the united condition. Hence, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, the *first great thing*—the one singularly kept before our souls by the apostle—is the individual state and experience. Because if this be true and well-founded the collective responsibility will be easily and naturally maintained. And here follows the exhortation, "When you come together tarry one for another." Though an individual exercise, it was yet to have a collective expression, which each truly exercised soul would acknowledge and contribute to. Now this leads us to pass from the individual thing to the collective expression, and the Lord's *supper* I apprehend in the latter, (the collective aspect,) is designated by the Lord's *table*; an expres-

by me and easy. The soul, apprehending truly the judgment borne for it, gets liberty to judge itself; but instead of being deterred from eating by the sense of its own ruin and folly, it finds its own title to eat the more confirmed, the deeper it dives into the sense of the judgment borne for it, and (what is inseparable from this) the judgment due to it.

I believe that according to our apprehension there is presented to us a distinct sense of Christ in each of the offerings, and all combined in the supper. Each has its own note to which the heart is awakened, but all being struck in unison, like a chord in harmony, the effect is *one, full, and controlling*, and the more so, the better the heart is strung. How blessed when, in deep, hearty remembrance, the soul enters into and knows itself in a scene where all these impressions are recalled; and when it lingers in all the assurance of its title and blessing through Him whom it remembers, though with the sense of how it needed and needs, all that in which He is remembered!

sion which we only find in 1 Cor. x., where the whole subject is the testimony; my responsibility being insisted on, and not the experimental issues of my soul, as in chapter xi., in connexion with the supper. And here I may say, that the Lord's supper conveys a more touching idea to the soul than the term the Lord's table, and though one and the other are the same thing, I have no doubt that each present it in a different aspect. The supper is what my soul is individually connected with; the table is my responsibility and position. Now as I enter into and am empowered by the first, so am I skilful and qualified for the other. It is evident that there can be no strength for responsibility when the soul is not experimentally invigorated; and that as one becomes cold and indifferent in oneself, so must there be indifference about and incapacity for the responsibility. True is it that many have attempted to maintain respect for the responsibility when they had no personal supply, which alone could have sustained them in it. And when we

come to scrutinize, we shall always find that the failure in the maintenance of the responsibility really arises from a sensible defect in the soul experimentally. And in no particular responsibility is this more apparent, than with reference to this interesting subject we are occupied with. I think it can be shown that when there is any weakness or defectiveness about the Lord's table—the responsibility of the communicants—that there exists a more marked defect or ignorance of souls as to their true privileges connected with the Lord's supper, or the individual part of it. If, for example, I find that the cup is forbidden to the laity, then I am assured that the knowledge of salvation is denied; and with this great experimental loss, I need not be surprised to find that the sense of the responsibility which becomes the Lord's table is entirely unknown. When responsibility is spoken of, the cup is put foremost, showing, I suppose, the solemn engagement under which the communicant placed himself, and to which, if he be true, he could not have

the Lord's table, how can I partake of any cup not His, or at any table not His, which has a religious profession having any reference to God? For that was the idol's temple. I am absolutely bound by the position I have taken, and if I depart from it I ignore my testimony and expose myself to the jealousy of the Lord whom I have despised. But not only so. In this communion with the body of Christ, we being many are one loaf—one body. The united action is looked at here rather than the individual experience, as in chapter xi. We are all the body of Christ in communion with the blood of Christ. We present this aspect, and it is our responsibility, because we being many are one loaf, one body; and then the table becomes the distinct object of the care of each and all. Every member is responsible for it, the whole body is responsible for it.

Now, in conclusion, I may add that the true and becoming badge of the saints during the absence of their Lord was His supper. This is their only point of contact with this scene, and

communion with any other; i.e., his having communion with the Lord's table precluded his having participation in any religious ceremonial outside of it. Partaking of the true, the highest, and the greatest, necessarily excluded him from all others; and if after his solemn adoption of it in communion with the blood of Christ, he stoops to another, the only retort or rebuke is the impossibility of holding both. Two things so utterly foreign the one from the other, could not be compatible; and this being so, the next word is, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than He?" which, to my mind, conveys the idea, Do we attempt to provoke Him to jealousy? Jealousy is cruel. "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered? Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" It is the last appeal or warning, intimating the issue which awaits the soul that forgets his solemn responsibility to the Lord's table by joining another. If I have drunk of the Lord's cup, and been a partaker at

from this point they count no interval up to His return. His death has separated us from the judgment on the world and our remembrance of it is therefore our only true and happy place in the midst of it. And besides this, it connects us in heart with Him as to His place here. His point of departure is our point of contact as to present things; though in our souls we have the light and joy of His resurrection, but this puts us out of this scene, and does not connect us with it, save as giving us power to understand Christ's love for us in His death.

May our hearts in truth enter more into the Lord's supper; and may we, in the spirit of our minds, be as "widows indeed," remembering Him here in His death; and as our personal tie to Him is deepened, we shall be the more careful and scrupulous that His table, where we, being many, present ourselves as His body, should be preserved unpoluted and undishonoured for His name's sake. Amen.

THE WOMAN IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE.

(Read Luke vii. 36—50.)

The solution of all our difficulties in the study of Scripture, and of every enigma in the ways of God, and certainly the remedy for every practical trial of our hearts, is to be found in the knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when examined, the groundwork of every error will be found to lie in ignorance of the same.

But He must be studied where He is revealed. When God would make Himself known, He does so in living act, and not in abstract definition. When He would manifest His power, it is not by the declaration of His omnipotence, but by the creation of the world. His wisdom, too, He displays in the ordering, and control, and sustainment of all things, which, by His power, He has caused to exist. His longsuffering patience He shows in the history of the waywardness and provocations of a nation whom He had brought into

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special connexion with Himself. His love, too, finds its adequate illustration alone in His having given up His only Son to death for creatures that were in rebellion against Himself.

Thus must the person of the Lord Jesus Christ be studied. For all that He appeared to be, all that He did, and all that He said; His every word and act and way, in His recorded history, goes to make up the sum of what He is.

The histories of Scripture, we must always remember, are recorded facts. They may have their significance, typical character, or spiritual instruction, but they are still recorded facts. There is divine wisdom in recording some and omitting others, and the fruitful study of the Scripture consists in the discernment of this, and not in *spiritualizing* the divine word. There is a reason why those facts which are recorded in the gospels are left for our instruction, and others are suppressed. "If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." There

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is a reason, too, why the facts that are recorded are given in their specific order, and why they are varied in the record of the four gospels, the discernment of which, and not writing "harmonies," enters essentially into the unfolding of the character of Him who is their blessed subject.

It is infinitely important for me as a sinner to know *what He has wrought*; but as a saved person by His grace, my heart cannot find its rest except in knowing *what He is*: however intimately the two may be blended, and never to be disjoined. I want, as the apostle says, I want "to know him." But blessed be God it is a study for eternity, as it is the only lesson worth learning in time.

Now in this scene in the Pharisee's house—infinity touching as it is, in these throbbings of a human heart, and in the unvailing of His who is divine—I think I see a practical truth unfolded, which it is of the last importance we should learn. It is this. The affections must be filled with Christ in order to the manifestation of that bearing and

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respect toward Him which is appropriate and due.

It is plain the Pharisee, by his invitation to our Lord, intended to do Him honour, but he egregiously failed. It is as plain, too, that the woman had no such thought in her approach to Him, but only sought to reach unnoticed the object of her affections, and thus she reached the acme of that which was appropriate in her bearing towards Him in the presence of others and of Himself.

"One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him," and our Lord accepts his invitation. But there was another person of very different character and pretensions, who had watched the movements of this mysterious stranger, and was drawn to where He was. "And behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at *his feet behind him*," &c. The woman was a sinner, not in the common application of the term only, but she was known as

a person without character in the city, and an outcast from society.

We have no means of knowing what opportunity this woman had possessed of becoming acquainted with the character and teaching of the Lord, nor is it important for us to know. It is plain that she had marked His course and His communications, and had felt her heart irresistibly drawn to His presence. It was perhaps to herself an unexplained and undefined impulse that made her seek to be near Him and to feel that happiness was where He was. In reality it was the drawing of grace working in the instinctive yearnings of a heart desolated by sin that drew her to His feet, because for the first time in her life she had found one in whose goodness she felt she could implicitly confide, in spite of what she was. How mysterious are these cords of love! How out of place, in Christ's presence, is the soul that knows not their attractive force!

But this woman, on whom the eye cannot choose but rest, now that she

has reached His presence, has no petition to prefer, no request to make. There is no cry of agony breaking from her lips. No "Lord help me" uttered with half-convulsive energy. But in silent unobtrusiveness she stands at His feet, or bends down to kiss them, as her heart in its fullest tides is gushing forth without restraint. In utter absorption of feeling she is engaged in giving expression, as best she may, to the estimation she had of the object whose worth had so utterly captivated every affection of her soul. She is dead to everything that at the moment is passing around her. The order of the Pharisee's house, is lost upon her. Neither his hospitalities nor his guests have any power for an instant to attract her eye. How could they? She has not a thought nor a look to throw away upon any object in the wide world, but on Him whose mysterious goodness had won her heart.

One does not like to turn away from the movements of a heart which one feels are so right, so suited to what the

Lord Jesus is, and to be occupied with the man who is coldly speculating on the character of his guest, and pondering whether after all he had not been showing Him too much respect in inviting Him to his house. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." It was a startling interruption of his reverie to hear his thoughts answered by Jesus, saying, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." His attention is demanded in a way that he cannot escape. There is nothing left for him but to hear the communication that had been so ominously commenced; and by the parable of the two debtors, he is so held to the point, that not only is he made to feel that he is in the presence of one who was, indeed, "a prophet," but to pronounce a verdict that laid the ground for his own condemnation and the vindication of the woman whom, from his ignorance of the workings of grace and of the person of the Lord, he had so abundantly despised.

(To be Continued.)

THE WOMAN IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE.

(Read Luke vii. 36—50.)

(Concluded from page 224.)

"But wisdom is justified of all her children!" And what exquisiteness of grace is there in the way the Lord Jesus receives and expounds the action of this woman, who had thus proved herself to be one of wisdom's children! Far enough is His heart from any estimation of the respectable but cold formalities with which, like the Pharisee, we too often seek to give Him entertainment. "He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."

But what is there, let me ask, in all this which so meets the heart of the Lord Jesus, and so commends itself to the heart that has any just estimate of His transcendent worth? Is there anything in it but the simplest working of love, which proximity to the Lord Jesus has put in action? It is not doctrinal clearness surely; nor is it the certainty of spiritual intelligence. It is simply and alone the instinctive working of love, love wrought in the soul by living contact with the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ." Moreover, it is love expressing itself in unaffected naturalness. But it is alone when love possesses the heart that it may be allowed thus to take its own way, and then how true and how perfect will be that way! It is heaven's pathway, and not the way of nature or of earth.

It is not far for the heart, where Christ's presence is supreme, to fetch these tokens of honour and regard. The washing of the feet, the kiss of welcome, the anointing oil, these marks of respect

plaint that may be uttered around her? None—none at all. She is deaf to everything but these accents of grace that are reverberating in her soul—"Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

And what are all the discussions of men, or the clamours of those who object, to the soul that is near enough to Christ to be occupied with His excellency alone, and that has heard His voice—the voice of Him that is judge of quick and dead—saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace?"

And if I look at this woman, thus absorbed with Christ in the house of a formal Pharisee, I see a picture of what the heart should be occupied with of those who seek to worship the Lord in the midst of the formal profession around them, and which is no better than the order of this Pharisee's house. It is not that this formalism should be before the thoughts, much less that it should give its tone or colour to aught that is transacted in His presence, which alone is the sanction and the power of separation. Occupation of the heart with

were not supplied by the courtesies of Simon, nor by the arrangements of his house. They are drawn forth only from the love that has now found its home in this poor sinner's heart; "for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Simon may coldly wonder at the intercourse between this sinner and the Lord, and the lookers-on may murmur at His declaration: "Wherefore I say to thee, her sins which are many are forgiven;" but it only serves to bring out to them more fully her vindication by the Lord—for it was but the vindication of His own grace—and to herself, the wondrous ground on which she now stands before God. "And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace!"

Before, when she entered the Pharisee's house, she had no eye nor regard for anything around her but the person of the Lord; for it was no place for such as she, if He had not been there. And now she is leaving, think you has she any ear or care for the voices of com-

Christ not only draws His blessed eye and sanction, but it gives the true character of nothingness to everything that pretends to honour Him, where His grace is unknown, and the heart consequently is its own centre of action.

THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.

1 Thess. v. 8.

"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

In the outset of this epistle, the three cardinal principles of Christianity, "faith, hope, and charity," are presented as formative of the divine life of a believer here on earth, of which the epistle itself affords us so striking an example. It was, in all likelihood, the first inspired writing of the apostle, and it exhibits the ardent glow of his affection toward those who, in so powerful a way, had received the testimony of the gospel

through him; and at the same time exhibits the bright and lovely freshness of that morning of Christianity, to which its testimony especially belongs. With delighted heart he says of these Thessalonians, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And he adds, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

It is comforting to find, in a subsequent epistle, the apostle declaring that, amidst much that would pass away that distinguished the history of the early Church, the three great principles, that figure so prominently here, would remain as long as Christianity should remain, as its characteristic power and force. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." "Faith," that lays hold of God's past and present revelations of Himself and of His ways, that

and heaven is the place where love eternal and universal reigns.

"The Lamb is there, my soul—
There, God Himself doth rest,
In love divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest."

And where is the heart that has not known enough of strife and sorrow to make it long for a world of perfect peace and goodness—a world of perfect love? This I know, that I would gladly pillow my aching heart on the bosom of eternal love. Well, the day will come, and till then I wait.

But the order of these three principles is different in the epistle on which we for the moment rest. Here their energetic and appropriate action is presented as forming the life of the believer in this world. "Remembering," says the apostle, "your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."

Each aspect of Christian life is here seen taking its spring from its only true and legitimate source, and linked with

brings to the soul "the evidence of things not seen," *abides*; for, without it, His salvation is unrealized and Himself unknown. "Hope," too, *abides*, and is the power of patience to the soul. As the apostle says, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." So essential is it to the Christian life, that he says, if the future, which is hope's province, were once withdrawn, the most absolute misery would be his lot. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And, blessed be God, "charity," or love, *abides*. For when faith shall have gone with us until we pass the veil that hides the world unseen; and hope shall have no further aspirations, because all that was once longed for has become the scene of present and eternal enjoyment; love will still abide. Faith may drop its glass, and hope may quench its torch—they were our needed companions and instruments in a world of darkness and of sorrow—but for love to depart would "unheaven heaven." For "God is love,"

its appropriate heavenly object. They were distinguished not only by work and labour and patience; these might exist in the Church's life, and yet leave room for reprehension. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." But then it is added, "nevertheless, I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." But here it was work in which faith was the direct and immediately inspiring power. It was labour that was undertaken and continued at the bidding of heavenly love. It was patience that sustained itself by a constant gaze toward the object of christian hope. This is seen where the apostle describes the utter revolution which the reception of the gospel wrought in their hearts and lives, their habits and their aims. He says, "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead." Here, without naming them, the apostle presents faith's work, and love's labour,

and hope's patience; and how needful is it in a day like this to watch that they be not in their action divorced from their divine and essential spring!

But I pass from this to notice how these three principles, in altered aspect, re-appear in the close of the epistle. Having given us the bright picture of christian life, as exhibited in these converts to its power in the early dawn of that day of which we have nearly reached the troubled close, the apostle turns to present by prophetic ken what would be the condition of the world, and the thoughts of men in the midst of which Christianity had run its course. He says, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you; for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the

furnished him with armour to contend against principalities and powers, who would fain prevent his enjoyment of the portion to which he is brought by the travail and victory of his Lord. And in that sphere where fighting is not his work, but the quiet expectancy of deliverance by the coming of his Lord, it holds forth to him "the armour of light"—the attire of those who are "the children of light, and the children of the day." For it must be remembered, when the world is in question, separation from it, by the energy of grace, is that which is enforced, and not conflict with it in its own arena. When the surroundings of evil and the false security of men, whom the clarion of judgment will alone awake to listen to the claims of God, are contemplated, what is the rightful posture of the Christian's soul? It is not to evolve some new truth or power in Christianity that he has not known before, but simply to take its cardinal principles, and to bind them the more earnestly to his heart: "Putting on the breastplate of

children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

Christianity does not alter the circumstances of the world, nor change its course; but, by its own intrinsic power, it raises the Christian above the world, by the impartation of a life which is divine, and whose whole energy results, as we have seen, from its connexion with God, and Christ, and the things which are eternal and unseen. It was of force in early days to detach the heart from earth, and from all things that are seen, and to set the soul to battle its way to immortality and a crown: moreover, it

faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," and thus to stand forth a child of light—a child of day.

God grant that it may be so more and more with us all!

NOTES ON EPHESIANS III., IV.

The reference which Paul makes to his being a prisoner, is not so much because of *himself*, (as also in Colossians and Philippians, where it brought out the grace of the Church too,) but his object *here* is to bring out the weighty matter he was made prisoner for: "The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you *Gentiles*."

We have in Acts xxii. the train of circumstances which led to Paul's being made a prisoner. They gave him audience until he declared his mission was to the *Gentiles*. Then they threw dust into the air, and said, it was not fit that he should live. It was no less than "the dispensation of the grace of God." It went beyond all promises to the Jews. The promises were indeed made, but

this went beyond them all—a great deal farther. It was not only adding the Gentiles and sweeping away all difference, but bringing out a full revelation of His counsels, and showing His secret purpose of giving sinners a place as sinners. This dispensation of the grace of God was to put forth something worthy of Himself, and suitable for the exaltation of His own Son, even *the Church*. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” He gave the Jews the promises. These were very gracious, but they were limited things, and by no means the full adequate display of what God was. Promises are not *God*. By Christ He made a glorious display of *Himself*. The ways of God with Israel and the character of His government revealed Him dimly. The express and only image of Himself was Christ.

What unspeakable grace to take us poor, wretched, defiled, polluted sinners, and set us in the glory with His Son,

thereby taking *hold* on Him, He might destroy it. He assaulted the whole powers of Satan in his own *fortress*, and led captivity captive. This expression is taken from Barak's song. “Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.”

What a sense we get from this fact of the agony endured by Him, as the sacrifice for sin on the cross! It was not simply bodily suffering, though the recital of that alone might melt any heart; but the bitter grief of having to allow in the presence of those who taunted him with the fact of God having cast him off, “Thou hast forsaken me!” This was not merely a seal to the truth of Scripture, but necessary for redemption. Man deserved to be forsaken, and so vicariously He suffered the forsaking. This was the keenest anguish, the bitterest drop in His sorrowful cup!

Whenever you find saints spoken of, you find Satan with devices peculiar to their circumstances. In *Peter* they are addressed as strangers and pil-

yea, in the same glory as His Son. But it was, as already quoted, “to the *intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

All the grace we meet by the way is founded on the fact of His having set us in this place. The priesthood of Christ does not bring us into it, but maintains us in it. There is something besides the person of Christ, though this is first; there is the grace which is brought out through Him. Sin is put away. There is “no more conscience of sin,” no more fear; because through the blood of Christ applied through faith, there is no more *imputation* of sin. The soul is brought by the kindness of God in Christ Jesus into nearness to God Himself. Christ came into the place where Satan had been triumphing unto death, according to the just judgment of God, who had given him power over death, and here breaks up his power. He comes into the very place where it was greatest, and is made *sin*, that death

grims scattered—and Satan is as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. In *Colossians*, Satan's devices are various, seeking to sever the saints from their Head, to obscure Christ's glory and Godhead, &c—beguiling and enticing. Here in *Ephesians*, where the saints are looked at in the heavenly places and power of resurrection life, Satan is spoken of as vanquished, captivity led captive. In their conflicts, however, they have to meet him in heavenly places in order practically to maintain their position.

What place do we find the Church put into here? The position of power, by virtue of the accomplishment of His glorious work. The Church is the vessel of the power of God. Christ places the Church at the right hand of God, as the fruit of His work. As man he perfectly glorified God here? As *man* He takes the place, and by right upon the throne of God above.

Till He had placed this title of His *own* upon the throne of God, He could not send down the Holy Ghost, who

delights to present to the soul the *knowledge* of this full and perfect redemption wrought, and so set the soul in fellowship with Him that is there. I have to do with a Christ in heaven. If I get a Christ on earth, He can have nothing to do with me, for I am a Gentile. We receive grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, *till* we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now, we have to keep the eye on the glory there. If the eye be off this heavenly place, in which we are set, we shall never keep the earthly position befitting our place there. It is the spring of all godly action. As a fact, we are down here; but, so far as I realize my place and portion up there, and only so far, shall I be the expression of Christ upon earth. As the apostle says elsewhere: "the *epistles of Christ*, known and read of all men;" and as Jesus said of Himself while on earth: "the Son of man which is in heaven." "If the Spirit of Christ *dwells* in you." This is what

He worked for—to make a dwelling-place down here for Himself on earth—a witness for Himself below. In figure we have this blessed truth given us by the tabernacle, the temple, Christ's own body. The character of the Church of God here is that it is—"builded together for an *habitation of God* through the Spirit." The first effect of realizing this wondrous glory is, "lowliness, meekness," &c. Who could be proud in the presence of God? The mind, and heart, and spirit, growing up into the fulness that is in Christ, would be formed and fashioned by what He has done. So completely has Christ done His work, that there never ought to be a moment in which the saints' walk is not the result of His victory over the power of Satan. Our union with Christ is most real, even now, though, alas! we have to be thankful if a saint is not in a snare of the devil, instead of being able to rejoice because of his power over him.

Did not Christ cherish her as His own body, where would the Church be

now? Our very infirmities, grievous as they are, and should be to ourselves, *prove* that He loves us, even as His own flesh. The continued outflowings of His grace testify the constancy of His care over us. The apostle would have us keeping the eye fixed on Jesus. Resist the devil and he will flee from us. Why? Because he has met Christ in us, who vanquished him. The delight of the Spirit is to testify of Christ's work and unfold it to us. But in very faithfulness of love, He cannot show Christ to us when we are living to ourselves and indulging the flesh. Then He must show us our sin. *That* is not the natural office of the Spirit; but His grace makes Him willing to do it, that restoring may take place.

The vessels of the Holy Ghost should be the enjoyers of the Holy Ghost, so as to be testimony to the work of Christ, who sent down that Spirit and enabled it to dwell in such hearts as ours.

It is by the power of faith alone that we walk practically. I do not say that we are able each moment to be occupied

with the glory. By reason of the weakness of these bodies, we are not able always to be thinking of these heavenly and holy things. I am not at least. And we have most of us earthly duties and secular callings. But, realizing my place and power as a risen one, I go forth into the world armed with that which enables me to walk separate from it, and worthy of that glory which is before my eyes. Let a servant, for example, be treated harshly, accused unjustly, and he, by grace, take it patiently, he will return to his communion with God, happy, and only enjoying the more his place and portion in those heavenly places. But, if he have answered again, or spoken unadvisedly with his lips, he will come back ashamed and abased, and remember his place only to feel he has acted unworthily of it, and dishonoured Him who brought him into it.

If that which is not of the Spirit should enter into our daily walk, at the seasons of our return to Christ, we shall have sorrow of heart instead of joy in the Spirit.

But there is always grace in Christ for every emergency. We need not slip with our feet; He has that which is suited for every moment's need. Only let the eye be fixed on the glory, and we shall walk as becomes the Bride who is to inherit it, and have done with ourselves, through the power of the revelation of His work, and the grace which makes it ours.

NOTES ON REVELATION II. 18; III.

These three churches, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, have a peculiar character, the coming of the Lord being that which is set before them as the sustaining point of faith. In the three first there is a difference in the place where the exhortation comes in. "He that hath an ear," &c., comes before the promise, while in the three succeeding it comes after, as though applying to the faithful few, instead of being addressed to the whole Church. It is not a better state of the Church that is set before them, but the Lord's coming.

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we must go on to contemplate our share with Him in the coming glory. We cannot apprehend the fulness of God's blessings till we know that the thought of His heart is to give us a place *with His Son*. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me," &c., and John xvii. 26. We can only be thankful in proportion as *we know* our blessings. Our utter unworthiness is no hindrance. "The Morning Star" not only the glory of the day, but Himself, as the One we have been looking for through the night in that aspect. To be for ever with the Lord is the best part of our portion. It is Himself we desire, and He will be ours, before the manifestation, as the One waited for. This hope is to keep us steadfast, "holding fast."

Sardis. The outward activity of life, yet dead. Works enough, but they were not perfect before God. It was not the soul identifying itself with Christ in the work, and if not done to God it is nothing. Only so far as Christ is the object in it is it worth anything. The

There was much that He could commend in Thyatira; but there was Jezebel, a deliberate, settled form of evil, and those who were born and bred in the system, under the name, too, of a prophetess. Great tribulation for those who were *in* the evil, but destruction for those who were *of* it. The progress of evil, which corrupts that which God introduced, goes on till there is no remedy. It was so with Israel. There might be good in Josiah and Hezekiah, but the people "corrupted themselves more and more." God might go on rising up early and sending His prophets, but evil went on till ripe for judgment. And so will it be with the mystery of iniquity till destroyed by the brightness of His coming. And, therefore, He fixes the eye of the faithful upon His coming. There was much to be gone through; but He says, "Hold fast that which ye have till I come." He holds out two promises—association with Himself in power, and the possession of the Morning Star. It is not enough for our hearts to be occupied with Him as our Saviour;

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works at Ephesus (chap. ii. 23) the same as at Thessalonica, "work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope." The abiding power being that they were done in direct connexion with Christ. Not the habit of doing much, merely from duty; but in the patience of hope. Not in the thought of how much there is to bear, but while waiting for Him who has the affections of the heart. All this was wanting in Sardis, and what was the result? The world's portion. *I will come on thee as a thief.* (See 1 Thess. v. 5.) Not upon the Church "as a thief," for we are children of the day. And that expression is used when He puts the Church in contrast with the world. Miserable portion for those who had a name to live!

Philadelphia. "I have set before thee an open door"—we see an amazing rising up of the power of evil—but "no man can shut it." So in John x., when the shepherd is seeking the sheep *nothing can hinder*. "To him the porter openeth."—"The word of *his* patience." *He* is waiting, and we are to have fel-

fellowship with Him in *His expectancy*. We know He is not slack concerning His promise, but His long-suffering is salvation; so, while longing to see Him, we can be satisfied to wait. "The patience of Christ" (chap. i. 9) is not the patient waiting for Him, but this fellowship in *His* patient waiting. To such the Lord says, "I come quickly." I ask you, Would you *like* Him to come quickly? Have you so understood the things around you; have your hearts enough the sense of what they would be if God had it His own way to make you love His appearing? The promise to such is especial association with Himself. It is not only to be "a pillar in the temple of God," but of "*my* God," and "the name of *my* God"—"the city of *my* God"—"*my* new name," as He said, "I go to *my* God and *your* God, my Father and your Father." This is our greatest happiness. *He gives us His PLACE*. In Him we are brought into the holiest of all—to walk in the light as God is in the light—the Father in Him and He in us! And His place *here*, too, of rejection and hatred from the world.

PHILIPPIANS I.

The Apostle Paul in this epistle is the *servant only*, the loving brother, one with the saints, a partaker of their joy, not reproving or commanding, but whatever of exhortation is found comes in the way of his own experience. All his affections are let out on these saints, because they had entire fellowship with him in the gospel.

The apostle had been two years in prison. He was the depository of the truth; humanly speaking, all hung upon him. How unfortunate, men would say, it was, that a man like Paul should have been stopped labouring and shut up in prison. Perhaps Paul thought so himself at first; but, during these two years, he learnt infinitely more than probably he could have learnt in other circumstances. He learnt what resources there were in God both for himself and for the Church. He found in God for himself such a spring and source of joy, that lifted him above all circumstances, and

I know some would be searching their own hearts. Dare you present your hearts before God? I know you cannot. It is only in Christ. There is no place at all for us before God except in Christ. How can there be? It is this "*in Christ*," or destruction. We can have no other place. *In Him* and *as He is*. It is our only place even now as to communion. Why do you not take it? How do I get into this place of goodness? Because He ~~came into my place of badness~~. Where sin brought me, grace brought Him, and puts me where He is. He was with the thief on the cross, and the thief must be with Him in Paradise.

However bad I am, the unfolding of all my affections will follow the reception of His love and goodness. The consequence will be, that *here* we shall be pressed with all the evil around us: but "hold fast till I come." "*My* patience."

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enabled him from the monotony and retirement of his imprisonment to pour forth the love and rejoicings of his own soul to these Christians at Philippi, which we get in this epistle. Observe, in everything he can rejoice. If he thought of and prayed for the saints, it was always with joy, being confident in what God could and would do for them, though he himself was still shut up. If he heard that some thought by preaching the gospel in a spirit of contention to add affliction to his bonds, yet in this he could rejoice, because "*CHRIST was preached*." If he was permitted to come to see them, that would be for their mutual joy; but if the Lord appointed otherwise, and he should be offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith, as a libation poured forth, he says, "I joy and rejoice with you all." The secret of Paul's joy was his knowledge of what Christ was, what God had made Him to him. He had seen the righteousness of God, and faith had made that perfect righteousness his. He had therefore thrown behind his back whatever

was of himself, and counted all that he once boasted in as dung. Christ was now his object; God had set Him before him as the object of his affections, his desires, his pursuits. To follow on after Him was Paul's ardent desire. God had done everything for him, and the apostle could trust Him for all things. This made him free from all anxiety either for himself or the Church. He stood fast in the Lord, and could say to the Christians, "be followers together of me." Which of us could say so, could point to himself as an ensample? We have not Christ before us as our sole object, we all have some object, and what our object is that we are. Is your object the world, you are of the world. Is your object Christ, then you are Christ's. So Paul says in chapter iv., "So stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved;" and, feeling the tide of joy rise in his soul from the position in which God had set him, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." The word

EXTRACT.

"Do you not hunger and thirst after righteousness? and I pray you, saith not He who cannot lie, that happy are such? How should God wipe away the tears from your eyes in heaven, if now on earth you shed no tears? How could heaven be a place of rest, if on earth you find it? How could you desire to be at home, if in your journey you find no difficulty, distress, or grief? How could you be made like unto Christ in joy; if in sorrow you never sobbed with Him? If you will sit at Christ's table in His kingdom, you must first abide with Him in His temptations. If you will drink of His cup of glory, despise not His cup of ignominy. If you were a market sheep, you should go in more fat and grassy pasture. If you were for the fair, you should be stall-fed and want no wealth; but because you are God's own occupying, therefore you must pasture on the bleak and barren heath, abiding the storms and tempests that he may send down upon that and upon you."

'moderation' might be rendered 'softness, gentleness.' And the apostle, set in the power of life in Christ, and realizing the speedy return of the Lord, (like Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, took a towel and washed His disciples feet,) he could go forth and become all things to all men; he could rise above all circumstances, either poverty or abundance—he could rejoice in all. And so he exhorts his beloved Philippians. Trust all to God, and *His* peace shall keep your hearts. Not peace *in* God for the soul, but the peace in which God eternally dwells, so that the heart, free from care and anxiety which distract, is unfettered to pursue whatsoever is lovely, just, pure, of good report, and worthy of praise, and the *God of peace* shall be with you. Not peace from the harrassments of a guilty conscience; and more than the peace in which God Himself dwells, even the *presence of the God of peace*. "The God of peace shall be with you."

THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

There is a voice of very deep instruction in that appeal of the apostle to the Corinthians, "I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Cor. x. i.)

It is so unusual a thing in this world for power to be possessed without making itself felt, or authority without its ostentatious display, that the apostle is obliged, as it were, to excuse himself for the lack of assumption and magisterial bearing in his intercourse with the Corinthians, by appealing to these prominent characteristics of his divine Master, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

He does not abandon his claim to authority as the apostle of Christ, nor disclaim the possession of a power which, in a sense against his will, he might, after all, be obliged to use; but he simply brings before them the characteristics of *His course*, who at any rate they must acknowledge as having the

absolute power and authority of "Master and Lord."

The whole chapter runs on this thought, and receives its colour and complexion from it. His presence might be base among them; but he did not walk in the flesh, nor war after the flesh. "The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God." His object was not self-exaltation, but to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." His bodily presence might be weak and his speech contemptible; but if he were to boast somewhat more of the authority the Lord had given him he would not be ashamed. He remembered, if they did not, that this authority was given him for "edification and not for their destruction." And in this he intimates that they would have respected his authority more, if the *grace* that marked its exercise had been less. He had said in a previous epistle "What will ye? shall I come unto you with a *rod*, or in love and in the spirit of meekness?" Putting it thus to their option whether his presence should be

marked by gentleness or severity; for this would depend on their condition. Here, however, he but refers to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," and leaves them to make their own application of his appeal. It could hardly fail to recall to their thoughts the memorable words of our Lord, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." At any rate it cannot fail to recall them to ours, and, if so, it takes us away from the exercise of apostolic or any other ministry merely, to think how far we are individually, and in our own walk as Christians, cultivating "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

It is never right, Scripture does not do it, to separate doctrine from practice. The revelation of Christ claims to have as much to do with the formation of our characters and the regulation of our affections, as it has to do with the saving of our souls. In the apostolic epistles ordinarily, the truth that characterizes the believer's position in grace and relationship with the Lord is first given,

and then the suited conduct and spirit are enforced. For, I may observe, that Scripture is never occupied with teaching *the world* morality. How could it be? How train to obedience the very spirit of rebellion? How give precepts and injunctions to a hostile will? If men are inconsistent, Scripture, at least, is always consistent with itself, and it is one witness of the divinity of its revelation. It does not, in one place, teach that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," and in another begin to enforce on it principles of obedience, as if, after all, there were some good in it, on which the truth might work. No; it tells the world of its ruin and coming doom, and beseeches it to be reconciled to God, through the redemption wrought by Christ. But it tells the believer of all the motives to holiness and love which are wrapped up in that infinitude of grace by which he has been brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. It does not call us, however, to listen to the Spirit of

God for truth, and refer us to our own spirits for its application; or leave it as a matter of indifference. All is divinely given, and given completely. And much it behoves us in a day like this to hold fast that testimony, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Christian who in faith admits the comprehensiveness of this claim, will find in it a citadel of strength, which the enemy can never command; and a light that will never flicker nor fail in the darkest parts of his road.

It is in the nature of things that any divine movement of truth and grace in this world should gradually lose its force when its first freshness in the minds of men begins to decay; and individual souls can only be kept in their first energy as they are near enough to the Lord to receive from Him the constant communications of His grace. It is only Christ who never changes; and

it is only His grace, and that constantly received, that is sufficient for us.

In the earlier days of the Reformation the recovery of the truth of doctrine was the grand concern of the reformers; and in its recovery the liberty and energy of souls were great. In the later periods of this movement, apart from its political character, its leaders had enough to do in repressing error and in the enforcement of godliness of walk. Not that those who held to the corrupt system of popish doctrine were holy in practice, but the reverse; for it was the debasement of morals in what was called the church that mainly brought on the Reformation. There may be, it is true, a careless, easy-going religious life in connexion with professed purity of doctrine, but there cannot be real holiness of life apart from that truth which gives Christ to the soul in all the efficacy of His work, by which we are placed in association with God, and are brought to "walk in the light even as he is in the light."

Recovered doctrine has gone widely forth in our day. "The heavenly calling

of believers," "resurrection life," "the presence of the Holy Spirit," "the hope of the Lord's coming," "peace through his blood," "perfect acceptance," are familiar in our mouths as household words. Whether our souls have grasped the wide import of these phrases, it is to be feared, in many cases, admits of serious question.

But there is another part of truth that must be regarded, if, morally, everything is not to go to decay. That Scripture has never yet been reversed, that, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Nor this, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and let him follow me." Christ must be followed as well as be believed in. There is a certain truth in Penn's motto, "No cross no crown."

There may be a legal, Thomas-à-Kempis kind of imitation of Christ, or there may be a free, joyous, Pauline following of Him; but Christ *must* be followed. Nay, the exhortation comes to us in a most wonderful and startling form, if its force had not been so dulled

by use, "Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us." But lofty as this exhortation is, and strange to us from its loftiness, we have been presented with an embodiment of it in human form. The lowliest of men—yet "God manifest in the flesh"—has presented us with its embodiment. He has done more. He has taught us how to reach it also. The rule is given in that deepest, simplest form of words, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Misery is the inevitable result of a Christian's following his own will; but what rest is there and calm satisfaction, in the feeblest effort to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!"

But there is a careless holding of doctrine—learning but not attaining. It is the consequence of dealing by the natural understanding with truths that can only be spiritually discerned, or discerned by the Spirit. Christians are

in danger of this as well as others. But truth so received is never practical. It is like the seed in the "stony ground:" it brings no fruit to perfection. I see all around me the signs (perhaps exhibit them in myself) that the truth, which is deemed *distinctive*, has been allowed to slip away; or has never been really grasped. There is a reciprocal action and reaction between truth received and the spirit in which it is held. Heavenly truth, if it acts at all, acts in the way of producing heavenly character. Man is moulded (it is a universal principle) by the objects, not perhaps that he professes, but that really occupy his thoughts and heart. It is not different in heavenly things. A heavenly walk opens for the soul a clearer perception of heavenly truth and gives it a firmer grasp. But heavenly truth cannot long be even professed in connexion with an earthly walk, except where all is hollowness. The profession is reduced, sooner or later, to the scale of practice, where the practice is not raised to some measure of agreement with the truth.

To possess and to exhibit the "meekness and gentleness of Christ," belongs to the very profession of Christianity, and belongs to it at all times. It will display itself differently under different circumstances, but it belongs to Christians in all circumstances, and belongs alike to all. Let us listen to the heavenly oracle, "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." What we want is to have the blessed Son of God more the centre and substance of our creed. To believe in Him, as we see in the case of the apostle, is the living power of practical Christianity. "That I may know him," is his word, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." What we all want is, to have the Lord Jesus more livingly in our thoughts and in our hearts. It is not

ing the acquisition of some divine disposition. Nothing more effectually teaches us the force of those words, "not as though I had already attained."

It is when one thinks of who He is, and what He has done, that the heart is bowed in His presence, and asks, Can it ever be? Can it ever be that I have this place in His heart? that He has ventured thus far for me, and that I am no more constrained by His love? No more like Him in spirit, walk, and ways? If He, who was thus immeasurably great, instead of being proud and contemptuous, and awing men to a distance from Him, carried Himself in the presence of His own creatures, in all imaginable meekness, can there be room for pride in me? No; none ever was proud in God's presence. None ever was other than "meek and lowly in heart," for the time at least, when near enough to Christ to know Him in His real character. But, then, what a secret does this betray!

When I think of what Christ is in Himself, and not only of what He has

to write an essay on meekness and gentleness that is needed, but to have the great example of meekness and gentleness more habitually in our view. If our hearts were but stirred up to say, this is to be my work, this my study, to be "meek and lowly in heart," to be like Christ, what might not be hoped? To seek in all honesty of purpose to have Christ's character brightly before our souls, and then as honestly, in spite of manifold failure, to seek to imitate it—this is the way to "walk and please God." To make the attempt, with this definiteness of aim, would not long be without its manifest result; at least, it would not be without result to our own souls, though not of a kind, it may be, to increase our self-esteem. At least, it would bring the Lord Jesus more habitually nearer to us, even if that nearness discovered to us other failures besides the want of meekness. There is nothing more profitable to the soul than to find itself alone with the Lord Jesus, in conflict, it may be, with some conscious human besetment or in seek-

done for me, though in the heart that is thus brought to God the two cannot be separated, I worship and adore. I am filled with admiration and delight, and I want never to look on any other object, as having moral beauty in it or attractive worth. But when I look at what I am toward Christ, not in outward act so much as in inward feeling and intrinsic estimation of Him, and consequently my little power to imitate Him, I hate myself. I do not speak of returns. What *returns* can I make for love like His?

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

But I speak of estimation of Him, and of the constraining power of that estimation on my mind, my temper, my habitual carriage, my estimation of everything around me, of the world, men, Christians, the things of the world, time, life, death, eternity.

Whatever the Lord Jesus *was*—and how wonderful is it to think of what He *was*! this we find *was* His distinguish-

ing characteristic as a man amongst men, He was "meek and lowly in heart." And amidst the drifting current of this world's usages and its sanctioned moralities, how necessary is it for the heart to be constantly schooled in this one principle, "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 it is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Meekness and gentleness are not the dispositions which the world has taken under its patronage any more than the path to greatness in it is to become servant of all. Whatever is of God morally must needs be contrary to the world. This is plainly a judged question to a Christian, whatever it may be to the advocates of human perfectibility. "If the world hate you," says our Lord, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you." And, more than this; He says, "they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." That ever the world

His Person, except by the Father, still the revealer of the Father—the revealer of God. For man's misery is that, otherwise, he knows not God. In another scripture He says, "all things that the Father hath are *mine*," speaking of the depth and claim of His eternal Godhead. Here, as the humbled man, He says, "all things are delivered to me of my Father," speaking as the head of divine communication to the labouring and heavy laden whom He invites to Himself that He may give them rest. But, then, as the Son He speaks of the mystery of the Father's Person, known only by the revelation of the Son; unknown and unknowable except by that revelation. Here we come to the exigency of man's condition and to the essence of what the gospel effects. It is the revelation to the soul, by One competent to the work, of God, in His character of infinite grace. And it is this revelation of the Father to the heart by the Son that gives it rest; however otherwise labouring and heavy laden. But, then, in the knowledge of this, and in the power of

should have hated Christ! But it is different now," say some, "and His mission is beginning to be rightly understood." Let us not be deceived. It is not the Christ of *revelation* that men are professing to honour. It is a mere simulacrum, a phantom Christ, such as superstition and the priest are pleased to give to men, or such as each man embodies forth for himself.

If I am ever to cultivate the meekness and gentleness of Christ, or to reduce to practice His injunction, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me," I must understand the substratum of truth on which this injunction rests. This is emphatically given in our Lord's words, by which this injunction is introduced. (Matt. xi. 27.) He says, "all things are delivered to 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." Here we have, then, the divine Son of God revealed in the world, and, though unknown in the unfathomable mystery of

a divine life so imparted, the believer is set forward on his path heavenward through the world, bearing Christ's yoke and learning of Him. For all truth of doctrine and precept is based upon what He is, and our practical failures and lowness of walk arise from the imperfect revelation of the Father which *we have received* of the Son. Nor should it be omitted to notice here who they are to whom this revelation is made. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. xi. 25, 26.)

It is just as impossible for the sun to shine without giving light and heat, as it is to have the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts without producing in us some measure of conformity to His blessed image. And here, let me say, it was not truth, but Christ, that the apostle's heart was occupied with when he said,

"One thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark." Neither is it truth of doctrine nor truth of interpretation, valuable as these may be in their place, but *Christ*, in His living person and grace, that is set before us in this same Epistle, (Phil. ii. 5—10,) when he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," &c. It is true that a *written* Christ is given to us in the Scriptures, but it is that a *living* Christ may thus, by the Holy Spirit, be revealed to our hearts. I am not speaking now of that revelation of Christ to the soul, which is the basis of salvation, and through which we are born of God. But I am speaking of Christ as the object of our affections, and of the heart's engagement with Him as the end and aim of all our purposes and hopes while passing through this world to where He is.

All truth with all its various applications, what is it given for but to make God and Christ known to the soul? The

inapprehensive disciples—how He meets their difficulties, bears with their ignorance, corrects their prejudices! How does every scene in which He is viewed add some fresh illustration of the truth of His words, "I am meek and lowly in heart," until the impression of the whole becomes overwhelming, and in one sense oppressive to the soul!

I have lately studied the gospels, as every one may study them, not for critical ends, nor with any outward helps, nor even with a view to see what Christ has done for me (this I know), but simply to see what Christ was like, and how He carried Himself as a man in this world, and passing through similar scenes to those with which I am connected from day to day. I do not state the result. Let my reader so study them, and he will be at no loss to guess the issue! This, however, I may be allowed to say, that I had not before seen the depth of the apostle's appeal, "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

Meekness is most seen in bearing

occupation of the apostles was to make *Christ* known, and through Him, God, in a world that had lost this knowledge, and, I may add, *has* lost it. The aim of the Apostle Paul in "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom" was, that he might "present every man perfect in Christ." And as to his own personal aim, apostle as he was, it is summed up in this, "that I may know *him*," &c.

But if we trace for ourselves the Lord's course through this world in the various scenes in which He is presented, what is it that strikes the heart? What is it that makes us feel the immeasurable distance there is between Him and every other character that we ever did, or ever can contemplate? Is it not His lowly meekness—His gentleness, His unutterable humbleness of carriage, in contrast with all that was around Him, and in contrast with all that we know of our own spirits and of the world? Think of Him in the presence of His enemies and their provocations! Think of Him in connexion with His dull and

with what we meet with that is in any way contrary to us. Gentleness has the field of its exercise in active dealing with others. And it may be well, before I close, to notice how extensively this spirit is directly inculcated in the New Testament.

In the first place the Apostle Peter teaches us that the characteristic calling of a Christian, as to this world, is to do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently. (See 1 Peter ii. 20—23.) And in suffering for righteousness, on which our Lord has pronounced His blessing, the same apostle says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with *meekness* and fear." (1 Peter iii. 15.) And when speaking of what kind of dress is becoming in the light of God for christian women, he says, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which

is not corruptible, even the ornament of a *meek* and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter iii. 3, 4.) Our Lord in giving the characteristics of those who would have part with Him in His kingdom, says, "Blessed are the *meek* for they shall inherit the earth." The Apostle James in presenting to us the spirit in which the Divine word should be received says, "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with *meekness* the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." (James i. 21.) And again, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James iv. 5.) And if we turn to the epistles of Paul, we find him in the Ephesians speaking thus in relation to the walk that is worthy of the Christian's calling: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and *meekness*, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. iv. 1, 2.) In Colossians he says, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God,

learned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 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; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Tim. ii. 23, 24, 25.) In Titus, speaking of what is the duty of Christians in their carriage towards the authorities of the world, he says, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all *meekness*." (Titus iii. 1, 2.) And when speaking of servants he says, in the same epistle, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity: that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 9, 10.) There is not a relationship in life, nor a condition in which we can be placed in which this spirit is

holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, *meekness*, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (iii. 12, 13.) In Galatians he says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *meekness*, temperance." (v. 22, 23.) In the same epistle he teaches us in what spirit brotherly discipline, if it is to be effectual, must be administered. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of *meekness*, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.) In his epistle to Timothy he says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, *meekness*." (1 Tim. vi. 11.) And in the second epistle, where especially he is concerned that Timothy should act rightly in the midst of opposition and evil and the corruption of the truth, he says, "But foolish and un-

not demanded of us. But, finally, let us listen especially to the exhortation, "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder, yea all of you be subject one to the other, and be *clothed with humility*." (1 Peter v. 5.) Other things may be of occasional requisition in a Christian, but "*humility*" constitutes his daily attire, the livery of his heavenly Master and Lord. And it is added, (as already quoted in James,) "For God resisteth the proud, [sets Himself in battle array against them,] and giveth grace to the humble."

I again warn that this is not the spirit of the world; nor is it the spirit that will make its way in the world; nor will it be cultivated by the Christian that has the least respect for the esteem of the world. Put aside the presence of God and His approval, and the study is hopeless. Consult nature and it is in vain. Forget the one perfect model, and the task may be given up. But I seek in Christians, surely, for the morality of the cross as well as the salvation of the cross. I do not believe,

whatever others may do, in grace without responsibility. The grand witness for Christ, that is so lacking amongst Christians, is the spirit of Christ.

I close however with this question to myself, which I am sure every one of my readers that is in earnest will adopt: How much is "this meekness and gentleness of Christ" displayed in me? And how much is it a matter of daily study, in the presence of my meek and gentle Lord and Master, in order to attain it? What is the verdict of my own conscience? What the conviction on the minds of those who know me best? Wife, children, servants, brethren, the world?

CHRIST AS A SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE.

Hebrews iii.

The constant tendency of our hearts, even when brought up to our privileges, is to slip off from them. When Satan finds he cannot resist the introduction of the power of the gospel by false doctrine,

he then seeks to get something before the mind—vanity, worldliness, the cares of the world, and a thousand things, to keep the soul from simply looking to Jesus. When the truth is first presented to the soul he tries to hinder its reception; but when it is received his effort is to diminish its power in some way or other, and the only remedy for this, is the heart being occupied with Christ Himself. We need an increasing knowledge of Christ. For the heart that is learning Christ, cannot stay about the things that the world presents, but desires to know *Him* more fully. In looking to Jesus, it is not knowing a doctrine merely, it is *Himself* we want to know. It is "the truth as it is in Jesus" that has a charm for the soul, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and it is never known in the power of faith out of Him. And never can there be that power which detects the course of false doctrine but as the soul is dwelling in Himself, "rooted and built up in him." The heart centred in Him is able to look out and see all the extent of the

divine revelations to the soul. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," &c. There is always a tendency to slip back and thus lose all practical power. But because of this, does the apostle try to shake their confidence as to what they are? Not in the least. God never does this; but He shows us our inconsistency with what we are; and so the apostle calls back their hearts to the place of grace, where God was dealing with them. As with the Corinthians, the apostle says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Now they were puffed up by evil. It is not that the apostle would allow the evil to pass, but he first sets them on the ground where God had set them. So he comes to our hearts and says, Do not you turn away from the grounds where God has set you. He calls us up to the spring of it all, in the heart of God, and then says, Now, can you be seeking the world and what it has to give, when you have such a portion in God? I would now say a

word of the manner in which he presents Christ. He is going to speak of Christ in the most glorious way he can, but, observe, he does not begin with it. He first speaks of what is a link between their hearts and this blessed and glorious One, and having knit up our hearts to this, he then shows us His glory. Now there is great grace in this. It is not merely as an abstract truth, a system of theology, saying, "this is God." No; he says, I am going to speak about One who brought God nigh to you, who was amongst you, the One between you and God, and stood for you toward God. I am going to talk to you about Him "who was faithful to him who appointed him." Here we get this glorious Person in an official character; and so He was appointed, and we look at this blessed, glorious One in office, "who was faithful in all his house, *whose house are we.*" And this is of the greatest comfort to us, for it is thus we get this glorious One so very near to us; so close to us as to be interested in everything that concerns us. "For Christ as a son

over his own house" was interested in carrying on all God had entrusted to Him, as Moses, the servant, was interested in bringing Israel up out of Egypt. But he presents Christ to us as worthy of more glory than Moses, "inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some one, but he that built all things is God." Thus I find myself brought into union with Him who created all things. I was brought close to Christ, where I get this blessed familiarity, and then I find that the One who condescended to be in this blessed place of nighness to me, was God. Thus I learn that all my concerns are in His hands who is God. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ is faithful as a *Son*, who knows the house belongs to Him. "As a son over His own house, whose house are we." It is His own house, for Christ as a Son over His own house, is not only the God who created all things, but the One who takes an interest in everything that concerns us, just as a Son over His own

APHORISMS.

The last thing that a man should look for in the Church, is comfort. I never expect anything but trial. We must not look for anything else. Paul had but little comfort in the Church. He sought only the approval of Christ.

There is no question whether this world in the end is to be a place of blessing. It will eventually be abundantly blessed. But God alone will bless it. It is folly for man to attempt to bless it. Six thousand years of fruitless effort have told them that they cannot do it. The world has rejected Christ and is judged in consequence, though execution of judgment may be stayed in the longsuffering mercy of God. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." There will be no blessing to the world until the "manifestation of the sons of God."

In all circumstances make God the great circumstance.

house. Thus I find myself brought into the whole universe *in Him* that created it. And now, beloved, this is the way the Spirit of God would carry us on through the world, not as merely leading us through the world, but keeping our hearts above the things of the world while passing through it. As the Son cannot but be faithful to Him who appointed Him, when I see the One that is thus interested in His house is the glorious One who created all things, I learn it is God Himself, and I can trust Him. He also makes us see it is the interest of the Son, and not merely an official appointment; thus the heart knows Christ has all the interest in it as a Son over His own house. And as our hearts are fixed on Him, and enlarged towards Him, our affections are drawn out and enlarged in their own proper sphere, and the heart thus kept from worldliness is enlarged in a divine way. And that is what is such a comfort that the most ignorant soul, if taught of God, gets enlarged and sanctified affections.

THE DEATH & COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away 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 unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—Hebrews ix. 24—28.

What above all things is needed in the reception of divine truths is, the exercise of a faith which gives them a living embodiment to the soul, and thus takes them out of the region of merely admitted and inconsequential doctrines. Other reception is of little worth. It fails utterly of the end for which they have been given. The end of all revelation is to act on our hearts in the highest possible way by making God and His counsels known. Even when

speaking of the salvation of the soul it is said, "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And every subsequent step of our progress may be summed up in this—"Increasing in the knowledge of God."

The inspired writer in this chapter is unfolding the difference between the position of believers, in regard to their approach to God, since the full revelation of His mercy in the person and work of His Son, and that which characterized it during the continuance of the ritual and ordinances of the law.

The arrangements of the tabernacle form the basis of his instructions: "When these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God," &c. Hence there is great vividness in his statements, as he presents this difference in a series of contrasts.

In the first place, the worship of the priests, who had the nearest access to God, was with a veil interposed between them and the holiest of all. The high

priest alone once a year passed inside the veil, with the blood which he "offered for himself and for the errors of the people," which was a type, as we learn, of the entrance of the Lord Jesus into heaven with the blood of his own accomplished sacrifice for sin. But, while this arrangement was in force we are told it gave, in figure, Israel's position under the law; namely, that God's presence was never reached by the worshipper. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." So far as God had revealed Himself He might be truly worshipped. But what God was in the light was unrevealed, and consequently unknown. The reverse of this is now true. It is the blessed privilege of believers now to come into God's presence without a veil. As it is expressed, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." All the necessity there was for man's being kept at a distance from God, because sin and holiness could not exist together, has been removed by the death

of the Lord Jesus. The sin which demanded the condemnation of the sinner in the presence of a God of holiness has been put away by the death of Christ. It was "when he had by himself purged our sins," that the Son of God "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." And the perfect love of God is manifested, inasmuch as He gave His only begotten Son to accomplish this work, which no other could accomplish or undertake. There is nothing in the character and claims of God that is now concealed. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." Because that which is true of Christ is true of the believer also—true as to life, and position, and acceptance. If we come to God at all now, it must be in the light and without a veil. It was of the highest possible degree of significance that on the death of Christ "the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom." The consummation of man's sin in rejecting and putting to death God's Son, was met by the consummation of God's holiness and love in giving

Him to die for the sin which thus reached its crowning act. At the death of Christ the veil was rent, because there it was that holiness and love rose to the height of their manifestation—holiness which received its vindication in the death of the Son of God, for He stood in the sinner's place; and love, that it could thus rise above all that sin had deserved in putting it away. It is beyond all expression a rest and happiness to the soul to know with certainty the ground on which we stand before God. Abiding confidence and peace cannot be maintained without it. It is liberty and rest to know that I am in the presence of the eternal God, because He has given His Son to death to meet the claims of His holiness; and that I am brought as it were face to face with Him on the ground of His own declared efficacy of the work of His beloved Son. I do not see how perfect confidence toward God is possible, except on the ground that we are brought into His presence perfectly in the light. If there could be a thought of horror it would arise from

the suspicion that perhaps after all there was something in the character of God that was concealed, something that was yet unknown, that another day might bring to light. But it is not so; "God is light," and "God is love." And both have their illustration in the cross of Christ. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

The next point of contrast is given in the condition of the conscience of the worshipper now and under the law. While God was hidden by a veil and only worshipped at a distance by means of external ordinances, there was nothing that could set the conscience at rest and at ease. For the law was only a shadow of good things to come; and in its ordinances there was no power to remove guilt from the soul or purge the conscience. But when once the veil is removed, and God's presence in the light is reached, it must be either utter condemnation, or the sense of fitness for His presence by a conscience at rest in

the light. And this is accomplished by the work of Christ. For His death for sin, which, Godward, removed the veil from His presence, toward man, at least toward the believer, perfected the conscience. We are called to walk now in the light as God is in the light, on this simple ground, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." On any other ground this would be impossible; for light cannot have fellowship with darkness. But how wonderful is this position, that I, a sinner, without disguise or palliation, without turning away from the thought of the claims of God's holiness or the greatness of my sins, should still find myself at ease and at rest in His presence, where I am well sure that not a single sin that has ever stained my conscience is hidden, nor a single wandering from God in heart or desire is unknown! No contrast can be greater than that of "the worshipper once purged having no more conscience of sins," and that of "a remembrance made again of sins every year." But this is the specific

difference of the position of the worshipper under the law and under Christ.

The next point presented is the character of the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It is no provisional redemption that believers are now made partakers of, as under the law, but one that is perfect and eternal in its character. God dealt with man's whole condition as a sinner in the cross of Christ, and delivered him eternally from it, at least where faith rests on his atoning sacrifice. The entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holy place with His own blood, never to be repeated, was the witness that a true and eternal redemption was accomplished, of which the day of atonement was but a shadowy representation. The Lord Jesus came into our condition in infinite grace; he undertook our cause; His death was the penalty of our guilt; and His resurrection and ascension into heaven was the divine witness of His having accomplished the work he under-

took. "He obtained *eternal redemption* for us."

Another thing is that the believer is now brought into the perfect liberty of serving God by virtue of this same blessed sacrifice. The blood of bulls and of goats, &c., had a certain efficacy in purifying the flesh; that is, by their application external or ceremonial defilement was removed. But it is argued that the application of the blood of Christ has a still greater efficacy in removing defilement from the conscience, and thus giving liberty to the soul in the service of God. "*How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" This is the blessed position in which the redemption of the Lord Jesus sets us in this world as to service. We are delivered altogether from dead works and are brought in perfect liberty to serve the living God. As it is said of the Thessalonians, "They turned to God from idols to serve the living and

true God." It is this which gives its spring and energy and freedom to the soul, that God is known, and that He is in a known relationship to the believer; that life is to be spent, not in a round of prescribed duties or dead performances, but in the liberty of a service which is constantly recognized by Him, and which gives the heart the joy of having the witness that we please Him.

But the last contrast presented is between the often-repeated sacrifices under the law, and the one sacrifice of Christ. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," &c.

The whole force of this statement lies

in the expression, "now once in the end of the world," or in the consummation of the ages. For it gives, and was designed to give, a probationary character to all God's dealings with man in His recorded history of this world's eventful course, until probation ceased by the rejection and crucifixion on the part of the world, of the Son of God. There is infinite wisdom in this, that the remedy for man's guilt should be brought out only when that guilt had reached its height; and that grace should be seen in its true character by the demonstration that nothing but the absoluteness of grace could avail. There had been many dealings of God with man before the coming of Christ, all of which, more or less, disclosed man's condition before God, as well as God's character toward man. But it is only when all these dealings of God, which the Scripture history unfolds, had proved inefficacious in bringing man back to God, that the last resource of God is brought out and He sends His Son—which issues in the cross. So far

from men using these means which God had presented for the purpose of returning to Him, they were the occasion of bringing out more fully the opposition of man's heart to God. So manifestly was this so, that in the ratio of the clearness of God's revelation of Himself to man, was the ratio of man's hatred to God displayed. As the Lord Jesus, who had fully manifested the Father, who was, indeed, God manifested in the flesh, had to say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." *This* is what was brought out as to man's moral condition in this "consummation of the ages." And blessed be God for ever that it is in this consummation His full and adequate grace takes its character in its presentation to us. My individual experience of sin, however extensive and sorrowful it may have been, does not give the

measure of what man's guilt is, that was met by the atoning blood of Christ. To have any just sense of this, I must needs glance at the record of those ages which found their issue and consummation in the cross. It is the use that God would have us make of the history of man which He has given. After the introduction of sin by the fall, man was left to himself without any external restraint, and we learn that in this age lust and violence filled the earth. "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." "And the earth was filled with violence through them." In spite of the testimony of judgment by Enoch, and the warnings of Noah, this age closed its history in the waters of the flood. The world commences from this point its history again, planted on every hand with the beacons of judgment. But there is no change in man's course. There is no fear of God before his eyes. If the world begins its course anew, sin begins its course too. The scattering of the nations at Babel, and idol worship; the separation of Abraham, and the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, are the witnesses of this. Neither the giving of the law nor the sword of the Lord on the inhabitants of Canaan wrought any arrest of sin, even in the nation whom God had redeemed by His wondrous power out of Egypt, and planted in Canaan in place of the nations He had judged. Nay, we learn that the law which taught the people what was right and demanded obedience, only brought out transgression. So far from their availing themselves of the light of the law to walk by it, they, through breaking the law, dishonoured God worse than the Gentiles. So that the practical effect of the law was that "through the commandment sin became exceeding sinful." Prophets were added in the goodness of God; but they killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. John calls to repentance, and Christ comes in grace. It is a new test of man's heart. But it issued in their killing John and hating God in the person of His Son, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." God's final

appeal to man's heart in the way of goodness is given in these affecting words, "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son; but when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir, come let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.' There is nothing further to be done. Man's probation ceases here. The highest goodness of God has only brought out the highest hatred of which man's heart is capable. Now, it is plain that either man's sin must conquer God's goodness, and there can be no meeting for him with God but in eternal judgment, or there must be another remedy than that which looks to man's nature to use. It is this remedy that is presented in the supremacy of God's grace. It is "now once in the end of the world [the end of the world as to its moral condition] that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

It is well for the soul to stay on this.

It was not to give the world's history in rounded periods, that God has caused *His* record of its course to come down to us. No, in these successive epochs of man's history and God's dispensations, to which brief reference has been made, there has been the trial of the principles of good and evil under the hand of God; and the issue of this trial is the proof of the utter and hopeless alienation of man's nature from God, and his absolute need of that grace which has put away sin by the bloodshedding of Christ and brings man to God in a new nature and in the power of a new life, of which Christ, as the second Adam, is the source.

It is too much the habit of our minds to forget the moral bearing of these preliminary dealings with men, on the part of God, and to act as if in the grace of the gospel, we had God's first address to men instead of His final testimony. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days [or in the end

of these days] spoken unto us by his Son." It is quite true that, individually, the first message I hear effectually from God may be that of His infinite grace in the gift of His Son; but I must not forget at what point in the moral history of man this grace has come in. It is "Now once in the end of the world [as to God's moral dealings with it] that Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

But that wondrous work which Christ accomplished in the putting away of sin is often obscured to our apprehensions by the measure which, in our carelessness, we apply to sin. Can I measure what sin is by my own experience only, or by the unhappiness it has wrought in me? Surely not. I must see in it the destruction of the image of God in the first Adam, and his expulsion from Paradise, and all blessed intercourse with God forfeited and gone. I must estimate it by Abel's murder and the call of vengeance from his blood. I must measure its character by the labour and toil it has brought into the world, and

the tide of misery that age after age has desolated human hearts. I must read its character in opening the sluices of judgment for the waters of the flood; in the fires of Sodom and the thunders of the law; the rejection of the prophets, and the slaying of God's Son. But what has sin not done? Look at the world through which we are passing. Look at its wars and oppressions, its murder and rapine, its diseased bodies and broken hearts, the corruption to which it reduces, the death it has wrought, and the judgment to which it brings! Now it was to meet this ripened sin of man that Christ came. It was sin in its essence, sin in its character fully worked out in man's sad history, that Christ came to put away. This is what He triumphed over. This is what God's grace in Christ Jesus delivers us from. Not from sin as *I* may estimate it, in the misery it has wrought me, in the trouble of my conscience and my dread of death; but sin as it has ripened up in man's history under God's gracious dealings, and

change it, and the gospel does not modify it. Christ's death has not altered the doom of *man*. Nothing in the overtures of the gospel, nor in the doctrines of Christianity, touch for an instant this doom of man. The grace of the gospel opens to him indeed a city of refuge, to which he may betake himself from the pursuit of the avenger of blood and be safe. But apart from this, it leaves him to his doom. Whoever meets death without faith in the sacrifice of Christ, meets it as the judgment of God for sin; and whoever thus passes the portals of the grave is held a prisoner by death until claimed by judgment. The course of ages has not altered this. Man's achievements have not set aside this. Pride, luxury, the intense love of life, philosophy, science, development, carelessness of the future, forgetfulness of death, have not in a single instance set aside this, the common doom of man, this appointment for man at the hands of God.

But as to the Christian. What triumph is there in the statement, "As it

as it appears in His sight—Christ came to deliver me from this. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He came to roll back the tide of evil which was engulfing men, and which was engulfing you and me, if He had not rolled it back.

This, then, is the work which Christ came to accomplish; "to put away sin," in all its pollution and all its consequences, to meet its penalty and to remove its guilt, to fit those who were its victims for the holiness of God's presence, and to reign in life with Him. This is what He came to accomplish. He came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This is the work He accomplished by His sacrifice, and in the power of which believers are now set.

As to the world, this is its position, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." This is God's original appointment for man as a sinner. Nothing in His dealings has ever reversed this. The law did not

is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ's death, with all its efficacy stands over against the claim death had against me. The very death of Christ is my deliverance from the claim of death. I own as a sinner my part in the common doom of man. I own I had no power to deliver myself from this doom. But it is exactly here that Christ's death meets my case. "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is no question whether Christ conquered death. For "in that he died he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth he liveth unto God." But then He did not conquer death for Himself. Death had no claim against Him. Death, as we have seen, is the penalty of sin. But in Him there was no sin. He took the penalty for others; and now His death stands to their account by faith. It is their deliverance. And as to judgment,

His coming again is to deliver those who look for Him out of it. 'If we speak of "the day of judgment," and day of judgment there surely is, we are told, in another epistle, that, "Herein is love with us [God's love] made perfect, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*; because as he is so are we in this world." Nothing can go beyond this in assuring the soul; nothing can equal it as a display of the perfect grace in which we are set in Christ. Death and judgment, the bitter results of sin which nothing in man can meet, are here utterly changed for the believer. Death is exchanged for life in Him, who conquered death, and the day of judgment is the day of boldness and triumph on account of our connexion with Him to whom the solemn awards of that day belong. The saints' boldness in the day of judgment is based on their association with Him who will then appear as judge. "As he is [the Judge of quick and dead] so are we in this world!" Such are the wondrous consequences deducible by the Spirit from our union

to accomplish the final deliverance and victory in glory of those that look for Him. His second coming in regard to them is in absolute contrast to judgment, and is but the completion in glory of that redemption which in His first coming was wrought in His sufferings and death. Nothing can be more absolutely in contrast with the world's position than the "waiting for God's Son from heaven." Nothing can more effectually show the vantage ground of faith or the absolute grace of God, than such a position.

What ought then the walk of a believer here in this world to be? What his joy? What his ready submission to God's will? What his separation from "this present evil world," a world that lies in wickedness? It is no mere figure to say that we are set between the cross and the glory. It is a divine reality. Our starting point is from the grace of the cross, and our goal is Christ's coming to lead us into the glory. Suppose I have sorrow and trial by the way, was not Christ's path of sorrow

with the Lord Jesus Christ! Such the life and victory wrought by the death and sufferings of the Son of God!

But in the passage before us the position of the believer is not pursued up to the point of personal union with the Lord; it is the efficacy of Christ's accomplished work before God for us, seen in His first and second coming, and in contrast with God's appointment of death and judgment to men as sinners. That which was accomplished by Christ's first coming was the bearing of our sins, which had brought on us the doom of death: "He was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." That which will be accomplished by His second coming for believers, who are "those that look for him," will be their gathering to Himself apart from all the judgment which His coming will then bring upon the world. He will come not about our sin then. This was what brought Him in His first coming. But when He comes again it will be entirely apart from the question of sin

here? But where is He now? When on earth He said, "I am no more in the world . . . and I *come to thee*." Personally He has left this scene of His unutterable sorrow, and has returned to the bosom of the Father. But has He returned there for Himself alone? No; He has gone into heaven itself, "now to appear in the presence of God for us." Nay, when on the eve of His departure from this world, thus did He breathe out His desire, which is registered for us, "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." And suppose I have to meet death in my passage to the glory, did not Christ pass through death in His pathway to where He is? Has He not opened to us the path of life, even through the darkness of the grave? "He has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made

with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away 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 unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

NEARNESS OF THE GLORY.

The sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us—and here I mean its nearness in *place*—and we need be at no effort to persuade our-

as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us, and, bearing the *image* of the heavenly, to bear us up, like Enoch, to the country of the heavenlies.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints, not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in which and shining in our glories, we shall be the witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him.

ON THE COVERING OF THE FEMALES IN THE CHURCH.

1 Cor. xi. 5, 6.

It has struck me that there is large and peculiar meaning in the ordinance touching the covering of the females in the Church. (1 Cor. xi. 5, 6.) It is clearly (on the first reading) to be re-

selves of it. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle and as soon as the appointed moment comes the glory is before them. (Lev. viii., ix.) So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple. (Exod. x. 1; 2 Chron. v.) So, when it had business to do (though in different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus, wherever it may have to act, and whatever it may be called to do—to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure; to smite to the earth the persecutor, or give triumph to the martyrs, or to conform an elect vessel to itself—it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil which either hides it or distances it; the path is short and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so, ere long, when the time of 1 Corinthians xv. arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon

garded as signifying that subjection which the woman owes the man, who is her head, or the subjection which the Church owes the Lord. Power or covering on the head was the sign of that, and therefore it was suitable to the female in the congregation.

But there is more than that, for the apostle adds, that "if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn;" and he says, that the being uncovered was "even all one as if she were shaven;" and to be either shorn or shaven would have been a shame to her. But what was the *shame* of which the shorn or shaven head of a woman was the expression? This must be determined, I judge, by a reference to the law, and under that we find two occasions in which the female was shaved or uncovered. First, when she was a *suspected wife*; (Numb. v. 18;) secondly, when she had been lately taken captive, and was bewailing her father's house, not yet united to the Jew who had taken her in battle. (Deut. xxi. 10-13.) The shaved state of the woman thus

expressed that she was not enjoying either the full *confidence* or the full joy of a husband. Now the female ought not to appear with such marks upon her. The Church ought not to be seen as though she were *suspected* by Christ, or still felt herself to be a sorrowing captive; this would be her shame. But the covering on her head shows the Church to be in neither of these conditions; but, on the other hand, *happy* in the *confidence* of her Lord; and this is as it should be. Thus the female covered in the assembly shows out the two things touching the Church. First, her *subjection* to the Lord; secondly, her being under his full *protection*, trusted in, and comforted by him. As the Church both owns the Lordship but enjoys the cherishing presence of Christ, which puts away the sense of captivity, and the uncovered head would be a denial of both, a *dishonour* to the man and a *shame* to the woman, and it would bear a false witness, therefore, to angels, who are learning those deep mysteries of Christ from the Church.

silent and passive. Abraham had only to *believe* and righteousness was imputed to him. Israel had but to *stand by* and see God's salvation. Joshua, in Zechariah iii., the prodigal, the convicted adulteress, are all in like case. And here, at the beginning of our sin, and the beginning of God's gospel, it is just the same. Adam has only to *listen*, and through hearing to believe and live. The word is nigh us, and we have but to receive it, without working anything in the heights above or in the depths beneath. The activities are God's. The sacrifices are God's. The profoundness of our silence and passiveness in becoming righteousness, is only equalled by the greatness of the divine activity and sacrifice in acquiring righteousness for us. In the sight of such a mystery we may well stand and say, "What has God wrought!" "Simple indeed it is to us," as one once said, "but it cost Him everything."

(Eph. iii. 10; 1 Cor. xi. 10.) Christ was seen of them first. (1 Tim. iii. 16.) They marked and attended His whole progress from the manger to the resurrection; and now they are learning from the Church, and mark her ways, and if the women in the assembly were to appear uncovered the angels would be taught the lesson incorrectly.

THE GOSPEL OF GENESIS III. 15.

This gospel published in the first promise in the face of the devil himself, is maintained in these last days by the apostle in the face of men on earth and angels from heaven. (Gal. i. 8.) Whether it be the earliest or the latest preaching of it, this glorious gospel is still the same. It is "the testimony of God which he has testified of his Son." It is the gospel of the bruised and yet victorious Seed of the woman. In the bright and perfect idea of it, man is

ISRAEL AT MERIBAH.

(Numb. xx. 1—13.)

In the First Epistle of John we are told what God is. "God is light," and "God is love." Here we get these statements illustrated by God's dealings with Moses and Aaron on the one hand, and Israel on the other.

The forty years of wandering were drawing to a close. The thirty and eight years which were to elapse since their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea in the wilderness of Paran, would, ere long, be run out. The brook Zered, the boundary between the wilderness and that part of the land eastward of Jordan, which they were to possess, would soon be crossed. And now the fortieth year from the exodus commences with the events spoken of in this chapter, a year so full of subjects of deep interest to the nation at large: during its first month, Miriam died; ere the fourth month had run its course, Israel murmured afresh against God; Moses and Aaron failed in obedience through unbe-

lief, their punishment was announced, and on the first day of the fifth month it commenced to take effect—Aaron died. (Numb. xxxiii. 38.) The events of their wilderness life after leaving Sinai are soon told. Numbers x. 33—xxi. 1 comprise them all. On the part of God, it is a record of patience, grace, and goodness; on the part of Israel, of stubbornness and iniquity, relieved only by their conduct as related in Numbers xv. 32-36, and their vow to the Lord about the Canaanites. (Numb. xxi.) At chapter x. 33 we read of the ark of the Lord going before the camp instead of in their midst, to find them out a resting place, a three days' journey; a beautiful picture of God's thoughtfulness for the people he had redeemed from Egypt, and was leading by the path He had marked out to Canaan. The first stage on their journey, as given in the itinerary of Numbers xxxiii., is Kibroth-hattaavah. (Ver. 16.) The first notices we have of Israel's conduct after leaving Sinai, are their complaining at Taberah, and lusting for flesh with the mixed

wilderness is related in chapter xxi. Discouraged by the way, loathing the manna, they speak against God and against Moses. On the part of the people then, we read of little else than rebellion and iniquity; on the part of God, we read of patience that never wearied, grace that never tired, goodness that never failed.

Punishments there were, yet the people remained unchanged. The burning at Taberah, the graves at Kibroth-hattaavah, the death of the spies before the Lord, the slaughter at Hormah, the awful end of Korah and his company, as well as of the congregation of Dathan and Abiram, and the plague which broke out the next day, failed to make any lasting impression on their hearts. When another occasion presented itself the people murmured afresh. In the midst of this picture of a people's iniquity how the character of God shines out. Those who had refused to go up to the land must wander in the wilderness, and die there, but their children shall enter on the promised inheritance. Sad, indeed,

multitude at Kibroth-hattaavah, dissatisfied with the miraculous supply God had provided for them in the manna. We next find them despising the pleasant land, and proposing to return to Egypt, and then madly going forth to encounter the armies of the Amalekites, against God's express command. (Chap. xiii., xiv.) God's authority in the person of Moses having been despised by Aaron and Miriam, (chap. xii.,) we have some of the people now following the example set them. Korah and his company seek the priesthood, (chap. xvi. 10,) whilst Dathan and Abiram refuse obedience to Moses. (Chap. xvi. 12.) The earth opened her mouth to swallow up the congregation of Dathan and Abiram, and the fire from the Lord consumed the company of Korah. With this fresh in their minds, the people on the morrow are found in rebellion, murmuring against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." (Chap. xvi. 41.) To this succeeds the murmuring in the passage before us. Their last great sin in the

must this announcement have been, though less, far less, than they deserved. But, to assure them of the fulfilment of His promise, God immediately afterwards gives ordinances for their observance, which could only take effect when their children should have entered the land He would give them. (xv.) They may fail, but He cannot; and though the children, by their perverseness of heart, deserve to die like their fathers in the wilderness, they are brought out of it, and do enter on their inheritance at the appointed time. On the 14th day of the first month they left Egypt, and forty years after on the 10th day of the same month they crossed the Jordan. (Joshua iv. 19.) But neither grace nor government makes any permanent impression on the people. Miriam has just died, another testimony to man's sad condition, and the wages of sin; yet, the moment they want water, they are ready, because of this, to give up all hope of the land.

They gather themselves against Moses and Aaron, and chide with Moses:

"Would God 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 there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into 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." (Chap. xx. 4—6.) But why chide with Moses? Was it that he had once before brought water for them from the smitten rock? Apparently their thoughts here, as often before, could not rise above the instrument. They come not to him as the mediator to intercede with God on their behalf. They turn not direct to God in their trouble, but chide with Moses, and hold him responsible for their distress. A distress it certainly was, and a great one; but they turn not to Him who could relieve them. They first gather together against Moses and against Aaron. They next chide with Moses instead of crying to God and asking Him to help them. God is left out of

can only judge by sight. The way was long, but who had made it so? What might have been accomplished in eleven days was taking them near thirty-eight years. (Deut. i. 2.) Better, they thought, to have died at once, better to have died long ago, than suffer a little now to be hereafter abundantly recompensed in the land of delight. Death in the wilderness seems preferable to life in Canaan, if it can only be reached by such a path.

But this is not all. Why in the wilderness at all? Full of this, they accuse Moses and Aaron of having brought them up into an evil place with nothing but death before them, instead of the vines, pomegranates, and fig-trees they expected; and they were the congregation of the Lord. (Ver. 4, 5.) The Lord's people they now call themselves, yet they look not to Him in their trouble. When a difficulty is before them they hold Moses responsible; when they want an occasion against him, it is the Lord's people he is thus ill-treating. How inconsistent man is! What blindness! If the Lord was

their thoughts as far as looking up to Him. It is man, Moses, not the Lord, that they are thinking of. How often was this the case in their history in the wilderness. At the Red Sea, at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, at Rephidim, and now in Kadesh, they find fault with Moses instead of looking to God. But iniquity waxes bolder, and they exclaim, "Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." Thirty-seven years had elapsed since that event; for of the ten spies is it said, "They died by the plague before the Lord." (Numb. xiv. 37.) Unbelief working within leads to such thoughts as these. Their brethren had died as a judgment of God. They declare their readiness to have died then. What profit was it to have wandered so long in the wilderness? What availed them all their marches in the desert? The land for which they left Egypt seemed as far off as ever. "Better to have died," they imply "at once," than have dragged on such a weary burdensome existence. Thus unbelief reasons, if it can be called reason; it

their God, if they were His people, why so faithless? Whose arm had smitten the Egyptians, and broken the chains that bound them as slaves? If He was their God, and they were His, how could Moses and Aaron attempt anything against them and succeed? Had He power over the armies of Egypt, and was He powerless before two of His creatures? Besides, who had brought them out of Egypt? They say it was Moses; their fathers had sung that it was Jehovah. (Exod. xv. 13.) Then it was for blessing, now it is for destruction. The Lord's people in the wilderness about to perish for want of water, brought there by Moses and Aaron, as if against their will! "Wherefore have ye made us," &c. (Ver. 5.) What dishonour to God in all this, affirming by their words that there was a difficulty too great for Him; and that two of His creatures could prevail against the Lord Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth! What dishonour, too, to God, in preferring Egypt without redemption to the wilderness with it. Death in the

wilderness, life in Egypt — anything seems preferable to their present condition.

To what a pitch of iniquity has unbelief brought them! They are ready to part with all they had in prospect, and to return to Egypt. Freedom with the Lord in the wilderness is worse than slavery with the fleshpots in Egypt. They know not the Lord, they have no conception of what He can do. Unbelief cannot apprehend what resources there are in Him. At the Red Sea we see the same spirit, (Exod. xiv. 11, 12,) indicating that they had no idea of deliverance. All they looked for was death. Thirty-nine years pass away, and we find their children, who witnessed how God had always delivered their fathers, using very similar language. They were truly in a great strait, but God was there. He had a resource they never dreamt of. He had before opened a way in the sea, and delivered them forever from their taskmasters, the Egyptians. But this fails to impress them with a belief in His ability to save

is announced. God delivers His people as He will, varying the manner as He sees fit. This is a truth of deep, practical importance to each one of us.

The waters of Marah were healed by a tree, the waters of Jericho by salt. (Exod. xv. 25; 2 Kings ii. 21.) At the first contact with the water by the priest's feet, who bare the ark, the Jordan was divided, and the people passed through as on dry land. Elisha smites the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and finds the way made for him to pass over. (Joshua iv.; 2 Kings ii.) Elijah stretched himself three times on the lifeless body of the widow of Zarephath's son, and he revived. Peter spoke to Dorcas, and she lived. (1 Kings xvii. 21, 22; Acts ix. 40, 41.) The hosts of Israel have water from the smitten rock at Rephidim. The allied armies of Judah, Israel, and Edom find ditches filled with water without wind or rain in the wilderness of Edom. (Exod. xvii.; 2 Kings iii.)

Moses was to learn the resources at the command of Jehovah. When God

them. Fresh difficulties arise, they murmur against Moses, and can see nothing before them but death. The different circumstances bring out the unbelief of their hearts, and show at the same time what Jehovah can do.

There is another phase of unbelief which this history brings out. We may doubt God's power at all to help us as Israel did; or we may doubt His ability to deliver us in any way different from that which He has already made use of. This Moses did. Till they leave Sinai we see him steadfast in his confidence in God. As long as difficulties arose which had never arisen before, he counts on God, and counts truly. He may not know what God will do, but feels assured when the want is set before Him He will act in delivering power. When, however, a difficulty, similar to that which has been met, has to be solved, he does not understand how God can meet it in any way but the one. What He has done He can do, Moses believed, which the people did not. But his faith fails when a different manner of acting

promised Israel flesh for one day in the wilderness of Sin, he believed He would make it good. But when He promises them meat a whole month, his faith is staggered. (Numb. xi. 21, 22.) But the Lord performed His promise. A wind went forth from the Lord that night and brought quails from the sea; and the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails. So in the passage before us. The rock had been smitten before ere the water flowed out. He thinks it must be smitten again. Do we not know something akin to this in our individual experience? We may trust God to a certain point, because He has acted before. But the circumstances are a little different, and we do not trust Him to act as He will. We would dictate the manner of acting, indicate the way of deliverance, instead of leaving it with Him to originate His plan, and carry out His design. We, thus, practically limit God as Israel did. (Psalm lxxviii. 41.)

The people want water. We never read

of their wanting manna, after it commenced to fall, till they could eat of the old corn of the land. That never failed throughout their wilderness existence. Food to support life, heavenly bread, was always supplied. They might loathe it, and ask for flesh; but they never had to cry a second time for bread. Not so with the water; that did fail, till God intervening supplied it in His own way. Food for our souls will never fail us; but with the refreshment by the way which the Holy Spirit gives, the case is different. That may stop to make us realize our dependence on the Lord, then it will flow out again. The Spirit may be grieved, then refreshment will cease, till, the soul being restored, the stream can burst out anew. This the people learn in type, and we in its literal exactness. God knew their thirst, and He would satisfy it. They may murmur against Moses and Aaron; chide with the former, and forget what God has done—He answers all with patience and grace. This is worthy of notice. Before they came to Sinai, as each fresh

need was felt, they murmur, and He gives what they want in pure grace. But, after they have promised at Sinai to obey His will, when they murmur again, judgment befalls the rebellious among them. Not so here, He sends them no judgment. They were ready with this difficulty before them to give up the land of promise, and renounce all the privileges of redemption. He bears with them, showing that He is love. He gives them water, and that abundantly. It is no scanty supply: "They drank and their beasts also." (Ver. 11.)

But how can it come out of the rock? At Rephidim the rod of Moses, associated with God's power, as displayed in Egypt and at the Red Sea, is the instrument selected. Now the rod of Moses gives place to the rod laid up before the Lord. (See Numb. xvii.) Moses is now to speak to the rock and the water will flow out. Why this change? What is the use of the rod if he was only to speak to the rock? The Lord would teach a lesson here, not to Israel only but also to us. The rod

was the rod which budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds; a mere rod cut off from the root from which it derived its life, apparently dead, yet giving evident proofs of vitality in itself. By it God had settled for ever in Israel the question whom He would choose to draw nigh unto Him. This rod typified priesthood, the priesthood of the Lord, as exercised in resurrection. Armed with this they were to present themselves before the rock, and speak to it. That rock, we are told, typified Christ. (1 Cor. x.) Water by the way for His people must come from the Lord, but He must be smitten ere it can flow. Once smitten the rock needs no smiting again, for He died but once, and lives for evermore. But the stream it contains can only come as ministered through the Lord, the priest on high. Without the rod no water could come. Without the Lord no blessing can reach us. It was from the rock the waters came. It is from Christ we have the living water. (John iv.) It was in the rock the fountain was. It is in Christ

all our blessings are centered; and the Holy Ghost, typified by the water, (John vii: 39) sent from Christ, ministers of Christ to our souls. It is the Lord as priest His people need for conveyance through the wilderness till they rest in the land. We see this illustrated in Israel's history. (Numb. xvi.—xx.; xxvii. 21.)

But Moses disobeys and smites the rock. The disobedience of one does not deprive the rest of the water. God gives that in grace, only the more conspicuous for the failure of Moses and Aaron. He is love. But He is also light. Hence, while giving Israel what they want, acting towards them in grace, He deals with Moses and Aaron in government. "He spake unadvisedly with his lips." The Lord will not let it pass. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron. 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." (Ver. 12.) What a view this gives us of God.

Moses, with whom He could speak face to face, as with a friend, who had been admitted to such close intercourse with God as none before him had enjoyed, and Aaron the saint of the Lord, (Psalm cvi. 16) are not allowed to enter that land to which they had so long looked forward. But Israel, rebellious Israel, who "often provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert," do enter in. To sinners He will act in pure grace. But His saints, those who are privileged to come nigh, must learn that He deals in government. Perfect grace, perfect holiness—such is our God, and such we see Him here. Aaron indeed had sinned twice before—once in the matter of the calf, and once in the rebellion with Miriam. But Moses till now had been obedient. His faith might be weak before, but He had obeyed the Lord's commands. Here he disobeys, and judgment is immediately pronounced on both. These two who had before interceded for Israel, and that successfully, when the anger of the Lord had been kindled against them, are now

the Lord. He gave them water. He is sanctified in them. Perfect in His grace towards Israel, He yet visits on Aaron and Moses their disobedience. He can forgive sin, but He will chasten His children. 1 Corinthians xi. 30; James v. 14, 15; 1 John v. 16; Heb. xii. 7—11, tell the same tale. It may be death as here, (see 1 Cor. xi.; 1 John v.,) or it may be temporal trouble of some kind, out of which we are delivered, whilst in this life, through the intercession of others. (James v. 15, 16; 1 John v. 16.) Miriam smitten with leprosy was healed at the intercession of Moses. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." Moses and Aaron must die ere Israel pass over Jordan. "For this cause many sleep." "There is a sin unto death." In this, dispensations make no difference. God's character is the same. He may reveal more of Himself to one age than He did to a former age, but His character is unchanged. If He deals in grace, which far surpasses human thoughts or man's expectation, He acts in government. While forgiv-

the only ones made to feel the effect of disobedience. What a view it gives of His character. He deals in grace, but He acts in government.

This opens up a very solemn question for His people in all times—government in His house. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me," He had said before. (Lev. x. 3.) The two who had the closest access to God, the mediator and high priest, are the two on whom the governmental dealings of God here fall—"Because ye sanctified me not." Their faith failed, they disobeyed. Occupied more with the sin of the people and the authority with which he has been invested than with God's grace, Moses exclaims, "Hear, now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" How far below the thoughts of God do His people often fall. God did not upbraid Israel; He did not show His anger. He heard their complaints, witnessed their sin, but acted in grace. How slow are we to learn what He is. But if we fail to sanctify Him, He will be sanctified. Israel strove with

ing iniquity, transgression, and sin, He will by no means clear the guilty. He pardoned the iniquity of the people at the intercession of Moses, but dealt with them in government. (Numb. xiv. 20, 22.) He does forgive, He does save sinners, but the wheels of His government still revolve; nothing can turn them aside. If admitted into His house we are subject to His governmental dealings in a way, perhaps, of which few are aware. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." Do we admit this? Do we act as if we did? For we are told, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.)

We should have been disposed to have punished Israel and spared Moses and Aaron. God spared the former, for He is gracious; He visited the disobedience of the latter, for He is holy. Love and light, such is our God. We bless Him that He is love; we should fear Him because He is light. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be

feared." (Psalm cxxx. 4.) "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." (1 Peter i. 15—17.) Who are we to fear? The Father who has redeemed us with the precious blood of the Lamb, showing at once His grace and holiness. If partakers of the former He would have us partakers of the latter. He may chasten us, deal with us here in government when the question of salvation has been settled, but it is that "we may be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) However great our privilege, however rich the grace of which we are partakers, and free and rich it is beyond man's conception, we are never set free from obedience, we are ever responsible to do His will. We are elected "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i. 2.) He delights

suit of every foe. Here they begin their journey onwards to the promised land, a journey in which they are to learn the deep and precious lessons only to be learned in the wilderness. Here they have to learn that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to attract the eye, nothing to supply their need; but that God alone must be their resource. And in learning this, they are to learn too, the pride and unbelief of their own hearts, and the grace of the heart of God who had redeemed them. "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, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst 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 to 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." (Deut. viii. 2, 3.) In Exodus xvii. they

in grace, He is sanctified in showing it; but His nature, His character, never changes—He cannot deny Himself. We are to be holy because He is holy.

THE ROD OF MOSES.

(Exodus xvii.)

THE ROD OF AARON.

(Numbers xx.)

What an eventful journey lies between these two chapters, between the day that the rock was smitten by the rod of Moses at Rephidim, and the day that the rock gives forth its refreshing stream at Kadesh at the desert of Zin! Jehovah had brought out a people from Egypt, and they had sung the song of Moses in Exodus xv., with all the freshness of joy that the sense of perfect and eternal deliverance and redemption gives. On the shores of the Red Sea they had passed the barrier which eternally separated them from the land of slavery; and which effectually shut off the pur-

have to learn what it is to thirst, as in chapter xvi. they had learnt what it was to hunger; and the resources of God to meet this need. The lawgiver's rod had to smite the rock *once*, and for ever, and the refreshing stream flowed forth to quench the thirst of the hosts of Israel. Blessed stream! Blessed source! "They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ;" type of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the promised Comforter, after the true Rock was smitten for us. What food was theirs, what drink! Bread from heaven, and water from the smitten Rock! Happy people whose God is the Lord!

He was even taking care of their clothes. "Thy garment waxed not old upon thee." How naturally we should expect in a journey, with such a God, to hear of a people wholly given to Him, fully alive to the grace that was theirs as having Him in their midst. But when we turn to Numbers xx., what a sad tale of unfaithfulness on their part and faithfulness on Jehovah's marked.

the way during that long, weary journey of forty years, to traverse that which was but a journey of eleven days! (Deut. i. 2.) They had seen the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, going before them instead of eyes, to search out a resting-place for them—Jehovah charging Himself to do what man had no heart to do for them. (Num. x.) Yet, in spite of all this grace, we find them, in chapter xi., murmuring in heart and loathing “this manna,” their portion from heaven by the way, and turning back in heart to Egypt, longing for the leeks and the onions and the garlic and the flesh-pots of Egypt, though nothing but bondage was there. Again, we find them sending up the spies to search the land, and, on their return, eating the grapes of Eshcol and hearing the report of the spies. “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 the word was not mixed with faith in them that heard it, and they think of the Anakims and themselves, and forget.

people had begun by forgetting that God was among them, and had measured their enemies with themselves. Then they had charged the Lord with bringing them up to die by the sword. And now we find them attempting to approach the presence of God in their own way, rebelling against His servants, Moses and Aaron, who represented Him. They sought the priesthood also. Where is it that unbelief will not lead, when it commences its insidious attacks upon our souls! Jehovah had one provision more, when rebellion was at its height, that He might not consume them altogether for their rebellious heart. This was the rod of priestly grace, Aaron's rod that budded. The dry stick “budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.” Living and victorious over death, the rod of priesthood was instituted as that alone which could now lead them into the land. Now at last we find the people abiding at Kadesh, on the borders of the promised land, a long journey passed, a wearisome way,

their God, except to say, “Would God we had died in the wilderness.” He granted their cry, and sent them back again that the murmurers might have their desire, “Would God we had died,” &c. They had seen the excellent glory go back and become a wanderer with them, while dealing thus with their sin in His wondrous grace. Again, He would, in chapter xv., refresh their ears by detailing their services for Him, which He would have them observe “when they would be come into the land of their habitation, which I give unto you.” He would bring them in for *His own name's sake*. But we would fain draw a curtain over the scene that follows here, were it not that such lessons are so necessary for our souls. They have been recorded by our God for our learning, and for ensamples for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. (I speak of chap. xvi.)

How unbelief leads to hardness of heart by the deceitfulness of sin! This we find fully exemplified in the rebellion of Korah and his company. The

in which they had learned their own hearts much, but they had learned the heart of God more. Yet, blessed as these lessons had been, deep and precious, we hear the voice of rebellion here as rife as ever. “And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God 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 there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us in 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.” Had the thirsty hosts forgotten the day of Rephidim? Was the wilderness more full; or the Lord less able to supply them now than then? No. But now there was no need for the Rock to be smitten. That had once been done, once and for ever. The Lawgiver's Rod had stricken one blow on that Rock, never to be repeated. From what source then was the supply to

come? "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take *the rod*" (the rod of priesthood living and victorious over death which had brought forth fruit in resurrection power, that a blow would only injure and bruise) "and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and *speak* ye to the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water." No smiting is needed now; that had *once* been done by the rod of the lawgiver. Nothing now is required but to show the sign of priesthood, of grace, and to *speak* to the Rock, and *all* the wants of the people would be supplied. Alas! the "meekest man," indignant at the conduct of the people, forgets himself; and thinks of the injured honour of Jehovah, and of the chiding of the congregation. He rises not up to God's thoughts, who can be above the evil in grace; and he sanctified not Jehovah before their eyes. He took "*his rod*," and "lifted up his hand and *smote* the rock twice." The Lord, ever gracious, rises above His servant in this too, and yields the supply to refresh the

could give to drink the water to the thirsty hosts, or lead them into the land. Priesthood founded on redemption, "ever living," "saving completely," from the beginning to the end of their journey could alone do this.

How beautifully we have its perpetuity shadowed to us in this chapter. (Numb. xx. 22—29.) Aaron clad in his high priestly garments going up to the top of mount Hor to give up his priesthood there, and Eleazer, his son, coming down clad in those robes of glory and beauty, in the sight of all the congregation of Israel. No break is in the chain, not a link wanting; a living priest, clad for service, goes up before them, and a living priest comes down, clad for service too. Precious figure of Him* who is not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. (Heb. vii.)

F. G. P.

* In "Hebrews," the Aaronic or successional priesthood is not used as a figure of the perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ. The Melchisedec priesthood is the type of this. The Aaronic is presented in contrast to it.—ED.

hosts of Israel, "And the congregation drank and their beasts also."

But Moses had exalted himself, and he who does so must be abased. "He spake unto Moses and Aaron, 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." And yet in His infinite grace He can take His servant, Moses, up to the heights of Pisgah, and show him the land of promise, and permit him to survey in His presence "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar." (Deut. xxxiv.) He permits him to step from thence to the mount of transfiguration and see His glory there, and talk with Elias of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem; but He could not permit the lawgiver to bring them in to the land. Nothing but priesthood founded on grace and triumphant in resurrection,

A SERIES.

No. 13.

MINISTRY.

When the Lord was about to leave the world and go unto the Father, He exemplified, by washing the disciples feet, the nature and the effect of the service He would render to His own during His absence. We have seen in No. 7 of this Series that He is now sanctifying, having cleansed us by the washing of water by the word. Christ is now the great minister of the word. He was the living transcript of it when on the earth. The principle of His life was, "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live." And according to the principle of His own life, so would He keep us by the action of His word, separating us from this defiling scene, and in the power of his life associating us with Himself above and apart from the world. The Spirit communicates His word to us. But not only this. When Christ as-

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cended, He gave gifts to men, and that for a distinct purpose; viz., for the perfecting of the saints through the work of the ministry. There are diversities of gifts, but the one Spirit. Christ having gone on high, the Holy Ghost has come here to carry out His mind, and to make known His words, and the power of them, in the souls of the saints. But not only this. Distinct gifts are conferred through the self-same Spirit, according to the gift of Christ for the perfecting of the saints. Ministry is one channel through which the mind of the Lord is made known: it is the great channel. The Lord is Himself the great minister of the word, and those gifted by Him are His deputies. They are nothing in themselves, and nothing in any sense but as they carry out His mind and purpose. To understand ministry I must see that the Lord is the one who charges Himself with the perfecting of His body, the Church; and therefore, though there be distinctions of service, there is the same Lord. The Holy Spirit confers gifts

sounding through His vessels and servants, or it is nothing. Of course there may be assumption and pretension. But counterfeits are only dangerous as they represent something precious; and then assumption does not excuse saints from seeking and preserving a sense of the great blessing and the great responsibility of hearing the Lord's ministry, either directly to themselves through the word, or through servants appointed by Him, and gifted by the Spirit, according to His will.

Ministry is a new and wondrous commission conferred on man; and not till the ascension of Christ was it conferred. Man was unable to take the place of His brother's keeper in any sort until Christ rose from the dead, and became the head of the body, the Church. Now He, the head in heaven, uses His members down here according to His will by the Spirit, to carry out and express His mind, and effect the service He desires for each, so that he who receiveth the servant receiveth Him. I ought to look for service from the servants of Christ.

according to His mind, so that the ministry, when true, is nothing less than the Spirit using individuals, one after one way, and another after another way, to communicate the mind and interest of one common Lord to any part of the body which He may appoint.

It makes the idea of ministry very simple, solemn, and responsible, when I see its true nature, and origin, and purpose. The Lord is absent. He sanctifies, He washes, and He will present the Church to Himself. In His absence the Spirit communicates His mind and interest, through the ministry of the word, either to oneself directly, or through members of the body whom He has specially gifted for the service in concert with the mind of the Lord, so that the saints are as responsible to hear and attend to the one as to the other. There is much blessing lost to souls in not seeing that true ministry is of the Lord, and that it is as incumbent on them to attend and hear it, as if the Lord called out of heaven. It is the Lord's voice by the Spirit

If I were to refuse it by saying I could get it from the Scriptures myself, I should only circumscribe the mode and means by which my Lord tells me He will carry out His service to me; and by which He is now sanctifying me in order to present me to Himself; not but what He may, and does, as I have before stated, minister the word directly to ourselves, as He sees fit. But to make this a plea for refusing His appointed channel is no way to obtain either. Any instruction, which a servant of Christ imparts to me through the Spirit, is as true, as binding, and as salutary to me as if the Lord spoke it audibly from heaven; and the man who assumes to learn nothing from ministry will be found little able to impart anything. The apostle was helped by the ministry of others. There was mutual comfort from their mutual faith. And how dependent was he on their prayers!

The first and most important point with respect to understanding what ministry is, is to have clear ideas of its origin and scope. No body of men were

ever set in the peculiar and distinct place in which the Church is now placed. It is quite new and unique. However great might have been man's responsibility to be his brother's keeper, not till the ascension of Christ was any man gifted to wash his brother's feet. There were priests and prophets, but they were manifestly unequal to perform a task which, if they could have done it, would not have left those whom they served "clean every whit." Ministry, as it is now, came in on the ground, that the saints were "clean every whit" through the work of Christ. The atonement must necessarily have preceded an institution that was founded on it. It will be seen that, prior to the introduction of priesthood, God's servant on the earth did not feel himself charged with the failures of his brethren, or responsible for their conduct. Joseph served his brethren, but he was not charged with their failings or appointed to correct them. Moses is sent to serve his people; but when God dwells among the redeemed, Aaron and the priests

are chargeable and responsible for the sins of the people, to put them away from any who sought to them. The priests and the Levites maintained the ritual, and afforded the benefit of it to any sincere applicant. They took cognizance of any breach of the law, not to strengthen the delinquent or to exonerate him, but to condemn him, and to exact the claim of the law from him in sacrifices, where there was no transgression. But now, through Christ our Saviour, not only are our sins and transgressions washed away through His blood; that is to say, those of every believer, but our blessed Lord undertakes to wash our feet; in other words, to detach us in mind and conscience from the defilement of the scene through which we are passing. On this ground is it that He appoints His servants to wash one another's feet; and to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ for the perfecting of the saints. Here, then, we have both the principle and the power. The principle is the perfecting of the saints,

and could be only on the ground of the fact of their being perfected for ever by one offering; and the power is the measure of the grace of Christ imparted by the Holy Ghost distinctly and peculiarly.

Now, we must have imperfect and inadequate ideas of ministry, unless we understand the principle on which we serve, and the power by which we serve. Who could understand ministry, and who could serve, if he did not know the nature of his commission, or why he is entrusted with grace from the ascended Christ, and that by the Holy Spirit this gift is maintained for exercise in him?

The first great point, then, in apprehending what ministry is, is to comprehend that "to every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," by the Holy Ghost, for the simple and distinct work of perfecting the saints. The ascended Christ—Head of the body—the Lord, from His place in the highest heaven, stands forth without let or hindrance now, to dispense gifts to men; in order that His saints'

perfection, through the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body, may be consummated. If there be any misapprehension of the source and object of ministry, there must be a corresponding failure and deficiency in attempting to carry it out; while if the soul be kept in the Spirit, it is ever made conscious that from the ascended Lord it derives the gift for serving Him; and then there is strength and wisdom in the use of it. Nay, if there be not most rigid simplicity as to this, if the soul do not confine the source of the gift, and the power to use it, to the Lord, the minister or servant will be coloured and perverted by anything which intervenes. And here, doubtless, lies the root of all the misdirection and darkness respecting ministry.

From inattention to the source, power, and object of ministry, arises all the confusion, and human efforts to reach the needed thing, from the highest ecclesiastic, or Romish priest, to the most scripturally taught. I need not pursue this part of the subject, but it is

easy to see that if either the source, power, and object be unknown, there cannot be efficient or pleasing maintenance of the gift.

Christ our Lord is the source, whatever be the measure or nature of it; and the Holy Ghost is the power by which it is maintained and exercised. The gift from my Lord is distinct and defined; but is known and maintainable by the Holy Ghost. Consequently two things are necessary for the due ministry of the word: first, that I recognize that the gift comes from Him, and therefore that I can distinctly refer to Him as His gift any measure I may have; and if I do so, I cannot easily mistake its nature and extent. Secondly, that it is only by the Holy Ghost that I can maintain the gift in any measure of power or effectiveness. The Spirit is the power by which it is energized; and from a neglect or ignorance of this fact, many who are gifted (I do not mean by gifted those merely who are pre-eminently so, but all who are so in any degree) are feeble or ineffective in the

exercise of the gift. The gift is always a positive thing, though it requires a certain intelligence to understand the nature of it. To us the gift of Christ is always most assured when we are most near Him; and while it is positive as a thing conferred, it is, I may say, only known to faith, and faith is assured in proportion as one is near the Giver of it. "The more I am walking in the faith of the Giver of it, the more am I able by the Spirit to declare it. It is evident that the gift is a speciality; and that though it may never be taken from me, it may become unprofitable because I do not use it as I ought. Timothy is desired by the apostle to "stir up the gift" that is in him. The speciality of the gift should be ascertained; and this knowledge in a great measure may be arrived at by the greater ease one feels in one particular line of service rather than another. I am sure that one gifted as an evangelist will naturally and easily turn to the work of addressing the unconverted. He will (I say it reverently) find himself in his element

when so employed, however he may need instruction as to the exercise of his gift. In the same way a teacher has in himself the sense and value of communicating truth. His turn and inclination, so to speak, is in that way. By nature he might have been silent and reserved, and delighting in his own acquisitions; but now he longs to communicate what he knows; not, indeed, to parade his knowledge, but to impart it. And the effect which he aims to produce, determines the nature of the gift more than anything besides. There is no act without a motive; and we know how often there are acts of service of one kind or another which spring from questionable motives. A public charity for instance, or a funeral sermon: the motives in both those cases might be merely human and carnal, and therefore all connexion between the gift and its source would be lost; and in such a case the gift could not be determined. For unless I am walking near Christ and in the faith of Him, I cannot determine the gift to be of Him. If I am, I get

assured, and the ease with which I act in any certain line corroborates to me the nature and speciality of my gift. Nor is it a very difficult matter to determine it. It may be for one to do so for another. Though even here the spiritual would soon determine it. But if a soul be walking near the Lord, he will soon know his gift; and the saints will, sooner, or later be sure to acknowledge it. On the other hand, though the gift be a speciality it is conveyed by the Holy Ghost; hence the one walking in the Spirit must always best exercise it.

It is quite possible for a gifted person to turn his gift to no account, or to an unwise account; for if the gift be not held from the Lord and directly under His control, its possessor will always act unwisely and perversely. The right thing will never be done at the right time. The right truth, or the right service, or the right place of service, will not be seen, and thus the value of the gift will be compromised. A pretended gift is "a cloud without water;"

a real gift, not under the Lord or kept under His eye, is rather a cloud with water, but in the wrong place and the wrong time. The gift is a certain aptitude to do some distinct thing, and therefore it must be cultivated and exercised according to its particular property. Whether "prophecy, let it be according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth on teaching." The gifted one is to wait on his gift, to engage himself attentively with it. It will be found that one who has been occupying himself with things foreign and uncongenial to his gift will when he essays to use it, be feeble and profitless. A gift ought to command the man, because it is Christ's, and if he be occupied or engaged with something else, (I mean, of course, unnecessarily so,) his gift is compromised and straitened. It should be nourished, as the apostle says to Timothy, "Stir up the gift that is in thee." I am sure that gift is continually impeded by the engrossment of a man's occupations. I

tention of ministry is edification, and therefore the gift for it is conferred by the Lord Himself according to His own will; and as the gifted one is walking near Him in faith, he is empowered by the Holy Ghost to exercise it usefully, and in keeping with the Lord's intention. Gift, by no means places one in any degree of independence. On the contrary, the gifted one who would use his gift truly and solely for the Lord must wait on Him unreservedly for counsel, as to place, time, and subject. I think here again, many gifted ones fail. They allow circumstances and human impressions to sway them as to each of these points, and not the mind of the Lord, which in faith they could have ascertained. There are different ministrations but the one Lord. Therefore I should know that in the exercise of my gift in every act of service I am in the place He would have me to be in; that the right time for me to exercise it is come; and that I have the right subject. How different any one thus sensibly ordered by the Lord would be

do not mean by the mere labour of the occupation which is right, but when the mind is involved in the cares and interests which get clogged to it. How can a person oppressed and swamped in heart by the cares and business of this life be ready and free to be the platform or vessel for the activity of an entirely different interest? Many feeling this embarrassment seek to escape it by using their gift; but the result is that they help themselves very slightly, if at all, and not any one else. To use your gift you ought to be under the control of it. For if you are pre-occupied, you cannot "stir up the gift that is in thee," or wait on it. Hence, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." The one who meditates on the things of Christ and gives himself wholly to them; that is, who is controlled by *His* mind, must necessarily become an efficient vessel for expressing it according to the nature of the gift vouchsafed to him.

Thus we see that the object and in-

in spirit and power! Nay more, there must be a great and marked lack in the ministry, when this responsibility to Him is not vividly and rigidly maintained. From the neglect of it has arisen all the misrule and unprofitable utterances which are the reproach of christian assemblies. Not that it always follows that there is no sincerity when there is an overlooking of this responsibility, by no means; but if it be overlooked, nay, if it be not strictly observed, oneself becomes the measure of one's thoughts and desires, and neither time, place, nor subject is chosen with reference to the mind of the Lord; but with reference to one's own mind. In this case it may all seem suitable enough to the mind of the individual thus carried away; while it is entirely out of place and unprofitable to the assembly. I think it is plain that the neglect of this responsibility is the cause, not only of all the misplacement of gift in Christendom, but the palpable inadequacy of many true earnest men to set forth truth needed for the edification of the saints.

Now if it be the cause of this evident and sorrowful confusion, how careful should all be, who have had their eyes opened to this sad state of things, to seek grace continually, to rise above what in their hearts they must so much deplore! Distinct, constant reference to the Lord on these points can alone preserve one from dropping into independence; and if in independence in the smallest degree, oneself is one's centre; for even the things of the Lord and the gift will be exercised as for individual benefit and with reference thereto, and not to the assembly as such. The service may be very true and genuine, but it is so individual that it is unsuited to the assembly, and does not edify. Often when one is ministering with great fervency, the assembly is not moved; because the minister, though very true and earnest, is not in the mind of the Spirit of God; and therefore, I may say, the key-note is not struck. This is more distinctly felt and known in public praying than in other services. If I have the Lord before my mind, and

man was occupied with his own psalm, or his own doctrine, and not the edification of the assembly? I cannot edify the Church except under Him who has the ministrations in His own hand. "There are differences of ministrations but the one Lord." And if this be lost sight of, the exercise of His gift, whatever it may be, will never be in time, place, or subject as He would have it; and so the edification, if there be any, must be very partial.

In conclusion, I merely reiterate the importance and necessity of continued and continual reference to the Lord, as Giver of the gift, as the only safeguard for the efficient use of it; and that the gifted one proves his value of the gift by the measure in which he fosters and cultivates it; always using it in the sense that the Lord gave it to *His* servant for *His own work*. And for this reason it is that the servant should so prize it as to seek in every way to cultivate and afford it full expression; and thus both Giver and gift will ever be distinctly and prominently before his

my responsibility to Him to use His gift for Him, I wait on Him as to time, place, and subject; and when I do, I am sure, according to His will, to edify, though, apparently, the effect may be small. I am sure it is a great mistake for any one to conclude that because a certain line of truth, or a certain hymn, is at any moment delighting and edifying to himself, on the *ground of* it, he should consider himself authorized or entitled to communicate it publicly. If he has the Lord's mind in communicating it, it is right and happy to do so. But that the mere fact of any truth being presented freshly to my own soul, should afford me title to communicate it, is subversive of the obligation which I owe the Lord, as *my* Lord. I believe that very often those sudden flashes of light to the soul are more for the individual than for the assembly. I do not say that they are never for the assembly; for we read, "If any thing is revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." Did not the disorder at Corinth arise from this, that every

soul; each contributing to the other, and according as it is so is he happily a minister of the word.

High and blessed office! May the Lord keep us so near Himself that our hearts may rejoice in being dependent on Him and in doing His will!

WORSHIP; OR, "THE ALTAR OF EARTH."

"Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto my altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."—Ex. xx. 23-26.

In this well-known chapter the Lord is presenting Himself to the people of Israel in two distinct characters. In the first part of the chapter He is seen in His majesty as the righteous dispenser of law. In the close of it He exhibits Himself as the attractive source

of grace. The correspondent effects of the one revelation and of the other on the minds of the people are also given.

When the majesty of the Lawgiver is before them with His holy requisitions, the effect is to fill the minds of the people with terror and to throw them to a distance from God. "All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed and *stood afar off*." Thus, in a figure, we are presented with the truth that under the dispensation of the law there exists no possible ground of a sinner's approach to God. For in the first place it may be observed that the commands of the law, almost without an exception, are prohibitory and are as a hedge of restraint around the rights of God, either in direct connexion with Himself or in connexion with man as His creature. And in the next place, if it were possible that the whole requisitions of the law could be fulfilled, it does not appear that under it there is any ground of communion or

receives the instructions of grace for the people; and in connexion with the altar we read the gracious declaration of God, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The altar is the meeting-place of the worshipper with God.

The first thing that is presented in these directions about the altar and worship relates to the absolute separation of God from every rival object of man's esteem. "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." No symbol of creature holiness, nor expression of righteousness in the creature is for a moment to be associated with God. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings and thy peace-offerings," &c. Whatever is expressive of acceptance on the part of God, as the burnt-offering, or of communion between the worshipper and God and the priest who offers it, as in the peace-offering, is connected with the altar of earth. For it was on earth that "Christ gave himself

intercourse with God. It leaves man, so far as appears, in the distance of a creature under subjection to the authoritative commands of the sovereign creator.

Hence it is said in Hebrews xii., which is an inspired commentary on this chapter, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire," &c. Their fathers were gathered to Mount Sinai, with the effect that we have seen. For even "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." But it is emphatically said they were not come to this mount, which was the symbol of law and of terror; but to "Mount Zion," the symbol of heavenly grace, and to all the array of blessing which follows, and which inspires the heart with confidence and joy.

So here. For while it is said, "the people stood afar off," it is added that "Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."* As mediator he

* How striking is this expression in contrast with the words, "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.....Let us draw near," &c.!

an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." And on earth He made peace through the blood of the cross, and came and preached peace to those that were afar off and to them that were nigh.

It is in the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and accomplished work, as accepted of God, that we find the elements and grounds of worship. It is for the soul to be occupied with these in the presence of God, in the expression of wonder, gratitude, joy, thanksgiving, delight, anticipation, hope, desire, in order to present true and acceptable worship. The altar of earth is surely found in the cross, the symbol of which Christ has ordained, should constantly be brought before us when we gather together in His name. And so exactly answering to the declaration here, "In all places where I record my name," &c., is the promise of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

But in connexion with this worship

of the altar of earth two things, expressive of man's work and man's order, are forbidden. "If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

Nothing can be more important than for our souls to bear in mind that in worship we have nothing to bring to God, nothing to work out by way of effort; nothing by way of external form, or by an effort of internal feeling, to raise ourselves up to God. He meets us at the altar of earth. God comes to us where we are. It is to have our souls filled with the sense of what His grace has done, and how He has come down to meet us where we are, and to be occupied with the sweet savour of Christ, "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God." For worship is the reflex of this, the heart expressing its delight and satisfaction, its adoration and praise for what Christ is for us as this blessed provision of God.

Now it may very well be that where human works are rejected and human order in worship is eschewed, there is still the presence of the two things, in a more subtle form, that are here forbidden. The bowings, and crossings, and sprinklings, the attitudes and order of an ordained ritual may be refused, while, at the same time, there may be an attempt to raise the feelings in order to come to God by some mental process, altogether different from the occupation of the heart in God's presence with what Christ is and what He has accomplished. It may be thought indeed that the generality of the saints are so occupied in the world during the week that it is necessary to act on their feelings when they come together, in order to produce in them the tone of worship on the Lord's Day. But this is a wrong assumption. A life of leisure is not necessarily a life of greater spirituality than one of toil. Where the Lord is owned as ordering our worldly circumstances, and is acknowledged in the daily walk of life, the heart, when brought into His presence, will naturally respond to the exhibitions which He gives of His grace when met to worship in His name. Moreover, worship, if true, is that of the assembly, and not the effort of an individual to act on the minds

and feelings of the saints, in order to bring them up to his sense of what is fitting in the tone of worship.

In the first place the very constitution of the assembly, as composed of the children of God, is that they may be able to worship: for "the Father seeketh such to worship him." Another thing is, that being possessed of a nature in common that can delight in God, it is the proper and spontaneous action of that nature to worship, when brought into His presence. Besides this, believers being partakers of the Holy Spirit, each member, in his measure, is made responsible for the worship of the assembly. Worship is for spiritual persons who are led by the Spirit. To lower the character of communion in order to meet the assumed unspiritual condition of some who may be supposed to be present, is emphatically to make steps up to the altar. Rather let spiritual worship proceed; and if there be souls that cannot join in it, let them judge their condition in the Lord's presence on account of it. But I may resume the subject in its more practical bearings.

THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—Eph. vi. 14.

VOL. IX.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW, E. C.
1865.

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THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

single thread, yet that thread was a golden, a divine one.

Whether it would be possible to trace the line outside revelation, I cannot determine. My business now is with the Scriptures.

There are two things which must strike every thoughtful man. First, that the Supreme Being, God, must be supremely good. Secondly, that if God be supremely good, why is man so miserable? Now if the first premise, that of God's goodness, be granted, we cannot account for the second, man's misery, on any other ground than that he is under penalty for transgression. Man in himself is in a twofold misery: he is thwarted in his moments of greatest enjoyment by the uncertainty of life—a fear which the lower animals know nothing of—and his superior intelligence, because of this felt uncertainty, imparts an additional misery to his existence; and he is also liable at any moment to be made a prey of by Satan in a way that none of the lower animals could be. Every one admits that man must be impelled

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GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

ADAM TO ABEL.

I PROPOSE, with the Lord's help, carefully to trace the line of testimony from Adam downwards, embracing, as far as I can be assured, the state of man under each phase of testimony. I trust the attentive reader, or still more, the earnest student of the word, may be led from these pages to dwell on this wondrous subject, even how God has maintained a testimony for Himself from the beginning of man's history on the earth. That He did preserve such a testimony we may safely conclude; for though now and again it may have been reduced to a

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by an evil spirit more powerful than himself, or he never would commit the crimes of which he is guilty.

Scripture opens with an account of man's fall, which explains all to us fully. It presents him to us as placed in a circle of blessing where every thing was suited to him; and with a suited companion. But notwithstanding all, he acts on the instigation of Satan; distrusts the love of God towards him, and incurs the penalty of disobedience. Thus the sentence of death falls on him, which entirely explains why man, notwithstanding God's goodness, is in so miserable a plight, uncertain of his life, and exposed to the power of Satan. He has yielded to Satan's representation of God, and has brought judgment on himself as well as placed himself in subjection to the enemy whom he obeyed. While surrounded in the garden of Eden with every thing that his heart could enjoy, and with all that the kindness and love of God could group together; then and there, in the very enjoyment of all these indications of God's thought about him,

Satan suggests that God has not *heart* to advance man's interests as He might according to His power. The power he admits, but the very admission is only to enforce the denial of God's *heart* to use His power for man's advancement. Man adopts this impression, acts on it, and thus incurs the penalty of death; while at the same time he becomes exposed to the thralldom of Satan, to whom he has lent himself without knowing the malice of the one who had beguiled his wife.

For a moment Adam was God's witness in Eden. Made in the image and glory of God, he was set in the finest group of natural blessing as God's representative on earth. Adam was at first the witness of God's purpose in man; lord over every other creature, naming them as he approved. And again in the espousal of the woman as formed from himself, as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. In both testifying of the two great circles in which our Lord will be manifested by and by as the last Adam. He sinned, and death

every blessing, set forth the glory and purpose of God in man. And in that day "the city shall have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But man, though fallen, and impressed with the sense of inevitable and impending death—the judgment on account of disobedience—is not abandoned by God; but on the contrary, in the greatness of His grace is sought after by Him. He addresses him, not from heaven, but in the garden, man's own abode, with those wondrous words, "Adam, where art thou?" And the avowal which this great question draws forth betrays to us man's newly-acquired relation and feeling towards God. "The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" had made him afraid, and he had hid himself behind the trees of the garden! Such was man's position now towards God. But God's thought about him is, on the other hand, most interestingly and blessedly disclosed. Dis-

came in, but even for the moment that he occupied this great position he pre-figured and foreshadowed the last Adam, the second Man, the Lord from heaven, in whom every one of the blessings and glories forfeited by the first Adam shall be reproduced and set forth with surpassing glory and perfection.

Hence the testimony in the hands of man has a double interest for us, for we see therein, not only God setting Himself forth and maintaining an expression of Himself through fallen man on earth; but that every phase of that testimony, so feeble and imperfect as it is in the descendants of the first Adam, will be reinstated in all the greatness and might of the last Adam. What a captivating view of the purposes of God we obtain when the vision of His testimony, marred as it was in the hands of the first man, serves all the more to engage our souls with the assurance that all shall be presented anew in the power and dignity of the last Man, the Son of God! The day will come when our blessed Lord, with His Bride, will, as the centre of

tinctly and yet precisely the whole scene presents the mind of both God and man toward one another. Man, a sinner, in fear of God; his mind and heart alienated from Him; while God in the love of His heart follows the wanderer and opens out to him the purposes of His grace, even that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This, the first intimation of the everlasting gospel to be yet preached to all the earth, is revealed to man shuddering in God's presence, and yet with tastes nurtured in a scene of the highest natural bliss, but now checked and clouded by the doom of death under which he is righteously placed. The more we are able to comprehend the mixture of taste, enjoyment, and disappointment which enter into the nature of man, the more do we see what a complex being he is; and thus are we prepared for understanding him, which is a difficulty, unless we combine the elements which comprise his nature. Adam is now set on entirely new ground, the ground of redemption and grace, and

is presented to us as a witness of the same. God details to him His purpose, and he calls his wife's name "Eve," "the mother of all living," as manifesting his faith in God's grace now unfolded to him. He thus expresses his clear conviction that life will come where death was in crushing force impending. Thus the certainty of life through God's grace was given. Through the dreary cloud of judgment a ray of assured light had penetrated. Through that grace he could now speak of life, and connect her, through whom death came, with the One "who is our life." Wondrous testimony! How admirable and suited! What must have been the feelings of Adam at the moment when he called his wife's name Eve! What a rebuke to Satan! What a voice to the angels in heaven! In the presence of God condemned as a sinner and under judgment, sensible of the immense contrast which awaited him on the earth, he had received in his soul this blessed conviction, vouchsafed to him by the grace of God and esta-

name "Eve." Love, the greater it is, the more distinctly does it act for me when I most want it. Adam at once laid hold on the life which his condition so required from the love of God. To man in his present state, there could be no real love unless life were the first expression of it. And hence, when God's love is fully revealed, it is eternal life, which is His gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Adam, who had been the first man to distrust God, and thus, in consequence, to fall under the penalty of death, is also the first man to bear testimony that God is love, and that through His love he can call his wife "The mother of all living." She is the monumental witness of this great and glorious fact.

Hence God clothed them in skins, as a token and guarantee that He would shelter them from the shame they had drawn on themselves; and thus clothed by Him, He compels them to take their place *outside the garden*. Adam must enter on another scene. He had been happy and innocent in Paradise: and

published in his heart, by the very word of God! How much the infidel loses! He cannot in any satisfactory way account for man's state. If he could but understand revelation, it would charm him by the miraculousness of its disclosures. What more fitting, what more just, what more beautiful? The one who sees the connexion and scope of this revelation cannot but admit it to be the profoundest theory that was ever propounded. True, the natural mind cannot enter into its depths, because the grace of God is above it.

But, as I have said, If God be good and man be miserable, must there not be some just reason for man's misery? and must there not be some definite way in which God, as good, would retrieve man from his misery? This God does. His love has been denied by Satan, and Adam has adopted Satan's idea. But now Adam is obliged, through grace, to contradict the ideas he had accepted and acted on, while suffering the consequences of his sin. Adam believes in the love of God and calls his wife's

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he had been miserable there because of sin and judgment. He had learnt from God to rise by faith out of this judgment, and now, outside the garden, as clothed of God, he takes his place. What a beginning is he to the long line of witnesses! How he exemplifies God's purpose and interest in man! As head of our race how he must engage and interest us, and how we may learn from him our proper place, even as though we were beside him, or as if we had lived in his day.

We have now to behold Adam outside Paradise. On this wide earth, dressed in the skins which God had prepared for him, baffling the natural and domestic trials of an ordinary man, children being born to him, and he plodding his way for many a year as God's only witness on the whole earth. In process of time his sons grow up, and there we shall see a new testimony declared in the person of Abel, but the history of it I reserve for the next chapter.

FORESHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM.

It was the will of God that man should have authority over this earth. Accordingly Adam, the last of God's works in creation, was formed for and placed as supreme over this part of the universe. His place of residence was the garden of Eden, his work to dress it and keep it. For him "every green herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed," the ground brought forth for meat. To him was given dominion over all the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, the cattle, all the earth, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. All these owned his sway. On the earth he was, under God, supreme. He had no rival. And to stamp his authority over animate creation, and to show God's will concerning it, we read that the Lord God brought to Adam every living creature to see what he would call them, and what he called

FORESHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM. 13

them that was the name thereof. What a picture does this afford us of God's complacency in His work, and in that the last piece of His workmanship—man. Beautiful indeed must it all have appeared, as the angels surveyed this world, fresh from the hands of their and its Creator, and man, its lord, made in the likeness of God. Well might the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy (Job xxxviii. 7,) as they gazed on such a fair scene. But how short-lived was their joy. He whose sphere of government was earth, and his dominion, coextensive with its boundaries, fell, and all was changed. The earth, which would have yielded its fruit for him, was cursed, and thorns and thistles were brought forth in response to his toil. (Gen. iii. 18.) Its fruits were no longer for his refreshment; and he, lately lord of creation, is an out-cast from that garden of pleasure and delight. In the sweat of his face he must eat bread and that only the herb of the field. Sin had entered and defiled God's paradise, and through sin, death.

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Adam, created spotless, pure, innocent, is so no longer. The image of God, in which he was created has been sadly marred. God's plans have, to all appearance, been wholly frustrated. Man has believed a lie, distrusted God's goodness, doubted His love, listened to the tempter, sinned against his Maker, and suggested that God was the cause of it all in the helpmeet He had graciously provided him. What would happen now? Had the Creator's plans been for ever thwarted by the enmity and wiliness of a creature? Had Satan triumphed here for ever? Had he, by ruining man, dethroned for ever God as the Lord of all the earth? It seemed like it. But God promised one who should reconquer what Adam had lost. Adam had failed and fallen, having listened to the suggestions of the devil through the instrumentality of Eve; but the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Another Man, the second Man, the last Adam, shall more than retrieve the ruin entailed on all his descendants and on this earth by the first.

FORESHADOWS OF THE KINGDOM. 15

This is never lost sight of. Throughout the whole interval that has elapsed since the fall, God has had this in view. So the announcement of the gospel of the kingdom is called the everlasting gospel. (Rev. xiv. 6.) The gospel of the grace of God does not supersede it. It introduces souls into the kingdom. From first to last this object is kept before us in the Bible, and we see how everything has been working, and is working, under God's direction for the accomplishment of this end. The kingdom is the Lord's, and He shall be owned as Governor among the people. We see not yet all this brought about, but we see Him, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. Glimpses of this coming glory are afforded us from time to time, enough to make the heart desire, and the eye watch for, the fulfilment of the creature's wants, and creation's highest aspirations, in the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord on the earth.

We get a glimpse of the future in

the position of Noah after the flood. Landed in a new world, as it were, swept by the waters of the flood, man is placed again on the earth, and government entrusted into his hand. The fear and dread of him was to be on all the animal creation, and to him they were given for meat. The fruits of the earth, withdrawn, it would seem, from him after the fall, are again permitted him for use, as well as the herb of the field. But the curse on the earth, though lightened, is not removed; and the fear of man implanted in the brute creation does not ensure him immunity from their wrath. The child cannot lay its hand without chance of harm on the cockatrice's den, nor does the lion yet eat straw like the ox—nay, the enmity to man of the wild beasts is distinctly pointed out. (Gen. ix. 5.) Imperfect, then, as man's position was compared to that which Adam had held, we see in the instance of Noah that man,—as he then existed, fallen man, though he might be a just man, and perfect in his generation, and walking with

history. He sojourns in the land promised to his descendants. An enemy from without has invaded it. He goes forth with his trained servants, and Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, and conquers. Returning victorious from the combat, Melchisedec, God's priest, meets him and blesses him. Is this the one to come? Is this the true king that is to reign? Many years must elapse ere He can appear. As yet Abraham had no direct heir, and when he is born, as the next chapter tells us, his seed must sojourn as strangers 400 years ere they can call the land on which Abraham walked their own. This scene, but a glimpse of the future, fades away into darkness before the long night of Egyptian bondage revealed in the next chapter.

Another scene depicting what happiness shall be enjoyed on the earth, is given us in Jacob's dream, when a ladder is seen set up on earth, and the top of it reached unto heaven; and, "behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold,

God, and such Noah was, as God bore witness,—was not the one who could bruise the serpent's head and overthrow the god of this world. Noah soon shows that he is not *the man*. He planted a vineyard, drank of the wine, and was drunken. He cannot rule himself, how then should he rule the world? The future which looked so promising after the flood is quickly obscured. The man who was seen righteous before God in his generation has failed, and any hopes of coming blessedness fade away before the spectacle of Noah lying unconscious in his tent.

Violence, and idolatry, and lust of conquest now characterize the world. The sons of God are seen no longer as distinct from the children of men, till God calls Abraham to walk with Him alone on the earth. In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed. But when? When shall this blessing be enjoyed? When the royal priest shall bless Israel victorious over their enemies. We get a passing glimpse of this in Abraham's

the Lord stood above it." What man (Gen. xi.) had vainly attempted in the pride of his heart, and in the power of his might, to accomplish, to open a communication directly with heaven, Jacob dreams has really been done; not by fallen man indeed, for the confusion of tongues was God's answer to the attempt, but by God Himself, who was seen above it. Could this last? Jacob awoke in the morning, and, behold it was a dream. The houseless, homeless wanderer must serve in a strange land, exposed to all the vicissitudes of climate, and the injustice of his father-in-law, for twenty long years. Never again in the course of his long life did this bright vision, that we know of, return. He revisited Bethel, and met again with God, and had renewed to him the promises made to Abraham and Isaac of the land for his posterity, but nothing more of the ladder connecting earth with heaven is mentioned.

Years pass on, his descendants have multiplied, yet he and they are still sojourners in the land. The 400 years

have run along half their appointed course, (see Gen. xii. 4; xxi. 5; xxv. 20; xlvii. 9; Exodus xii. 40,) and a famine visits Canaan, which compels the sons of Israel to go to Egypt to buy corn. There they find Joseph the hated, persecuted, and in purpose murdered one, raised up by God to preserve the chosen seed alive. He whom they hated, when formerly recounting the dreams presaging his future greatness, is the one before whom they bow, and whom they address as Lord. But Joseph dies and all his brethren, and their children are evil entreated by another king who knew him not. Deliverance was wrought for the children of Israel by the one they had rejected, saying, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" But it is only temporary; he dies, and greater afflictions than ever befall the chosen race.

If blessing is in store for Israel, is it not also in store for the Gentiles? The second Man will exercise authority over the whole earth. We have next a scene

The wilderness life of the people supplies us with another and a very different glimpse of coming glory. Aaron and his sons have been consecrated priests to God. The tabernacle has been erected; the eighth day of their consecration has arrived, and Aaron arrayed in the garments of glory and beauty, lifts up his hands from the altar and blesses the people. Then with Moses he enters the tabernacle of the congregation, and the two coming out, the king and priest, bless the people. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation; a fire comes out from the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering and the fat. The people saw all this, they shouted and fell on their faces. How shortlived is this too! Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire before the Lord. Mourning succeeds rejoicing. The garments Aaron wore that day he would never have occasion to wear again. Never again could they behold Moses and Aaron coming out from the tabernacle of the Lord to bless them.

Another period of more than four

which portrays what shall be when He comes. The people are in the wilderness, redemption from Egypt having been accomplished. Thither to meet them repaired Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, the Midianite, with Zipporah his wife, and Gershom and Eliezer, his two sons. The Lord's deliverance of Israel is the subject of their conversation; "and Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians." (Exodus xviii. 9.) Then they offer sacrifices, and Jethro the Gentile, Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel, together eat bread before God. It is not Jew and Gentile taking new and a common ground, becoming one new man as in the Church, but Jew and Gentile, preserving their distinction of families, together rejoicing over the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. The night succeeds this happy day, the morrow comes, but the feast is not again, that we read of, repeated. It shadows forth what shall be on the earth.

hundred years elapses. Moses and Aaron die, Joshua dies, the elders which outlived Joshua die, the judges pass away, and there is a king over Israel. Solomon occupies his father David's throne. David has conquered his enemies, reduced to submission all the kings who inhabited the territory outside Canaan, promised to Abraham, and Solomon, king of peace, is established in the kingdom. The tabernacle has been superseded, the temple takes its place, and all Israel are called to celebrate its dedication, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. Never before has there been such magnificence, such wealth in Jerusalem as under Solomon. (2 Chron. ix. 23—28.) The glory of the Lord appears and fills the house, and the people keep the feast of tabernacles, type of millennial rest. Has the reign of righteousness really commenced? Has the second Man appeared to sit on David's throne? "Solomon loved many strange women, (together with the daughter of Pharaoh,) women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, Hittites,

of the nations *concerning* which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you; *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon clave unto these in love." (1 Kings xi. 1, 2.) The glory of the kingdom is dimmed, his sun sets in gloom, and the Lord announced the rending of his kingdom in twain, and the establishment of his enemy as king over the ten parts of the land. Fallen man is again proved unfit for the place of sovereignty.

Dark times follow. Near three hundred years roll by, when the nation is encouraged by a prophecy of a king who shall reign in righteousness, and of princes who shall rule in judgment. The throne of David is filled by a pious king. The temple, closed in the reign of Ahaz, has been re-opened and purified; the lamps, suffered to go out, have been again lighted; the priests and Levites have been sanctified for the service of the Lord's house; the passover in remembrance of redemption from Egypt

has been once more celebrated; the enemy of God's people, the Assyrian, has been successfully and signally defeated. He never returns to invade the land. Add to this king Hezekiah has been sick, and is recovered of his sickness; the sundial of Ahaz has marked the retrogression of the sun ten degrees; and the fame of Hezekiah's recovery has prompted the king of Babylon to send letters and a present to him. Judah had been of late more accustomed to have letters enjoining submission from that quarter of the world, and an army attempting to enforce it, than a present in token of friendship. Has the king that was to come appeared? Again we see how fallen man cannot occupy the position yet to be filled. In the pride of his heart Hezekiah shows the ambassadors all his treasures; he fails, and the captivity is announced. This, too, is but a passing glimpse of the glory of the kingdom yet to be made good.

Another period of years elapse, and *the King* appears on the mount of transfiguration. The three disciples behold

His glory: "His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." With Him are seen two men in glory, Moses and Elias. Now, surely, the kingdom will be established; now the coming time of blessing for the weary world has dawned. There is the king, the woman's seed, Abraham's heir, and David's son. These two talk with Him. Is it of the glory of His kingdom, the grandeur and majesty of His reign? Another subject occupies them. "They spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." A cloud overshadowed them all: when it passed away the manifestation of "His majesty" had disappeared. Short, indeed, was their glimpse of His glory. It faded away from sight, not memory, as quickly as Jacob's dream. And in due time the subject of the conversation on the mount was made plain to His disciples by His death. The King had come and gone. Since He hung on the cross, and Pilate gave the word to take His body down, the world has never seen Him. Was this all that was to be

enjoyed of the glory of the king and kingdom? Had He, rejected by the world, disappeared for ever? The world may and does ignore the truth of His return. We look for it and the kingdom likewise. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor xv. 25.)

Man, the son of Adam, the woman's seed, shall have the dominion Adam lost. Melchisedec, king and priest, shall yet bless Israel. The ladder of communication between earth and heaven shall one day be manifested as set up. Already the circumstances under which it can be erected have begun to be unfolded. (See John i. 51, *ἀπ' ἄρτι*, "*from henceforth* ye shall see," etc.) Jew and Gentile shall together rejoice before the Lord. (Deut. xxxii. 43.) The throne shall be established in peace and judgment return to righteousness. (Ps. xciv. 15.) All these foretastes of happiness shall have their full accomplishment in the abiding presence and reign of Him who alone is worthy to receive and retain the sovereignty of the earth.

But how could a king reign in righteousness whilst sin and lawlessness abounded? How could happiness be the constant portion of the saints of God, and the earth be gladdened and rejoice with them, whilst sorrow, sickness, and death had power to cut short their enjoyment? How could a man reign without a rival over this world whilst Satan, who had usurped its sovereignty, and declared it, by saying, "All these will I give thee," etc., retained the title of its prince? These must be conquered. He the King died, but rose again. All seemed lost when He died—all was manifested to be gained when He rose. By the sacrifice of Himself He put away sin. By His death He overcame death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil. (Heb. ix. 26; 2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14.)

Nothing remains but to take the kingdom. Yet He waits—we know why. He waits the Father's time. (Psalm cx. 1.) He delays for the salvation of souls. (2 Peter iii. 9, 15.)

EXTRACTS.

.... "You are asking bread from a hungry man. For though I have known what it is to have spiritual supplies heretofore, my liberty of spirit seems at present as much obstructed as my voice. Still you have with you the omnipresent Lord, who once visited us from the bosom of the Father, clothed in the nature of man—a name which before had been out of repute in heaven: but which He has now made honourable among angels, and has rendered graciously acceptable to God. Here then is our light; contemplate it with stedfast eye; sweep away, if possible, out of its beams everything unholy and unclean; read, and pray, and praise; yea, persevere in such exercises. 'Give thyself wholly to them,' and apply all to your *personal* spiritual improvement."

"I beseech you, my dear friend, to abide by that one dictum, 'It is written,' and leave, 'It appears to us,' to the

His next appearance to the world on this earth will be to claim the kingdom for His own. Then shall be seen man in power, owned by all as Lord, acknowledged by Israel as King.

How full of interest, then, are these brief, passing glimpses of the glory of the kingdom, which, enabling the saints of old to taste for a moment something of that joy which shall yet be known on the earth, kept them looking forward as those who had desires unsatisfied, longings not yet fully met; and surely, whilst we know of, and rejoice in, a heavenly position, we too should feel an interest in all that concerns His glory on this earth, and the full recovery of creation from the grasp of the god of this world, by the establishment of power and sovereignty in the person of the second Man, the Lord from heaven.

"O WHAT a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurl'd,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to thee!"

EXTRACTS.

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philosophers. Theological verities themselves, in their harmony and beauty, are to be looked for in the Scriptures alone; it is there we find their best mutual illustration; and we must ever consider the sacred volume as its own safest and best interpreter."

"As we cannot contemplate a globe without observing how round and complete it is, so, to an *attentive observer*, are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. . . I cannot conclude without reminding myself and you, that all doubts are more easily resolved by prayer and retired communion with our own heart, than by any argumentative proofs."

"It is only in the Bible that the all-pure Spirit of God breathes; I am afraid of human theology lest it "savour the things which be of man."

REST IN THE ROCK OF AGES.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (The Rock of Ages.)—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

Rest in the Rock of Ages—
In Life's eternal Word;
Rest, through time's passing stages,
In Christ, the faithful Lord.

Rest on thy Saviour's promise,
O helpless, weary child;
Trust in His tender, Shepherd care
To bear thee o'er the wild.

Where should the dove be shelter'd
Save in the riven Rock?
The Hiding-place, where God's own power
Secures from every shock.

What though the tempest rages?
What though the wild waves foam?
Safe in the Rock of Ages
Dwell—as thy spirit's home.

High o'er the highest billows
Thy God, thy Saviour reigns;
His hand controls all creature things,
His hand thy soul sustains.

Rest in the Rock of Ages,
In God, for ever blest;
Eternal love maintains thy lot—
Rest, then, in Jesus rest.

A SERIES.

No. 13.

CHURCH—DISCIPLINE.

While the true and happy place for every saint is running the race set before each, looking unto Jesus, deriving from Him nourishment and counsel; while it is the labour of the Spirit directly, or through the ministry of the word, to sustain each in his course unblamably and unrepitably; still if any soul wanders, or is drawn aside, discipline in one form or another is to be resorted to, as the divine mode of dealing with, and eventually blessing such an one, if born of God. Food is the natural means by which support is afforded to the body, but when derangement supervenes, we resort to medicine or remedies of some kind, and not merely to food, in order to effect a cure. Discipline is the medicine or remedy for the soul, when the food has been hindered, or where there is no reception or appropriation of it.

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When the derangement is great, or rather in proportion to its magnitude, there is neither appetite for food nor any result from it, even if apparently accepted. In such a case we must have recourse to discipline as the divinely-appointed means for restoring the soul. And it is well for us to understand the necessity and also the intent of it.

Discipline becomes necessary when the natural and normal condition of a Christian is openly departed from; and when the Spirit is so leavened by it that there is no ear for the word of the Lord which would detach him from the evil that is damaging; and when the heart has become so hardened through the deceitfulness of sin that the word has lost all power on the conscience, or must have lost it before the soul could have sunk into its present condition. The ministry of the word, while the conscience is awake, acts to preserve us from falling, and to separate us in the power and virtue of itself, from the defilement to which we are exposed and liable. But when there is no ear for

the word, the proper office of which is through the power of the Holy Ghost to keep us in communion of heart and purpose with our Lord, then there is sure to be an exposure of the evil of our hearts; and when this exposure occurs, we must deal with it in discipline. How else can we? There is no ear to hear the word, and there is no vindication of holiness as becoming the house of God otherwise. If every one professing the name of Christ and taking his place as a member of His body down here, were to walk in reverence of His word, there would be no room for discipline; but when the word has been refused, and evil practice has been, as it must be, the consequence, the means appointed of God for restoring the soul, and at the same time maintaining the holiness which always becometh His house, is discipline.

Congregational discipline was first introduced when Israel, God's redeemed people, "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play;" when they said, "up, make us gods which shall go before us." They made a calf in those days and

offered sacrifice to an idol. They had openly and avowedly departed from the place of a people redeemed by God, and hence when Moses returned to the camp, he stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" And his word to the Levites is, "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord; even every man upon his son and upon his brother, that he may bestow on you a blessing this day." Here we get the first great principle of discipline, namely, the vindication of God's holiness in His redeemed people; and necessarily that must have been the leading principle until grace in a risen Christ came in. Under the law discipline was enforced according to the nature of the guilt of each; though in the case of leprosy which the law did not reach, there was an opportunity to present the course and principle on which grace would act. There was, we find, a great effort to restore the leper; and there we are first taught that while the holiness that becometh the house of God is maintained, the restoration of the one who had per-

we find in 1 Corinthians v., then, though the power of Christ was for them, when in solemn assembly they owned their need of it; yet while it acts primarily with reference to the Church, the body of Christ, in excluding the wicked person, the benefit arising to him from the discipline is not overlooked; for, it is added, "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." And thus grace, as in the case of the leper under the law, considered for the transgressor while the holiness was stringently maintained; and the leaven, which would have leavened the whole lump, was wholly purged out. Here for the first time we are warned that evil in another, if in fellowship with us, as the assembly of God, imparts to us a like evil. We are infected by it through fellowship, though we may have no liking or tendency whatever to it of ourselves. Moral sense from the Spirit of God in us would doubtless have instinctively impressed us with this truth; and it is an evidence of the low moral tone to which the Corinthians had sunk when they

sonally compromised it is earnestly aimed at, and he is, if possible, restored. The holiness is most rigidly maintained at the same time, and by the same act in which the health and blessing of the leper are secured: and this is the principle of discipline under grace.

When the Church was first organized, the holiness of it as Christ's house was unequivocally maintained; for it was to be the expression of Him who is now absent. Two things were then co-existent: one, the moral sense of what became those who took the name of Christ here; and the other, the power of Christ to maintain them in keeping with this moral sense. The Spirit was not only with them *for* Christ, but maintained in them a true sense of what was due *to* Christ. Hence Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) are at once, and in the most signal manner, removed from among them. The true moral sense had at command the power of God to support and justify it. The thought of restoration in such a case is not expressed. But when the moral sense declined, as

required to be reminded of a fact so elementary in understanding what the Church is as Christ's body on earth.

We have now before us the principle and purpose of discipline, namely, to preserve the holiness of the house of God; and therefore taking into account every kind of evil which would leaven the members of Christ. For even "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." But, at the same time, it keeps in view the ultimate blessing of the disciplined and excommunicated one. We must unflinchingly keep before us the first of these principles; for it is the primary condition of our being as the body of Christ, while we must not forget the second.

If there had been true and spiritual sense there would have been no need for the apostle to supply a list of the evils which otherwise the Corinthians might not class under the head of leaven. He does not include the grosser evils, because there was still moral sense enough to know that if the lesser evils disqualified for membership with the Church of God on earth, how much

more the greater! We learn from this scripture (1 Cor. v.) that the power of Christ acted with the assembly to consign to Satan the transgressor. I am of opinion that the apostle's words imply that if they had felt the evil as they ought it would have been "taken away" in some singular way. The feebleness of the Church gave, as I may say, a wider sphere to grace towards the transgressor, and yet a more distinct responsibility to the Church itself to act with reference thereto. While the Church continued to be the pillar and ground of truth there is no doubt but that the power of Christ was ever ready to act for the assembly when it waited on Him for it; for then it was not doctrinally leavened. But when the assembly, as we find in 2 Timothy, had suffered in its midst "profane and vain babblings;" the servant of the Lord is directed to purge out *himself* from it. Now this determines an important epoch in the Church's history. The Church was appointed "the pillar and ground of truth;" but that great characteristic it had now sur-

rendered, for it suffered to proceed babblings of such an order that the apostle pronounces the evil from them not only leaven, but still worse GAN- GRENE—mortal disease—for vitality was affected. In this state of things not only was the moral sense as to the assembly gone, but power was only given where there was spiritual sense, and therefore it was an individual action. Every one calling on the Lord out of a pure heart is directed and empowered to separate from the large body where vessels to honour and dishonour are found promiscuously. No doubt the purged ones according to their spiritual sense, received power to maintain themselves pure according to the unchanging principle that "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."

Any distinction forfeited is never restored. The Church has never recovered the high position of being what it once was, the pillar and ground of truth; and therefore the power which always acts with reference to the position, must not be looked for to act as it did at first. If

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the Church cannot assume to be the pillar and ground of truth; neither ought it to look for or expect the manifestation of power which acted in its midst while it maintained this position. But though the Church is not now the pillar and ground of truth, yet as the habitation of God through the Spirit, the first and great principle of His house can be in no wise slackened, but must be rigorously adhered to, according as there is faithfulness of heart towards Him. General declension and indifference only urge the true-hearted to more devotion to the Lord, and what becometh His name and honour in the earth. The *manifestation* of power is lost, because a certain high position has been forfeited; but the circle of God's interest in the earth, where Christ's heart is set, must ever engage the faithful, and there will ever be grace granted to maintain in it, though in feebleness, what is worthy of Him. Even as with Israel after the captivity, (Haggai i., ii.,) the moment we accord with His mind and work in sympathy with His counsel, though

visibly powerless as they were, (for the glory and the kingdom were never restored); we shall, like them, be blessed; He will be with us, though we may have but a "little strength." We *now* properly take the place of purged ones; the only true place for a saint when the house of God has suffered false doctrine to obtain a hearing in it. From that time, I am bold to say, that the only true or worthy place for a disciple of Christ is as a purged one; one who has purged himself out of the great house and is seeking to walk in company with his fellow purged ones; sedulously watching lest he should decline into that state of practical indifference, where false doctrine would find an utterance. The Church lost its high position because of its carelessness in suffering profane and vain babblings in its midst; the faithful are bound to purge themselves from the mass of the house; but the tendency natural to such, is to relapse into the evil of Christendom; and through indifference and carelessness again to allow erroneous doctrine to be

uttered and listened to. Satan's greatest aim is to corrupt the truth of God. He would degrade us in practice; but how much more would he corrupt that which can alone maintain us in divine conduct! So much is this danger in the mind of the Spirit as to the latter day, that discipline is alluded to chiefly with reference to false doctrine. The time would come when professing saints would not endure sound doctrine. And when the doctrine of Christ would be denied the faithful were then to be most exclusive, and to preserve the most rigid discipline. They are warned not only to refuse to receive such into their houses, but to decline all common salutations, for he that biddeth them farewell (*χαίρειν*) would be partaker of their evil deeds. The very feebleness of the faithful one should only urge him the more to preserve himself from all association with that which had been so fatal to the Church and so dishonouring to the Lord; and therefore it is to a woman that this very stringent rule is committed. (2 John.) The greater the

There is, however, another form of discipline which is exercised *within* the assembly. That which we have been considering requires that either the delinquent be removed from the assembly, or that the assembly has so forgot its own true dignity that the faithful are called to purge themselves from it. These two forms of discipline we have considered above. I desire now to offer a few remarks on that which is to be exercised within the assembly. This order is spoken of in 2 Thessalonians iii. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." This rule was given with reference to one who would not work with his own hands. It was a case which did not amount to immorality of conduct or unsoundness of doctrine; and yet it was sufficiently important to be brought under the notice of the assembly. The refractory and disobedient were not to be excommunicated, but they were to be excluded from

moral declension, as we see in Jude, the more the faithful should be banded together, and watchful how they preserve themselves distinct from what would contaminate.

It is evident that the great principle of God's house must ever be maintained by the faithful, and that the true-hearted will abide by the circle of His interest to the last. The company of the purged ones will always command the power of Christ to keep themselves from practical defilement. There will be no open demonstration of power, but the Lord will support them in their action. If, however, false doctrine be suffered in any degree, there is no remedy then, as it appears to me, but to resort to the simple rule to purge out oneself from the defiled company; and here is the true and salutary discipline in that state of things. I stand apart where I cannot suppress; for I must not remain where the truth of God is wilfully misrepresented and a false doctrine accepted. In such circumstances how can the word of God act or be used?

social intercourse. The failure in this case was of a milder order and therefore to be dealt with more leniently.

Another point to be noted is that the teachers of the law were not excommunicated though denounced in no measured terms. "I would," the apostle says, "they were even cut off which trouble you;" (Gal. v. 12;) and who would subvert the gospel of Christ; but they had some show of right. And until they became heretics, or *persistent*, in what was fundamentally wrong, we are not directed to reject them. If the Epistle to Titus be studied it will be seen that this is the course enjoined by the apostle. First, to exhort and convict the gainsayers whose mouths must be stopped; but if they will not be stopped, in strivings about the law which are unprofitable and vain; then they are heretics and must be rejected.

One word more concerning those who, because of weak consciences, observe days, or impose restrictions on themselves. It is not assumed that such practices are in accordance with the truth; but then there is nothing done or

allowed detrimental to truth or morals. It is mere weakness of conscience; it is intended as self-denial, and it arises from ignorance and prejudice. It has to do with oneself individually, or points referring to oneself, and therefore the lenity and consideration to be observed toward such, would not be applicable to or could not be claimed by those who from ignorance or prejudice prescribe and adopt forms and rules for the Church of God. I am suffered because of a weak conscience to restrict and determine for myself when truth and morals are not involved; but I am at no liberty whatever, nor is it a case of weakness of conscience, when I assume to make and abide by rules which concern Christ and the government of His house. Such is not a weak conscience but a tyrannical one; one which assumes rights never in any way conferred on it.

The Lord lead us in His infinite grace to understand and maintain what concerns His honour and glory in the earth and the real blessing of His beloved ones, our fellows in the grace of life through Him.

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST." In this passage it is plain that, while the name "Jesus" points out the person of our Lord, as known to the Jews and crucified by them, the terms "Lord" and "Christ" mark out the official positions to which God had advanced Him in spite of His rejection by the nation.

The name of "Jesus" never lost before God, and never will lose, its import of "Jehovah the Saviour," nor indeed to us who believe, though it was used as a mere appellative by the Jews; and too often now by those who do not know its worth. But in the titles "Lord" and "Christ," the attention of those whom Peter addressed is especially called to the import of those terms as employed in the prophetic scriptures on which he was arguing. He had connected the signs of Pentecost with the last days which should be precursory of "the great and terrible day of the Lord," as mentioned by the prophet Joel; and he had insisted that in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who had been so wonderfully attested among them "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him," God had accomplished David's prediction in the sixteenth Psalm, and had raised up Christ, or the Messiah,

ON THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AS LORD.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. xi. 23-32.)

The frequent recurrence in this passage of the term Lord, the special title of authority, directs the mind to the speciality of the instruction it presents.

All the names and titles of the Lord Jesus are distinctive; and they cannot be employed indiscriminately or interchangeably without losing their force, and without injury to the truth. For example, the Apostle Peter says, (Acts ii. 30,) "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that

whom He had sworn to David that He would seat upon his throne. This was what pricked his hearers in their heart, that they had rejected the Lord, of whom Joel had said, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and they had crucified the Messiah, or Christ, David's Lord, and the heir of David's throne. In Him who sustained these two titles of authority and glory, every promise and prophetic declaration of Israel's blessing and supremacy as a people centered; and on their recognition every hope of the nation hung. But, as Peter says, "that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, God hath made both Lord and Christ." This was the gravamen of his charge. And it was the terribleness of their position when this truth reached their consciences that made them cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

This, however, I do not pursue. I adduced the passage merely as an illustration amongst many of the designative character of the names and titles of our Lord, and of how much may be lost by failing to mark their force and distinctness.

"Jesus," then, is more especially the personal name of our Lord, still retaining its original import of Saviour. "Christ,"

or the anointed, marks Him out in the New Testament scriptures as especially in connexion with His Church, as Head of the body. Moreover it gives its true designative force to the term Christian: "If any man suffer as a Christian." "Lord," is a title of authority, and directs the thought to Him to whom we owe our allegiance, and whom we are called to serve and obey.

With this latter title the apostle commences his immensely interesting and important instructions concerning the Lord's supper in the passage before us; and he carries it through to the close. He begins by saying, "For I have received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you." And he closes by the declaration that, "When we are judged we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world." As to the title itself, it expresses much more than master. And its correlative implies much more than, we, at any rate now, understand by, servant. It is a term that claims for its possessor, the position of absolute, unquestionable authority over those by whom the title is acknowledged. Nay, whether acknowledged or not, the authority which it marks will eventually be vindicated to its possessor by the almighty

according to the flesh....and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to the Lord, and not unto men....for ye serve the Lord Christ." In other words, he shows that the authority, I might say, ownership, remains, but it has passed into other hands. The call to subjection is equally absolute and binding; but it is to another, and a very different, Lord. It may be the authority of grace, but it is not the less authority, nor the less obligatory on that account.

It is indeed in redemption and grace that this title of Lord is founded, as we learn especially from Romans xiv., and in many other scriptures. In the passage referred to, the apostle says, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be LORD both of the dead and living." Nothing can be more absolute than this language of the apostle. One sees at a glance that there is no room for "playing fast and loose" with this authority of Christ; an authority that is binding upon us at all times and in all places; and the foundation of which is laid as deeply as the foundation

power of God, even over those who do not now acknowledge it. For "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," [this is the point of their confession, that sovereign, universal authority is, by the fiat of God, in the hands of Jesus,] "to the glory of God the Father." But Jesus to us is Lord now, in all the absolute and unrestricted authority which the title expresses. It is true that this title rises much higher than is expressed by it in its most ordinary application in the New Testament; for here unquestionably it presents to the mind the relative position of owner and slave. I do not mean, of course, that there attaches to its application our notions of arbitrary and capricious power, on the one hand, and of oppression and degradation on the other. But I do mean that the claim of authority is absolute, and that it is met only by absolute and willing subjection. For example, in the Colossians, where the apostle is treating of the relative obligations of masters and servants, [owners and slaves,] he says, "Servants obey in all things your masters

of the eternal redemption in which we rejoice.

Now, I confess that I delight to contemplate the supremacy of my Lord; though I know how poorly His grace is met in the daily practical subjection of my soul to Him. Still it is my delight to think that I am emancipated from the tyranny of every other Lord, to be henceforth and for ever subject alone to Him. And so far as it appears, it is a relationship that will never be laid aside. At least it is found in "the holy Jerusalem," that is, seen, "descending out of heaven from God," of which it is said, "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." They are in this scene *δουλοι* still; and openly and with honour they wear the badge of their subjection: for it is added, "they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." At any rate now, before the kingdom of our Lord is established in glory, amidst the "gods many and lords many" that seek to rule the minds of men in this world, it is the mercy and blessing of our souls to know that, "To us there is but one God the Father of whom are all things, and we for him; and one LORD Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." And what is there so right,

as that He who has delivered us from death, from sin, from the power of Satan, from "this present evil world," and from self, the worst of tyrants, should be owned by us as our sole and only Lord? And this especially, if we reflect that we belong to "the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood:" for that which is true of the whole is also true of each of its parts?

However, in the Church, as presented in the Epistle to the Corinthians, what was in requisition amongst them was the practical acknowledgment of the relation in which they stood to God, the Lord, and the Spirit. For these are presented not only as the source of heavenly blessing to them, so far as they could be viewed as a body redeemed by the Lord, but as imparting its essential character to their position and witness in the world. Their gifts were the gifts of the Spirit; their ministries or services were to be in subjection to one Lord; and their energies were to be known as the result of the power and energy of God.* It was alone by the recognition of these fundamental truths, which give its essential character to the Church of God, that their walk could be steadied, and the disorders, which had so

* See 1 Corinthians xii.

claim is thus, at least, weekly enforced. And if it have faded from our thoughts amidst the din and drudgery of this world's affairs, or amidst its ease and comforts, it is on the recurrence of every first day of the week designed to be recalled. For surely a dead remembrance of accomplished redemption, in which my conscience can take repose, or in which the indolence of my heart is ministered to, is not to meet the design of the Lord's supper. No. But, if I understand its import aright, it is on my part the acknowledgment of His claim to the utmost fealty of my heart, made in the most affecting manner it is possible that it could be made, by a living and present Lord. For if He is not present, it may be dismissed as an idle formality, and all further reasoning upon it may be closed.

Moreover, it has been insisted on that the peculiar construction of the passage, "Do this in remembrance of me," which occurs here and in Luke's gospel, has the signification of "Do this for my remembrance;" and is rather the Lord Jesus Christ's reminder of His claims, in infinite grace, upon us, than that we should bring our best thoughts and remembrances in the supper to Him. And the predominant title under which He is presented in the institution as already noticed, seems to

large a place amongst them, were capable of correction. Now it is in the midst of these characteristic and controlling thoughts that the injunctions concerning the table and supper of the Lord take their place. And it is of deep significance that the one institution which is left to us, by Him who is everything to our souls, and which was to be in perpetual recurrence, should have this special bearing that, with all the grace it exhibits and the depth of love which it calls to mind, and the efficacy of the work accomplished on the cross which it declares, it is His special claim on our souls to acknowledge Him as Lord. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the *Lord's* death till he come." His claim is thus perpetually enforced. It is not to lapse until He comes. It is the most striking living demonstrative witness to the truth of Christianity. It is a monument which has already outlived the lapse of more than eighteen hundred years. And when I look back through this dim vista, I reach that sacred company in which its institution was marked by the bodily presence of my Lord, the echo of whose voice has reached us in the touching words, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." His

give its sanction to this. For it is not right to call it the Father's table, as is often done; though it is true that none but His children are entitled to be there. It is the Lord's supper and the Lord's table. It is the Lord's death that in it is proclaimed. It is the Lord's body that in eating is to be discerned. Unworthily eating and drinking renders one guilty in respect of the body and blood of the Lord. And the discipline that is carried on in connexion with it is expressly declared to be the discipline of the Lord. "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Ordinances and institutions are for this world. The witness of the Lord's supper is not to the Church's heavenly character and portion as risen into the heavenly places and there seated in Christ. It is rather the witness of each believer's connexion with a rejected, though risen and ascended, Lord. It is the balancing truth to the Church's heavenly position, as the cross is the pathway to the glory. "If we be dead with Him we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." It does not contradict the truth of the Church's position as risen in Christ, far from it; but it presents altogether

another aspect of redemption. It is my Lord's death that has bound me to Him as His bondsman. His cross was the separating point between the world and Him and all His claims. His cross is the point of union between my soul and Him who hung upon it; and its moral power is to crucify the world to me, and me to the world. The standing witness of the Church's allegiance to Christ is that in heart and purpose it shows "the Lord's death till he come."

The Epistle to the Corinthians presents the Church's position and witness on earth in relation with Christ's title as Lord. It is addressed, in the universality of its bearing, "to all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Moreover the Epistle to the Ephesians, which so specially unfolds the relationship of the Church with Christ as His body, participating, in the infinitude of God's grace, in all that characterizes the position of its risen Head, does not omit to present also Christ's title as Lord. For if "there is one body and one Spirit," there is also "one Lord and one faith." Christians are not gathered together by God's Spirit to be in subjection to a dogma; but to yield a willing and due obedience to a living Lord. A profession of speculative

I may talk of the heavenly calling, and rightly too, but I ought to remember that the earthly part of the heavenly calling is the cross and the denial of self. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow me*." I may delight to think of the certainty of my position before God, as sealed by the possession of Christ's risen life. But I ought to remember that there is the other side of this truth, even the "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." I may see with admiration and rapture how everything of man's thoughts about the Church is thrown into the shade and utter insignificance before that blessed revelation of its portion as the body and Bride of Christ; and withal, of its possession of the present Spirit of God to tell her of the worth and glories of Him to whom, as a chaste virgin, she is espoused. But I want another principle, which is not speculative but practical, in order to give stability to my course through the conflicting elements of the world, and which will produce a practical conformity to Christ. It is the principle of subjection. That principle which is in itself the reason for what I do, as well as my authority for doing it. Christ has not redeemed us and set us loose to follow our own will. He

truths, though of the highest possible character, may leave the soul at fault in this most essential point, the witness of a good confession. The truth of the Church, in conjunction with the mystery, does not in itself furnish us with the grounds of this. It gives the true formative power to the affections, and links the soul in living association with God and Christ. But to Christ personally, as rejected in the world and coming again in glory, I am to show my loyalty here in the world through which I am passing to the heavenly kingdom. It is a principle that binds me to Him at all times and in all circumstances. It is the substance of the witness I am to bear to Him, "whose I am and whom I serve." I am to confess His name and paramount claims where they have been rejected. The truth of the Church in its association and union with Christ is *for* the Church. Knit up with it are God's counsels of grace, by which its heavenly character and heavenly hopes are formed. But my confession of Christ as Lord is the bond of my fellowship here in this world with those who by the cross are separated from its course and judgment. We own allegiance here to a common Lord, whatever the heavenly portion and hopes we have in Him, and which will be realized at His appearing.

has said with infinite grace, "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." We are "sanctified unto obedience," as well as unto the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And what is there in my whole course through the world, whether in heavenly association with the children of God, or in the every day pursuits and business of life, that ought not to be brought into direct contact with that question, and under its governance, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Love, as the apostle shows, the love of Christ, is the constraining principle of all true Christian action and suffering; but then the will of that Lord who has loved is as necessary to guide the outgoings of affection.

Thus while this principle of subjection to the Lord, leaves the heavenly portion of the believer and of the Church untouched, it furnishes the only bridle of restraint for the manifold operation of self-will, which, as the evil of the world advances, becomes more and more the temptation of the children of God. It gives the whole rule and guide for that walk on earth which ought to result from the Church's heavenly character. Moreover, it is especially the re-

gulating principle of christian fellowship. For we are not only members one of another, but we are mutually servants of the same Lord. I see no reason for Christians being gathered together at all, apart from the acknowledgment of the will of the Lord. And it is to be carefully noted, in days like these, that all that was heavenly in Christ, all that connected itself with his conscious unbroken communion with the Father and His knowledge of the heavenly glory; all, in a word, that is contained in his declaration, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," so far as it was seen on earth, was in lowly subjection to the Father's will. In result and embodiment here in this world it is expressed in the sentence, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." But who is there of us who duly lays to heart the import of that word, "As (*καθὼς*) thou has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world?"

"O Lord! thy boundless love to me—
No thought can reach, no tongue declare.
Then bend my wayward heart to thee,
And reign without a rival there;
From thee, my Lord, I all receive;
Thine, wholly thine, alone I'd live."

God has been perfectly revealed through the work of Christ, and revealed in respect of evil and sin. He has been revealed in his dealing with others, with evil and with good where it is, with what glorifies Him, that is Christ. He is righteous. He has been revealed in His own nature too, as regards good and evil: abhorrent of evil and having his delight in what is pure and good; He is holy. Adam was innocent; he did not know good and evil till after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Now we know good and evil, and if we are to be "after God" it must be more, far more, in nature than Adam's estate. It must be in righteousness and holiness of truth. The power of the divine word revealing God, as Christ as now sitting at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens has brought Him to light, and quickening us, gives the true character of holiness in which we are created after God. (Comp. John xvii. 17, 19.) God is known now not merely as a Creator who saw all as very good which had come out of His hands, but as one whose

THE TRUE PATH OF A CHRISTIAN.

Allow me to present to you a brief outline of what has struck me as to the true path of a Christian, or rather the principle and measure of his walk, as taught in Ephesians iv., v. I purpose merely to draw attention to the great principles.

I should gladly see some application or exhortation added by yourself.

We get the principle and the measure of this walk; its double principle in chapter iv. If we have learned the truth as it is in Jesus, it is that we have "put off" (not to put off) "as concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that we have put on the new man." And here we at once get the true character of this new man. It is "created after God in righteousness and true holiness:" not yet love, though this will never be separated, but its intrinsic moral nature in respect of good and evil.

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whole nature is revealed in the dealings and work of redemption, when evil and good are fully manifested, when evil is there and rife. But redemption, the new creation in which we are quickened out of our state of death in sin and raised as Christ out of His grave, has taken us completely out of that condition, and has made us as so quickened the living expression of the divine nature thus fully revealed. We are created again *after God*, in righteousness and true holiness. (Comp. Col. iii. 9—11.) What God is in respect of good and evil, we are in nature as having put on the new man created again in Christ Jesus; and this as we see in Colossians connected with a true full knowledge of God as so revealed. We are partakers by a new creation of the divine nature as fully revealed in Christ.

This is the first great principle of our walk as Christians. It is our life, what we are.

The second is the presence of the Holy Ghost as dwelling in us. God Himself dwells in us by His

Spirit, and sheds His love abroad in our hearts. We have been thus sealed for the day of final, full redemption. We are not to grieve so holy and blessed a guest. Nothing inconsistent with His presence, where all is peaceful and holy love, is to be allowed in our hearts. It is not now merely a new nature, holy and righteous in itself, and capable of enjoying God blessedly revealed in Christ, but God dwells in us, shedding His love abroad in our hearts, sealing us for the time when we shall fully enjoy Him. He guides, orders, reveals the things of Christ to our minds, communicates what is blessed to us, filling us with what is divine. But especially, here, is present in us, so that nothing inconsistent with God's own presence in love is to be allowed in us. Nay more, we are to walk according to the love of the divine nature.

Such are the two great principles of the Christian's walk. He has put off the old man, the first Adam, with all its lusts and will, and put on the new man which, with the knowledge of God's

have seen that we have been made partakers of the divine nature, created after God, and that the Holy Ghost is given to us—we are sealed by it. The measure of the Christian is not what man ought to be, but what God is, and has been to him; of course this does not refer to His Omniscience and Omnipotence and the like, but morally in holiness and love. The latter we are never said to be. It is the prerogative of God to be it, and love without a motive. We, that it may be also holiness, and withal as creatures, must have an object, and a motive. We cannot be it and love sovereignly; for we are not sovereign but subject. Yet we shall see how blessedly the divine character of this love in us is maintained, though God Himself becomes its full and final object.

Light we are said to be, for purity of nature we can have, and have, as regards the new man. We are called then to be *imitators of God* as dear children. Being born of Him we are to imitate and follow Him in our actions and spirit as par-

estimate of righteousness and holiness, is created after God according to this righteousness and holiness; and the Holy Ghost is present with him and in him, and he is not to grieve Him. No word or temper unsuited to that holy guest who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts, and seals us for the day when all will be holy and blessed, is to find a place in our mouth or in our heart. In a word, the divine nature with its moral effect, and the presence of God in love, and the power of holy hope, form the Christian.

We now get the measure of this. In the latter we already get the walking of love. Chapter v. gives us the measure, if measure indeed we can call it.

God takes two essential names: Love and Light—none else. These are taken as characterizing the walk of the Christian. The measure of it Christ Himself, being the practical model, Christ in whom we see the life of God, God Himself, in a man. And this it is leads us to the full extent and character of what is looked for from the Christian. We

taking of the divine nature, and in relationship with Him as children. We are to be followers of God and walk in love. We find a double character of this, by which, as I just now intimated, its divine perfectness is maintained. We are to be tender-hearted and forgive, show grace to one another as God has forgiven and shown grace to us. (Comp. Matt. v. 48, and the preceding verses; see also Col. iii. 13.)

But there is another element in divine love in man, which has a very deep stamp of perfectness on it. I have said Christ is given as the model of the display of God's character in man, as naturally it must have been. It is said here, "And walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Perfect love was here shown in giving up Himself. So we are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our intelligent service. Two principles characterize this perfectness. First, offering up himself. It is not loving

my neighbour as myself—a true and perfect principle when evil is not, a state which the law as such would produce if efficacious to do so—but where evil, moral or external, or sorrow requires it wholly giving up, offering up oneself. This Christ did. He offered up Himself perfect in love. Our path is to follow Him in this. As in 1 John iii., “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” The second seal of perfectness is that it was an offering to God. The object and motive were perfect. If he had only given Himself for us, there might have been touching generosity, nobleness of character. But the object which formed the motive was inadequate to give perfection to the act, take men as good, or simply evil; for it was love in a man and had a motive, though divine love; and it is in that He is a model to us. But He offers Himself to God, though for us. Here our worthlessness only adds to the proof of the perfectness. But the offering being to God the motive was

adequate—the act of love perfect. Hence, too, we are called to add to brotherly kindness charity or love, which we are told is the bond of perfectness. Absolute, sovereign love is where there is no motive in the object. This we have seen in the last verse of chapter iv. and in Colossians. And this we are called to imitate as concerns our matters; i.e., when any wrong is done to us. But when it is love with an object or motive in a man, when the motive gives its true character, then to be morally perfect, self must be given up to God. In us it may have been an evil self. But whatever it may be, it is given up, and, in our own case, the body presented a living sacrifice.

We are not, then, said to be love, for sovereign love we cannot be; but we are called to be followers of God in it, as forgiving in grace, which rises above all injury, and to walk in a love which gives self wholly up to God, as Christ did. Blessed privilege!

The other essential name of God is

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Light—essential purity of nature. And this in the Lord we are said to be. For in as far as Christ is our life, as having put on the new and put off the old man, we are so. Christ is our life. This is not prerogative with an object in grace: it is a nature which we have. We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord. It cannot be separated from the love, because that gives us purity of motive, setting aside self. (Comp. 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.) Yet it is a different thing. It is the purity of nature, thought, and object which were manifested in Christ. I do not add conduct, because that is a matter of exhortation. “Walk as children of light.” God is light, purity itself, and making all things manifest. While Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And in Him we have life and thus become light in the Lord, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the

word of life, as Christ (1 John i.) was the manifestation of the word of life. God hath shined in our hearts to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. Then indeed it was for the full purpose of apostolic testimony. Still as having Christ as our life, the fruits of light are manifested, divine intelligence of good as in Christ Himself contrasted with the darkness of the world (a darkness which belonged to our nature) and the separation of good from the evil by the word, but by the living knowledge of Christ as He is, which was practically expressed in all His life. As it is written, “Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified through the truth.” So even in our intercourse with God, “Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” It is the revelation of Christ as He is now that acts by the Holy Ghost on our

souls, "We beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The effect produced, in walk, is what His walk was on earth; and for the same reason He could then say the Son of man who is in heaven. That, no doubt, was the glory of His person, but so far as we are introduced by faith, livingly, through the power of the Holy Ghost into what is heavenly, we, as to object and motive are purified according to that in our walk here, while His lowly path here engages our affections in imitating and following Him. That of which the power is seen in what He is was manifested to the understanding heart in His life down here. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, *according to the Spirit of holiness* by resurrection from among the dead. In us it is a nature, a new man, but as the creature must, having an object, Christ. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live in the

flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." So in Ephesians v.: "Ye are light in the Lord." Then not only are reproveable things manifested by the light, but Christ is Himself the perfect standard and light of the soul. "Awake, thou that sleepest," sunk into ease and apathy as a Christian, like the dead, though not dead, "and Christ shall give thee light." God is light, we are light in the Lord, and the perfect divine expression of this light in man, in which we are to walk is Christ. The eye is upon Christ. "Christ shall give thee light."

Such, then, is the true measure of christian walk what God is in His nature as love and light, brought down to its true, perfect, and blessed expression on the earth, in man, in Christ. Thus we are to be followers of God as dear children, the fruit of the light, the purity of the divine nature to be seen in us.

J N. D.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER II.

ABEL TO NOAH.

We should keep distinctly before our minds the place which Adam held on the earth, from God up to the mention of Abel. Adam and his wife bore on the earth a most remarkable testimony. There they were inwardly and severally conscious of their fall, but "clothed of God!" There is a wondrous and beautiful significance in the survey of our first parents, filling their appointed sphere in this wide earth in garments of skins made of God for them. We revere them as we realize the hand which clothed them, while we are solemnly reminded that no other hand but God's could in any degree repair the disaster that had befallen them. They moved and lived as distinguished witnesses of God. No eye could light on them, but it must be occupied with the work of God *for* them, with which they were in-

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vested. How fully and touchingly it set forth the great standing and position to which He would eventually exalt man in Christ and by Christ! Let men or angels look at me a Christian according to the purpose of God, and their eye, as it surveys me, must be engaged with the beauty and being of Christ, by which I am and in whom I am. I am in Him who is of God to me wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. I cannot but regard it as a most attractive and impressive sight to see Adam and Eve, in the ordinary ways of this life, consciously and manifestly clothed of God; and thus in themselves testifying on the earth of the great purpose of God in His love toward man. If this testimony had been perpetuated, what could have been more significant? And possibly it is in connection with that, according to the law of the offerings, the priest who offered the burnt-offering had the skin for his part. He was entitled to that part with which God first clothed man, indicating that he could appropriate personally the sweetness and

value of the burnt-offering, which is Christ Himself.

But in process of time (or literally in "the end of days")* Cain comes forth with his offering to God, thus superseding the testimony which up to this was supported by his parents. Let us note here, ere we proceed, that when the failure of one phase of testimony is consummated, and the attempt to supersede it is perpetrated as a consequence of the laxity in which the former was held, then a new phase is introduced; not a revival of the old, but one which declares the truth of God's purpose apart from, and yet in keeping with, the intention couched in the old. Cain essays (and I assume it was the result of his education) to restore man in his relations with God, a very laudable desire if undertaken under the mind of Him who claimed every consideration on the part

* What is the exact meaning of this I do not pretend to say; but it is evident that Cain, in the spirit in which he was educated, as "the man gotten from God," seeks to repair the disaster under which they lay.

of the earth an offering unto the Lord. By toil and industry, at personal cost, he succeeded in obtaining fruits from the earth which is now cursed. The very toil he endured in trying to counteract the curse, and extract from the earth fruits that would indicate that the effects of the curse had been mastered and annulled, had a voice to every one with a conscience.

Let us walk beside Cain for a moment, and catch up the idea under which he acted. Here was a man, the first-born of fallen Adam, conceiving in his own mind without co-operation or subsidy from others the idea of placing the earth and himself with it in acceptable relations with God. What an amazing scope of purpose is thus in its first and simplest form propounded! A man to conceive and attempt to set aside God's curse on the earth with the intent of placing himself and it in acceptable relations with God! View it from any side one may there is a boldness of design in it which lends an interest to it independently of the beneficent results

of man, who had been the offender. If I am a grievous offender against one who has every claim on me, I am bound to seek the reparation he requires, and not assume for myself what should be an adequate set off. But this latter is just what Cain did. He overlooks both the magnitude of man's offence, and the immensity of the claims which God had on man. He judges and determines with himself what he considers will be sufficient to repair the breach which is acknowledged as existing between them. Cain, I repeat, instead of being impressed with the fact that God must clothe man, and that thus alone could he stand, screened and separated from the exposure of his fall, that his position was of such a nature that God alone could act in it, and therefore that man could not in anywise meet him as things *then* were; that is, simply as man in his own life and strength, for it was under judgment, and therefore positively in itself impotent to effect relief or even reprieve. Yet Cain assumes, and brings according to his own mind of the fruits

it sought to effectuate. Cain, in his purpose and aim, gives to us in a very distinguished way the highest and best aim of the natural man. If it were but right how amiable and fine would Cain's action appear to us! He was evidently sensible of God's claim to a certain degree; he must have experienced painfully the distance in which man on the earth stood in relation to God. In a word, he was the first, and at this stage of his course, I doubt not, the brightest example of natural religion (eventually the Antichrist), he could set matters to rights; he did not deny the state of things, but not understanding anything morally of the distance between man and God, he attempts by individual toil to surmount and countervail the consequences of the penalty under which man lay, and not the penalty itself. In his act Cain embodies and exhibits the largest and fullest development of man's attempt in any age to place the earth and man in it, in such acceptability with God, that man would be owned of God as having effected such a desirable

end; and hence, when the Spirit of God would delineate the characteristics of the great enemies of the Church in the latter days, He says, "They ran in the way of Cain." The scope and purpose of the apostacy in the latter days will be only on a par with that of the first human religionist. Whether as to its course and manner of action, or as to the moral feeling towards the people of God: respecting the one Jude warns us, and for the other John prepares us.

It was when this terrible and consummate purpose of man was being enacted, that Abel, the younger son of Adam, and therefore without natural title, propounds and sets forth, as taught of God, the only right and true ground on which man can ever attain to true and happy relations with God; and that, on that ground, he is sure to be in those desired relations. Abel is the witness raised up, not only to vindicate the truth of God in opposition to Cain's assertive attempts, but also to set forth to man the simple and blessed way in which God accepts the sinner. Abel acts in strict

reference to the moral relations between man and God. God in His righteousness engages his soul, and man as a sinner under penalty, because of sin, is before him. He, therefore, brought of the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof, expressing thereby the two chief points of that great sacrifice which should be henceforth offered to God by His own Son, namely, a life not chargeable—offered up vicariously—and the excellency which the fat represented, obtained through death. By this offering Abel sets forth what was due to God and incumbent on man. He was thus a true witness. He rebuked the presumption of Cain, and, at the same time, became the channel of announcing the terms on which God would resume happy relations with man; nay, accept him. "God had respect to Abel and to his offering, but to Cain and his offering he had not respect." "By the which," says the apostle, "he obtained witness that he was righteous," for he had apprehended the righteousness of God. The testimony is beautiful and distinct.

In "the end of days." I conclude when Adam was 129 years old, Cain presumptuously attempted to represent on earth what practically disavowed and superseded the testimony which, as clothed of God, his parents presented. Cain, as the first-born, had natural title to maintain the truth of God, as His witness on earth; he failed, because he overlooked the moral distance between God and man, and therefore did not comprehend what God in His righteousness required. He had no just apprehension of God morally; whereas, Abel, apprehending the righteousness of God and his own sin, offers with strict reference thereto, and is accepted. The mind of God is met, and as is always the case the moment it is, blessed be His name! He declares His acceptance of the sinner. *How* God signified His acceptance of Abel and his offering I cannot say, but that it was manifest enough is very plain: possibly by fire coming down from heaven; for Cain had palpable evidence of the different reception that Abel's offering met with in contrast to

his own. Morally now there is the same difference only more controlling and influential. The Cains perceive easily enough that the Abels have an acceptance with which they are in no way favoured, and on this account they hate and would extirpate them. "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Abel not only fully and distinctly set forth on earth the only true and perfect way of ensuring acceptance with God—vindicating God in nature, and His ways toward man and the earth, but he seals his testimony with his blood. He dies by the hand of his brother because of his acceptance with God. This was the fruit of acting righteously; for I do not act righteously unless I act according to the mind of God, and in keeping with His nature and will. How fine the testimony! May the heart travel in company with Abel, and may it covet to maintain this testimony in the most unequivocal manner though the consequences be nothing short of death; and death, too, at the

hands of a brother who had assumed to repair everything.

Abel, the first martyr on earth, closes his history here in death at the hand of him against whom he witnessed for God as to the true manner of approach to God, and of acceptance as the fruit of it. If we could with any accuracy survey the scene and the testimony, and the different motives and ideas which produced such diverse actings in these two men, in the opening of the world's history, how impressive and grand it would become to us the more we dwelt on it, as a display of human religion against divine! Man does not, as a rule, deny altogether the claim of God, but he overlooks the moral side of it, and seeks to commend and render all acceptable by IMPROVEMENT. The Cains do not deny that there is need for improvement, but they rest everything on improvement. Abel, on the contrary, announces that all blessing to man comes from God through the intervention of one entirely *outside himself*, and therefore he is accepted; and because thus manifestly

accepted of God, he is pursued with relentless hate, a hate that taketh away the life of the owner—the hatred of a murderer. The highest human religionists are, in reality, God's bitterest opponents; and in proportion as human religion is held to, so is their opposition to the divine. Abel heads the cloud of witnesses or martyrs. (The word is the same for both in Greek). He had obtained witness that he was righteous, hence he fell by the hand of his brother. What a commentary on man's goodness! and the earth which drank in his blood must answer for it. The fact of his death has a voice to man, and therefore though dead yet speaketh. Hence the Lord pronounces that, of the Jews—the earthly people rejecting Him—all the righteous blood shed upon the earth should be required: "from the blood of righteous Abel," &c. It called for judgment, and the world is oppressed with this additional judgment. Hence it is said of the blood of Jesus that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel;" for it on the contrary speaks of forgiveness.

After the death of Abel there does not arise any new order of testimony for 200 years; and then we find it in the person of Enoch; but during that interval, as we gather from Genesis iv. 26, there was a faithful company who called on the Lord, or "by the name of the Lord." Growing evil compelled the faithful openly to seek the Lord and to manifest unequivocally where their hope lay. Doubtless the voice from Abel's death was not unheeded by those who feared God. To Adam and Eve is given another son after the death of Abel, and he is called Seth,* in faith that God had "appointed them another seed;" so that both Cain and Abel are omitted from Adam's line: Abel because he had passed away in death, and Cain because he had forfeited his place in Adam's family—in the human family owned of God. At an interval of little more than 100 years, about the time of the birth of Seth's son Enos, men began to call on the name of the Lord; or, as the LXX. give it, "This man hoped to

* Seth; i. e., appointed.

call on the name of the Lord." "This man" I should suppose to be Seth, and this rendering shows us how the passage was understood when the Greek translation was made (B.C. 273).

In studying the history of testimony we must be prepared to find long intervals between very distinguished witnesses, who were raised up specially to maintain the truth of God against increasing evil and assumption on the part of man, because God's principle has ever been, "when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raiseth up a standard against it." An interval is allowed in order to prove the effects on man of any remarkable testimony, and then another phase is presented, though the former testimony is by no means superseded. Nearly 200 years have elapsed before Enoch,* the seventh from Adam, is born, and he occupies the place of God's witness for 300 years. He "walked with God" for 300 years, "and he was not, for God took him." He was known as a prophet, warning of

* Enoch; that is, dedicated or disciplined.

coming judgments, and in the spirit of John in the Apocalypse, testified of the judgments coming on men, because of their growing ungodliness. From God's side he viewed the state of things on earth, and as Abel had testified how approach to God was to be obtained and acceptance known, so Enoch in acceptance (the word "walked" is synonymous with "well-pleasing"—see Heb. xi.) with God looks on the earth, and proclaims through His Spirit, in which he is himself in fellowship, what must befall man on earth, because of his departure from God. Looking from God's side and knowing in himself what was compatible with God in His holiness and truth, he saw clearly that nothing less than terrible judgment could vindicate it, even what is fully depicted in Revelation xix. His was a glorious testimony. He walked with God for 300 years and proclaimed to men the judgment which, as worthy of God, should await them. *With* God and *for* God on the earth, he passes away from it as one beyond the power of death. His testimony is sealed

Seth down died before the translation of Enoch. We may conceive the effect that this increased light must have had on this living chain. The story of Abel was part of the history of each on earth, but the translation of Enoch presented a new and wondrous consummation to all their hopes and desires. What a revelation it must have been to those who must have felt the judgment on man, now the more aggravated since the unnatural death of Abel. Adam is now dead, but all his posterity in God's line do not pass away until after the translation. Even Adam lived to within fifty-seven years of it. What a day it was! And what strange joy it must have diffused among the godly, and what full and gracious unfoldings of His mercy for God to vouchsafe at that early day!

482 years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the deluge. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, lives to the

reached to the very verge of the judgment, which Enoch his father doubtless, foresaw, when he thus named him at his birth, the very year he began to "walk with God" (see Gen. v. 21, 22).

by the announcement, now through his translation made for the first time, even that the heavens are opened to man, that he is to have a place, an inheritance *there*, even as Adam in his first estate had on the earth. The seventh generation from Adam is chosen to announce the glad tidings that God will deliver from death; yea that light and incorruptibility have come even now. The supremacy of grace over the penalty of man is declared. If Abel had died at the hands of his brother because he was accepted of God, Enoch is enabled through the same grace to show himself victorious over death, as Stephen did in principle, and he "is not, for God took him." What instruction and interest does his testimony in every way convey to us!

Enoch's son, whom he named Methuselah,* lived to the very year of the flood. Methuselah's son Lamech lived to within five years of it. None from

* The word Methuselah signifies, "he dies and it is sent," or "at his death he sends it," thus giving moral confirmation of the chronological fact that his life, which was 969 years,

year of it, and Lamech, the son of Methuselah, is the father of Noah, whom he thus named in prophetic faith, which reached on to a time beyond that of which even Enoch had foretold, even the days when the earth, now cursed, should again be blessed by the Lord, and when the heavens should rule. "This same," he says (i. e., Noah, which signifies rest), "shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." He had found nothing but toil here, and he does not, like Cain, attempt to improve the earth. He had no hope from it in its then condition, having seen the growing misery of all around him. But he had also seen the translation, the victory of God's witness not only over the earth, but over the penalty of death. He had, doubtless, hearkened to the prophetic warning of Enoch as to the coming judgments, and he is allowed to discern in the distance a happier scene beyond those judgments; a time of rest even for the cursed earth. In token of this he names his son Noah;

he who was to pass through the deluge unscathed and be blessed anew in a purged earth; even as it will be with those whom Noah typified, in the days of millennial rest which will succeed the judgments which Enoch had foretold, and which that of Lamech and Noah's day had foreshadowed. Lamech did not die till within five years of the flood, and when the ark must have been well nigh completed, having, perhaps, assisted in its construction. His age is significant being 777 years; the number seven being, as we know, that used in Scripture to denote perfection; and the three sevens stand out in contrast to the three sixes (666) given in Rev. xiii., as the number of the Beast—the "Man of Sin."

Lamech is properly the last before the flood and outlived all his forefathers except his father Methuselah, who, as living up to the last year, indicates, I should suppose, that the line of testimony should be unbroken to the last, and thus brings us in the year of the world to the flood, which I shall reserve for the next chapter.

hear thee." (1 Tim. iv. 16.) All that Timothy taught was to revert back on his own heart, and to be found in his own path. The delight felt by ingenious minds of spiritual intelligence has been great at all that has been opened of the Scriptures in the past years; but the minds of teachers may be surely inclined, though taught of the Spirit, rather to multiply the setting forth the bright things which have been opened successively to their view than to regard the need of the conscience which the love of Christ was there to sustain. There is no book that has not received an enlargement, and its page a life that it never had before: at least it has not been recorded. Among others the Apocalypse presents difficulties more profound than most; but the portion from which our quotation is taken bears a simpler form, and one that is easier to illustrate from other parts of Scripture, but yet unexhausted.

In many respects the "Seven lectures on the seven churches, delivered in Davies Street," have supplied more than

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"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 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; I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie: behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."—Rev. iii. 7-13.

How careful we should be in using the knowledge we gain at the hands of others, for there is danger of our using it, in ministry, as our own, in satisfying the desires of our minds! How different is this from the thought of the apostle in speaking to Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that

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would content most readers; but Scripture knows no bounds in its teaching by the Spirit to the conscience, where there is a spiritual capacity to receive it.

It would be unnecessary to go far through the addresses to the churches in chapters ii., iii.; but there are two points I would observe upon: first, the sequence to be found in the addresses themselves, besides as one after another; and, secondly, the ground of the decadence of the assemblies; and then, God willing, how they apply to this particular church.

The first point I would suggest to the meditation of brethren, is whether there does not appear a succession in the state of each, as we have generally received a succession one to another. They all begin, up to Sardis, with a good and faithful state. Nor can we wonder at Thyatira receiving its meed of praise, so high and full, if we look at the corruption of Rome so faithfully delineated. What more excellent was there than her commencement, thirty of her bishops being martyrs in succession?

Sardis (to which Laodicea would have been a natural sequel, and succeeding the abuses of Thyatira,) came under correction of outward evil by the introduction of a controlling power, which was not of God and which left but little of Himself. She received another lord than Christ. She was to strengthen the things that remained. The power of worldly interference in Protestantism was now completely established in its rule in the Church, though it began with an emperor becoming a Christian. The faith that the Church should be removed, and that Christ was to come and rule the earth with His saints, had left the earth: truths which, by mercy, have been so widely restored. The failure of the recognition of the kingdom of God as to come, and to be established in the personal advent of the Lord, now bore its full fruit; and the Church, instead of being an exception to the world and the witness of the hopes of the saints, served only the order of the world as far as it might: but surely it took the sword, in princi-

unseen country—was beginning to fail. The kingdom in which they were to rule and the hope of Christ, were ceasing from their spiritual vision; whose glory was the glory of the desolate of the earth, till He came. They referred their assigned duties less and less to the Lord, who should reward them in that day, because they served Him in them. The offering was less acceptable, and less accounted of, and the reward of the inheritance diminished, as He was less in view in them. All these defects continued to increase, and all that should have characterized the confession of saints continued to decline. In Smyrna there was some boast of either extension or of its embracing the great of the earth. It was to be tried therefore by fire. In Pergamos the evil becomes permanent. The Holy Ghost could not witness amidst such a state, and the felt deficiency was sought to be met by superstition (completed in Thyatira) and the filthy lucre of a Balaam spirit to establish its power. There was one sign of early declension which, I believe led

ple, to perish by it. The fearful consistency of Rome in claiming power over all things, being but thus the source of the deepest religious corruption. The Church waiting in hope of the kingdom of God as the reward of her confession and path, and desirous of being with Christ, was kept free of the world, as well as of the value put on possession of it. While this faith continued, the impetus of the first works of the assembly at Ephesus continued. But they gradually failed in the works of faith as towards the Lord of glory, and in their affections towards Himself; and thus the separation that the standing of faith marked grew fainter, and the hope that belonged to it; and so the LOVE waned. It is not absolutely said that the works were His; but the divine love was, and the works began to take the character of christian beneficence. The love that looked on all those about them as heavenly strangers with themselves—and what they possessed not their own, and the mammon of unrighteousness making friends for the

to this, which is mentioned in the reprobation of the Nicolaitanes.

I see no ground for the common view of it. Could such have commenced in Ephesus? Hardly possible. But it has far more consistency with the state of the Church in considering it as the growth and claim of ministerial distinction, putting aside the place Paul saw himself in to the Church of God in 1 Cor. iii. 20—23. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." It continued and found its way into the practice marked as the sin of Balaam. Thus the authority of Christ as Lord and the power of discipline were lost. God's assembly in, and yet out of the world, became corrupt; and how should not the calling of the Church become obscured and the heavenly calling despised?

We need not extend these observations for the purpose of drawing the attention of believers to Philadelphia.

Its first characteristic at the Lord's hand, is that He had set before her an open door. It is not the praise of the churches before Sardis, however they had fallen; but the opportunity God had given her—of what?—of return, of taking up again that which was lost in past ages. It is the last opportunity of recovery—nor is it called repentance. It is not given to Laodicea. Why is there room for the hope that such an opportunity puts before them? Because of previous grace. "Thou hast kept my word and not denied my NAME." The order is that of God. Keep my word—disciples indeed—knowledge of the truth again; knowing God's will—doing it—acquaintance with God. So here an open door is granted. Now, therefore, enter upon the charge my grace has given you in these last days, before the state of Sardis, closing in Laodicea, has earned final rejection of the testimony of the Church to Christ.

source of declension and every difficulty. Even error would not cause mischief (for this works security against it) so dissolving to the Church of God as that. What, then, is said? "Hold fast that which thou hast: let no man take thy crown." The fruit of the mistake of those who gainsay their faith, however painful the sense of the stumbling-blocks around them, is not to weaken the hands of those to whom the Lord has committed, serving the saints in guarding them against these things. We are in face of the synagogue of Satan; that is, a return to beggarly elements as well. But if we would pass on through the open door it is in confidence of the wonderful grace of the opportunity given to those that hold fast the Word and Name of the Lord. It is this keeps it open in his hand; and what grace is there that does not humble and prepare the heart for service!

The stamp of rejection of the world which is on the heart of faith, and Christ coming to take possession with His saints, works strength to the Church,

It is quite a mistake, that the open door is to the gospel. It is an open door to a return from a lost condition and confession. It is such an open door with His word and name, that makes such as to whom it is given to gain the place of pillars in the house of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How sad is it to see on one side the apprehension of the exalted nature of the Church put aside the faith of the heavenly calling as a path on earth; and on the other, believers refusing to gather in the oneness which they may call a party, and deny as a practice, to secure the blessing.

Now, accepting Philadelphia as representing much we see and rejoice in at present, what a deep instruction it should carry to those "who seem to be pillars," and a warning to those who would call the acknowledgment of the appointment of the Holy Ghost as the unity of the body and the duty of acting on it, sectarian! The neglect of this, coming on the failure of looking to the coming of the Lord as judging all things, has been the

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having her place above and knowing the mystery. These, thus taking up the desire of what is set before them, accept as no boon any veiling of the holiness of God in love. It is the want of affection to it that claims on the ground of the joy of grace (alas! we find often how the flesh can take up the best things), a latitudinarianism in principles, which has not learnt the love of brethren after 1 John v. 2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." What is pleaded for by this latitudinarianism is not merely the reception of a believer simple and of very small knowledge.

The due acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ in its various aspects is surely to enter on the way of "overcoming," through the open door. The firmness of the PILLAR in this evil world will never be found without the faith of it in its revealed extent. How shall we enjoy the presence of the Holy Ghost unless Christ's exaltation is held in wonder and humility, and His steps

ours? Nor should we forget the gracious encouragement as to being saved from the judgments, or "those things coming on the earth," yet worthy of the shelter and to stand at last among the attendants of the Son of man.

A SERIES.

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PRAYER.

The more divinely instructed we are, the more the word of Christ dwells in us, the more shall we value and be in dependence on God. The more conscious I am (and this true intelligence imparts) that all I have and all I am comes from God, the more natural and happy is it for me to be dependent on Him. Anything else would be dishonest and unseemly. If I feel that I derive everything from Him, and know that everything concerning myself is of interest to Him, I must feel that it is true and right of me to own all as coming from Him; and that both my hap-

everything to Him. I have nowhere else to confide it, and if I but know that I may confide, I must depend on Him, for everything comes from Him. But I confide, also, as I know that His love is as great as His power; His will to serve me as great as His power to do so. Prayer is the expression of this combined dependence and confidence, and the absence of either must necessarily make the prayer defective.

Prayer is awakened when one realizes that God orders everything; and that He is so near me and easy of access, that I may speak to Him. Abraham's prayer, where he is especially called the "friend of God," is recorded for us. The Lord communicates His mind to Abraham in a near, intimate way; and Abraham then, according to his confidence, prays to Him respecting Sodom. In like manner when David heard from Nathan how God felt and purposed about him and his house (1 Chron. xvii.), he went in and "sat before the Lord;" and then states that *because* he had heard of the Lord's mind about him and his house,

piness and strength are according to the constancy and accuracy in which I look to Him for everything that in any degree concerns or interests me. This is prayer, though it may be subdivided into various orders, as I trust to show. Prayer, then, in itself, is our natural and wondrous privilege. It is the expression of my dependence, but my dependence on One from whom I know I derive all. It is but just of me to refer all to Him, and it is most blessed for myself to be assured in my heart, that He not only confers on me everything that I have, but that I am, because of His interest in me, free to speak to Him on any subject of any moment to me.

Prayer properly combines dependence and confidence, and according as they mutually increase, so is prayer better known. If I am dependent on God for everything, I must look to Him for everything. I grow in confidence as I grow in practical dependence, because if I can depend on Him for everything, I may, nay, must, as I feel this, confide

"*therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee.*" Prayer necessarily must express the amount of my dependence and of my confidence. If I am not dependent, why do I pray? And if I have no confidence, what is the use? I may know that there is power there, but if that power is not available to me, if it cannot be enlisted on my behalf, what object is there in my appealing to it? Prayer is the expression of life in a new-born soul, its instinct according as it feels its new relation toward God to be that of dependence and confidence, instead of distance and distrust. Thus the evidence the Lord gives to Ananias of Saul's change of heart is, "Behold he prayeth."

There is such a thing as crying to God without any thought of being heard, more from superstition, if haply on account of it a desired answer might come. This is rather tempting than believing, and not properly prayer, which cannot exist unless the soul has some sense of its dependence on God and some faith in Him as being One who will attend to

a supplication. The more we contemplate prayer, the more impressed must we be with the grace and mercy of God in ordaining such a link between us and Him. Such a sense of dependence and yet confidence is imparted as we know what prayer is by the use of it. I may have the fullest conviction of God's omniscience and omnipotence, and yet not at all apprehend the intent and value of prayer. In prayer I am of myself assuring my own heart of not only my dependence on God, but of my confidence in Him; my prayer goes no further. It is always characteristic of my real apprehension of Him in His relation to myself. It is not so much impressions of Him coming from Him to me, but rather my expressing my state and circumstances and impression of Him to Him. There is something peculiarly expressive of our relation to God, or the relation He would have subsisting between Himself and us in that we are not only permitted to pray, but enjoined to do so. The true relation between God and us on earth is maintained by

third, and that the third may exist without embracing the two others.

The first I may call the prayer of persistence (*αἰτία*), and the scripture I refer to is Luke xi. Here we find the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray, and consequently here we are taught the first rudiments, or the first right ideas of prayer. The state of the disciples must be taken into account or we shall not arrive at the instruction communicated in this passage. They were but just awakened to the sense and value of prayer, and meeting them exactly and suitably to their then state and intelligence, He replies and instructs them, divinely of course. Having told them the subjects which should form their prayer, subjects, as I have above said, which were correlative to the apprehension of their relation to God *at the moment* they uttered them, for had it been otherwise it would not have been prayer. It could not be prayer for me to address God in terms as to His relation to me of which I had no ideas or warrant for at the time. The place their

prayer, and while His permitting it is a marvellous expression of His grace; it at the same time indicates the truest expression on our part of our place of dependence. Man ought never to have departed from the place of dependence. The Lord Jesus here a man used it and appropriated its value fully, for He was entirely dependent. It is not a question as to whether my prayers move God or alter His purposes. My simple duty and blessing too is to unfold all to Him, sensible of my dependence on Him for everything; and confiding in His love for me that He will in some way assure my heart touching the state of things through which I am passing, of His unfailing wisdom and His care of me. This the soul truly praying is always sure to obtain.

Let us now examine how prayer is presented to us in the New Testament. In order to make the subject clearer, I propose to divide prayer into three orders, only premising that the first order may reach to the third, but that the second may not touch on either the first or

souls ought to have occupied with God at that *very* moment was embodied in the words which the Lord dictated. It was a prayer for that present moment, and useable only by those who could personate the disciples' state at that moment. From this the Lord enlarges on the subject and nature of prayer, showing the state of soul in which one must be towards God in prayer. It is simply, as we gather from the parable of the man going to his friend at midnight, not only that I have a want, but that I know of none who can relieve me but One—that is God. It is the sense of my entire dependence on Him without any other resource; and hence the needy one at midnight persisted in his request, even after there was no response on the ground of friendship. The sense of necessity on his own side, and the conviction that his friend could help him, is what he exemplifies. Now this is the first and simplest order of prayer. I am sensible of a want, and I know God alone can supply it; and the greater the power with which these two con-

victions engage my soul, the more continuous am I in prayer, and the more am I simply and entirely confined to Him. Instead of in the natural restlessness of my heart trying one here and another there, I am ever looking to Him in the unquestioning conviction that no one else can help me. We are often reduced to the last strait and extremity in order to establish unequivocally this dependence on God.

After this the Lord sets forth, that while the persistence proves that I have no other resource, for I should not continue importuning unless I were convinced that I could be supplied, and that my need demanded it; yet, besides the importunity, which is the evidence of my sincerity, I should know in myself that I am appealing to a Father from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down. The Lord impresses that we have to deal with one superior to a natural father. If we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened; but we must bear in mind the nature and rela-

tion of God towards us. If a natural father would not give us a stone, if we asked for bread, or a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg; if one evil in himself knows how to give good gifts unto his children, how much more shall the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. The gift would be in keeping with the goodness of the Giver, and the relation in which He stood toward us. The better and the nearer any one is to me, the better, intrinsically, are all his gifts to me. If I ask of God, knowing the relation in which He stands to me, I may depend that He will not give me anything inferior to that which I have asked for; but, on the contrary, something superior and after the order of His own Holy Spirit; something which will assure my heart and establish it in the nature and holiness of Himself. He would not give me that which would only prove a stone instead of bread. He is the judge of what is really bread—the bread of affliction from Him is bread and no stone. I may seek a fish,

something more than bread; He takes care that what He gives me will not be a serpent, something poisonous to me. How often the fish, something to please nature, turns out to be a poisonous reptile! What He gives will never be of this kind; and if I ask an egg (something more of a luxury), He will not give me a scorpion—something to wound and afflict, as a luxury to nature always proves to be. He will gratify, He will answer, but always after the manner and order of His own holy mind and interest as a Father about us. Now in this, as I term it, the first order of prayer, there is some pressing need, some need, from whatever cause it may arise, that so oppresses us, that we feel compromised unless we be relieved; sometimes it may be on account of our imprudence or failure—such, for instance, as borrowing an axe, and then the head of it falling into the water. (2 Kings vi.) We may be to blame in the first instance, i.e., the cause of our present embarrassment may be attributable to our want of faith or wisdom in some

form or another; yet we have no other resource but God, and we turn to Him, and wait on Him, importuning for relief, and the more so as we are pressed by the need and believe that no one else can help us; and He does help when we are simply and entirely dependent on Him; not always as we may have proposed to Him, but in a way to assure our hearts of the high quality of His love and interest.

The next order of prayer is described in Philippians iv. 7. There we are told by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known all our requests unto God, and that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Here all our requests are made known by prayer, simply pouring forth of the heart; and supplication, which is more expressive of want, but all with thanksgiving, the sense of having already received, for it encourages one's heart greatly to recall God's love and goodness, and how He has dealt with one in times past. Now when you

are in this state of soul, making known all your requests, it is not so much obtaining answers for your requests which relieves you, but you derive from so doing such a sense of God's interest in you, such a reliance on Him that the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. You may have want; you spread out all before God. You make known all to Him; and if your conscience refuses to submit to Him anything you desire; you are convinced that you must not seek it; but all you can conscientiously make known to Him, you feel is so before Him. You are so conscious of being with Him, if you have made it known to Him (merely formal utterance would not come up to that), you are assured that the pressure is gone. You feel that He is for you, and you have in lieu of the pressure, the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeping your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The question of results or answer does not arise here. The soul is assured of God's

Ephesians vi. When after being invested with the whole armour of God, you are praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto unto this very thing with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, the sense of security from all antagonistic agencies, only enables you the better to spread out not merely your own wants, but the circumstances and wants of all the saints unto God; and you are thus watching unto this very thing, engrossed with the communication and reference of everything to God, as also for the word of the testimony.

The third order of prayer differs only from the second in this: that while the second reaches to happy, unquestioning reliance on God, and has simple rest in Him with respect to everything presented to Him, in this order the heart is so assured that the thing asked for is according to His will, that there is distinct faith as to the answer (1 John v. 15), we have the petitions which we desired of Him. In this scripture we find, that if we ask anything according to

intervention, and in the consciousness of this there is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which is far better than any answer, keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus, who is our Lord and life. The soul, through this order of prayer, is set in a very blessed and wealthy place; the peace of God barring out pressure, keeping the heart and mind from anxiety through Christ Jesus. He is the source of this peace to me, so that it is not only good in itself passing all understanding, but the source is inexhaustible, and I know it to be so. If this order of prayer were better known and more cultivated, there would be more real happiness of heart in passing through the circumstances of this evil world. The sense that I had made known every pressure or question on my heart to God, and that I had His peace, keeping my heart and mind through Christ Jesus, would enable me to go on brightly and cheerfully through everything with my feet like hind's feet. The soul is in the fruition of this order of prayer in

His will He heareth us, and we know that if He heareth us, we know that we have the petitions which we desired of Him. The point practically turns on our knowing that He heareth us; the peculiar sense of His hearing us assures us that we have the petitions which we have desired of Him. In Philippians iv., the preceding order, it is our making known our requests to Him, and we resting in the fact that we have made them known to Him. It is different my making known my requests to God, and therefore resting in the certainty that as He knows them all will be ordered aright; and the assurance that He hears me because I have asked according to His will. Our Lord could say, "I know that thou hearest me always." Hearing implies acceptance. I have a sense of having asked what is acceptable. He has heard me, and if I know that He has heard me, I know that I have the petitions I desired of Him. I think, that in making known my requests, there is a sense of what He is for me, that I have Him to see

about them; but when I know that He hears me, I am assured in myself that I am asking according to His will, and therefore the things I desire shall be granted; and I feel that they will.

In the first order I am engaged with my want, and with God as my only resource, all the more so as I understand Him to be my Father. In the second, it is rather to acquire rest for my heart from the pressure bearing on me; and this is done by making known all my requests to God; and then I am assured, not that all shall turn out as I desire, but that God is everything to me and gives me such confidence in His love, that His peace keeps my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Now, in the third, it is more; it is my heart being assured of certain petitions being according to His mind; and that as I know He hears me, I may reckon that I shall have the petitions which I desired of Him. When I know that I have made known to Him all my requests, I am at rest, and my heart and mind are kept in peace through Christ

the Father may be glorified in the Son; i.e., that the goodness of the Father may be known through the Son's helping us, and answering the prayer which we have asked in His name, realizing so what becomes Him that we can assume to personate Him, and therefore taking His name upon us, asking thereby, and thus asking, receiving. Chapter xv. 7 is of the same order but with reference to fruit-bearing and service, while in chapter xvi. 24 it is with reference to our place in the world during our Lord's absence; and hence it is added, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full;" so personating our absent Lord in the world, that we can ask in His name and have our joy full amidst all the surrounding antagonism, because we are receiving from God whatever we ask, and asking only what in such a position we could only value, even what suits us as of Christ here.

I may add one word as to Matthew xviii. 19, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of

Jesus; but when I know that He hears me respecting what I ask for, because it is with reference to this that I am aware of His hearing me; when I am conscious of this, I may rest assured that I have the petitions which I desired of Him. They may not, however, be granted as I may have expected or described, but they are granted in a divine way. Paul may have prayed, and have been assured that he should serve the Church after his capture at Jerusalem, but it is not likely that he expected his prayer would be answered by his writing his epistles, by which he has served the Church better and more amply than if he had obtained his liberty, and had resumed his former labours. The petition is granted, not after our small selfish idea, but according to the grace and greatness of God who answers the prayer in the largeness of His own heart.

I think prayer in John xiv., xv., xvi. is of this order. In chapter xiv. 13, 14, the heart troubled during Christ's absence, prays in His name, and is cheered and helped by the Lord Himself, that

my Father which is in heaven." Here all depends on the agreeing, "If two do agree." It is the power of God's Spirit rising above their individual selfishness, and giving each of them a common desire; and this will be owned of our Father in heaven.

I need hardly after the foregoing refer to Mark xi. 24, "Whatsoever ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive, and ye shall have." This is simply realizing that I believe He hears me, and therefore I am assured that the petitions I desire will be granted to me.

The Lord lead us more into dependence on Himself and rest in Him; always conscious that we have made known to Him all our requests, and glad of heart when in His goodness to us He lets us know that He hears us respecting anything we may desire of Him; our hearts growing and deepening in our confidence in Him, and in the knowledge of His heart toward us for His name's sake.

FRAGMENT.

In Daniel iii. we have the spirit and character in which the godly remnant will pass through their trials. It is not in that character, however, not the outward difficulties here referred to, but it is the aspect of the thing that I desire to call your attention to, because there are various trials which attend the soul while passing through this world. In Israel God was showing forth His mighty power in temporal deliverances, as in the case of Pharaoh; but with us it is a different thing, being spiritually delivered we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. All through, those who are faithful to God have been a suffering people. Obedience and reliance on God, characterize the seed all the way through. It is another thing we find here. Besides the love of power, they use religion to unite and band together, to oblige conformity to the king's word. No matter whether king or pope, if it is *his* religion, for religion being the strongest motive in the human heart, men use it to sway and influence others to gain their own selfish ends.

THE KING IN HIS KINGDOM.

2 Samuel xxiii.

There are two songs in the Books of Samuel indited at different times, with upwards of a hundred years interval between them, yet when read together they appear as two parts of one whole, the work of one mind—the Spirit of God—though the utterances of different hearts and under different circumstances. They are the prayer of Hannah and the last words of David.

Hannah bursts out in praise to God after years of heaviness, sorrow, and reproach (1 Sam. i. 6), when it had all passed away, and the Lord, in answer to her cry, had granted the desire of her heart. It is the first, though we can well believe not the last, effusion of her heart in praise to God, yet in Scripture the only song of hers that is recorded. Of David's psalms we have many, but this is his last. Hannah might look forward to years of happiness now that she devoted her child to the Lord, and

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entrusted him to Eli to train up for Him. David had nothing before him but death. She looks back on all God's dealings with her and rejoices. David looks forward and hopes. Hannah sings because of a salvation already accomplished. He is occupied with the covenant as yet unfulfilled, which is all his salvation and all his desire. Accordingly she celebrates God's ways of sovereignty and grace to the afflicted: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: he bringeth low and lifteth up. 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." (1 Sam. ii. 6, 8.) David's words have for their burden, the character and work of the King—the Lord's Christ. But no celebration of the Lord's intervention in grace and goodness on behalf of His people, could be complete without a reference to that for which God had been all along work-

ing, the establishment of the kingdom; so Hannah goes on to speak of the king, although the kingdom had not then been set up in Israel. "He shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." It is at this point where she ends that David begins; and, speaking by the Holy Ghost as he expressly affirms (2 Sam. xxiii. 2), he treats first of the king, then of his work. And so the whole chapter gives us a slight sketch of the king and his kingdom from "the pen of a ready writer." Hannah's prayer, deliverance having come, is full of brightness: David's song is full of beauty yet tinged with sadness.

The priesthood, which in the days of Hannah was God's appointed form of government in Israel, had been displaced and the kingdom set up—but the king was yet future. So, in speaking of him, David declares he speaks by direct inspiration. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." Nor that only. It was to him that God revealed the character of

the One who should sit on his throne. This is only in harmony with the rest of God's dealings with David. It was to him the form and character of the house was revealed. It was by him the Levites and priests were arranged in their order and courses. It was he who appointed the choir, and set apart the different officers of the intended house for their respective positions. And if Solomon was to execute justice on Shimei and Joab, it was David who charged him to do it. So here it is to David that the character of the king is first revealed. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain."

If such was to be the king, David was not the man. Tried by this standard he had failed, and that grievously. That Saul, made king by the people's

request, should have proved himself unfitted for the office might not seem so surprising; but that David, the man of God's choice, not selected because of outward appearance (i.e., after the judgment of man), should have been tried and found wanting, might indeed surprise some, proving, as it does, that fallen man, even if renewed in heart, is unfit for the place of universal sovereignty. David's adultery, followed by the murder of Uriah, and his manifest partiality for Absalom, though his hands were stained with the blood of Amnon, his brother, were proofs that he had not been always just, ruling in the fear of God. But might not his son, beloved of the Lord, be the man? Ah, no! He surveys his family and confesses, "Although my house is not so with God." Young and tender, his hand free from blood, an untried sovereign was Solomon, yet the dying prophet could see he would not answer to the description of God's king.

There is something touching in this statement of his house. Death was near

him. He was singing his last words yet God's covenant was unfulfilled. Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, these were of David's house; but the just king was not there. God had promised, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore." (1 Chron. xvii. 11—14.) With this David is satisfied. It is beautiful to see the faith of the dying king stayed upon God's word. He looks forward not because he discerns in his son a promise of the coming brightness, but because God had told him the light should shine. Sorrowful must it have been to his heart to own his sons were not so with God, but comforting to remember God's covenant which nothing, not even the sinfulness

of his family, could annul. (Ps. lxxxix. 35—37.)

Hence he can sing, and how beautifully! If the thought of his family introduces a vein of sadness, the description of Him that shall come sheds a beauty and brilliancy over everything. "He shall be as a light," &c. Brightness, freshness would characterize him. What is brighter than a morning without clouds? What is fresher than the young grass after rain?

Following this we have the work he will accomplish: punishing the wicked and rewarding the faithful. The first, David sings of as future; he never could effect it. The second he did in his measure, and thus it has its place here as a foreshadowing of what the Lord will do when He comes. For to Him only will the dominion over *men* (Adam) belong. "The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands." Useless as thorns, whose only power is to injure, David had often smarted under their thralldom. Joab, whose hands were twice stained

with innocent blood, was still captain of the host. David knew well that such could not be taken with hands. His efforts to remove him were fruitless. "But the man that shall touch them must be fenced (or filled, i.e., fully provided) with iron and the staff of a spear; they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." To one only of David's offspring will this apply—Him of whom it is written, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." (Psalm ii. 9.) "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as the fiery oven in the time of thine anger, the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, the fire shall devour them." (Psalm xxi. 8, 9.) "He will baptize with fire," "and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii.) The punishment of the wicked is the Lord's "strange work" (Isaiah xxviii. 21); yet He will do it. (Matt. xiii. 41.) To David it was a work of insuperable difficulty. For with the exception of the Amalekite, killed

have been placed much earlier in the narrative, for these were they "whom he had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel." (1 Chron. xi. 10.) They had owned, and fought for, and with him, when Saul hunted him as a partridge in the mountains, the Ziphites discovered his retreat, and the men of Keilah were willing to deliver him up. They had shared his dangers and owned him when in rejection, so their names are now mentioned with honour. It is very interesting to trace the moral order of events as given us in God's word. Long before David uttered his last words, two, certainly, of these mighty men had passed away. Asahel slain by Abner when Ishbosheth yet divided the land with David, and Uriah slain by David before the birth of Solomon. Yet the catalogue has its place here as completing the picture of the kingdom.

Of the deeds of many here recorded we have no account. But, whilst all of

for having asserted he had slain Saul, the Lord's anointed, and Sheba the son of Bichri, who lifted up the standard of rebellion against David, none of the others in Israel, whose deeds of iniquity have been recorded, are spoken of as punished by the king's commandment. So the language of Psalm ci. can only fully apply to the time yet to come. David's impotency appears in the pathetic exclamation, "I am this day weak though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me; the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness." (2 Sam. iii. 39.) Against the enemies inside and outside the land of Canaan, within the limits of his kingdom, he prevails; but against the sons of Belial among the people, he owns himself impotent. He had felt their power and knew his weakness.

The rest of the chapter gives us a different subject closely connected with the kingdom—the reward of those who had been faithful. Viewed historically, this catalogue of mighty men might

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them are classed as the mighty men of David, we see each one is rewarded with his place, according to his work. Such is the law of the kingdom. (Matt. xvi. 27.) Is it asked what qualified the first three for their place of pre-eminence, the sacred record informs us, boldness in the wars of the Lord, and personal devotedness to their king. But among these three there was an order. The Tachmonite sat chief, qualified by having killed 800 (in 1 Chron. 300) at one time. Eliezer comes next for his bravery in retrieving the day single-handed, when the men of Israel had gone away, and "the people returned after him only to spoil." Shammah has his place next for defending a portion of God's land against the Philistines, when the people's courage had failed, and they fled away. In these the claims to place were different. In what follows they had a claim for distinction in common. (2 Sam. xxiii. 17; 1 Chron. xi. 19.) These three mightiest hazarded their lives, and broke through the hosts of the uncircumcised to draw water for

their king from the well of Bethlehem. Death was braved by these men, perils were encountered, the enemy defied and overcome. Numbers were as nothing when God's honour and power were in question. Difficulties could be overcome, dangers met, when the desire of the king had been expressed. Against God's enemies they would fight, even if they fought alone. For the Lord's anointed they would break through the Philistines' hosts, if only to get him a drink of water. What cannot boldness for God achieve when acting according to His mind? What will not attachment to the king effect?

The Philistines, who dwelt in the land; the Moabites, who often invaded it; the Egyptians, from whom God's arm had delivered Israel; such are the enemies they encountered and overcame, and these the enemies of Israel were likewise the enemies of the Lord. Thus they entered, with what measure of intelligence we know not, somewhat into God's thoughts about the kingdom. The time was approaching when a king

of Israel should reign over all the land, and the different kings and kingdoms between the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates should own his sway. By their acts they seem to anticipate this, and they did what they could to forward it. The acts of Benaiah were numerous; three only are singled out: the combat with two mighty men of Moab, the slaughter of the Egyptian with his own weapon, the destruction of the lion in a pit in the time of snow. Nothing stood in his way when conflict was necessary. In season, out of season, such seemed his motto. Few, too, would like in such a position to meet a wild beast. Death or victory would be the only alternative. There could be no escape. He went forward and conquered. Confidence in God, and fellowship with God's thoughts, seem the two features that characterize these mighty men. None had a place in this list who was not mighty in warfare. The time to sheath the sword had not then arrived. Each was active, and was rewarded according to his deeds. And God remem-

bered them. David gave them a place in his kingdom, God recorded their acts in His word.

But in all parallels between God's saints and the Lord Jesus, there will be contrasts also. We have David in his last words as an example of faith in the word of God. We have him too in his acts as a type of the Lord in rewarding those faithful to him. It has been noticed how he was not a type in punishing the wicked. There is one other contrast to be noticed ere closing. He could reward his faithful adherents with a name and place at his court, but he could not preserve them from death, or ensure their beholding the reign of the Prince of Peace. And if he gave them a place before him, to sit in his presence, he could give to none a place on his throne. What he could not do, the King of kings can and will. It is now the time to be associated with the Lord as the rejected of the world: by and by we shall reign with Him. Asahel never saw David king over all Israel. Uriah never witnessed the capture of Rabbah,

and the final subjection of Ammon. We, through His grace, shall witness our Lord's glory, and share in His triumph.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER III.

NOAH.

Long before the death of Methuselah the building of the ark had begun, and Noah had thereby inaugurated the new and peculiar testimony committed to him. How long before the flood this took place we cannot determine, for if it were for 120 years, as some have supposed, how can we understand the word of God to Noah, when directing him to build: "And thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee?" For 120 years before the date of the flood, Noah's sons were not born. Moreover, it is not

material to fix the date when the building commenced, it is only important to bear in mind that long before the death of Methuselah, who was the continuing link from Enoch, Noah, a "preacher of righteousness," had begun by word and act to announce to the world that God was about to deal with it, and that righteousness must be manifested when evil is dealt with, and while condemning the world on the one hand, he, according to divine instruction, prepared an ark for the saving of his house. The evil of man had now betrayed itself in wanton disregard of the line of holy separation which was due to God. Man allied himself as he chose; his lust was the arbiter of his actions. God's claims he set at defiance, his violence was great upon the earth, and every imagination of his heart was evil continually. The terrible character of man's nature was now exposed. It is manifested to God, and it grieved Him to His heart that He had set man, that which He had formed like unto Himself, on the earth. A most momentous moment is this for us to ponder on,

relating to the judgment and the time of it; and the other, after the judgment has passed away. One, comprising the building of the ark, and Noah's leaving it after the waters had dried up; the other, dating from Noah's occupancy of the restored earth.

First let us trace out how Noah maintained the testimony connected with judgment. Before there were any indications of judgment, nay, when men eat and drank, bought and sold, married wives, &c., and did as they pleased, apprehending no special catastrophe, Noah, walking with God, and having learnt His mind, practically avows what is worthy of Him; and while maintaining his true place *for God*, at the same time and by the same act maintains the true place *for himself*. "Moved with fear" he prepares an ark—for how many years I do not say, but for many—testifying by every hammer-stroke he gave to it that his hopes from earth in its then condition were at an end; announcing thereby to all his belief in the coming judgment, and, in God's pur-

and then gather up at this early date, on the one hand, the inconceivable repulsion with which God now viewed man, and, on the other, what He, notwithstanding, in His eternal goodness, purposes to do with man.

Noah is chosen of God to be the witness of His mind, and as such God directs him to build an ark, gives him the measurements of it, details who and what the occupants of it shall be, and announces, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die." Noah and his house alone of mankind are to be saved, and that through means of the ark. The testimony to be maintained is, that God will destroy all men except one whom, with his house, He will save out of the overwhelming judgment, to take his place again on the restored earth. Noah, accepting what is worthy of God touching the earth and man on it, maintains this testimony, which, as is evident, is twofold; one

pose, to save himself out of it. If he falters, he has lost his own true place, and his true place for God; for it was worthy of God that all here should come to an end. And this was necessarily the first part of his testimony, as a preacher of righteousness and a witness against those who gave no heed to him and his preparations. How he must have looked on everything around him, all soon to be submerged in judgment, while his own hopes rested in God's provision for him out of it all! He carried out distinctly and fully the divine measurements. His *all* he knew would be there. His expectations, completely turned from the earth, all centred in the ark, where all that was valuable to him, all that of God he could surround himself with, was to be. This he declared, and this in practice he maintained. Many were the years, and much must have been the toil and exercise of mind, while, like another Paul (in Philippians), he had not yet attained, but yet this "one thing" he did in order to attain. He presented to an unbe-

lieving world, that the ark would not only save him and his house, but contain in it every order of creature. No work of the Creator's hand would be lost, and none would he be deprived of, but it was all to be *within* the enclosure which God was providing for it; and from earth he ceased to expect anything. On he worked towards the completion of that which comprised, confined, and concentrated all his thoughts and energies. God had done with the earth, and man as he then was on it; and this Noah strictly and unequivocally bore witness of. If he had betrayed any hope from the earth, as it then was, he would have failed in being a witness of God's mind, for he could neither have prepared the ark nor condemned the world. He must not flinch or falter, or deviate from one of God's instructions to him. The testimony, to be maintained at all, must be perfect in all its parts. What a life was his! What a position he held! One singularly apart from all human hopes and desires, which were centred, and all his labours ex-

lentless in its course, he testifies to the heavenly hosts, knowing in himself full and perfect security, though death and judgment reign universally and without restriction. For a year, which comprises all the vicissitudes of season and climate, and this typifies one natural life, Noah remains in the ark floating on the waters. For many years he had testified to men on earth of his hope of safety, and entirely apart from their hopes, had occupied himself solely and exclusively with the ark, but now he is *in* that which he had for so long been preparing, and through it he surmounts the waters of desolation of which he had predicted, and which now prevail upon the earth. How wondrous is this two-fold testimony to us when read in the light of the glory of Christ? How beautifully and significantly these two parts of the first line of Noah's testimony come out and unite in their application to ourselves! For though with Noah the two lines were successive, with us they exist at one and the same time, even as Paul in Philippians and Paul in Ephe-

pendent, on that which alone was worthy of God, and in which he had been instructed through God's revelation to him. What a testimony at this early date! Even that God could sustain a man on the earth, not as Abel, in acceptance, and persecuted to death because of it; nor as Enoch, walking with God, apart from everything on it, and in the hope of being translated out of it; but, as in Noah's case, assured of judgment coming on the earth—nay, more, knowing that, as under sentence, it was already judged in the sight of God—yet equally assured of a place of inviolable security for himself in the ark; thus simply and definitely presenting to us, even now, how we should rest in Christ in a world under judgment because of His death; for in Him, our ark, we are in spirit out of this world, while the Holy Ghost convicts it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

The second part in this the first line of Noah's testimony now follows (chap. vii. 16). God has shut him in! and there, amid the overwhelming judgment, re-

sians. In the one he is building the ark, counting everything but dross to win Christ; his hopes as to earth are at an end, and Christ, whose death sealed the judgment of this world, is simply and entirely his object. In the other he is *in* the ark—"seated in heavenly places in Christ," in whom he is blessed with every spiritual blessing.

Noah, therefore, while personally a type of the remnant of the latter day, who will be borne scathless through the time of judgment, and possess the renewed earth, presents a testimony which in a still more comprehensive way in its two-fold features, answers to what our own should be. The saints now fulfil the Noachic testimony by witnessing on the one hand that while *waiting* for the judgment Christ is their only object and hope, and on the other that the judgment of the earth being sealed by His death, we are *in Him* above all the ruin and death here. If we do any other thing than seek to win Christ, we are not in our own true place, nor are we in our true place for God; and if I am not

sensibly in Him, "*shut in*," knowing that all that is valuable to me from the Creator's hand is *there*—inside—and not looking outside for anything, I am denying what is worthy of God in ending all flesh. I am not a witness for Him, or rejoicing in His grace towards me. I may have light enough to see my place, but failing to maintain it, I cannot be happy in myself, or a witness for Him; for I do not accept that which alone is worthy of Him. Noah in heart, life, aim, and position, declared that it was worthy of God that the end of all flesh should come before Him, and he himself be saved in the ark. In like manner it is for us to declare that the judgment of this world is come, and that we through grace shall not come into judgment; that it is worthy of God that in Adam all should die, and in Christ all should be made alive; and that He is the depository and centre of every blessing, so that it is as vain for us to look for anything outside Him as it was for Noah to look outside the ark, when all that belonged to him, or that

He renews man's term on the earth with a large mitigation of the original penalty and in the sweet savour of the sacrifice, man becomes the object of fresh and multiplied blessings, while a second trial is ensured for Adam's race and that with the promise, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, neither will I again smite any more every living thing as I have done; while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." God blesses Noah and his sons, and makes him the representative of government. Every created thing is delivered into his hand, and every moving thing was to be for meat, while it is also added, "and surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." It is important to gather up the elements of the testi-

he needed, had been brought into it, and the waters of judgment were overwhelming all the rest. And so we shall find as we go on, every faithful servant of God, from Noah down, is ruled in his walk and finds his own blessing in maintaining what is worthy of God; and thus their own souls grew and were enlarged in the greatness and goodness of God to themselves. For as we maintain what is worthy of Him, so do we enjoy it in ourselves; and as we enjoy it, so do we maintain it.

After a full year, after patience and hope had been exercised and proved, Noah leaves the ark for the restored earth, and here the second line of his testimony commences. On the purged earth he takes his place in type of the millennial saints, and he sets forth by offerings of every clean beast and fowl (Chap. viii. 20) on the altar, man's true place with God's as to worship, and the relation in which through sacrifice and redemption man should stand with God. This infantine expression of man's true place is acknowledged by God, and

mony which Noah was called to support. Man is on his trial again, and for a moment fills the place appointed of God. The bow in the cloud is the token from God of His new arrangement with man, as He said, "I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood. Neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." Noah for a moment maintains this testimony, a faint expression of that time when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." And very interesting is it to connect ourselves with God's great purpose at such an early date, and to discern how the things unfolded now, or which are about to be manifested, had an existence, and had been witnessed of characteristically by man ages ago; thus intimating the nature of God's purpose eventually.

But it was only for a moment that Noah maintained this testimony untarnished. Man's sufficiency in this his new trial and under new circumstances,

is again found wanting. He drops into nature, and is exposed by his own son, who, in proclaiming his father's shame, shows man's advance in evil, and that man's nature is not only weak and foolish in itself, but that it is insensible to its shame.

Noah lives 349 years on the earth after leaving the ark, and this period embraces the building of Babel (man's effort to make for himself a name on the earth), little more than 100 years after the flood! This new form of man's evil—systematic and combined purpose—to be independent of God, and to make a name for himself, takes place on the earth so lately cleared of all that was of man, and under the very eyes of him who had been the witness of its destruction, and, with his house, was the sole survivor. So great and universal had been the judgment that for a whole year or more no man had set foot upon the earth; yet now, on the new earth, how rapidly man's evil and presumption had sprung up and ripened. Man's purpose now is in advance of and

man's independence was developed; for he who had seen and witnessed of God's dealings and purposes respecting man, is continued on the earth for more than 200 years after the judgment on Babel. God's witness on the earth is still Noah; he who had demonstrated in such a terrible way God's judgment, and who had commenced again when God made a new trial of man on the earth; even he lives to see the development of man's evil in a more independent form than ever; and that mercy from God only exposed the more the estrangement of man's heart. God has no other testimony for the earth at such a time. Noah's is the suited one during the action and course of this evil. From the confusion of languages the various kingdoms were first formed; but the point for us to bear in mind, is that God vouchsafed no new line of testimony until the evil of man in the judged earth, which every one knew had been judged (no event was ever so universally known or admitted under heaven as the flood), was fully developed.

very different from that of Cain, who acknowledged a claim from God, yet being ignorant of what that, His claim, was; not understanding the distance between himself and God, he proposed to meet it by a work of his own. But here, the builders of Babel assume entire independence, and seek to effect it by systematic combination. The terms of the new covenant are entirely overlooked, and Noah, like Paul, survived to see the total failure of the testimony entrusted to him. How chequered was his life, and yet how fine the line of his testimony! Nor did he pass away from the earth till another and new order of testimony was ready to be revealed. For more than 200 years after the division of the earth, in the days of Peleg, did Noah live. He died two years before the birth of Abram, and whose father, Terah, was then 128 years old. God always continues one line of testimony until there is a full manifestation of man setting it aside. Noah's does not terminate at the building of Babel, where first the great full purpose of

The faithful had still Noah to look to and rest in as their guide from God; but after his death Terah, I conclude, in faith calls his son Abram the "great father," as the expected one to lead the people of God into the line for him, suited to the evil which had now grown to its height universally on the earth.

Before the death of Noah the two great kingdoms of the earth were founded—the kingdom of Egypt and that of Assyria. Thus we see of what long continuance was the Noahic testimony, and it is most interesting and instructive for us to bear in mind the moral conveyed in its continuance for such a period without any addition. Nothing else could God present to the faithful until the independence of man was fully developed and until as kings they had laid hold of the earth, and were governing it *without Him*. Then Noah dies, and two years after Abram is born, who is called to set forth a new line of testimony, which I reserve for the next chapter.

FRAGMENT.

Daniel iii.

When God had tried man, as the Jews by the law, and they failed, He puts absolute power in the hands of one man, and instead of his using it in serving God, he sets up an image and commands all men to worship it. And what do we find? God's people abstain from it in the character of the remnant—they will not submit. They do not do it, and it is a great crime of course, upsetting the whole thing. Then comes persecution, and to that they do submit. However God might allow His people to suffer, nothing ought to alter their reliance on Himself. Faith was as simple a thing in Babylon as in Jerusalem. God is the God of heaven and earth at all times, and none can hinder His power nor the exercise of it in grace towards His people. He may suffer them to be in trial. He may not always give outward deliverance, but patience is always the same, and the ground of confidence the same here in Babylon as in Jerusalem. If the circumstances and trials are different and great, the Lord's power of interfering is always the same—it is never hindered a bit. The outward trial may hinder God's power from our eyes, but He is always the same. I doubt not in this day many a heart is feeling discouraged and ready to say, "Who will show us any good?" "Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!" And what would you get more? For what is better or mightier than the light of God's countenance? However sorrowful we may be about things, that is not to weaken our confidence in God. It was when all seemed hopeless in Israel that Immanuel was found among them, and however hopeless the condition of God's people may seem when a false god is set up, God remains the same.

REVELATION XXI. 1—4.

These verses of God's word speak of the everlasting state, regarding which so little is revealed in Scripture. That period will necessarily follow the millennial kingdom, when, as written in 1 Corinthians xv. 24, 25, "Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father," that "God may be all in all"—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God. In the kingdom it will be God in government—a vast sphere of glory administered by the Son of man. In the eternal state it will be the perfection of the nature of God, displayed and enjoyed by the Church and all the redeemed—the vessels of mercy. How very sweetly this truth falls on the ear of the renewed and *wrapt* soul:—"Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God!" But if the blessed God will thus take delight in men, thus redeemed and in that unclouded glory,

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vessels full of the Holy Ghost in unhindered power of joy and praise, what does the whole current of the revealed word, from Genesis iii. to the end of Revelation, convey to us but the same blessed display of the heart of the God of all grace? We shall find that all along, in each dispensation, and with every hindrance to it on man's part, there is the delight of the Lord to dwell with men according to the measure in which he could reveal Himself. His good pleasure was that they should know Him, come to Him, walk with Him, worship Him, and fear Him, that there should be communion together. The glory had to vindicate its own title, had to withdraw from evil, even to remove from the earth (as in Ezek. x. 18); but, oh! in dealing with self-will and rebellion in the creature, in what ways did the blessed Lord God act for restoration, for recovery of the loss to His people of His presence and mercies! What were all God's appointed means under the law, for the cleansing and restoring of His people? What the same gracious

REVELATION XXI.

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care for the Church and each member of the body of Christ revealed in the New Testament? The priesthood of Christ, the washing of water by the word, the working of the Spirit of God in the souls of the elect—what does all this make manifest to us but the unfolding of the affections of God (I speak as a man), the revelation of the heart of Him, who calls Himself Love? He does not call Himself Holiness—that is His nature—but He calls Himself, Love, His nature likewise. And what a powerful way of attracting our affections and drawing out our hearts to Him who first loved us, is this revealing to our souls through Scripture, in the Spirit's energy, the depths of the love of God! As we sing at times—

"In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found:
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy—
All His grace shall there abound."

It is an easy and delightful work to gather vivid illustrations, both from the Old and New Testament, of this blessed truth—the good pleasure of our God to

dwell with and have intercourse with His people. The first place in which a people are seen in relationship with God, such as Israel then had, occurs in Exodus xl., to which I would advert. But I would pause for a moment over Genesis iii., though it be but an individual, "the first man, Adam;" because at the hour of the fall and the entrance of sin and death into the world, there is a most blessed exhibition of what mercy and grace could do. The voice in verse 9, "Where art thou?" is not one of judgment and anger, but a voice of love, pleading with guilty man and opening an ear in his soul to hear of the coming One, the seed of the woman! What a display of what God is in Himself, acting worthily of Himself, and what a pledge and pattern to His people, that the first man fallen, ruined, and dead in sin, should be brought out to seek and follow God and holiness (it was innocence before), not in a life that could be, and was forfeited, but according to the power of eternal life through "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven!"

unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel." (Psalm ciii.) 2 Samuel vii. affords a still fuller and richer illustration. King David's intention seemed good even to Nathan (ver. 3), but it was not according to God. And what a word have we in verses 6, 7, expressive of the Lord God's tender living grace to that poor people! "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt *even to this day*, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle." Let His people be moving from place to place, *He will move with them*. Let them be stationed, He will have a house built for His name (ver 13), to be dwelling with His people! David, type of Christ as a warrior king, could not do this work; and the Lord turns to David's personal history with much beauty and wondrous grace, "also the Lord telleth thee *that he will make thee an house!*" No wonder king David could pour out his heart in worship. (Ver. 18.) When the temple was built (1 Kings viii. 10, 11,) we find how the "glory of the Lord had

In the chapter of Exodus we find a striking exemplification of our subject. The sin of the people had risen to its height. His voice from the glory had to say, "that I may consume them," the stiff-necked people! The magnificent pleading of Moses (type of a greater Intercessor) had cried, "Let my Lord go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people:" the very reason why the riches of grace should flow out. The tabernacle had been set up and we read (ver. 34), "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." The cloud showed the Shekinah, symbol of majesty, as God could then reveal Himself; but, oh! the grace, the long-suffering, the tender care and mercies (ver. 36—38) of the Lord, who only waited for the opportunity to testify of what He was to them! May our hearts learn more of His ways. "He made known His ways

filled the house of the Lord," testifying of God's good pleasure to dwell among His people. What a serious weighty consideration for conscience, that *we* in the fuller light, in "the habitation of God in Spirit," realize so feebly the power of the presence of the Lord; that worship is so inadequate, that walking in the light is so little known in power. Alas! *it is so*. But it is not according to God, and His revealed good pleasure. It is man who has soiled and corrupted everything his hand has touched from the beginning! And since, when we come to the New Testament, the God who inspired the prophets and servants, Himself stood on this earth, the lowly humbled Man, and came to tabernacle amongst men, we do, indeed, discover in a more blessed way the heart of God. We come to the cross, and we behold that blessed One bearing all the wrath of God, undergoing death (and destroying that stronghold of the enemy), and accomplishing redemption by putting away sin for ever from God's sight—eternally glorifying

God. The moral nature and being of God everlastingly glorified in the putting away of sin! We go on to see Him raised from the dead—the Head and Creator of a new creation, till by faith we behold Him as Man in heaven, from whose face shines out the living glory of God. Oh, what a reconciliation! what a way for God to dwell with men. Every ray of that glory on which we love to gaze tells of the power of His mighty, efficacious work for us—of the full and infinite love of God. And when we approach the Pentecostal hour, we reach the strength and glory of the matter, as far as earth could then show it. God the Holy Ghost descends from the ascended Son of God, the glorious and victorious Man. And what does this signify? “He shall glorify me,” Jesus said. He quickens, He gathers together the children of God, the co-heirs, He forms the Body, the Church: He dwells there—“the habitation of God in Spirit.”

Tremendous responsibility to man! Unspeakable blessing, condescension, and

grace from God. What the quick entrance of apostacy—what the more and more ripened condition of apostacy—judgment on the churches—the word amply reveals to us. But God's love and purpose cannot be frustrated. Where He fixes His affections there can be no disappointment. Jesus comes to take the Church, to present it to Himself (as God), “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” to introduce it to the Father's house, that *inner shrine* of glory which, I believe, cannot be manifested. It is the place of the communion, the joys of the heavenly Father's children. Then the kingdom and manifestation of glory on the earth, which leads on to our subject of a new heaven and a new earth in Rev. xxi. God's delight to dwell with men. “The tabernacle,” doubtless, will be the Church itself, and God will dwell with men. And, oh! what words for the soul, “God *himself* shall be with them and be their God.”

Oh! that the hearts of the saints could be more occupied with God—

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what He is to us; more breathe of that spirit and that scene into which they may be so very quickly introduced. “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

A SERIES.

No. 15.

THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The first impression, and the one to which we must hold most simply in coming to the study of Scripture is, that in them alone is God's mind and will revealed to us. Creation, to a certain extent, is a revelation of God; it sets forth the quality of His being, but it does not disclose His mind. Even with regard to our equals, their acts only can give us a clue to their minds; but of one much greater than ourselves, in nature as well as in power, we can know nothing whatever save as such an one is pleased to divulge His mind to us. This God, in His wondrous grace, has been pleased to do. Not only has

He communicated His mind to individuals now and again, but He has had it written out for us in connection with those whom He used for the time as witnesses of what He revealed. Consequently, the Scriptures are for the most part a record of God's ways with men on the earth, and men in relation to God with respect to Himself as made known or revealed. So that as I read the Scriptures, I am in a certain sense reading of myself, in the state of things in which the revelation has reached my fellow-men. I see how natural it is. Man becomes the medium to me by which the mind of God, as unfolded, is presented to me. I am reading in the Scriptures as it were, a history of myself under different phases. I am made to feel the exactitude of the nature of the characters there delineated to my own, and yet the wonderful thing to me is how man, so weak and frail in himself, as is so often seen in the divine record, should be so great at times through the power and mercy of God towards him. The very fact of all this

lends a charm to the Scriptures, which, while it seems too simple, and a mere fragmentary history of man to the wise and learned, who always look for something mysterious and outside the mind of man generally, is full of beauty and power to the simple, as in the most touching and familiar way bringing down God's revelation of Himself to the general routine of man's daily life; as one reads it, one reads oneself in it, and always as one would have been in the circumstances given. The mind of God is communicated to me as I am in myself, learned or unlearned, and it is received and comprehended by me independently of my ignorance or knowledge of anything else.

We must, therefore, address ourselves to the study of the Scriptures, as the writings in which the mind of God in the most simple and familiar way is disclosed to us. God can bring down the greatest thing with Him, so close and near as to be at home with us, and yet all the time retaining in itself all its essential and unfathomable greatness.

when we see the main difference between the two with reference to ourselves. The Old Testament is the history of God's ways and purposes towards man as man, in all his feebleness and frailty; maintaining His claim on him, and putting him under law, when man assumed to meet the claim, yet always making bare His hand and openly blessing, in the most distinct and remarkable way, any one who turned to Him and sought His help. In the New Testament you have pre-eminently how God brings man to Himself through His own Son, and by Him sets him above all the power and difficulty by which He could be assailed. This very briefly sketches the difference between the Old Testament and the New; but it is very important that the distinction should be clearly established in our minds; because from not understanding the distinction, simple as it is to state it, much confusion has arisen, and consequent inability to interpret the word of God. We must read ourselves as addressed all the way down. We must put ourselves in the

Who can explain the commonest thing in creation, and yet it is near enough, and its uses palpable enough. Light or air for example, who can adequately explain them? and if not these, how the deep things of God?

But in this disclosure of God's mind to us, God must use His *own* words, for no words save His own, can rightly divulge and express to me the mind of one greater than myself. Even with men I have no full conception of their communications, but as I accept them verbatim, and this in proportion to the largeness of the subject on which they treat. The very words used are always important, and my receiving them verbatim is evidence of my acceptance of the full idea as expressed. How much more so with regard to any communication from God! If He will express His mind to me, He must use His own words, and I must accept them *implicitly*.

The Scriptures are divided commonly into two volumes, respectively called the Old and the New Testament. We may accept this division, and it will help us

place of our fellows through all the revelations from God; and as we do, we shall come to apprehend how appropriate and perfect is the manner and scope of the whole.

Let us now examine for a little what will characterize a soul truly set on the study of the Scriptures in a divine way. For the sake of clearness, I shall divide the characteristics into five heads.

The first must surely be a readiness to receive what God communicates. "The meek he will teach his way." If I am satisfied with my own thoughts and ideas, I cannot truly pay attention to God's. It is because I have discovered my ignorance, and therefore my incompetency or inability to see things in their true light, that I seek the Scriptures. But if I come to them as God's revelation of His mind to man, I must come without any preconceived ideas. I must allow God, who is infinitely above me, to reveal His mind to me (and He alone knows it), *as He is pleased* to do so. I must, in a sense, be passive. I am ignorant; I

need to be instructed in the most momentous instructions ever vouchsafed to man; and hence it becomes me to take my true place as meek before Him, and therefore quite ready and waiting for Him to make His own impression on me in the natural force of the words He uses to instruct me. In fact, according to my meekness, freedom from preconception or opinions of my own of any kind, the more truly am I prepared and in a condition to receive the word of God. This is the first and most important characteristic; for it is only in proportion to the extent of it that there is any acquisition of God's mind in the study of the Scriptures. There is no real disposition to learn otherwise. There may be a desire to acquire the knowledge of passages of Scripture to support one's own views; but it is so simple and easily understood, that in dealing with One supremely above me I must be in complete readiness to receive His mind, and that I must not, in any measure, put my own on a level with His. For if I do, how could I expect Him to

how far I must be subject to it, I am not prepared to receive from it; and thus souls are often hindered in the study of God's word. They do not come to it with an honest and true heart, in simple purpose to accord to everything there communicated. Where the heart makes any reservation, there is a barrier to the force and application to the word of God. It is possible to be quite sensible of one's ignorance, and in that sense truly desirous of learning and in the true disposition to learn, and yet not prepared to act on *everything* which the word of God might demand of me. Now if we are not prepared for this, we must necessarily be unprepared for the study of the Scriptures, because we, in effect, prescribe limits to where the truth must reach us; and, surely, it is plain to everyone, *that* can be no proper state for the study of the word of God.

Thirdly. I must study the Scripture not as a matter of ordinary concern, or as a casual thing, but with a daily increasing and deepening sense of the importance and value of the communi-

divulge His deep and peculiar counsels to one pre-occupied with thoughts of his own? We may rest assured that herein lies the solution of the question so often asked, "Why do not I get more out of the Scriptures?" It is because you do not come to them meek and unprepossessed and ready to receive just as the words of God would impart to you.

The next characteristic, I may describe as the retention of the word in the soul. This is the "good ground," the "honest and good heart," which, having heard the word, keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience. I must have been in a true disposition to hear the word, or I should not have heard it truly; but, besides this, I require to be intelligent as to the claims which God's truth has on me. I then not only hear it, but I understand it; and because I have purpose of heart to accord to all that God will say to me, the word will find in me a suited soil for itself. If I am in any position and would in any way prescribe a limit to the word, as to

cations made to me there; that in very deed God's mind is there revealed to me; and what could be more important? I must, then, prize it; and as I prize it, I seek for it as for hid treasure. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, *then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." "My son if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee," &c. A valuable thing is not committed by the wise but to one who will value it; and therefore God never commits anything of His to anyone but in proportion as they value it. Whatever is most valuable ought to be most valued; and if you really value anything, you will be devoted in your pursuit of it, and use every endeavour to acquire it. Look at all the servants of God from Enoch down, and you will observe this. See Elijah forty days in Horeb, or Daniel three weeks without pleasant food, or Paul in prison at Rome,

or John at Patmos, and we shall see that the divine communications were only made to those who, because of their interest therein, were entitled to receive them. Who would like to communicate what was precious to him unless it were valued? And will God communicate the counsel of His heart to one who is not entirely devoted to Him, and simply engrossed with acquiring what He values? Do we ever see any one acquire but in proportion as he proves his value of the mind of God by the devotedness of his application in the acquisition of it? In all labour there is profit, and especially so here. Even in ordinary learning, a man progresses only as he applies himself to it. But when we learn from *God*, we must remember that we are in mind carnally at enmity with Him, and therefore we require, I may say, a double application; one to keep the natural mind in subjection, and the other to receive and apprehend the mind of God communicated to us in His word.

Fourthly. There must be meditation

—"meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them." The more you meditate on anything, the more you deepen it in your mind, and place yourself under the control of it. The word "meditate" is used in the Old Testament Scriptures to express any deeply-engaging sentiment: a lion *roaring* after his prey, and a dove *mourning* sore. The deep continual occupation with the mind of God has not only the effect of deepening it, which is very important, but also, the more you keep before your mind (i.e., meditate on) the ways of God particularly or generally, the more will you find that you are acquiring development of the purpose of them; and what was at first simply a sentiment, has become by meditation a large subject with manifold ramifications and deductions. And you will observe that the man who has meditated much on a divine sentiment can develop it as one conversant with the scope and range of it; while another who has but caught the idea, has as yet acquired no history or sense of its power or quality, and

therefore cannot invest it with any development. When a subject deeply engages you, it is before your mind day and night, and you give it *size*, if I may so say, while you find on one side that which is contrary to it; and then, as what engages you is divine, you make a front against the enemy, and when you find anything congenial, you appropriate it as belonging to your subject; so that in every way through meditation the subject is deepening in yourself, and acquiring strength and body by the continued and sustained engagement which it obtains from you; and thus in measure one becomes a "tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The last characteristic that I shall notice is that where there is a free and simple readiness and heart to communicate for the good of others what has been acquired from the study of the Scriptures, there always according to the unalterable rule of God, the "liberal soul shall be made fat." He that water-

eth shall be watered himself. That which he hath given shall be repaid unto him again. "God loves the cheerful giver." It is in keeping with his own mind and if we do not lovingly and heartily impart the truth that has been committed to us, we cannot expect more from God, or have a heart to look to Him for it. We have not freely given that which we have freely received; and hence in the study of the Scriptures, as in any thing else, if we are not free and cordial in imparting it as we have received it, there is a sensible check to one receiving more from God. Even when the study may be continued and laborious—where there is not a ready and cheerful sharing of the acquisition with others, it will be observed that the acquisitions are more of a critical intellectual character than of the living and intimate communications of one receiving from the heart of Christ, and ministering from the same. Nay, it will be observed that the ministry or expression is indicative of the kind of intimacy and nearness which he has had himself with

the Lord; and hence, I can understand how, when there has been the most blessed and sustained ministry, the servant of Christ has said, that he never read Scripture for others save as he had read it first for himself. I believe it is of great importance to remember that now the Spirit of God first feeds our own souls with Christ, before we can truly impart of Him; and that it is in proportion as I have believed on Him and have derived from Him that there flow from me rivers of living water. In a word, that no one can impart beyond what he has received in his soul. I allow that there is a certain amount of interpretation of Scripture which many may receive, but the living ministry of the word I believe does not go beyond what one has received for oneself, possibly in its fulness and freshness at the very time of communicating it. Yet he is not a mere instrument. The ministry is more from a member of the body to the other members; and therefore living to all, and from a soul to souls. Hence there is advance in the intelligence of truth, as there is

cause we have the perfect and wonderful model of it in Christ Himself, who is the power of it. He is the very eternal life that was with the Father, and He has given us that eternal life. He was the Creator as shown in John's gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him," &c. He was eternally with God before He created; "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" and he adds, "of his fulness have we all received." Two things are here. First. "The Word was made flesh;" as also in the Hebrews, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" as in Colossians, "the image of the invisible God," the perfect representation of what God was. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We get in His person the life itself that was with the Father from the beginning. He was the life—it was in Him. It is

devotedness and zeal in sharing it according to the mind and purpose of Christ.

May we in these days of difficulty wait on Him with true meekness of heart and readiness to impart that we may be through the Scriptures thoroughly furnished unto every good work! Amen.

NOTES ON I JOHN II. 8.

"Again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth." We here get a very important principle of the divine life: what is our life, and whence its source. There are two parts of the manifestation of the divine life: what He was in His own person down here, and, now that He is exalted, what He manifests through and in us of the divine life. First. Christ the source of it for us: "the Word was made flesh," &c. Secondly. The manifestation through and in us. There we can correct every estimate we form of our own lives, be-

never said eternal life is in us, but it is given to us; that is a different thing. He Himself is our life. He has life in Himself. "God has *given* us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." But the Son has life in Himself. My hand is alive, but my life is not in my hand. My hand lives by virtue of its union with my body; take it off and I shall live still. So the Church, or an individual soul, lives by virtue of its union with Christ, the Head. It is in Him the reality of the life is. Secondly. When Christ was down here, all His instructions were the expressions of this life. It was not like a commandment given by the law, because the law exacted from man what was becoming, and what man ought to be in relation to God. It took the responsibility that attached to man's character as man, and did not go beyond it. But we get in Christ the manifestation of what God was to man; love acting in the midst of evil. It was no part of the law to love sinners; but it was the part of the Lord; He came down to love. Another thing is this;

that in all His thoughts and tones of feeling for us, He went far beyond the mere letter of the law, for the law could not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" that must arise from an estimate of God. The law could not notice "Blessed are the peacemakers;" but Christ was Himself the Prince of Peace, showing there was peace to be made. So the duties. There was a spirituality in the law beyond what we see, but there was a power of good in Christ that went beyond the evil. The law never manifested power over evil in the shape of love; but there was manifested in Christ the power of good over evil, and that was Christ's life. We get in all His actings the character and expression of what God was in man when on earth, and that is so lovely; He was the eternal life that was with the Father. John the Baptist who was next to Christ, and immediately preceded Him, of whom the Lord testified, "of them that are born of woman there has not been a greater than John the Baptist," came in the way of righteousness; and therefore

which attracted in Christ. The moment a Christian recognizes divine life in another, in spite of difference of education, rank, and many other things, he will be drawn towards him, it is characteristic, he cannot help it. The moment a man discerns the spirit of Christ in another, there is a necessary attraction to it; at once they are united together in love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The instant the spirit and character of Christ is manifested, there is necessarily an attraction where the spirit of Christ is. Then there is the blessed discernment of the traits of it. It is discerning Christ. "Love your enemies," that was manifest in Christ as a man; "If you love them that love you, what thank have ye?" You must be above your enemies, and love those that are good for nothing. In Christ we see God coming down and manifesting this life in a man on the earth so as to attract towards Him, and to bring into His presence in rest; and He says, "As I have loved you, you

went away from men altogether, and was in the desert and kept no company with any; was a herald before Christ to announce Him; had nothing to say to any; ate locusts and wild honey. But God, being the person who was offended, could come in grace near to them, and speak to them in the spirit of grace, which rises above and over-rides the evil and expresses what God is; and they said, "Never man spake like this man." Then it is said, "He went about doing good." In Him was found the activity of good, the suffering for righteousness' sake, the exercise of love, "love your brethren." There is another thing which specially characterizes the divine life of Christ, the discernment of it in those who possess this life, the power of discerning the Spirit of life in another. It has been said there requires much grace in oneself to discern little grace in another. There is an attractive power in grace which recognizes the Spirit of Christ in another. He could say, "for as much as this man also is a child of Abraham." There was that

ought also to love one another." "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." He overcometh evil with good; you must do as God does—love your enemies. It was that proved Him to be God, in that He could love that in which there was nothing loveable. In God, the spring of love is from Himself, but we need something to attract us. I am referring to the primary revelation, "that which was from the beginning;" and however much we may go on, we must come back after all to it; it is always perfect because it is God Himself that is manifested. You never can bring me to anything where God was manifested but to the living word of Christ, or the written word of Scripture. We have only to ask—is it that which you have heard from the beginning? if not, "it is evil seducers." If it is that which we have had from the beginning, that is God; and that must test everything, and that is the character of the word. Bring a sinner opposite the word and you learn what he is, as in the case of the poor Samaritan woman. The writ-

ten word is the manifestation of Christ, and is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is not that man can judge God's word without judging himself, so if he judges it wrong, he is judged himself. You may talk about colours or light to a blind man, but if he is blind he will not understand you. It is his non-perception of light and colour that proves he is blind. "He that believeth not is condemned already," he is incapable of seeing Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and the word judges himself. It must be so where God is manifested. If I am incapable of discerning what manifests Christ, and the word does not reach my soul, it is that which judges me. "The word that I speak the same shall judge you in the last day." All God's ways now are presenting His *moral* manifestation. It will next be His *judicial* manifestation. If the moral manifestation is not received, "the word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day."

(To be continued.)

that in its place may be. For communion to be possible—at least "communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ"—whether at the table of the Lord or elsewhere, there must be the possession of a life that is divine. But connected with that, as with all life, there are aspirations and energies which go far beyond the utmost illumination of the mind and understanding, and are surely met and responded to by Him who is its giver and its source. Scripture teaches us expressly that deep in the heart of the believer there are unutterable groanings, which the Holy Spirit produces and so takes up as to become intercession to God, which, it is declared, He fully understands; albeit they receive not from us either the mouldings of intelligence or the utterance of words. Moreover, it must not be forgotten, in our desire for scriptural knowledge (and that desire cannot be too strong), that in the history of the Church, the men who have left the deepest impress of their labours upon it, and who have carried with them most

THE TABLE OF THE LORD.

Whatever means God in His wisdom may take to send us to a renewed independent study of His word, it will always issue, if rightly used, in renewed blessing and enlargement to our souls. If it be carried on in humility and with quiet waiting upon God, it will result not only in clearer apprehensions of the divine word, but also in, that which is the end of all divine teaching, increased acquaintance with God and Christ.

With this conviction I take occasion from some brief remarks presented in a single page of a recent number of a cognate publication, entitled, "The Table of the Lord," to go over again the testimony of Scripture on this subject, for my own profit, and, if the Lord so please, for the profit of my readers also.

With the remarks, so far as they refer to a point of Scripture, I entirely agree; not however that I think the communion of Christians is to be restricted to the correctness of their exegesis, nor that it is regulated by it, however important

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unequivocally the stamp and seal of God in connection with their service for Christ and souls, have not always been the most consistent expositors of Scripture, nor pre-eminently distinguished for the clearness of their views. It is well for us to remember an observation of Bengel, in reference to those who in the early ages of Christianity sought to escape from its worldliness and the incoming tide of its corruptions, that "Secluded separatists are seen generally to have more light than life." But above all, it becomes us to remember the words of Him who, not without reason, said to His disciples, "If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Errors of the most opposite character are ever ready, through the malice of the enemy, to entangle our souls; and we are secure only as we are kept in lowly subjection to the Lord, taking the yoke of Christ, and habitually judging ourselves in the light of the Word. For, if ignorance of Scripture exposes us to the shafts of Satan and cripples us in

our souls, both as to communion, and service, and walk, as it surely does, there is danger of error also from the opposite side. To souls emancipated from the trammels and systems of men and alive to the darkness and corruptions which, through the practical disregard of Scripture, deform so large a portion of the professing church, there is no error nearer, especially to minds possessing a certain degree of activity and intelligence, than that of mistaking the mental perceptions of truth for its living power—apart from which most surely Christ will never be graven on the heart. This mistake—such are our hearts!—is by no means uncommon; though no two things can well be more unlike, as all will acknowledge who are ever so little versed in the opposite actings of the enemy and of the blessed Spirit of our God.

As to the table of the Lord, the name of *Christ* is confessedly connected with the communion there, which is its happiest and most distinctive part. "Lord" is the title of dignity and authority;

necessary in its place, but, if we think of its correlative, suggesting the idea of *subjection*, not that of communion. Both titles are employed (1 Cor. x., xi.) in reference to the table, and both in their legitimate and distinctive force; and it should have been observed that the title which bespeaks communion is as much in contrast with the evil of idolatry as that which marks the table as a place of dignity and judgment is in contrast with the table of demons, &c. And the question is, not whether the table could exist and Christianity remain if Christ were not Lord; but whether the title connected with communion having been once changed for that of authority, because evil was there, is resumed, when the continuous character of the ordinance is given, and of course its communion implied, which it is not.

In the gospels we find the first institution of this memorial of self-sacrificing love, which, in its accomplishment and results, for God's glory and man's blessing, stands out in eternal relief from the hoary chronicles of time, and is the

single and only inscriptive pillar in the wide universe, where all created intelligences can plainly read the full moral character of God—where all created intelligences may learn what evil is and what is goodness. From it the *principalities and powers* in heavenly places receive their instruction in "the manifold wisdom of God;" *angels* stoop down, desiring to look into its holy mysteries; while as to *man*, it binds with eternal ties to God and Christ the soul that has learnt, though in feeblest measure, the story of the grace which is there inscribed.

To the record of Luke I now turn, that we may be cheered by the living freshness of the gospel narrative as well as instructed in the intrinsic character of the divine institution, which is the subject of our enquiry. In Luke xxii. 14—24 we read, "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more

eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and said, 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. And he took bread and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest."

It needs that little be added to this touching narrative, which produces its own effect; while the simplicity of its terms like the light is unnoticed and

unthought of as it fixes our intensive gaze on the objects it reveals. We not only read the narrative, but are transported by it into the midst of the scene that is described. But before further remark I will present in a synoptic view the words of the institution of the supper as given in the three gospels.

MATT. XXVI. 26—28.	MARK XIV. 22—24.	LUKE XXII. 19, 20.
"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."	"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."	"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given (διδόμενον) for you; this do in remembrance of me (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν). Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη) in my blood which is shed for you."

It might *a priori* be assumed that, in its first institution, every essential characteristic of the Lord's Supper and Table would be found. The truth of

this conclusion subsequent scripture confirms. In its first institution, the ruling feature, that which alone gave it its gracious and authoritative character, was the presence and the command of Christ. In the midst of His disciples He is presented as Lord and Master of the table, and in infinite grace and condescension, its willing *servitor* too. This gives it its essential character. Its significance must be read in the death in all its bearings and issues, He was about to undergo—the death of the *founder* of the feast, which it then prefigured, and ever after recalls. Now Christ's bodily and earthly presence with His disciples, when the supper received its indelible character, at once destroys the figment of any "real presence" in the elements of bread and wine; and negatives, at the same moment, the dogma that the ordinance receives validity from its administration, by consecrated or other hands. Christ Himself, at its institution, *was* the administrator (who will deny it?), if place for an administrator can be

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found in the naked and sublime simplicity of this monumental act. Christ *was*, and *is*, the sole administrator at His table, and *will be* to the end. For when I turn to the special revelation which was received by Paul, from a risen and ascended Christ; in reference to this cardinal expression and symbol of Christianity, what do I find but a simple repetition of the words of the original institution? But was this special revelation given to Paul merely to attest the truth of the gospel narrative, and certify the Church of a *past*, barren, historical fact, which he could well have learnt by other means, and have received from other hands? It was not. The intention of the Lord in giving it (I speak with unhesitating words and adoring heart), the *intention of the Lord* in giving it was to show that, while circumstances necessary to be changed are changed, in all other respects its essentiality remains. These are His words: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which

he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Thus far the revelation is but a recapitulation of what is presented historically in the gospels, and almost in the literal terms of Luke, where alone the particular expressions "*εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν*" are found. All that is added by Paul, substantively, or in literal words, as a new revelation, is that which stamps its unchanging character on the supper as instituted by the Lord as long as it is destined to be observed: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (Ver. 26.) And this is the place to ask, Was there any *personation* of the Lord Jesus by Paul? that *he* now, instead of Christ, should pronounce the words that alone authenticate to the

faith of him who eats the supper, his *title* to be there, and from which alone is derived the validity of his act? Do I hear the voice of *man*—apostle! bishop! priest! minister! in the words, “this do ye in remembrance of me?” No; but the words of Him “who loved me and gave *himself* for me,” and who says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”—words that echo through the chambers of my soul, where, as a wretched sinner, they speak to me of cancelled guilt, of judgment passed, of “death abolished,” of “life and incorruptibility brought to light”—words that give me power to obey, and stamp validity on my act, when I so obey—if indeed I be not a wretched despiser of “the precious blood of Christ,” or a formal hypocrite at best. Paul’s presence or absence, and the presence or absence of any other, never for a moment was essential to the celebration of the supper, nor affected in the remotest degree the validity of the act. If it did, let it from Scripture be shown. In the simplicity of Scripture history I read, “Upon the first day of the week,

and only a part, of the fulfilment of His word of promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world?” Or, apart from all connection with official position, of the apostles or their boasted successors, “Where *two or three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?”

The notice of the table of the Lord in the Acts does not call for much remark. It is seen in chapter ii. as an essential feature of Christianity, where it is recorded, after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Of the three thousand who were pricked in the heart and received the testimony of grace through the word of Peter, it is said, after they were baptized, that “they

is not an *individual*, much less a ministerial, act. It is declared by the apostle to be the corporate act of the believers, gathered to the table. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Cor. x. 16, 17.)

when the *disciples* came together to *break bread* [the normal character and object of their meeting] *Paul preached to them.*” (Acts xx. 7.)

That which takes the place of Christ’s *bodily* presence, at the supper (His spiritual presence is never vacated), is the living, continuous authority of His word, given power to, in the soul of the communicant, through faith, by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit. This, as it will at once be seen, explodes the miserable assumption of anything in the ordinance being dependent on priestly “*intention*” in its administration. For administration there is none, save, as I have shown, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.* And what is this but a part,

* Any supposed administration in the act of one who breaks the bread and hands the cup is set aside at once, if we think that the breaking of Christ’s body, if it is supposed to be expressed in this act, was accomplished through the power of Satan by the hands of the Jews: and it is of His body as already “*broken*” that we partake. It is a mere circumstance, because the bread cannot break itself, nor the cup hand itself. Moreover, in communion the blessing of the cup

continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Ver. 42.) In chapter xx. we are brought into the midst of the sphere of Paul’s labours amongst the Gentiles, and find a recurrence of “the breaking of bread,” which chapter ii. had already shown us was the characteristic practice of the Church when composed only of Jewish converts. Here the mind is at once arrested by the simplicity of the historical account, and, I might almost say, the *homeliness* of the aspect in which the supper is presented: “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together TO BREAK BREAD!”—that is all. From this it is at once seen that it was for this object, in special, that the disciples came together, whatever subsidiary ministrations or services might grow out of it and be connected with it; as we find here Paul *preaching* to them, and in Corinthians the gifts of the Spirit in exercise. But all that is presented in the narrative is the normal practice of the disciples on the first day of the week.

In 1 Corinthians x. 16 we get the grounds and nature of the believer's communion at the table of the Lord. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Yet this is not pursued nor dwelt upon, as if it were the apostle's primary object. For as the title of Lord is introduced in contrast and conflict with the power of demons, so the *communion*, the believer's most precious part, in the supper, is presented in contrast and conflict with the communion connected with the idolatrous sacrifices of the heathen. He introduces it in connection with warnings drawn from the proofs of Israel's apostasy; and commences his direct instruction as to communion with the words, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." And that there might be no vagueness in the exhortation, he shows by the example of Israel that those who eat of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar (Jehovah's altar), and so far had communion with the God of Israel; and

that in like manner a participation in the heathen sacrifices involved communion with the idols to whom they were offered. And after the declaration that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, not to God," he adds, "and I would not that ye should have fellowship [or be *κοινωνοις*] with devils." He then introduces the title of authority in contrast with the power of these demons. Still the communion is there. And how well may the heart linger over the wondrous words in which it is expressed—"the communion of the *blood* of Christ!"—"the communion of the *body* of Christ!" What elements are here! What thoughts do they open out to the soul! What worship do they awaken in the heart! It is not possible for the spirit of a believer to be under the living power of the truths these words express, and not be lifted up above all the beggarly elements of the world and, for the time at least, emancipated from the influence alike of its joys and sorrows; while it echoes back the language that broke eighteen hun-

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dred years ago from the apostle's lips, while dwelling on this theme, "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." It is the *death* of Christ that is before our souls in the communion of the supper. It is His voice of love in agony and death that at His table speaks to our hearts. And while yielding up the soul to the controlling power of the words, "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come," how does it yearn for some better embodiment of its emotions than is sometimes sought to be presented in our united worship, by a half-mechanical reading of certain scriptures referring to the death and passion of our Lord, and by the singing of hymns fitted to the same. Oh! how far is this from the just consequences of the living guidance of the Holy Spirit! But our God is gracious. And who can measure the extent of His forbearing love? Albeit it must not be forgotten, that "they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In chapter x. 21 we have the introduction of the title of "Lord," which is continued without a change all through the instructions in relation to the supper,* from verse 23 to the close of chapter xi. This title is unquestionably connected with the presence of evil, and is brought in as its corrective. Still in the standing designation of the supper and table, which Christians have adopted, and the Scriptures have supplied, it is manifest that the aspect of the Lord's dignity and claim to subjection, presented in its observance, are not to be allowed to fade from our minds. The title itself, however, is far from resting on the narrow basis of this chapter, as has been attempted to be shewn, in a practical way, in a paper in the February number of this work, entitled, "The authority of Christ as Lord." The pre-

* I do not draw any practical distinction between "the table" and "the supper." There is a difference, of course, in the natural figures; but any conclusions of a practical kind drawn from this must, I think, be deemed precarious, if the truth of the deductions be not in other scriptures plainly expressed.

sence of evil and disorder, it is conceded, gave occasion for the introduction of the title, but divine wisdom saw fit to continue it unchanged, as the designative mark of the observance of the supper until the end.

Besides, in the communion of the table it is plain that our condition may be such, spiritually I mean, (our chapter is an example in point, though followed with grosser disorder than is to be looked for now), that the Lord must not only present Himself in our midst with the touching expressions, as it were, of "behold my hands and my feet!" but also with the solemn overshadowing of His dignity and authority too. So that—if our souls contract a too careless familiarity with the grace which cost Him His precious blood, and His body broken on the cross, in order that He might manifest it to us, wretched sinners that we were!—we might, at least, be bowed and awed by the dignity of His mien and by the glancing of the diadem seen upon His brow.

I well remember, many years ago,

the priests, who had unquestioned right of approach to Him, was met by the fire of God's judgment. And I was taught by it the meaning of the solemn oracle that came forth from the ark of God's presence, explanatory of His act of judgment, "I will be sanctified of them that draw near unto me!"

There is another passage in the Corinthians I would refer to as throwing light on the table of the Lord, and as presenting the personal, practical holiness required in those who are associated with it. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) This passage, it is true, does not refer directly and exclusively to the table of the Lord, but to the discipline that is called for in the assembly of believers, that their practical condition may correspond to their character in grace. But,

when amidst the activities of an anxious life, and of service in the gospel, made arduous by its being among a rural population, and in widely distant places, before the facilities of railroads, that my soul, having lost the freshness of its communion, was recalled to it, with intense humiliation and thankfulness, by pressing upon others Job xxxviii. and the three following chapters. It might seem to many to be a portion of truth very remote from containing in it the elements of communion, and yet I believe it is very intimately connected with it. For if the heart, familiarized with the thoughts of grace and liberty, carries itself carelessly before the Lord—and, alas! how often is it so—He must needs unveil His majesty that we may learn that it is God with whom we have to do. But it may be objected, you could not then have known the liberty of the gospel and your standing in Christ as dead and risen in Him. Far from it. It was the main topic of my ministry and the sheet-anchor of my soul. But I was made to feel that the "strange fire" of

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," brings before the soul the full redemption which is ours by the sacrifice of Christ. "Let us keep the feast," &c., refers to the feast of unleavened bread, which the passover introduced to, and is the expressive type of the holiness that is to characterize a redeemed people. But the passover cannot be restricted to that which was eaten in Egypt with bitter herbs, &c. For in that there was no peaceful communion; because God was acting as a judge, and the blood upon the doorposts, while it gave security to those within the house, shut God out of it. Yet cannot the table of the Lord be separated from this aspect of redemption, since on the cross the Lord Jesus was indeed bearing the judgment of God for our sins. But the instructed mind is led by the expression to that memorable passover which Israel kept, after they had crossed the waters of Jordan, in the plains of Jericho, as described with all its significant circumstances in Joshua v. But in the passage before us it is the feast of unleavened

bread, which lasted seven days, after the passover, that is in prominence. This is the feast that was to be kept, "not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The application is plain. In our lives and associations and all the circumstances of life, as redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are to be distinguished not by the principles and habits of our old nature, much less by the activity of actual evil—"malice and wickedness," but by the uncorrupted principles of "sincerity [or pureness] and truth." God grant it may be so with us and with all His people!

What is presented, then, and represented in the two distinctive ordinances of Christianity is the *death* of Christ. Baptism, as a figure, reaches only to death—the death of the old man in the death of Christ. "We are buried with him by baptism into *death*." But resurrection comes not in baptism, neither is it represented by it. This comes "through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him [Christ] from

the dead." But baptism, in its significance, is the closing of the grave of Christ on the old man, which is not, in principle, and ought not to be in practice, raised again. "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) So also as to the table of the Lord, what is expressly said of it is, "Ye do show the Lord's *death* till he come." But, as in baptism, the believer is not lost in death, which is but the death and burial of the old man, but rises again in the resurrection of Christ to a new life; so also at the table of the Lord, we show the death of One who though He stood in the breach for us and bore the judgment of our sins, yet was He not lost in death (that were immitigable sorrow, supposing redemption were possible to us so), but was raised from the dead, and ascended on high, is coming again to take His people to Himself.

In the Lord's table the Church is not viewed in its abstract perfectness as

the body and bride of Christ. This aspect of it is not, cannot be, represented in an ordinance which is designed for earth, however blessedly it may be true of those who are true partakers of it. It is for the body of actual believers in the world, who, as partakers of redemption through Christ's death and bitter sufferings, confess their allegiance to Him whom the world, to its condemnation, has rejected. No ordinance can reach up to the height of the Church as seated in the heavenly places in Christ. Hence it is not in connection with Ephesian doctrine that the table of the Lord is presented, but Corinthian; and the absence of reference to it in the Epistle to the Ephesians may be accounted for on the same principle as the absence from it of the coming of the Lord, as the hope of the Church, is accounted for. But is it by this denied that the coming of the Lord is the hope of the Church? Far from it. It is but giving to Ephesian and Thessalonian doctrine their just aspect and bearing.

In Ephesians we have the revelation

of the mystery and the Church presented in its divine perfectness in the counsels of God as the body and bride of Christ, and also presented on earth as "the habitation of God through the Spirit." In the Corinthians we have the Church in its witness on earth, and the ordering of its gifts and ministries by the Spirit unto this end; and moreover, presenting a sufficient reason (if one were needed) for insisting on truths fundamental to Christianity, and without which neither it nor the table of the Lord could be. For it is in this Epistle especially that Christ's title of Lord is insisted on; and the doctrine of the resurrection is elaborately argued, and argued on the precise ground that without it Christianity would cease to exist. Philippians gives us the position of believers in this world, i.e., of pilgrims going through it, to join a risen Christ in heaven (by the cross and suffering, if God see good), but having no other object for their affections and no other hope. In Thessalonians the fulness of instruction is given concerning the truth of the coming of

the Lord, guarding it also against all the perversions of the enemy; while it presents too the responsibilities of the kingdom and its rewards. Hence the nature of its exhortations. "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory," (1 Thess. ii. 11, 12,) and "that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In the Colossians the apostle tells us that he was a minister of the gospel "which was preached in the whole creation which is under heaven." He says also that he was made a minister of the Church to fulfil [complete, if you please] the word of God. And here we find him in the intensity of his zeal and labours seeking to make known "the glory of the mystery amongst the Gentiles . . . warning every man and teaching every man, that he might present every man perfect in Christ." In like manner in the Ephesians he declares his mission to be to "preach among the

shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. vi. 13—15.) The contemplation of the wondrous scene of our Lord at the bar of Pilate is necessary to show what the "good confession" of a Christian is.

But why do I enlarge? The truth that is to be formative of our souls, as belonging to God and Christ, is as various as "the manifold wisdom of God," and is as various in its application as the varied relationships in which the believer can be placed; as *varied*, in reality, as are the varied exigencies of the saints as seen by Him who has marked, in His wisdom, their course on earth, and who best knows the fitted training for them as heirs of the glory with Him, which is yet to be revealed. Our wisdom, therefore, in the ministration of truth, is to find a place for all for which Scripture finds a place—"rightly dividing the word of truth." There is no antagonism in truth. The whole of Scripture, not a part, is essential to the apprehension of the due range of practical min-

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things." (Chap. iii. 8, 9.) In his leave-taking of the elders of Ephesus, with a tinge of unutterable sadness he gives this remarkable description of his active ministry. "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts xx. 25—27.) To Timothy he says, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," and then adds, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall

istrations amongst the saints, that they may "build themselves up in their most holy faith," and be taught "to walk and please God." And if the Holy Spirit be leant on for this, He will guide to its discriminative use, for these ends of God, in His church. Truths justly esteemed to be fundamental, and so not enlarged upon, by one whose labours for the Church may be doctorial, and so mainly engaged in evolving the truth from the divine records for its enlightenment, may, and must be, insisted on again and again in their practical bearing, in pastoral ministrations, by any who are in a position to heed the words of the apostle, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28): and who are guided by the example of the Apostle Peter, who said, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea,

I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." (2 Peter i. 12, 13.)

The undue or exclusive insistence upon any truth, however important in itself and unquestionable, not only sins against the example of Scripture, but also (through the infirmity of our nature and the ever-watchful craft of the enemy) almost invariably awakens in the mind a feeling of opposition against it. And if this feeling, once awakened, be not watched against, and the Lord sought to about it, the transition is most easy to the rejection of the particular truth altogether and the adoption of its opposite error.

But before I dismiss this paper, which has already passed the ordinary bounds of such contributions, I return briefly to the accounts presented in the gospels of the institution of the supper, and more especially to that which has been quoted in full from Luke.

In what are called the synoptical gospels, it is given with its distinctive groupings of subordinate truths and

circumstances (infinitely interesting to trace) accordant with the distinctive character and purport of each, while the grand central truth is given in its divine essentiality by them all. In the account presented by Luke we have the Lord giving to His disciples the paschal cup saying, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until *the kingdom of God shall come*." In Matthew it is, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day *when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*." The world and Israel had rejected Him in the grace in which He came, and had rejected "the kingdom of God" in His person; and now until it be established by judgment and power (as in Daniel vii.), there is nothing left to Him but Nazarite separation from the world—separation to suffering and to heavenly glory. But this is not the cup of *communion*: that comes afterwards. While the heart is occupied with the infinite grace of this scene, and is melted by the sorrows of

Him who is saying in ineffable love, "this is my *body* which is given for you," and "this cup is the new testament *in my blood*," with what harshness and dissonance do the words break upon the ear, "and there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest!" Alas! for human nature, at its best! But they loved the Lord—and they loved themselves too; and one blushes at the incongruity of their thoughts and feelings so out of harmony with the love that was here displayed. But are *we* quite prepared that the same hand should remove the veil from our bosoms and our assemblies? "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

The Gospel of John, it has been long since observed, is the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His essential glory as the Son of God, and so above all dispensation, and also stamping with their relative worth all the official titles and offices which, in the accomplishment of redemption, He sustains. Hence there is no mount of transfiguration in

John, nor garden of Gethsemane. So also there is a striking absence of all reference to the institution of the supper in it. We only know from this gospel that there was any supper at all in the most incidental way. It is simply said, "supper being ended," &c. There is nothing to distinguish it from the passover—no breaking of the bread; no blessing, and giving the cup. Not that these were absent; but our Lord being presented in this gospel as the eternal life—the Son quickening whom He will, and giving eternal life to those whom the Father hath given Him, it is not the continuance of an ordinance on earth that is in prominence, but the association with Himself in that life which had been displayed on earth in the accomplishment of redemption, and which was now to be resumed in heaven and in heavenly communion. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and went to God; he riseth from supper," &c. The passover here is simply viewed as the point of exit of our Lord

from this world, necessary to His return to the Father. And all that we find connected with the supper, is not its institution as a commemorative ordinance on earth, but the unfolding of what grace would do in putting into association with Himself in the communion and the heavenly glory to which He was going, those whom He could acknowledge as "His own which were in the world;" and whom having loved, "He loved unto the end." All that is intermediate between the expression "supper being ended," &c., and "arise, let us go hence," is the washing of the disciples' feet, and the expression of that grace which would be in exercise on high on their behalf, until His coming again to receive them to Himself. Every part of Scripture has its place.

Divested of the corruptions and incumbrances that have been heaped upon it, the table of the Lord is the social ordinance of Christianity, designed for the collective communion of those that are His. It is the rallying point of the soldiers of the cross. The continuous

living monument of that which is the central truth and foundation of the gospel and of Christianity. It is the place, too, of holy communion, from which all leaven of evil is to be banished; and where nothing in doctrine or practice is to be allowed that will not sort with the ends of Christ's death. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are, unleavened." The grace that has set believers before God in Christ in unleavened perfectness, is urged as the obligation to separate from all that practically would contradict that position. The consequence of the neglect of this is declared in the words, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" In the simple narration of Scripture we read, "Upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." And this first day of the week received its indelible character from its being the day of the resurrection of the Lord. And still further, it was the day especially selected by Him, after His resurrection, to renew

His intercourse with His disciples, appearing in their midst and saying, "Peace be unto you." Whatever disorders might exist in the church of Corinth, disorders that were corrected by apostolic authority, it is plain that it was the *primal* meeting of believers. The apostle notices it thus, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," &c. But then connected with this we have the unfailing promise of the Lord, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This I do not limit to the presence of the Spirit in the Church, nor confound with it, however it is only by His power and presence that it can be realized. Neither do I limit the accomplishment of this blessed promise of the Lord to the gathering of believers around the table of the Lord; though I do expect pre-eminently to find its fulfilment there: and I do not think that the true elements of worship and communion remain where this is not apprehended. I need not insist on all the blessed consequences of the realization of the Lord's presence. He will surely not be present to *do nothing*. And if the disciples in their journey to Emmaus 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?" (Luke xxiv. 32) will it be less so with His saints now? It is not, I fear, enough borne in mind that the absolutely distinctive characteristic of the world and of His people is given in the expressive words of our Lord, "*The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.*" And again, "I will not leave you orphans, *I will come to you.*" And once more, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest myself to him.*" And if the individual heart ought not to be, cannot be, if taught aright, satisfied without these manifestations of the Lord, which the world cannot know, are they to be less realized when meeting in His name, to which His pledge and promise are especially attached?

One moment more I snatch, to urge from the apostle's example this practical corollary: If I am called to this communion of the body and blood of Christ—if I am thus in constant, habitual contact with the unspeakable grace and love of the cross, there is surely a correspondent obligation to confess before the world the Master whom I serve, the Lord to whom I belong. In the apostle's touching appeal at the close of the Galatians, when he had brought to an issue his conflict with the corrupters of

the gospel and the boasters in human ordinances, he teaches us what alone we ought to value in the world, and what character in it we should always bear. He says, "They desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But 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. vi. 13, 14.) He then adds, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Ver. 17.) All that he valued in the world was the cross. All that he cared to be known by amongst men was by the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the wounds and lacerations of His body in the service of the gospel, he would have men plainly see whose servant and bondsman he was. For these *στίγματα* were the marks branded on slaves to indicate their owners.

May our hearts be so intent on confessing and serving the Lord Jesus, that if we are permitted to carry with us in our bodies or in our spirits any impress of the opposition of the enemy's power, we may be able to see in this the marks of the Lord Jesus, and so be able to say in the profound quiet of our souls, "Let no man trouble me," conscious to ourselves whose initials we bear.

"ΜΝΑΣΩΝ."

I have already called attention to the fact, that God allows man to expose the full opposition of his heart in contrast to His revelation (the maintenance of which is the only true testimony) before He sets up another; and when He does set up another, it is manifestly and peculiarly distinct and in contrast to the features of the declension then prevailing. Most interesting, therefore, and helpful is it for us, to keep before our minds the condition of things on which the sun of testimony (at least that particular phase of it) sets, and in which the light has not been comprehended; man having proved that the greater the revelation to him, the greater his natural repugnance to yield himself to it, and therefore he has studiously presented the converse of the divine mind, instead of the reflection of it, which the light of testimony vouchsafed by God, as suited to the condition of things, would have produced if comprehended. The manifestation of good calls forth, according to its order and quality, a correlative evil from man, because of his

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER IV.

A B R A M.

We have seen that Noah continued until within two years of the birth of Abram, and we learn from Joshua xxiv. 2, that Terah* and his fathers "served other gods," thus proving that before the death of Noah man had fallen into idolatry. Not only were they independent of God, but they worshipped those "who by nature are no gods."

It is important for us to preserve a view of the earth as it was morally at the time of Noah's death. Ham (the cursed) takes the lead in occupying the earth, especially that part which should eventually belong to the descendants of Shem, of whom it was said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem;" and from whom the people of God should spring.

* We must bear in mind that Jacob speaks of God as the God of the father of Abraham and Nahor (even Terah), in Genesis xxxi. 53.

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innate corruption. Strikingly is this exemplified in the days of which we are treating; for before the death of Noah, the then vessel of God's testimony, independence of God and idolatry had become a confirmed characteristic of man; and this notwithstanding the testimony committed to Noah, and maintained by him, having circulated through his children into all the earth; for by the families of the sons of Noah after their generations were the nations divided throughout the earth after the flood, and in every ancient record or monument we find traces of the testimony, though almost lost in the perversion in which man always represents divine things.

As to locality, it is generally admitted that Ham and his descendants eventually occupied Africa, for the most part; Japhet Europe, and Shem Asia; but the important point for us to keep in mind, is the moral state of man when Abram, about 74 years of age, is addressed by the God of glory in the words, "Get thee out of thy country

and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that *I will show thee.*" This call embodied an entirely new principle. Abel by faith had offered; Enoch by faith had been translated; Noah by faith had prepared an ark for salvation; but now the earth on which man was is set under another covenant, and God's witness in the person of Abram is called to hold no place in it but in dependence on God and on His word. All he had naturally he must surrender, and assert or maintain no title or right to any place but by faith. Abram is to come into the land that God would show him, not to get possession in it, as we shall see, but to maintain this unique position, holding everything that he held, not by right of possession, but by faith in God. In a word, that he had no place on earth as a man, or after man by the rights of man, to whom the earth was given on new terms after the flood. Man had proved himself unworthy of those terms and unfit for them, and now God raises up, in the person of Abram, a new tes-

timony, viz., that His people on the earth hold no place on it by the right of possession or inheritance, but by the word of God and in dependence on it; for it is not the land that I have acquired or have by inheritance succeeded to, but the land that *He will show.*

truth, God calls out Abram. It is evident that Babel was the first kingdom founded. Here the seeds of man's presumption, independence, and self-confidence, were first sown; hence, Babel, called afterwards Babylon, represents and embodies all the evil workings of man; and it is in the face of all those workings, and as a witness against them, that Abram is called out of Ur of the Chaldees from the scene of the tower of Babel, to declare that he had no place on the earth but in dependence on God; and therefore he gave up all he had by birth, and went out not knowing whither he went. Truly he looked for a city which hath foundations; he knew that God would not call him from anything without guaranteeing to him a superior; and he rested in the assurance that the builder and maker was God.

It would appear that Abram was a man of considerable consequence and means in the world, and his move must have been well known. His father, Terah, whether believing or not, accords with his son's call, for we read, "And

timony, viz., that His people on the earth hold no place on it by the right of possession or inheritance, but by the word of God and in dependence on it; for it is not the land that I have acquired or have by inheritance succeeded to, but the land that *He will show.*

This testimony was most significant and needed, because man, to whom the earth had been committed by God on new terms, had entirely forgotten his allegiance to Him; and had not only denied dependence on Him, but had served devils ("other gods"). The full exposure of the principles of man's independence of, and alienation from, God demanded a testimony, which would declare that everything on the earth was to be held solely by the word of God and in the most complete dependence on Him (and this in addition to the surrender of every natural tie and association); and would disclaim and rebuke the rebellion and presumptuousness into which man had wandered and which he, without remorse, arrogantly maintained; now to be a witness of this

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go unto the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran and dwelt there." After the death of Terah, as we read further, "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son . . . and went forth to go into the land of Canaan: and into the land of Canaan they came." Abram's move had in it a voice to all the world. He had left the place he had in it by birth and association, and went forth dependent on the word of God. This was the testimony. He "passed through the land unto the place of Sichem unto the plain of Moreh, and the Canaanite (the descendants of Ham) was then in the land." Now the Lord appears to him again and says, "Unto thy seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." He holds his place on the earth by faith, builds his altar where the Lord appears to

him in acknowledgment of his homage and link unto Him, asserts no claim to anything of the earth, but lets the Lord determine everything for him. What a remarkable testimony must this have been in contrast to all that was passing around! Man in full independence was seeking and maintaining government on the earth as possessors of it, owning no allegiance to God, worshipping them who are no gods. And here was a great man—a prince as known among men—leaving all his inherited or acknowledged rights, and following the word of God, dependent only on that word, “not knowing whether he went,” and owning the unseen God by an altar of sacrifice *where* He appeared unto him. How instructive and interesting to grasp the nature and power of the faith which worked in Abram, and made him a fit witness for God in that evil day, declaring to us the true instincts of divine grace when brought in contact with the same order and character of evil. And this is essentially and particularly what we ought

than ever that it is the only true and right one, “my reformation glittering over my faults.” Abram, however, returns out of Egypt “unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.” Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is constrained by God to send away Abram and his wife and all that he had. Egypt was of Ham, and Abram, yielding to it and seeking from it countenance and support, intimates to us the nature of the temptation to which a soul seeking to stand for God like Abram is exposed, and so often yields to. If we walk in faith we must always see here a famine at first, or it would be no faith. The famine tests our faith, for it is not only that I have come into a place by faith; but the question arises, Can I stay there in faith? Egypt *here* gets its moral relation to the people of God; and sets forth that particular form of the world which offers us aid when God does not appear to do so, assuming that *it* is better for us than *He* is. That is what Egypt is

to learn and become imbued with while studying the testimony of God. The testimony is suited and in direct divine contrast with the form of evil rife, and working; and because it is of God, who is thus vindicating Himself while the enemy comes in like a flood, though the enemy be the more exasperated, and so on to the close; and therefore he comes with a more fearful opposition and evil virus in proportion to the manifestation of the purpose of God in His grace toward man.

Abram fails for a moment to maintain this testimony, and goes down into Egypt. The failure only showed how impossible it was to maintain it but in divine power. The more simply divine our path is, the more absolutely must we be kept there by divine power, and therefore there is oftener failure in that which is most divine than in that which is not. And the failure always has, through God's grace, this effect on us, that of making us distrustful of ourselves and reliant on Him, so that we return to the true path, more assured

1 2

morally; the world as a system. Abram is delivered from it and is a witness to it in his very deliverance, and is also better established in himself; for the testimony committed to him, though a thorn entailed by the failure, is, as we shall see, never removed.

Abram, now restored, and invigorated by his restoration, is called to move in a more distinct and self-sacrificing way than before, to prove his confidence in the principles which placed him in his present position, not to the world in general, as he did when he left his own country, not to the world in its use and service to himself as in Egypt; but now to Lot, the one who had borne him company and shared his trials in his walk with regard to the world in both aspects. From Lot he must now separate; but this separation, necessary (as marking the divergence in principle) on account of the path of testimony which Abram was re-entering with renewed energy, comes about as a consequence of the principles of that testimony being the rule of Abram's action and conduct.

Again declaring thus practically that he will assume no right or possession here, and that not only with regard to the world but to his brother, he says, "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; and if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." It is necessary in studying the history of testimony to mark the incidents which disclose the virtues displayed and incumbent on one who truly supports it. True restoration, because it is grace confirmed, obliges one to be more faithful than before. Abram, depending on God, can submit all to Lot's election, and thus be a witness to his own immediate circle, where the sacrifice is always the greatest.

For his faithfulness Abram is given more; he is confirmed in the truth of the position which he had maintained. "The Lord said unto him, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee

will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Thus had he traversed the centre of the land, taking a survey of it, though as yet asserting no claim to it.

In the next chapter of Abram's path (chap. xiv.), we have another characteristic belonging to this testimony—even that when I am depending on God and looking to him for everything here, the moral consequence must be, that I devote myself to what concerns Him here, and seek to extricate His people from the toils in which they are taken. Before it had been separation, now it is service rendered to the very one he had separated from.

* I doubt not that the circumstances

* I hope, when these papers are completed, to give, in an appendix, a general outline of the antitypes to events mentioned in the text, as far as I am able.

related in this chapter (xiv.) are typical of the closing scenes in the earth's history, and are presented to us to exhibit the nature of the testimony which should be borne by the faithful at such a time. This conflict of kings has in it the elements of the final conflict; and the supremacy sought to be maintained by Chedorlaomer indicates that which the wilful king will assert and assume in the latter day. The character of the passions working among men, and the way in which men were using their power, is presented to us in the scene here described, not so much to give an idea of the ultimate struggles for power, but as embodying a state of things which required a certain testimony for God, and which, in such a state, Abram is enabled to render. "Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled." Lot—representing God's people who have sought a present portion on the earth—is carried away by this successful power. What is the testimony for God at such a juncture? Why, to do as Abram did.

We must bear in mind that God is disclosing the characteristics of His own grace, in opposition to the violence and pride of man; and we are learning, not the history of Abram, but the grace of God, and how it calls on one, standing for God on earth, to act, and this in testimony for God with reference to the current state of things; and thus ever (for God's principles are unchangeable) in a similar state of things at any time.

Abram, though personally, entirely aloof from the scene of conflict, musters all his resources, and without reserve or personal consideration devotes all to the rescue of his brother Lot. By night (and night it was to *them*) he smote them and pursued them, and brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother. The reigning powers of the earth are in one way or another made to know the strength by which God's witness is sustained in his peculiar path. And God, as He is, is testified of as a truth. To Abram, returning from the slaughter of the kings is vouchsafed a revelation of the grace of

God in the person of Melchisedec, which strengthens his soul in God and enables him still more distinctly to walk independently of man, or of his gifts on the earth. It is hard to live here and assert no claim to any place here. It is harder still to devote all our resources, at every risk, for the service of others, and yet receive no reward for it; nay, because of our dependence on God to refuse all acknowledgment from man, for the beneficial results to man from your services to the people of God. Doubtless, service rendered to the individual (as to the legion), confers a general benefit on the community at large. But as dependent on God, I must refuse all acknowledgment for it from man. When the Lord saw that the people would take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain by Himself alone. But God acknowledges the service. Abram's soul is enriched and strengthened, even as is the fruit-bearing disciple in John xv. 5—16.

Melchisedec meets Abram, and so in-

consciously to himself to the service of Satan; physical, inasmuch as the earth, which but recently at the word of the Creator brought forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, fell under God's curse on account of man's sin.

By the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, another great change has taken place, this time moral only. Man (Israel in profession excepted), in the vanity of his mind and ignorance of heart, had served the devil as his master and lord. But when the Lord arose from the dead, conqueror over "death, and him that had the power of it," another Lord was presented, a kingdom was declared to be set up, in a mystery, indeed, yet really set up, on the earth, and its King, the Lord Jesus, was announced as the One to whom the sovereignty of the universe belonged. "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ." (Acts ii. 36.) "He is Lord of all." (Acts x. 36.) It is true, His claims as King and Lord are recognized but by few.

vigorates him that he is strong to refuse all the offers of the king of Sodom, whereby he displays another principle of the testimony committed to him; and the king of Sodom hears from his lips how the blessing of God, and the sure word of His promise, though the fulfilment of it be still future, can make a soul proof against even those things which are everything to the natural man.

(To be continued.)

A THOUGHT ON COLOSSIANS.

There are four great epochs in the world's history, as unfolded in the word of God, at each of which a great and radical change is introduced, viz., the fall of man, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the establishment of His kingdom in power on the earth, and the delivering up of the kingdom to God, even the Father.

By the fall of man, a change, both moral and physical, took place. Moral, inasmuch as his heart was then alienated from God, and his powers devoted un-

The god of this world still successfully blinds the minds of them that believe not. But His claims are real though Satan now, as it were, divides the authority with Him.

When next He comes to this earth, riding on a white horse, with the armies of heaven following, divided authority in the earth will cease. The claims of the Lord, as universal king, will be acknowledged *professedly* by all. The curse, too, will no longer weigh down creation. (Rev. xxii. 3.) The wilderness will be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Enmity between man and beast will disappear (Isaiah xxxv. 1; xi. 8; lxxv. 25); peace and plenty abound, and judgment be administered in righteousness and truth. (Psalm lxxii. 7; xciv. 15; xcvi. 13.)

When the end comes, and He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, a further change will take place. As at the fall, a change both moral and physical was introduced, so will it be at the close. "Behold I make all things new," is the word of the living

God. What this means Peter unfolds: "A new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Pet. iii. 13.) Evil in that creation will not be repressed as during the millennium. It will not exist.

Placed as we are in the providence of God between the second and third of these epochs, what is presented to us? The kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, not yet established in power, but set up in a mystery, to be owned by all the faithful. Before He came Israel were bound (though they failed, as God's word shows us) to acknowledge the claims of the Lord Jehovah, their Redeemer from Egypt, according to His promise to Abraham, despite their murmurings and rebellions by the way. For Israel, and Israel alone, had this mighty work been accomplished; and with them, and them alone, did God enter into a covenant, which they bound themselves to observe. After the death and resurrection of the Lord, redemption, not from Egypt for one nation, but from death and judgment

for all who would receive it having been accomplished and announced, the Lordship of Christ, though first declared to God's ancient people, is proclaimed far and wide. All that in every place received the word, believed it, and called "upon the name of the Lord, both theirs and ours," are declared subjects of the kingdom. By and by God will command the obedience of His creatures on the ground of creation. (Rev. xiv. 6.) Now conformity to His will is urged, on the basis of an accomplished redemption (Romans xii. 1, 2; Titus ii. 11, 12; 1 John iv. 14), and His will, is that the claims of the Lord Jesus should be owned and submitted to. So the Philippian jailor is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And in Romans x. confession is to be made of the Lordship of Jesus. That the Lord Jehovah was to be obeyed the Jews professedly admitted. That the crucified One, the virgin's Son, Jesus, should in all things have the pre-eminence, and be owned as the Lord, was a new, and to many ears, a novel doctrine. To the Jews Christ

crucified was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who believed, He was the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is in the Epistle to the Colossians that we have brought out in the fullest and clearest way the preeminence of the Lord, and the great moral change which has taken place consequent on His death and resurrection.

After the salutation to all the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse, from God the Father [for the chief critical editors agree in the omission of the words, "and the Lord Jesus Christ," an omission peculiar to this epistle], Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, with Timothy, gives thanks for them to God the Father of the Lord Jesus, having heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and prays that they may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Observe, the object of their faith is the lowly one Jesus, God's anointed one—Christ. But faith, if real, is evidenced by walk. When that is mentioned, the claim of Jesus as Lord

is set forth. "Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," into whose kingdom we have been translated, delivered from the power of darkness by the Father. But who is this one, and what has He done, that He should be Lord? He is God's Son, the image of the invisible God. By Him all things were created, and by Him they all consist. He has therefore a place as head of all creation. He has a place too as head of the Church, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. As Creator, then, He could command our obedience. But He is presented here with another claim on His people, for in Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And now "you," says the apostle, "that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, God has reconciled to himself in the body of his flesh through death;" [and how perfectly reconciled] "to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight." Furthermore, in Him all fulness pleased to dwell, and in Him also are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Having thus brought forward the excellency of His person and the ground of His claim to the allegiance of His people—and what excellency could surpass it, what claim could be greater?—the apostle goes on to show, in chapter ii., how the excellency and fulness in Him may be denied; and in chapter iii. how His claim as Lord should be owned and obeyed. Since all fulness dwelt in Him, they could not get beyond Christ. He was not only the foundation on which they must rest, but the One in whom they must be built up, “Rooted and built up in him.” The truth about him had been revealed and received. There was nothing fresh to look for. “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” But why this caution? They were in danger, and this was not confined to that day, of being drawn aside (1) by philosophy, (2) by a recurrence to ordinances, and (3) by the corruption which had already been developed of Christianity itself.

1. To some, human philosophy might prove a snare. Would they reject (it might be asked) the teaching of the

(Chap. ii. 10.) “Not after Christ,” is the short but effective answer supplied by the Spirit of God. Has not this a voice for us in these days? Man’s wisdom and researches are brought forward to discredit Scripture. Man’s intellect, liable to err, is to sit in judgment on the unerring word of God. His discoveries in science, his researches in the kingdom of nature, his discernment and power of dissecting the Scriptures to show the small residuum of truth, imbedded in the mass of documents compiled by some scribe of a far later age than the record would assume, and men till now have believed, are brought forward as sufficient to outweigh and discredit what has been received as the word of God. To all this we have a ready answer here supplied: “Not after Christ.” It is the exaltation of human intellect, the deification of human wisdom, not subjection to God and His word.

2. Were any troubled by teachers insisting on the need of circumcision, and the return to a religion of ordinances? They had been circumcised in Christ, in

sages for the doctrine of this most recent of schools? Was all the wisdom and learning of the ancients to be put aside for the dogmas and novelties of the sect of the Nazarenes? What is the answer? Philosophy and vain deceit were indeed after the traditions of men, suited to the world, but they were opposed to Christ. What were the philosophers when compared with Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily? What were the rudiments of the world when weighed against Him who is the head of all principality and power? Between these they had to choose, and they had chosen Christ. He was henceforth to be everything to them. The cravings of the heart, which the philosophy of the schools could not satisfy, He could. The all-important question of the soul’s future, which man’s wisdom could not solve nor his reasonings stifle, found an answer in the good news of the finished work of Christ on the cross, and His resurrection by the power of God on the third day. They were filled full in Him.

putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Moreover, they had been buried with Him by baptism into death, and risen with Him, brought into a new condition altogether, where a religion of ordinances had no place. Had not God appointed them, it might be urged? Would they renounce that which had been ushered in with such solemnity amid the thunders of Sinai? Would they turn their backs on the sign of the covenant made between God and Abraham, “an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee?” (Gen. xvii. 7.) Was He not allowed to be the Father of the faithful? were not all believers children of Abraham? would they not lose the blessing if they refused to adopt the sign of the everlasting covenant? how could they meet this form of evil? Again the Spirit of God gives a very short but clear and decisive answer. All that these teachers were battling for were shadows of things to come, but the body is of Christ. Christ had been set before them as the One who had

"blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Were they to go back to that which existed by God's appointment before the cross? From that the great change which had come in took its date. Who would pursue the shadow when they had grasped the substance? How real, then, and great was the change introduced by the death and resurrection of the Lord.

3. Another form of evil might draw away unstable souls: an appearance of humility and worshipping of angels. If they followed this they would cease to hold the Head. The forms of evil already spoken of had regard to what men had been occupied with before. This seems more a corruption of Christianity, not a return to that which they had left. The correction for this, as for the other, is found in but one—Christ the Head. Holding the Head, cleaving to Him, was their business now. Besides, this apparent neglect of the body, this humility, was, after all, a satisfying of the

iii. 5—8), the apostle proceeds: "Lie not one to another seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." However the Jew or the Greek might have attempted to take advantage by deceit of any one placed in conscious inferiority to themselves, that would not become the Christian. National distinction or social position could no longer give an apparent liberty for such practices, for a change had been introduced. Christ was all now, and, moreover, in all. Would they seek to take advantage of one in whom Christ was? And, further, there would be the need of forbearance and the exercise of forgiveness, and the reason is stated: "even as Christ forgave you."

As pilgrims here below, other difficulties must be met than those incidental to intercourse with their brethren. So

flesh. But they had died with Christ. What place then could there be for such doctrines among them?

These three forms of evil, so needful to guard the Colossians against, whilst differing in many things, had this in common—they were all connected with the world, and regarded man as alive in the flesh before God. But believers were dead and risen with Christ. The heavenlies was their place, and the things above God would have their hearts occupied with. The heavenlies, however, is a wide place. Satan is there with his angels, as well as believers. Whither, then, should their thoughts be directed? Where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Their security, too, was bound up with Him, and their hope was to appear with Him in the glory. Associated thus with Him, one with Him, He Himself their life, a heavenward direction given to their thoughts, they were nevertheless still in the world, and had to do individually with one another. So, after speaking of the desires of the flesh and of the mind (chap.

the apostle speaks next of the provision made for such, and turns their thoughts once more to the Lord. "Let the peace of Christ (for so the critical editors read) rule in your hearts." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" and to maintain consistency of walk, it is added, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Here the authority and title of Jesus as Lord comes in.

But comprehensive as this precept is, the Spirit of God does not stop here. To make it plain how completely it accords with the Father's good pleasure, that in all things the Son should have the pre-eminence, relative duties are next enumerated. Now these existed from the days of Adam and Eve. The special relations of individual believers to one another in Christ were new, and were not the subject of divine admonition till the body was formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the relative duties of life existed long before. The subjection of the wife to the husband, the child to the father, the servant to the master, were acknowledged and enforced from very early days. But now that Jesus is risen, these duties are to be done to the Lord. (Chap. iii. 18, 20, 22, 24.) In verse 22 the critical editors sanction another change, reading the "Lord" for "God"—"fearing the Lord;" a change in perfect harmony with the thought of the whole passage.

What a change, then, has taken place since the Lord died and rose! A change of which the world is unconscious, but yet a most important, a real change. "Not after Christ"—"The body is of Christ"—"Holding the head"—"Christ is all and in all"—"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"—"Fearing the Lord," Such are the statements of the Spirit, indicating the reality and greatness of the change. Ephesians unfolds God's counsels about the Lord Jesus and the Church. Philippians sets before us the Lord as the example and object of His people. Hebrews unfolds His offices, and proves the finished character of His work; whilst Colossians displays to our eye the mighty moral change brought about by His death and resurrection. It is the Lord whom we are exhorted to walk worthy of. In Him we are to walk. Where He is, there our affections are to be set. His word is to dwell in us, as His peace is to rule in our hearts. Wives, children, servants are each to obey as it is fit in the Lord. Throughout we see it is Christ that is set before us. The Lord grant we may not stop here. May the writer and reader ever know not only what it is to have the truth displayed before the eye, but to have it really acting on the heart.

A S E R I E S .

No. 16.

PROPHECY.

Having in No. 15 of this series treated of the study of the Scriptures as a whole, we now come to a particular subject of them, one that is largely presented therein and of special importance.

"The prophetic word now made surer," we are (in 2 Peter i. 19) exhorted to take heed to, as to "a light which shineth in a dark place." The character of this exhortation instructs us as to the effect and usefulness of prophecy or the prophetic part of the Scriptures. It is a light for a dark place. It was first given when darkness set in; early indeed in man's history, for it was his sin that created the darkness, into which the light of prophecy was sent as a relief from it. To Adam after his fall was the first prophetic word given. It is a word from God to His people to carry them forward into scenes superior to the present. This is its primary object. Times of great tribulation may be shewn to intervene,

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or to be necessary as judgment, before the better thing comes in (man's sin has required this), but the end of prophecy is to shew out the goodness of God, and how He will triumph over all evil and ruin, and bring in His own gracious purposes. Thus it is expressly a "light shining in a dark place." The darkness is in the place, and the prophetic word is given of God as a light in the dark place. The one who yields himself to the prophetic word has got light for himself in the darkness; the one who does not has his eyes blinded, and cleaves to the dust, not knowing whither he goeth. If we examine the Scriptures we shall find how prophecy was given, and what was its effect and usefulness when received.

The first prophecy, as we have said, was given to Adam when he fell. The terms of it were, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." No communication could be more suitable or valuable at such a juncture. Satan had triumphed over man, but now when the gloom of death and distance from

God reigned, a light from the prophetic word springs up, and the heart that received it, saw the way according to God out of the thickening darkness.

It is evident that according as Adam and Eve embraced this light, so was each able to rise up and soar beyond the dark clouds now resting on their souls. We know that man in every age, in proportion as he took a lead of his fellows in intelligence, did forecast scenes of a better state. Now this, in the natural mind, was poetry, which carried the mind into imaginations that responded to sentiments and cravings which existed, and which found themselves interpreted and intensified in the poet's words. It was the fact of darkness being felt which provoked the intelligent and reflecting one to forecast scenes and feelings which would give form and strength to the cravings of the natural mind after something better. According to the power with which this was done, so was the man's power as a poet esteemed. Thus man in himself admitted that he needed light to escape from the oppression which

weighed on his heart and mind. This felt-need God graciously met in His own people, and in His own way, by presenting to them, not the imaginations or any superior intelligence of the natural mind, but the prophetic word, which necessarily led the soul that received it out of itself and its then condition into dependence on God, carrying it into scenes entirely in contrast to those in which it moved, and fraught with the very relief which at the moment was required. How welcome such a light in a dark place.

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, by faith being translated that he should not see death. He, too, had the prophetic word when he prophesied, "My Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment," &c. That was the "light" to him, as to the growing confusion and ungodliness of the earth which he was leaving, and it shone in a dark place. Not only was he to be personally removed from the scene, but the prophetic word by which he foresaw the time when the Lord would come and be in the full

exercise of His power, gave him a true estimate of the darkness with which he was surrounded and led him to walk more distinctly with God. A "light" indeed it was to him, and, as he walked in it, it necessarily separated him from the darkness.

The blessing of Melchizedek was a prophetic word to Abram. It revealed to him the Lord God as the "possessor of heaven and earth" in such power that receiving it by faith, and entering into what was yet future, he could refuse the offers of the king of Sodom. Abram's own circumstances in the dark place were an apparent contradiction to this belief (for the Canaanite was in full power in the land), but in the light of prophetic truth he was translated from the darkness of man's day unto the day when the Lord God should rule. Nay more, the Lord says of him, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." The prophetic word always conducted the receiver of it into the scenes of which it spoke. It carried him out of the place where he was, and

was given on purpose to set him free from the present confusion and disorder, and to establish him in that order of things which eventually would be.

When Jacob fled from his brother Esau, and, wearied, lay down on a pillow of stone, it is by the prophetic word in a dream that the Lord ministers cheer and hope to His suffering saint. "He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." Surely this was a light in a dark place, now made a "Bethel" to him; and in spirit the houseless, homeless, friendless Jacob was transferred to the greatest of all manifestations on earth, even the manifestation of the Son of God in His glory. He saw that which the Lord announced to Nathaniel (John i.) as among the "greater things" to come, when, in the free communication between heaven and earth, the angels of God would be seen in ministry on the Son of man in His millennial glory. Again, in the light of the prophetic word, Jacob

when a dying blesses the sons of Joseph and all his sons. He would conduct them in the spirit of their minds into scenes and a condition of things at the moment not existing, and of which there was nothing to indicate their future existence, no more than there was to Joseph that his bones should at a distant day be removed from Egypt to the land of Canaan; but faith carried him forward into that distant moment, and it was thus a light to him in his then circumstances.

When Moses was worn out by the continued failure and perverseness of the children of Israel, his cry to God was, "Show me thy glory." He desired a light to shine in the dreariness around him, and the light disclosed, led him in spirit unto the Holy Mount, where he was afterwards quite at home. Prophecy, as we have seen, properly belongs to, and is given of, God to relieve the heart here oppressed by the darkness and difficulty of the way; so much so, that the more the darkness increased, and the more man's

evil obtained, the more fully and constantly the prophetic word was given to warn the unruly, and cheer the faithful. For while it fully declared the righteousness of God in judgment, it failed not to disclose the purpose of God in His kindness and love to His people, and on this His people could ever rest. Thus the song which Moses taught the children of Israel, while it warned them of the consequences of forsaking the Lord, reminded them also of His love to them, and therefore comforted the faithful and assured them that in the darkest hour of trial and judgment He would be "merciful to his land and unto his people."

When Israel is set in the land, there is at first little or no prophetic word. It was a trial of man, *as man*, on earth, to be seen again in the millennial day, when the Lord will be present in person to sustain man therein. Until it was proved that man was incompetent to maintain this standing, there was no need, so to speak, for a prophetic word which would carry him in spirit out of,

and beyond it. If Israel had acted up to their covenant, all would have gone on cheerfully and blessedly on earth. When failure had fully set in, when the priesthood, represented by Eli's sons, was corrupted, and a new line is adopted by God in the person of Samuel, then the prophet became, as I may say, an institution from God, "For he that is now called a prophet was before time called a seer." (1 Sam. ix. 9.) From henceforth the prophet is the distinct and peculiar minister of God. He by his word shed a light in a dark place; and though he might tell of intervening sorrows and trials yet he always conducted the believer in hope to the bright day of God's kingdom. I repeat, that the prophet became an ordinance of God when man was proved a failure under every trial. "Yea," says the apostle and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, "as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." (Acts iii. 24.) The prophetic word was of the grace of God, to lead His believing but suffering people into the day

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of blessing, and their hardness of heart was that they had not "believed all that the prophets had spoken." The Psalms, many of which were indited during Saul's reign and David's rejection, distinctly and vividly look beyond all trouble to the day of Christ's glory; and thus the prophetic word was a light to David. Thus in the prophets, one and all of them, the greater the ruin, as in Ezekiel and Daniel, the more vividly the grace of God traces for His people the times of refreshing which would come from the presence of Christ.

How blessed and animating the prophetic word, in scenes and times when everything of God was marred and defaced; the temple dismantled, the carved work broken down with axes and hammers, a wild boar out of the wood devouring the vine of God, and Jerusalem trodden down of His enemies! Then it was that the prophetic word poured out its helpful and salutary light to the suffering people of God. And so does it now for us, though the character of it

is of course varied according to the different times and need. Then the great burden of the prophetic testimony was Christ as "the mighty one on whom God would lay help," the arm of the Lord by which salvation should be wrought. "Behold thy king cometh" was the light which the prophetic word shed into the heart of many a way-worn, afflicted one in Israel. Hence to the shepherds it is announced, "This day is born to you a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" and Simeon dwells on the fact that it was revealed to him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. What we have to understand is the effect and usefulness of the prophetic word, and how God in His lovingkindness vouchsafed it to His people in all dark times as a light. He in His grace and tender mercy communicated what would be, in order that the heart of each suffering saint might pass through the present affliction sustained by the future, and therefore reckoning himself of it, and not of the present.

When Christ came prophecy ceased, for He was the fulfilment of it. He was here to make good, if He had been received, all the promises made to the fathers, and all that the prophets had foretold. He was the Light to which they had pointed, and therefore for the interval that elapsed between Christ's coming and His rejection there was no prophecy. But immediately on His rejection prophecy again came in to cheer the hearts of saints, while also depicting to them the terrible sorrows they would have to pass through. The Lord Himself, when virtually rejected and on the eve of His death and departure from the world, announces to His own the "days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 22.) The prophetic word is a light in a dark place; and, therefore, as light, it sets forth everything as it is, not to discourage and overwhelm but to disclose and forewarn, in order that the souls of the faithful may, while anticipating the glorious end, be prepared for the trial in the way.

but it is of the same nature, and effects the same as prophecy proper. It is a light, nay, how great a light, shining in a dark place. The Lord being absent, rejected from the earth, the Holy Ghost down here revealeth the deep things of God—the great mystery, the secret of His heart, determined on before the world began, but never divulged until now. It was the subject for the new prophets to divulge, and in doing so they did not declare a thing manifested, but a position which had not entered into the heart of man, now to be occupied by faith, and therefore in a marvellous way to be a light to them in the darkness of this world. The Lord saying, "I go to prepare a place for you," and the Spirit's desire that we may "Know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance," both conspire to show the nature and the usefulness of the prophetic word, which carried the saints forward from the scene of misrule and sorrow, in a world which the Lord was waiting to judge. And this was the light peculiarly needed

On the ascension of our Lord, and consequent on His rejection, two subjects of prophecy were committed to the servants of Christ: the one as touching His coming glory and kingdom which simply was "things to come;" the other, a disclosure of the secret of God, the Church, as not of the world but given to Christ out of the world. This structure He had Himself announced in Matthew xvi. 18, that He would build. But it was not till after His final rejection, and after the rejection by the Jew of the testimony of the Holy Ghost about Him, that it was fully disclosed; the disclosure being especially committed to Paul, who announces that the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, "now is made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known," &c. (Rom. xvi.) The Church he also tells us, is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." "And he gave some apostles and some prophets." This at first sight may not appear to be prophecy,

in their circumstances and ours. Who can understand his true and divine place here, if he have not this light in his soul and on his pathway? In one sense it is not so much a matter of prophecy now, but in another it is; for prophecy, by presenting how God will place and order things, must always be a light, because it makes manifest what is opposed to this order. The secrets of the hearts are made manifest by one speaking with a prophet's power. But, not only this, the prophetic word is to carry souls forward, and connect them with the mind and purpose of God, and set them in it apart from and above the *actual* circumstances in which they are found. Surely no prophetic word more perfectly effects this than the truth of my place with Christ in heaven. Yea, the moment I receive it, I know how great a light it is to me in this dark place; that is, it carries me by faith, outside it altogether. It is however revealed and known, though not yet manifested. The marriage of the Lamb is not yet celebrated, but it has been revealed by the

prophets, and we know, as we enter into the light of it, the momentous value it is to us.

Now while this subject, this mystery is of the nature of a prophetic word because it discloses to us at the present moment what we shall be in by and by, and therefore now by faith sets us in; the *other* subject of prophecy relates to the earth, and sets before us what will transpire on it, the great and wondrous events which shall take place here; how different and how according to God, this earth shall yet be. It must first be swept by the besom of destruction, and then the Lord will reign. The *one* subject carries me in spirit into my place with Christ; so that now through the light of the prophetic word I am out of the darkness here. The *other* shows me the glorious alterations which God will effect here; and in the light of it, I pass through the wreck and confusion around me. My mind imbued and carried forward by the power and intelligence of the prophetic word which is to me a light in a dark place. The *one* relates

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the power and intelligence of it walks through it, instructed in the judgment of God about it. Apart from it in spirit he views it in fellowship with God's mind, and is empowered to do so, because he knows and rests in what God is about to do with it.

How blessed and gracious of our God thus to enlighten us! May we indeed take heed unto the prophetic word, now made surer, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts!

The force of the word "*until*" I shall hope to examine in a future paper.

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD.

(1 John v.)

"This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus (the) Christ; not by the water only, but by (the) water and (by the) blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is (the) truth."

peculiarly to the status of the saint himself; the other, to the earth, as the sphere of God's glory. Both are God's light to us, and the souls which are not enlightened by the prophetic word have really no true light to guide them in the darkness. Thus is it explained why so many earnest souls know so little where their path is, amid the confusion so increasingly pressing now from every side. It is the light, as we have seen that God has given from the beginning; and now in the consummation of ages, He vouchsafes to the Church, the body of Christ, a two-fold prophetic word. By the one, the word of God is fulfilled (Col. i. 25), and the saints are now by faith therein placed in heaven with Christ, a fact absolutely future, but now by the Spirit through the prophetic word known to faith; and the light of this sets the saints free as to spirit and position from this evil world. By the other, which is also fully declared, so that "blessed are they that hear the word of this prophecy," the nature of God's purposes on the earth are disclosed, and the saint in

There is no point in which the blessing of the way of God by faith fails. But then there must be the reality of faith in regard to each distinctive point of the divine testimony. It is not enough that the word of God should not be disbelieved, or that it should remain a matter of consideration on our minds. Its objects presented in Christ must, in simplicity and directness of faith, be received as the objects of faith. It is thus alone that we can "know (in the (ac)knowledge(ment) of Him) what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe according to the working of the power of his might, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places." It is in faith the blessing is transferred to our souls, and by which we are made partakers of it; and "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is (the) truth." We enjoy the power in the blessing of faith, energised by love, for the accomplishment of the ends and thoughts of God toward us in Christ Jesus.

Such is the wonderful way of grace, inconceivable in the goodness and greatness of love: God takes the manhood into Himself, that through death and resurrection, the manhood, as in us, might partake by faith of God in Christ. And it is in the way of "faith, that it might be by grace;" as it must be if sinners are to be partakers of it. "By *man* came death, by *man* came also the resurrection of the dead," even by Him who is "the resurrection and the life." How can the soul fail to bow in worship at the thought? "The first Adam was a living soul, the last Adam is a quickening spirit." How sad is it when the condescension of God becomes the ground of dishonour with His creatures! The name of the SON OF GOD, therefore, becomes, by the marvellous grace of God, resurrection to me and eternal life, which are in Him and in me, by grace through faith: for "he loved me, and gave himself for me."

Christ, then, the object of all God's thoughts, is presented to us in various characters, with a peculiar power attached

to each. He Himself is this peculiar power. To enumerate some that attach more especially to His person: Christ—Christ Jesus—Jesus Christ—Jesus the Christ—Son of God—the power of God—the wisdom of God—Lord—in the various power applicable to the use of the word in Scripture. May we think with reverence of these wonders! For there is danger of failing in reverence.

The simplicity of the word that reveals God in the Son, and the blessings that are in Him and by Him, would render explanation unnecessary, except for others, were Christ more simply and directly the object of faith and love. It was given me to make the following observations in a letter to an individual, intended as a communication to a particular assembly:—

"That the righteousness of God is imputed in every separate object of God's appointment believed on. If we believe any one such object—and they are as diverse as the objects presented to us by the word of God, being such as we are to receive blessing by—the believer is

accounted righteous, and is the accepted object of God for the blessing and power that God has given in it, or by it. The one case we ordinarily hear of is, that if we believe on Christ, the Son of God, the righteousness of God is imputed to us. We thank God for the clearness this has daily received of late. Now, Christ believed on, contains everything that God has to give in Christ. The case in which the righteousness of God is ordinarily looked on as imputed, is in the remission of sins and the acceptance of the believer in the presence of God. We are not to confine this grace, and the manner of the grace, to this singly. Faith in the resurrection of Christ, by the glory of the Father, is counted for righteousness. By Him we believe in God that raiseth the dead. We are counted righteous unto justification of life. Righteousness is equally imputed unto us in this case as in the former; for it is written, Righteousness shall be imputed unto us, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, who died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification

(δικαιωσις*). Abraham believed God as to the life of his body, though dead, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and God fulfilled His grace in his begetting a son in his old age.

"As to forgiveness, it is applied to us in the sprinkling of our hearts from an evil conscience. Now, the whole circle of things presented to our faith by God, in the several ends of them, stand on the same ground, and the results are offered to the faith of them as of Him. Faith in the Holy Ghost is faith in God, as faith in the Son is faith in God. Faith in the Son, His person and offices, is necessary to enter into the blessings of the Son. Faith in the Holy Ghost, His person and offices, is necessary, if we would enter into the blessings of the Holy Ghost. I mean faith working by love. To fail to possess ourselves of that which we might, which is necessary to our spiritual well-being and completion in the way of Christ and the manifesting of His grace, is

* Διὰ δικαιωσιν, for the end of justification as results; in fact, of δικαιωσις ζωης.

chargeable before God; for all that should be worked out in the way of blessing is lost through the faith not being directed to the object as of God.*

So in this place: "This is he that came by water and by blood." (1 John v.) The emphasis is peculiar with which the water and the blood out of the side of Christ is mentioned in John xix. 34, 35. It is mentioned apparently with a different intent and in relation to the certainty of His death; but here it is taken up on the ground of the *doctrine* of it, and as it respects the blessing by the water and the blood.

The water is not, I think, the Spirit, as in several other places in Scripture, but the new nature. But this could not be alone—redemption is conjoined with it. The world knoweth it not, but it is *our* life. It is not fitted to be of the world, nor to live in conjunction with it, but to God, and according to the calling we have received in Christ. It is true that, though having the new nature, the world is our

* Letter to Mr. C——, Dublin. (Dunne.)

This chapter begins with another declaration as to the faith, which is prior, in the order of the Spirit, to that just noticed. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"—Christ the anointed One of God—"anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Again: "No man saith Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Thus it is here; but we advance one step farther. It is the essential character of SON that carries all with it both in nature and circumstance; and so heirship of God and eternal life is in the SON. By this He is heir of the world and of all things: and we sons of God and co-heirs in our place in and with Him.

To those who are subject to Christ none of the commandments of God are grievous. "His commandments are not grievous." For if "love is the fulfilling of the law," we also read, in chapter ii. 7 of this epistle, of "an old commandment" that the apostle had written, and "a new commandment," in close alliance with the old, "*which* (says he) *is true in him and in you.*" How could His commandments be grievous where the

place for a while; but in that nature we overcome the world, being redeemed out of it by the blood. It is redemption *out of the world* that is here the work of "the blood," and it is the object of our faith. It is not His death as our substitute that is here presented, nor our cleansing, but the overcoming the world as purchased out of it; and this with a new nature (the water out of His side), as fitting us for our new position as strangers and pilgrims in the world, and to be perfected in it.

This, however, would not avail were there not such a faith of His person as the very Son: for "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

"By weakness and defeat
He won the meed and crown,
Trode all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down."

A wondrous way, indeed, of overcoming!
"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

* Τον κόσμον and τον αἰῶνα του κόσμου too; i.e., the ordered world which lieth in the power of the wicked one, and the course of its precepts and actions.

love of God is; where its fulfilment is in the identity of the source of its fulfilment? "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, as (καθ—ως after the same manner as) he is righteous." It is "Christ in you;" and, "The *life* is the light of men." "I have written unto you fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." He then adds, in address to the "young men," "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..... and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The love of those only that are begotten of God can be in this kind and in this faith.

This chapter, as I observed, begins with the faith that "Jesus is the Christ," i.e., He that was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. I must own His place as the Christ, and a description of such as own Him is that "they overcome the world"—the world in its present form, order, objects, desires, obedience, and own Him and His commandments. The victory

that overcometh the world is even our faith. But here we advance a step. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the SON OF GOD?"

I need present instrumentality and condition of being in order to overcome the world. "The water and the blood" from the side of Christ present this condition and this instrumentality. I overcome in the power of them. I accept them as my power of overcoming; and the consequence is that the world, through the love of God, has lost its hold. I am a partaker of Christ. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "This is he that came by water and by blood:"

"And death by dying slew."

Christ and the world are diametrically opposed. "The prince of this world" is the rival of Christ; and the question is, Who shall rule and reign? This question is answered by the *faith*. Nothing can now sanctify the world; but (as it is expressed by the prophet) "In the midst of

it shall be a tenth, and the holy seed is the substance thereof." These alone are accounted of God, and called above to be with Christ and to come with Him. Ye are "risen with Christ"..... therefore "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."*

All the peculiarities of the apostle are markedly in this chapter, and its general abstraction is manifest. But the divine principle of it is evident; as also in the gospel of the same apostle, as practically applied, in chapter xv., to servants.

This chapter relates to the ministry and service of Christ; and the "Father is the husbandman" who prunes the branches. And I cannot but think that the word He spake unto them which made them "clean" (ver. 3), was clean for this end, viz., service and ministry. This, I think, is shown by the connexion of the terms *αιρει, καθαριει*,

* It is written we "have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens." The Greek is *διεληλυθота τους ουρανους*. Wickliffe's translation is "persed the heavens." I should humbly think that we have passed through the heavens to the highest, by the excellency of His confession.

and *καθαροι*. (Ver. 2, 3.) It was the live coal from off the altar, of Isaiah vi., which the seraph laid on his mouth and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." So that he that had said, "Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," now said, "Here am I; *send me*." "Ye have not chosen me (saith the Lord), but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen

* In 1 John v. 3 it is said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." And chapter iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." He sent the Comforter: "*My* peace give I unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." The command was to love one another in the sympathy of both not being of the world that hated them, because it hated Him and the Father. How can the Spirit rest where the world is, or anything of it, and which "could not receive him?" Thence comes the question, "Is the Comforter come, and is He gone?" Christ was in a world contrary to His Father. In the same world we confess Christ. The Holy Ghost testifies to the glory of Christ, and His glory rested on His not being of the world. "Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world." "As my Father sent me, so send I you." As I live by the Father so shall ye live by me. On whom will the Spirit of God and of glory rest?

The testimony from 1 Timothy vi. 12 must not here be omitted: "Fight the good fight of THE faith, lay hold on *eternal* life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast confessed a good confession before

many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; ['Now my kingdom is not of this world'] that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing (*επιφανεia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We must however say a few words as bringing us plainly back to the individual consideration (though the truth of the Church makes all ministrants one to another in the faith, in the grace which is to every man according to the gift of Christ). Dying we must die where we are dead, even on the cross; that living, we might live where we have life even *in Him risen*. We have the water and the blood and the Comforter, and are partakers of Christ.* He witnesses to the truth. In advancing let us never leave the place from which we start, binding ourselves to Him or the cross, and in whom we are risen, that nothing may escape us by the way. Amen.

* What others were the reproach of Christ which Moses esteemed?

conjoined that where the one exists the other, without our care and concern, and without our watchfulness and warfare, will necessarily follow. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." This casts us upon God as the gracious and sole author of our salvation, thus endearing His character to our hearts while it gives them their sure and eternal ground of confidence in His favour. But Scripture also speaks to us thus: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more." This throws the soul inward upon *itself*, to see how far its habits and principles, its conduct and feelings, or, as Scripture beautifully expresses it, "The issues of life," are in accordance with the will of God. "For (adds the apostle) ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification," &c.

WALKING BY FAITH.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight." (Read 2 Cor. iv. 6 - v. 9.)

To a certain extent it is, doubtless, true, that every real Christian may be said to walk by faith, and not by sight. But the largest charity will not allow us to think that, all Christians at all times, in their course through this world, are, according to the force of the principle enunciated by the apostle, as gathered from the connexion in which it stands, practically and characteristically, walking by faith, and not by sight. Nay, if we turn in upon our own consciousness, it may be asked which of us is found, day by day, and in all the varying circumstances of life, so giving to the things which are unseen and eternal their due and controlling power in the soul over the things which are seen and temporal, as to be habitually, and in the sense of the apostle, walking by faith, and not by sight?

To be *saved* by faith is one thing, to *walk* by faith is another. And Scripture does not present these things as so

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WALKING BY FAITH.

The balance of Scripture is destroyed where the mind is occupied alone with privilege and grace, and is impatient of the aspect of duty and obligation. And it is to be feared on the part of those who profess to be separated from the general corruption of Christianity, but whose separation is a thing of nought if it be not a separation to *God* and holiness, that there may be springing up amongst them a new and subtle kind of Antinomianism, in constantly looking at the Church's abstract position and perfectness in Christ, as if the mere mental recognition of that secured to each individual a position and acceptance with God which could never be forfeited, and beyond which it was impossible he should be advanced. Every word of God is true; but it is true in application only so far as it is truly applied. Truth is not truth to *me* until it is reduced to living act. Every distinct proposition of the word of God asks for itself a definite reception by faith, "faith which works by love." The ends of a divine revelation are not

accomplished in us except as it brings the soul and God together, in the harmony of truth communicated and truth obeyed. This, and not a light kind of second-hand dealing with the terms in which truth is expressed either in Scripture or by men whose hearts have felt its power, is the obedience of faith.

"We walk by faith (says the apostle) not by sight." This is not equivalent to the thought that we are saved by faith, however true that may be. To *walk* is indicative not of a point but a progress. Neither can walking by faith be reduced to the vagueness of a general principle, leaving it to the individual mind to fill up the undefined outline of its application. Nothing, I think, can give more definiteness and force to this simple but comprehensive proposition, "For we walk by faith not by sight," than the way in which it is interjected by the apostle in the passage under consideration. It is presented in connection with the most wonderful unfolding of the character and consequences that mark the reception of the Gospel by the

soul which are traced onward through all the vicissitudes of our earthly course, giving a victory over every trial and even over death itself; linking every sorrow and suffering, that is met in the power of faith, with eternal glory; pointing the soul, in the dissolution of all its present associations, to a "building of God, a house not made with hands;" and immediately giving to death this simple character of being absent from the body and present with the Lord; in issue landing the soul in this simple purpose of life, "endeavouring, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to him."

In the first place he glances at the condition of the world, of men who are in estrangement from this gospel, and in a few emphatic words presents a melancholy picture to the mind. He says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (Chap. iv. 3, 4.)

He connects a veiled or hidden gospel and lost souls and Satan's power, whatever men may think to the contrary or say. But while this should stir our pity and rouse our energies to make this gospel known, it comes in here in the way of enhancement of that work of God which it is his object to unfold. He says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 6.)

There is an overwhelming kind of feeling produced by the realization of this aspect of the gospel. It brings God so near to the soul. It shows Him who, in His sovereign power in creation said, "Let there be light, and there was light," bringing in by a power and agency, as direct and immediate, the light of that revelation by which He is made known in grace to the heart. "It is *He* who has shined in our hearts;" not to reveal something already existent there, but to make Himself known where all was darkness and estrangement from Himself before.

To dwell only upon the effects of the gospel in its saving power toward men, is to lose sight of the true and substantive character of the gospel itself. That which is hidden from men, to whom the gospel is hidden, and which leaves them in a lost condition, is the good tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. And that which is revealed by the light shining in the heart, is to give the light of the knowledge of *God's glory* in the face of Jesus Christ, whether this be in its apprehension in the soul, or for its outshining in testimony in the darkness of this world. And at this point, as throughout, how necessary it is to bear in mind the principle, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Faith only will keep the soul in companionship, if I may so speak, with this wondrous disclosure of what God is, and how near He is to us, in this gospel which we all profess.

The next point which is presented is the effect of this revelation in us, and the purpose of God in the conditions of its display in the circumstances of this

world. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." If the knowledge of God is introduced into the heart, it produces a permanent effect there. As the Lord Jesus says, "This is *life eternal*, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It is the in-shining of God to the soul; but then we must remember that it is characteristic of the nature of God that He is light. Doubtless, He is love also; but it is said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." And when the eternal life is manifested in this world in the person of Him of whom it is said, "He is the brightness of His glory and the express image of his person," it is declared, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men;" or, reciprocally, "the light of men was the life." Again, the Apostle John, speaking of a new commandment which he was writing to them, says, "which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." He refers

life is in his Son." "The true light now shineth." But if the rays of this light shine into the soul, it is not to leave there a mere photographic image, a fixed and dead shadow of the living object it represents. It first gives the life—"the *life* was the light of men"—and eventually it will change its objects into the glory, which is the proper home of the life. "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." (Chap. iii. 18.) "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And farther, the Apostle John, "We shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is." This is the final transformative power.

I again repeat, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." And if it be not so, I ask, wherein does the common familiarity with the statements of Scripture, which is not lacking amongst us, differ from a cold and uninfluential dealing with the terminology of some obscure

to what is expressed by the Lord in John xiii. 34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you (*καθώς*), that ye also love one another." This, as the apostle recognizes, necessitated a participation in the nature from which this love flows, which is the nature of God Himself. Hence, as already quoted, in repeating this new commandment, he says, "which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth." It is the linking together the two statements of his gospel, "the light shineth in darkness," &c., and "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Thus far to rescue the expression, "we have this treasure," &c., from any vagueness of meaning. If God shines in our hearts, it is to produce there, through the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, a specific and eternal result. It is to produce His own image there, to impart His own nature. Doctrinally it is stated, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this

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and obsolete record? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." "If we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself."

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." And this not simply and of necessity from the condition of our nature here in this world, but in order to illustrate the divine power. This brings in the necessity of our knowledge of God's purpose concerning us in our daily walk as Christians in the world, and in our testimony for Christ; and also the concurrence of our souls in the conditions in which the divine power is to be displayed. Doubtless, the apostle made a great advance in his personal knowledge of this, when, in answer to his prayer concerning his "thorn in the flesh," he got this reply from the Lord Jesus, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And the immediate concurrence of his soul in these conditions of the display of divine power in a human vessel, an "earthen vessel," is seen in

his subjoined declaration: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," &c. It was the personal, individual illustration of the truth before us, "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." (Ver. 10.)

There is a proportion and correspondence between the manifestation of the life of Jesus, and our bearing about in the body His dying. If this be entered into in the energy of divine grace, and in enlarged and self-denying service for Christ, as in the case of the apostle, it displays, as from within, the power of this life. But it is not dissociated from the divine care, and watchful ordering of external circumstances for this issue by the Lord, as he says, "For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (Ver. 11.) There is the purpose of heart which, by a voluntary consecration to the service of Christ, seeks to

be made conformable to His death; a voluntary "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But there is also the weakness of nature, together with a lack of full spiritual apprehension, which, if unchecked, would induce in the most energetic servants of the Lord a not unfrequent turning away from the constant pressure of the cross; and, to that extent, would defeat the desire to manifest the life of Jesus. To counteract this, therefore, and that the desire for Christ's glory may be divinely accomplished in His servants, there is the ordering, variously by the Lord, of outward circumstances, so that, as the apostle says, there should be a delivering up unto death for Jesus' sake: the ordering of the Lord coming in, in aid of the weakness of the earthen vessel in which this divine treasure is deposited. Hence, especially, in the service of the gospel, the apostle had to say, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you."

But the secret of all this willingness to meet death—death not outwardly only, but in all the inward purposes and

principles and objects of a man in the flesh—what is this? It is the conscious possession of a life that death cannot touch; a life whose triumphs are now seen in the moral death of all that nature, apart from God, must needs value and cherish; a life sustained by its alliance with God amidst "deaths oft" in its course through this world; and a life, finally, that resurrection will give its triumph to when even the earthen vessel that contained it is broken, and lying like a dishonoured potsherd in the grave. It was this which urged the apostle onward in his fervid course, as he says, "We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (ver. 13, 14); and then adds, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (Ver. 16.)

But here again how needful is it, if

these things are not to be to us mere empty words—words of *Scripture*, it is true, but to us wholly uninfluential—to remember the declaration of the apostle, "For we walk by faith not by sight." How otherwise is it possible that the summing up of the apostle's estimate of his whole course of suffering and sorrow and affliction in this world should appear to us to be anything but a mere rhapsody, instead of the utterances of a man soberly weighing up the issues of time, with its passing and checquered scenes, and of eternity with its impending glory? "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (Ver. 17, 18.)

The eye that is steadily directed to the world that is unseen and eternal, will bring home to the soul a thousand intimations of coming glory and of at-

tractive goodness, which are missed entirely by the Christian even that is unduly occupied by the things of this world and time. The spectacle of the starry heavens and all the glory of the celestial sphere may be alike the object of the contemplation of the astronomer in his observatory, and the midnight traveller as he lifts his transient glance ever and anon to the spangled canopy on high. But while the one gazes with wrapt wonder on the limitless fields of space, and has his senses bathed in all the glory of revolving suns and spheres, as through his telescope they are seen to thread their mazy way through never-ending galaxies of brightness; the other beholds little more than an outstretched pavilion of blue hung with its tiny lamps, which, twinkling with glowworm brightness, shed their feeble rays to guide him in the bewilderment of his steps. The objects of contemplation are the same to both, but how different are the emotions awakened by them in the mind of each! So is it with the Christian that steadily gazes with the

suitably be applied. Though if human estimation be regarded, it is granted that in this respect "the first may be last and the last first."

There is nothing more wonderful than the calm and confident way in which each point is explained and disposed of in the questions that are discussed in the verses on which we now enter, chapter v. 1—9. If we think of what death is, what conquests it has made, what is involved in the dissolution of the ties that bind us to the present scene of existence, what utter powerlessness there is in nature to meet the approach of death, what darkness and uncertainty mark all the reasonings of philosophy concerning what is hidden from us in the future by the veil of mortality, we cannot but see and wonder at the love that opens out such a vista of glory and triumph through the regions of death and discomfiture of all human power and hope. The body which we now possess, and which is subject to decay and dissolution, is but an earthly tent that death takes down, to be replaced

eye of faith into the disclosures of that world which faith alone can apprehend, and the Christian that does not indeed *disbelieve* the record of those things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but who, in a practical sense, could hardly—at least in the apostle's application of the phrase—be said to "Walk by faith and not by sight."

In infinite grace, we know that God so watches over the feeblest and faultiest of His children, in their course, as to make all things work together for their good. But this is far wide of the truth which was before the apostle's mind in the passage now before us. Here the scope and purpose and entire bent of the soul, whether in active labour or in patient suffering, are directed to the things which are unseen and which are eternal, to the exclusion, as to any dominancy over the soul, of the things which are seen and temporal. Nor can it be said, I think, where Christ and His service, His cross and coming again are not the ruling objects of the heart, that the language of these verses can

by a "building of God," an eternal habitation, in those heavens where Jesus funds His home and where God's glory eternally reigns. There may be groaning now because of the weakness of nature, and because of our association with a creation that, through sin, is itself made to groan; but this only compels the more earnest out-look of the soul, and the more longing desire to be "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." But where this is not the object of desire, and where the soul has not a title to this provision of God, what is there for it but the most terrible unpreparedness for a scene on which it is compelled to enter? For what pregnant sorrow is there in the expression, "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." This heavenly house must be ours, the soul must be clothed upon with this, or else we must "be found naked." But this is an interjected thought; and the apostle returns again to the "groaning" which characterizes our dwelling in this taber-

nacle, showing that the very burden we now feel through corrupted mortality, awakens, not simply a desire for the deliverance that death might bring, but for that which goes far beyond—"that mortality might be swallowed up of life." It is *life*, and not *death*, that Scripture always presents to the believer as the proper object of his hope. It is for life and glory that Christ has redeemed us, and not for death and corruption. And God has wrought us for the self-same thing; and the earnest of the Spirit, is the witness and earnest of the inheritance and of glory.

But, come life or death, there is always a ground for confidence. Death *may* come. Be it so. If we are at home in the body, there is so far a necessitated absence from the Lord. If we are absent from the body, it lands us with Him who is the object of our desire. "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." And the issue of all, where it can be truly said "We

of the true hearts in Israel in a time of difficulty. Midian and Amalek were to be overcome. 32,000 gather around his standard; of these, 22,000 are fearful and afraid, and there remain 10,000. But these are now to be tested as to whether they are fit and prepared to go forth with Gideon; and the Lord's mode of testing them is "Bring them down to the water and I will try them for thee there." *Why to the water?*

Now there are two phases in man's history; one is adversity, or, as we may call it, difficulty; the other, prosperity; and each is placed before us in its moral effects in Deuteronomy viii. The wilderness was the time of difficulty. There the soul was learning God; there the strait became the occasion of God's help when the soul had found out that it had no other resource, and thus was truly strengthened; for the real measure of our strength is the measure of the strait we have passed through with God. God's great purpose in leading me through the straits of the wilderness, is to lead my soul into the simple depen-

walk by faith not by sight," is summed up in the words "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." (Ver. 9.) Amen.

WHAT IS MY OBJECT?

(Judges vii.)

The greater the difficulty of the time in which I am, the more have I to learn that the only true regulator of my course, is the Lord Himself as my object. When I know Him thus, I am "holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." When Christ is my object, He is both my guide and my support. He not only occupies my heart, but He nourishes me with His own strength, in order that I may accompany Him in His mind and counsel.

Gideon is presented to us in this chapter as the centre and rallying-point

dance of hanging on His word apart from and beyond any provision or arrangement. Thus difficulty or adversity differs much from prosperity. In difficulty I am thrown on God, and any strength that I have must be in Him; if I have any it will come out then. In the day of adversity all my resources according to the strain bearing on me, will be pressed into use; and if I fail, it is a proof that my strength is small. But in prosperity my resources are not so necessarily in God, and if I have a weakness I have an opportunity of gratifying it. Hence, the Lord warns Israel lest, in the prosperity of Canaan, they should forget Him.

And now we may understand the nature of the test to which Gideon's army were subjected. The water represents prosperity or mercies, it may be any thing which addresses ourselves, and which, though provided or allowed of God, is, as addressed to ourselves, in no way connected with Gideon and his work. *But it is the test.* If Christ be not simply and definitely my object, things,

good things, which address and suit myself, and for which I may be thankful as mercies, will engross my attention, and Christ as my distinct object is lost. And not only so; but if He be not my distinct object, I am not "holding the Head," and, as a consequence, am not nourished or enabled to hold on and accompany Him in *His* objects and purpose. And here it is where so many true-hearted ones are turned aside. The water tests them, and it assumes such specious forms that they see not that they are tested by it, and so are often found wanting. Various are the forms it takes. One great test is our own usefulness. This is Martha-like: she was full of serving Christ, and, in a measure, it became her as mistress of the house; but her heart was more in her work than in the Lord, and she was not one of the 300. 9,700 threw themselves on their knees to drink water—were engrossed by it. The 300 did not deny the existence of the mercy, they lapped it—took just what was necessary and no more, for they had another object. Gideon

fit for Gideon. Every one ordinarily is seeking some prosperity, but our devotedness to Christ is in proportion as we surrender it. Yet, *in* the surrender it is that we receive an "hundredfold more!" The Lord in the same breath in which He tells the young ruler that he must leave all and follow him, and when Peter retorts, "*We* have left all and followed thee, replies, "You will have an hundredfold more." Had not the 300?

The Lord be thanked that He has given us such an object as Himself, and that as our hearts make Him such, so are we helped, nourished, and guided according to His very mind.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."—Matt. xi. 12.

When the kingdom was first announced to the Jew, there was no question of taking it by force. He was told to repent because the kingdom of

was their object, who doubtless was looking on to see who would be able to stand the test. And any who *did* stand it, he not only equipped suitably for the conflict, but put them in the blessed place of imitators of himself. "As I do so shall ye do," are his words to them; they were to be similar to himself in place and action. What more blessed, more honourable for a soul in this day of difficulty; and how fully answering to us now. If our Lord be simply our object, we are *as He is* in place and action; we are "holding the Head," and He nourishes us up into His own mind and ways at the time.

Another test may be our reputation among men, which Paul calls "loss for Christ." His own righteousness, which would have given him a place among men, he counts as dung, something not to be touched.

Another test (as in Col. ii.) is the effort the heart makes to set itself off by will-worship, &c., and is thus turned from Christ. It is as I surrender the water—prosperity—that I am devoted,

heaven was near. It was his birthright to inherit the kingdom. But he would not repent, despised the King, sold his birthright, and so lost for ever his title to enter the kingdom of the heavens upon that ground. The kingdom therefore could not be then established: and such was the opposition and enmity of the Jew, even from the very beginning, that Jesus said, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."

This was a condition of things which could only exist while the Lord Jesus was a rejected man upon earth. It could not have been before, for it is evidently consequent upon the Jew rejecting the king, and thereby selling his birthright. Nor can it be specially applicable after the ascension of our Lord, for then the *mysteries* of the kingdom began, and are now running their course, in which time the grace of God is proclaiming, "To him that worketh not," &c. To take the kingdom by force, supposes a condition somewhat different, and in some

points, quite the opposite of "not working."

There may be an analogy between that time, and the present; i.e., between the energy required then to break through all opposition, and the faith *now* needed to leave the traditions of men; but not in the way that God now brings sinners of the Gentiles to know and believe in Jesus.

We see that taking the kingdom by force was the necessary result of Christ's rejection. Could the Jew have received Him, there would have been the establishment of the kingdom in power. But now all the learning, wealth and authority of the nation were in antagonism to the Lord Jesus. All that the Jew was accustomed to reverence was, in appearance, contrary to the position now taken by the Lord. All then to whom he looked for instruction had denounced Him. They had called Him Beelzebub. Further than this they could not go. Now if a Jew became the disciple of Jesus, he would find himself cast out and despised by all whom he considered

God) could sustain a Jew through the terrible ordeal.

I have said that there may be an analogy between a Jew breaking through old and revered associations in order to follow the rejected Messiah, and Christians now, who, led by the Spirit and word of God alone, leave the traditions of men and the bondage of human systems, and gather round the name of Jesus; as also between the rejecting Jew, and those who now, taking the place of Christians, prefer the good opinion of the world and its smile, to the despised place outside the camp.

The Jew, in a certain sense, was in the position of the people of God (though really disowned). There was an external semblance of obedience to Him. But when the Lord came, when God applied the moral test whether they would receive Jesus, humble and lowly, they utterly failed: they preferred the world.

Even the amiable young man whom Jesus loved, would not part with his riches for the sake of Jesus.

to be teachers and instructors, "cast out of the synagogue," and exposed to the persecution and hatred, of those whom he had been accustomed to reverence. More, he must break with his friends; father, mother and all beside must be forsaken, to be worthy of Christ. And therefore the closest ties would not prevent hatred, his "enemies will be they of his own household." Indeed not a habit, not an association of his old life, but must be broken off, and sundered, if he would have the kingdom of heaven. The most useful and necessary things, right feet, right eyes, all must be parted with if it come in the way. He must patiently submit to persecution, be content to have his name cast out as evil; in short to seize upon the kingdom, would be for a Jew at the cost of all that he held sacred and dear. This was taking the kingdom by force. Nationally the kingdom was refused, and therefore individuals had to struggle against everything in order to enter it. Nothing short of the most determined energy (which could only be given by the Spirit of

Do we not see at this present time something analogous to this? Do we not see among those who profess and call themselves Christians, some who shrink from that close following of the Lord Jesus which necessitates a thorough break with the world? Is there not a clinging to the world and a dread of its frown? Ah! it is as true *now* as it was *then*, true discipleship is sure to bring the hatred and enmity of the world; the hatred and enmity of all who are not with Jesus. And family ties are no more able to bear the strain *now* than *then*. The name of Jesus turns the warmest natural affection into coldness and indifference. If we would follow Him, we must do violence to all that connects us with the world. I do not mean that only those are saved who have broken away from human tradition and circle round the name of Jesus; but I do mean that they alone are in the true path, and, notwithstanding the broken condition of the Church, are in its true and normal position.

In such a day as the present, when

infidelity and superstition are advancing apace, it becomes those who love the Lord Jesus, to stand firm for Him, "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and to manifest faithfulness to Christ, true heartedness; and a standing apart from all that is of the world, whether the corrupt or the religious world, for His name's sake. For this, the divine energy and power of the Spirit is as much needed by us as it was then by the Jew to seize upon the kingdom of heaven.

May we understand our calling and responsibility.

C. B. B.

"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."

ness of His own people on the earth. And thus it follows that the "one seed," the source and channel of all such blessedness, was *now* to be the great subject of testimony.

It is incumbent on us not only to know every line and phase of testimony as connected with the interests and purposes of God, but now, as in the light and grace of Christ, to maintain all and every line which, as worthy of Himself, was required of His faithful ones, according as He was made known to them. God's will has been perfectly accomplished by Him, in whom we are, and therefore we are responsible to gather up and embody in our practice here all the lines of testimony enjoined on, and maintained by, God's servants in any time.

Abram's desire for posterity—for a continuation as to himself here, gives occasion to that word of the Lord which embodies the new line on which he was entering. "Behold," he says, "to me thou hast given no seed, and lo! one born in my house is mine heir." Hence the word of the Lord to him: "This

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER V.

A B R A M.

(Concluded from page 249.)

We have seen what was the nature and scope of the testimony committed to Abram, as relating to man on the earth; that is, how the witness for God must conduct himself in relation to man on the earth, when independence of God and idolatry were man's principles; and how Abram is required and enabled to observe a line which would distinctly disavow such principles, not only to the thoroughly worldly man, but also to the unfaithful saint.

Now we come to another phase in the testimony, and one which has respect to the hope and status of the people of God *on the earth*. It is not enough in this order of testimony to disavow the principles of man, or to assert that the Lord is "possessor of heaven and earth;" but it is of God's grace that there should also be a testimony of the future blessed-

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shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." And He brought him forth abroad and said, "Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abram has now a new testimony to maintain, namely, that the seed springing from him, of which there was no natural hope, would be as numerous as the stars of the firmament; and his belief in this, through grace, secured to him the position of righteousness before God. Faith in the fruit and issue of God's work, which He would do by Him, who would do His will and finish His work, enabled God to count Abram in the righteousness in and through which He would eventually bring about this glorious consummation, even that his seed should be as the stars of heaven. Abraham has now to journey on maintaining this. How fine! How blessed! He himself accounted righteous before

God. He, in the spirit of his mind, having reached the day when God can, in His own righteousness, fill the face of the earth with sons and daughters of Abraham's seed, which is Christ.

And it is by the covenantal sacrifice that this truth, of which he is now the witness, is secured to him; and it becomes the basis and surety of all to him, even though a prolonged darkness rests on his path, and the night be dreary before the promised issue comes—before the earth bears in its bosom what the heavens in their starry myriads illustrate. All this is declared in chapter xv. 9—21. When, in answer to Abram's query, "Whereby shall I *know* that I shall inherit it?" God directs him as to the sacrifices he was to offer, after which a deep sleep and a horror of great darkness falls upon Abram, in which the history of his seed is revealed to him, and the extent and limits of his future inheritance detailed and defined, all on the ground of the covenant.

The testimony now is that man, believing in the issue of God's seed, is

counted righteous; and this with a defined inheritance on earth is secured to him by a covenantal sacrifice. Abram in fact in this testimony stands outside man as he is, his faith connecting him with God's work, and he himself in righteousness thereby, depending on God through the covenant made by sacrifice for the consummation of His promise. Abram in this testimony is in the righteousness of God by faith and therefore outside of things seen; for faith is the evidence of things not seen, and while he so walks all is well.

It must be borne in mind that with every phase of testimony there is always a by-path, a "wile," by which the enemy would lead us, in order to remove us from the *true* line, and from which we should have been preserved had we truly and conscientiously abode by the *terms* on which we had been set on it. Abram, now set on the true line outside everything here, depending on God for the seed and the issue of it, the by-path or "wile," which would divert and allure him from this, would be one which

would propose to accomplish the desired end, through a merely *human* means. This Satan finds and achieves through Hagar the bondwoman; and Abram falls from faith to sight, and is *in the flesh*; so that we find it written that "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Eleven years after Abram had come into Canaan, Ishmael was born. That which is after nature precedes that which is after the Spirit. Ishmael is born fourteen years before Isaac. The testimony suffered on account of this failure, and Abram as the witness suffers also; but God overrules all in His mercy. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, and within one year of the birth of Isaac, the testimony receives another addition, and at the same time a correction for the flesh. The Lord appears unto Abram (chap. xvii.) and unfolds to him two things—the one that where sin abounded grace superabounded, there being no other way open for God to act, therefore his name is changed to *Abraham*, with the reiterated assurance that,

notwithstanding his failure, he should be a father of many nations; and, secondly, he is taught that, if God confers in grace, man must surrender, and deny himself in the flesh through which sin acts. Hence circumcision is required and enjoined. The cause of his having turned aside from the testimony, in the faith of which righteousness was reckoned to him was the *flesh*. He had been accounted righteous for believing in the future of his seed, which God had revealed unto him; but instead of walking simply and restfully in this hope through faith, he is drawn aside to seek an heir in a carnal manner, and that which had been entrusted to him (the testimony) suffers. How needful for him to be taught that the evil of the flesh *must* be set aside; that flesh to which he had lent himself and by which he had been drawn aside from the simple testimony of waiting by faith for the seed promised of God. And this is what circumcision signified, as we see in Philippians iii. 3, 4, &c. It prefigured the entire renunciation and putting away

of the flesh. Therefore Abraham must be circumcised and his seed after him throughout their generations. A great addition was now given to the testimony. The Lord has revealed Himself more fully as He is in Himself, and on the ground of this by covenant He gives Abram the name of Abraham. This declared the manner of His grace; but if His grace be full and blessed, there must be a setting aside in man of that which called for the grace. Can I require and receive grace from God and yet retain that which, because of its evil and weakness, required it? Nay, if grace comes in, flesh retires; and hence circumcision is enjoined, being a "seal of the righteousness of the faith he had, yet being uncircumcised." The greater the grace, the more needful the abrogation of the flesh; and this is taught here in figure. It is as *Abraham* that he circumcises. It is the one who is in grace that can endure circumcision, who can afford to have "no confidence in the flesh," and to deny it, because he is on better ground. This was now the

fears to avow what is truth. These failures point out to us what the testimony would preserve us from and by what temptations it is damaged and spoiled, and for this purpose it is recorded. Therefore, I make this passing remark on the sojourn at Gerar.

When Abraham is an hundred years old, the promised seed is born; and now comes the open and manifest casting out of the bondwoman and her son. The counsel of God, of which Abraham is called to be the witness, is the promised seed; and, this being come, that which was born of the flesh must not continue in the same house or standing with him. And (how full and blessed is the testimony conferred on Abraham!) not only is the one born after the flesh (antitypically the Jew) to be cast out, but Abraham is still further taught that the promised seed does not depend on natural existence, but on resurrection—on Him who raises the dead. What an element! What a strength this imparts to the testimony. How line upon line the purpose of God is disclosed, and Abraham

testimony for Abraham; "and the self-same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael, and all the men of his house, born in his house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

Abraham now in his new position is shown the judgment on the flesh in its corruptions and lusts, out of which the uncircumcised one is delivered so as by fire, for Lot was uncircumcised. Abraham is shown in Sodom and Gomorrah the extent to which the flesh of man runs; and circumcision has its value as indicating the renunciation of the flesh. Lot, righteous in himself, is delivered from the judgment that overtakes Sodom, only to sink into positive crime, when, lost to sense, an advantage can be taken of him; while Abraham sees it all as one apart from it, and in company with God.

But though blessed and circumcised, Abraham is not unswerving in his path of testimony. He has still a tendency to go south, and dwelling at Gerar he learns that he is not in the power of the truth he professes; for in Canaan he

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made personally a witness of it! Not only is Ishmael cast out, but in Isaac resurrection from the dead is in figure known by him, thus filling up his testimony; and then all the purposes of God, as conveyed to him in former promises, are enlarged and secured anew to him, founded on resurrection. God confirms all by an oath, as through faith in the day of glory. Abraham is accounted righteous, and takes this new standing. So now, having reached to the resurrection, God, by oath, confirms to him all previous promises.

The more we bring together and set forth in order the great principles of truth, which Abraham was called to exemplify, the more must we be charmed and edified by the beauty and greatness of the whole. Like the fir-tree among the trees, faith is the leading shoot; but as the tree grows, great branches are superadded on this side and on that, to furnish the tree and support it in its greatness. Thus Abraham grew up, and on; and, as we survey him in the testimony to which he is called, we won-

deringly see what grace can do in a man, while we also see the tendencies to which man is exposed, and to which he yields. But, at the same time, because grace is acting, opportunity is given to God to call that out in His servant which would preserve him from those tendencies. Consequently, Abraham's failures are given to us in order that we may see how God empowers him to rise above, and be superior to them. Before the birth of Isaac he had failed in the land from fear of the Philistines who were in the land. Here we get the moral relation of the Philistines to the people of God. It is the fear of man which bringeth a snare. Egypt was not in the land, and therefore the world; and *there* the fear of man is also. But Gerar was *in the land*, and Abraham, the circumcised Abraham, the Abraham who had passed through the experience of seeing the judgment on Sodom, even he fears the king of Gerar. After the birth of Isaac this self-same king makes a covenant with Abraham, and then comes in the resurrection as the true

and stable ground for all this blessing, from which neither the Philistines nor Ishmael can displace him.

Three "branches" more remain to complete Abraham's testimony. One, his conduct and way on the death of Sarah; the second, with regard to the marriage of his son; and the third, the way in which he distinguishes between Isaac and his other children. It was in his hundred and thirty-seventh year that Sarah died, and she died at Hebron. Abraham had latterly resided at Beersheba. (See Gen. xxii. 19.) Hebron is a distinguished place; it was where the promise was first given; the promise of future blessing to the earth, and here it is that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, dies and is buried: thus testifying that nature in itself must end, when the grace of God and its accomplishment is manifested. In its highest sense, we may say, when Christ comes in. I can afford to part with mere nature however dear to me, when I am where God will establish the better than nature according to His own will. (Phil. iii.) The be-

reaved Jacob buried his Rachel at Bethlehem; Sarah is buried at Hebron. Abraham, while living in the land, and traversing it by faith as his own, obtains no possession in it but a burying-place, and that he obtains not from God, but from man by purchase. He buys it. He does not buy from man a place to live in, but a place to be buried in. A striking but expressive testimony! Living by faith, seeking no acquisition here to remain in, but when death supervenes, becoming a possessor of a burial place, an earnest of resurrection; for surely, as to inheritance, it was the only earnest he had; therefore his first actual possession was a burial place. He would tell the people of the land, "I have no possession here but a grave. I anticipate my right and buy a grave that my dead may rest securely till the day of glory." Beautiful and emphatic testimony.

The next line in this comprehensive testimony, following immediately on the death of Sarah, is the manner in which a bride and co-heiress is provided for Isaac. I am aware that Genesis xxiv. is

generally interpreted as in figure presenting the Church, the body of Christ and the bride of the Lamb spoken of in Revelation xxi.; but though there may be some touches in the scene described there, which can only be fulfilled by the Church, yet I am inclined to think that it is more consistent with the testimony and purpose of God that we should here be presented with the earthly bride, the queen referred to in Psalm xlv., the one who shares with the promised seed His rights and inheritance on earth. The sphere of the heavenly bride is in heaven, though exhibited to earth; that of the earthly bride, the queen, is simply the earth, and in partnership with Him who reigns here as the heir of all things. This is just and consistent with the testimony set forth in Abraham, and with this view we at once see the place of the nations presented to us in his children by Keturah. These children—six sons—Abraham sent away eastward into the east country after giving them gifts; and surely they must have carried with them some knowledge,

at least, of the testimony which their father had maintained.

Here this wondrous and remarkable testimony is brought to a close. Isaac having been already called and used of God, to set forth His name and purpose on the earth, will engage our attention in the next chapter.

THE PLACE WHICH CONSCIENCE HOLDS IN THE SERVICE OF THE GOSPEL.

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."—2 Cor. i. 12.

By conscience it is plain that the apostle here refers to that inward principle or power of the soul which takes notice of our motives and springs of action, and pronounces its secret judgment upon them. In this respect he declares himself to be perfectly free and clear, both as regards the world at large and the saints also, with whom he had a more intimate association.

himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Here the voice of conscience is met by the value of the blood of Christ, as before it was presented as meeting the judgment of God; and the blessed result is that the soul is put into recognized relationship and intercourse with God.

This is an immense privilege, and under the law an inconceivable blessing, that the conscience of the worshipper and the claims of God's holiness should be brought into perfect harmony. It is this harmony between conscience in us and the claims of God's holiness that is the wonderful thing in the gospel. But the ground of it is plain. It is thus energetically expressed in the language of this epistle: "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." It is plain that there can be no rest for conscience here. But that which faith rests upon is this: "Now *once* in the end of the world (or the ages) Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-

There is, of course, another aspect of conscience, and which is of vast moment in the question of the soul's acceptance before God. This the apostle speaks of, when declaring the inadequacy of the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances. He says, "They could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the *conscience*." (Heb. ix. 9.) In relation to its cognizance of sin he shows that the claims of conscience can only be met by that which, in this respect, meets the judgment of God. The effect of Christ's work, therefore, on the conscience, in giving it peace before God, is necessarily based on the accomplishment of redemption. The two are presented in connection in Hebrews ix. 12—14. But redemption comes first. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." This as meeting the holy requirements of God in regard to sin. Then follows the effect on the conscience of him who believes. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered

self." This work He has accomplished; and on the ground of this it is argued, that "the worshipper once purged should have no more conscience of sins." The desert of sin having been met in God's presence in the sacrifice of Christ for sin, of which the sacrifices of the law were but dim and indistinct shadows, the blessed effect upon the conscience in us through faith, is correspondent to the efficacy of the work accomplished before God. That is, the worshipper is brought to see, through the testimony of the Spirit to the work of Christ, that sin has been so entirely judged in God's presence—where, of necessity, it must be judged, if judged at all—that there is nothing left for his faith but entire acceptance in the grace of God, who in infinite love gave His only-begotten Son for the express purpose of the accomplishment of this work. It is the difference between the sense of *responsibility* under the holy requirements of God, which is only the more oppressive and confounding the more the sensibilities of conscience are alive, and the liberty of *grace*, which

points to an accomplished righteousness and an *eternal redemption* wrought by the death of the Lord Jesus, that Lamb of God's providing! "Thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift."

The Apostle Peter, too, speaks of "the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." It is the same thing in effect with that which has been already considered, i.e., that the conscience meets what is needed for its peace in the expiation of Christ's death, of which His resurrection was the grand pledge and proof. Conscience gets its answer by seeing Christ going down to death bearing our sins; and then seeing Him not only raised again from the dead, but "gone into heaven, and on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

But, in the place we are considering, conscience is presented in a very different aspect. It is not here conscience having its claims once and for ever met by the redemption which is by Jesus Christ, but conscience holding its daily court to

try the correspondence between the testimony of the gospel believed or proclaimed, and the inward feelings and aims of him by whom it is believed or proclaimed. In this view it is essential that conscience should be kept bright and unsullied by our constantly walking in the light as God is in the light, and having our daily course tested by the divine word and by the living example of the Lord Jesus. The apostle tells us it was his rejoicing, or boast, to have such a conscience; and it is exceedingly important for us to mark the force of this principle, and how entirely it is through God's grace our responsibility to maintain. Other things, as the apostle shows, in his service might be denied him, and may be denied to us, such as the measure of success he desired in the ministry of the gospel, or the satisfaction he could not but covet in the conduct or walk of those amongst whom his word had been received; but a good conscience, through grace, he could maintain, and thus find a rest to his spirit amidst all his sorrows and

disappointments. And how serious a business this was with him is shown in his address to king Agrippa, where he says, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." It was a thing that did not come to him without his care; nor will it so come to us. But it was what he cultivated with earnest diligence. He says he "exercised himself (i.e., practised himself in a sort of gymnasium) in order to maintain this, of which he might otherwise have been despoiled by the subtilty of the enemy, using to this end the circumstances and trials and temptations by which he was surrounded. Everything that we meet with is, or may be, an occasion for the exercise of conscience either toward God or toward men. On the other hand, he shows, in his address to Timothy, the danger in other things to which it exposes us if we fail to maintain a good conscience. "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." The practical power

of faith cannot be maintained in the soul where a good conscience is not maintained. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things; if our heart condemn us *not*, then have we confidence toward God." Hence we see the secret spring of all apostacy or departure from the Lord. The man who does not "add to his faith virtue," &c., will soon become blind, and not able to see afar off; i.e., beyond the horizon of this world. His *faith* will go, and he will "forget that he was purged from his old sins." His confidence toward God will give way, his faith will suffer shipwreck.

This then is what we see so strikingly exemplified in the apostle's course. I do not now allude to his earnest zeal and patient labours, and entire devotedness to the one cause he had espoused. These are manifest. I speak of this, that whatever might be the result of his labours, or whatever might be the estimate of men concerning them or him, he always maintained the consciousness of the most entire integrity and simplicity

in his own bosom to fall back upon. As he appeals to the Thessalonians, "ye are witnesses and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." There it is not the testimony of his conscience only, but that which is the result of a good conscience, the collateral testimony to the truth itself, which is found in the consistency of those who present it.

It was not, however, that he did not recognize a higher standard, in the truth itself, to which conscience was to be conformed; or that he did not appeal to a deeper judgment of himself than conscience would reach. This he plainly shows where he says, "I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself [I am conscious of nothing, i.e., of no fault]; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." That is as to faithfulness or unfaithfulness and the ultimate awards of Christ to His servants (for this is the point of his argument), it is not a matter of human judgment at all, but of the final judgment of the Lord. And he adds,

what is there left for those by whom it is ministered or professed, but the maintenance of that simplicity of purpose and inward conformity of feeling in relation to it which makes its appeal to the scrutiny of Him who is light, and who has called us to walk in the light? Success is not at our bidding. Circumstances are not under our control, but under the control of God. The sphere of *His* service is not in our own choice, but in His appointment. But, in all these conditions, the one thing to be maintained—and it is all that rightly can be done—is the possession of a good conscience. Even an apostle could do no more. Hence, Peter exhorts Christians generally as to their conduct in the world, and amidst persecutions and suffering and calumnies of enemies, thus, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." It will not be human approval at all, nor appointed by human judgment, but praise to each one, who will then be the subject of praise, will be from God. Still, as he owns, he could not look on to this judgment if he had not been clear in his conscience now.

It is remarkable the place which the apostle gives to the possession of a good conscience, in a practical sense, in his request to the Hebrews for their prayers on his behalf. He says, "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." (Heb. xiii. 18.) This seems very humble ground to take; too humble for the spirit of fanaticism, but not for the quiet, healthful spirit of the gospel. In truth there is everything in it. Given that the gospel is true, and that its revelations are directly from heaven,

that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (1 Peter iii. 15, 16.)

In writing to Timothy, the apostle says, "Now the end of the commandment [or, charge, for he is referring to the words of verse 3, "that thou mightest *charge* some that they teach no other doctrine," &c.] is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned." *Love* was to be the spring and the issue of all his service. But we cannot fail to see how this love is guarded, and by what holy and conservative principles its integrity is to be maintained. It is love indeed. But it is "love out of a pure heart"—a heart that, in the exercise of love, connects itself with the truth; that remembers the declaration that God is light as well as love. It is love out of a good conscience too. Love that must be controlled, not by the softness of natural feeling, but by uprightness of heart as subject at all times and in all things to the will of God. It is love also "with faith unfeigned"—that is, a faith that honestly looks to

God's word and Spirit for its foundation and its guide. He adds, "from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling," &c. In a word, the apostle shows that if right moral feelings be absent from our walk and service, no amount of knowledge or zeal will keep us from being turned aside from the right path.

So far conscience: but what was this inward testimony of conscience to? To this, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," the apostle had his conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward those who believed. His whole course in the world, in connection with the gospel, exhibited these characteristics, simplicity and singleness of aim. He was *sincere* as a persecutor, but that is not our point. Genuine and unmixed, as examined in the light of God, was the purport of his heart; and there was nothing covert or tortuous in his ways. There was a wisdom, a practical wisdom, I mean, which strongly marked his course in many instances.

The apostle's conscience was not occupied with the foolish punctilios which marked the Church of a later age, but took its character from the fulness of the grace which he proclaimed, and was the reflex of his association with Christ and God. It was a *heavenly* conscience, though dealing with his path on earth; and this is the *kind* of conscience which the perfect revelation of the Christian's place and portion in Christ demands. Hence nothing can be more important than to realize the place in which divine grace has set us, because our walk here in the world and our conscience in all its exercises is to accord with our relationship to God, and the full and perfect disclosure which He has made to us of His counsels and will. May we learn more and more what it is to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." (Phil. ii. 15, 16.)

But it was not the politic wisdom of men which seeks to bend the minds of others to its purpose by acting on their natural feelings, and which is ready to seize upon their weaknesses and prejudices, even, in order to carry its point. The wisdom of the apostle was the reverse of this. It was not "fleshly wisdom," but the grace of God which marked and controlled his path. I know but of one seeming exception to this, when he said before the council, "I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee." But this did not turn to very good account. What he sought was not a place for himself in the estimation of others—not even amongst those who were most his debtors in the truth. In all his labours prosecuted with all his zeal and ardency of affection, he desired only a place for Christ, and for the power of the truth with which he was entrusted. This is abundantly seen in his appeal to the Corinthians. "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

"I WILL COME AGAIN."

Read John xiv. 1—3.

In this passage, which every Christian's heart must often have dwelt upon, we get the whole chasm of time bridged over from the moment of the Lord's anticipated departure, which was then the occasion of His disciples' sorrow, until He comes again, which is presented to them as the simple and only object of their hope. What might be intermediate in their circumstances is not presented. What would be intermediate in His own is given for their comfort. For a season they must know Him as separated from them—gone to the Father's house, but there as much interested about them and occupied for them as ever He had been on earth. But then He would come again and receive them to Himself. He had been with them on earth. He knew the place He held in their affections, and what He was to them here. It is well. He would come again and they should be with Him in *His* home, as He had been with them in theirs. This was to soothe their sorrow; this was to inspire their hope. It was enough. All that they had ever valued on earth they had given up and had been separated from, in order to be with Him. If it was little they had to surrender, they had found their all in Him. What was He not to them here? What could fill up the blank in their affections when He was gone? Nothing—nothing but being restored to the object of their affections again. It was not earth's anticipated sorrows that made them sad. It was the thought of being bereaved of *Him*. Why, the world was so absolute a blank to them when *He* was gone, that their affection (at least of one of them)

would have seized upon His dead body as her only treasure amidst the desolated waste around.

Love asks not to be enriched, to be told of happiness and glory; but *to be with* the object loved.

Did not the heart that had won their affections know what love's true guerdon is? He knew it well; and therefore says, "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." A glorious heaven may well be the home which the God of glory has prepared for those whom His call and grace have made strangers here on earth. It is His goodness to tell His pilgrims amidst their present toils, that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." But to the desolated affections of His saints He says, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him . . . then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be *with the Lord*. Wherefore," says the apostle, "comfort one another with these words." They are love's only effectual anodyne. He knew it well; *his* own heaven was to be "ever with the Lord." And ours, what is it, if it be not this? What is our Christianity? The knowledge of forgiven sin? the certainty of acceptance at last through the blood of Christ? the assurance of heaven—a doctrinal heaven—a reasoned heaven—when earth is done with? No; it is this. Christ has loved me, and given Himself for me; and He has said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

THE ACTS.

Had any man of his own hand undertaken to write an account of the first establishment of Christianity on the earth, we may safely conjecture he would have given us a history very different from that recorded in the Acts. From the time of the Lord's ascension till the apostle's first journey to Rome, is the period of history it is concerned with, and yet we have little else than the labours of Peter and Paul. What were the labours of James the Less at Jerusalem, or of Thomas, the reputed apostle of India? Where were the others at work when Paul found only James and Peter at Jerusalem? (Gal. i. 18, 19.) What was the immediate cause of John's banishment to Patmos? where did he labour before and after that? To answer these and kindred questions, we must go to the writings of men, for God has not seen fit by the Spirit to inform us.

Again, the history of Peter, as given us in the Acts, as well as that of Paul, breaks off in the middle of his work.

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We read of his deliverance from prison, and of Paul, that he was kept a prisoner two whole years in his own hired house. Peter vanishes from sight in Acts xii. 17, to be seen no more except at the memorable meeting, whose details are recorded in chapter xv. As the apostle of the circumcision, it is plain, he regarded the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia as his especial charge; and we may gather from 1 Peter v. 13, that he did not in later any more than in earlier years remain fixed at Jerusalem. But where he went when he left Jerusalem (chap. xiii. 7), and what he did at Babylon, whatever place we understand by that name, is left a story untold. So, too, of Paul; beyond the first interview with the Jews at Rome immediately on his arrival, we get nothing but the brief notice, contained in chapter xxviii. 30, 31, of the two years' residence at Rome of this most zealous of the servants of Christ. Had any one of his own accord sat down to write such a history, would he have stopped, unless

prevented by some unforeseen occurrence, just when the apostle arrived, for the first time, in the great metropolis of the world? Surely he would have recounted some of the details of that first answer, when no man stood by him, but all forsook him. (2 Tim. iv. 16.) Perhaps, too, he would have given us some insight into the apostle's visit to Miletum, where he left Trophimus sick. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) And yet we would not say that the history is incomplete, unfinished, like Stephen's speech or Paul's defence (chap. xxii.); interrupted before the speaker had ended, with no after opportunity of completing it. Its composition betrays no such haste; for if Luke had been minded to have extended it, he had ample opportunity, when with the apostle shortly previous to his martyrdom (2 Tim. iv. 11), of hearing from himself all the details of his imprisonment, and answer before the emperor's judgment-seat, even if he had not been an eye-witness of the events as they took place. But this is passed over, and all Paul's labours after those two years so briefly

noticed. And why? May not the reason be simply this: The history of the Acts was not intended to give us man's work for God, carried on by the agency and supreme direction of the Holy Ghost; but the Lord's manner of working on earth, after His ascension, by the Holy Ghost, for and by man. Hence, when the great features of His work have been set before us, the history closes never to be resumed.

These great features are *three* in number. The Lord working in power for His people, manifested chiefly at Jerusalem; the Lord working by His word, manifested chiefly outside Jerusalem; the Lord acting in grace towards His failing servants, manifested so beautifully in His dealings with the Apostle Paul.

If we examine the facts recorded in connection with God's work in Jerusalem, we see the power of the Lord, in one form or another, is generally the prominent feature. Outside the city the first place is given, as generally, to His word. We have several speeches of Peter at Jerusalem, but they all fol-

low some manifestation of power, and give usually the reasons for its display. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, showing how what had taken place was only what Joel had foretold; but he only speaks after those who witnessed it wondered what it was. The healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate brought crowds together, to whom those fearless words were spoken, which subjected Peter and John to be brought before the council. At Cesarea, on the contrary, we read of nothing but God's word by the mouth of Peter, which, listened to and received, was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost. When the Lord would commence the work in Samaria, Philip went down and preached Christ to them. He worked miracles as well (chap. viii. 6, 7), but we read, "They believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptized, both men and women." (Ver. 12.) So at Damascus (chap. ix.); at Antioch in Syria (chap. xi. 19—24); at Salamis, and Antioch in Pisidia (chap. xiii.);

Derbe (chap. xiv.); Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (chap. xvii.); Corinth and Ephesus (chap. xviii.), it is the word of the Lord, and not the manifestation of His power, that arrested the attention of both Jews and Gentiles, and converted those who gave heed to it. At Paphos and Philippi we have accounts of miracles worked, but in each case it is only to remove the hindrance Satan put in the way of the free reception of the truths preached. The sorcerer, Elymas, is struck blind for a season, because he perverted the right ways of the Lord, and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith; and the damsel is delivered from the spirit of divination only after she has followed Paul and his company many days. For if the hostility of Satan to the truth could not arrest the progress of the work, the Spirit of God would not receive from him any testimony in its favour. At Iconium and Ephesus we have notices of other miracles wrought, but they seem to have been in confirmation of the word previously spoken. (Chap. xiv. 3; xix. 11, 12.)

Nor need the miracle worked at Lystra be an exception to this rule, for it appears not unlikely that the word had taken hold of the impotent man's heart before, at Paul's command, he leaped up and walked. (Chap. xiv. 9.) At Jerusalem, with the exception of Stephen's speech, the word follows the manifestation of power.

How suited was all this to the work to be done. If the apostles could stand forth at Jerusalem and proclaim a revelation they had received from God, their opponents in the council and synagogue could meet them on similar ground, and affirm the necessity of adhering to that word given by God to Moses at Sinai. For He had appeared in their midst at Sinai, and manifested His presence afresh at Jerusalem. (1 Kings viii. 10, 11.) They could and did oppose the disciples, as in the case of Stephen, with a revelation as much from God as that delivered to them. Did the followers of Jesus speak of a gift now given by God to none but those who believed on His name? The unbelieving Jew

could point to the many marks of special favour bestowed on their forefathers. From the time of Abraham to the days of Daniel, Jehovah had often interfered in power on their behalf. Twice in the history of Abraham (Genesis xii. 17; xx. 18) had the Almighty interposed. For the deliverance of his descendants it was that the destroying angel had passed through the land of Egypt, and decimated the ranks of the Assyrian invader. For them the sun and moon had stood still, the stars had fought against Sisera, and the shadow retrograded ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. For them the Red Sea had been divided into twain, and the waters of Jordan had stood on an heap, till all passed over dryshod. For Daniel, faithful to the God of heaven, the angel had come and shut the lions' mouths; and with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, a fourth was seen in the burning fiery furnace, having the likeness of a Son of God. What nation but theirs could speak thus of God's intervention on its behalf, or exhibit so many proofs of His lovingkindness and

those afflicted with devils are brought, and all are healed. Despite the known displeasure of the council, the work spread; so to stop it, the whole company of the apostles are put in prison. In the morning the prison is empty, though bolts and bars are untouched, and the keepers are standing before the doors; but the men are found teaching in the temple "all the words of this life." The council then doubted whereunto this would grow, and well they might. No threat could intimidate these men, no earthly power restrain them. Stronger measures are next resorted to, and Stephen is stoned. But here, too, though outwardly they seemed to triumph, he really triumphed over them. For, rising above the spirit which legitimately characterized Judaism, he cries not for vengeance on his persecutors, but implores their forgiveness from the Lord. And stranger still, one who was consenting to his death, and kept the clothes of the witnesses who stoned him, one who manifested by his acts that he was exceedingly mad against the Christians, is

tender mercy? How could such arguments be met except on their own ground? They could appeal to the power of God exerted so often in behalf of their fathers. Let them see now with whom and for whom He was working in power.

That nation, which formerly had experienced His intervention in power for their deliverance, must now witness His interposition in favour of those they persecuted and killed. They had crucified Jesus, and He, now at the right hand of God, had shed forth the Holy Ghost on His followers. At the temple gate a miracle, which none could gainsay, is wrought by two unlearned men, professedly in the name and by the power of that Jesus they had lately crucified; and when charged to speak no more in His name, these two humble fishermen bid defiance to the council. And still greater wonders are done, so that the sick are brought and laid in the street that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them. From within and without the city, the sick and

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suddenly changed on his journey to Damascus. A light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shone around him, his companions saw it, and heard him speak to some one evidently in answer to words, addressed to him, inaudible to them.* In this case it was no weak enthusiast, nor any one seeking a fitting opportunity to declare himself on the side of the believers, but a man more hostile in spirit to the truth than the rulers themselves; for he solicited, unasked, letters from them to the synagogues at Damascus. Their most zealous instrument converted, the rulers pause in their career of outward opposition, and the "church had rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria," (chap. ix. 31), till the civil power in the person of Herod, essays to put down the spreading sect, by striking at them in the city of Jerusalem. James, the brother of John, is killed by the sword, and Peter is kept in prison, guarded by

* Is not this the meaning of the statements in chapters ix. 7, xxii. 9, "hearing a voice," "but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me?"

four quaternions of soldiers, to be killed after the feast of the Passover. Twice had he been imprisoned before. To make all secure he is chained to two soldiers, and one night only intervenes before the time appointed for his execution. But that night the angel of the Lord awakes the apostle, while the sleeping guards are unconscious that the prisoner escapes them. He leaves the prison, and the iron gate which led into the city, opened to let the angel and Peter pass of its own accord, and he was free; and shortly afterwards Herod, his hands stained with the blood of James, is smitten to death by the angel of the Lord.

On whose side then was God now? For whom was His power exercised? These displays of it for the deliverance of His people had a feature in them most peculiar. They were not miracles worked by men, but the direct interpositions of God on their behalf. It was the finger of God manifested in that very city of Jerusalem, of which He had said His name should be there. The arm of the

hearts to discern, decided the question without equivocation or the possibility of a doubt. How convincing this should have been to their enemies, how encouraging it must have been to them. "The Lord of hosts was with them, the God of Jacob was their refuge."

But they had a work to do, to make known to Jews and Gentiles that One whom they owned as Lord and Christ. How should this be accomplished? By the display of power? No, but by the preaching of the word. Power reveals God as almighty, the word preached reveals Him as the God of all grace. Hence the next thing we see is the manifestation of the efficacy of the word of the Lord, and its suitability for all classes and nations, Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, barbarian and civilized. Some of each are brought under its power, and show themselves obedient to the faith. Was the religion of Jesus to be propagated only by power, those, who succeeded the apostolic age, might well have trembled and shrunk back, appalled at the task before them. But

Lord was again awake, but this time for the safety and shelter of those whom the rulers wished to put down. In no other place in the whole earth could His power, when exercised, have more plainly declared His approval of the apostles and brethren. Here, in the very centre of those who claimed to adhere to, and support, the revelation He had formerly given at mount Sinai by Moses, is the Lord showing Himself strong in favour of those, who announce a fresh revelation from the God of their fathers. The high priest and all the elders of Israel are arrayed on one side; the apostles and their converts on the other. On the one side is earthly power, and the prestige of many centuries; on the other side is human weakness, and a revelation, at the most, a few years old. And the Lord Jehovah, by the Holy Ghost, personally present on the earth, shows plainly in the very metropolis of Judaism, and under the shadow of that house which the Jews called His temple, who are His. His acts, His interpositions in power, to all who had eyes to see and

since it was to be propagated by the word, the same word which was effectual then is effectual now—God's word applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost; and the same divine remedy suited then, is suited now. Whatever be the condition of darkness and ignorance now, it is not worse than that which reigned at Thessalonica or Lystra. Whatever be the pitch of civilization, and refinement, and intellectual activity the world may now exhibit, it will not surpass what could be formerly met with at Rome, Corinth, or Athens. The preached word was the instrument suited for them, it is equally suited for the civilized world now. Hence, outside Jerusalem, as has been stated, the prominent feature is the Lord working by His word. In Jerusalem, the need was to show that Christianity came from God. The display of God's power did that. Outside it, and to all the ends of the earth, the object was to point out what suits lost man. The word of God does that.

But there is something else displayed in the Acts—the Lord acting in grace

toward His failing servant. If we speak of Paul's failure, we must not forget the honour due to him, surpassed by none, in zeal for the Lord's glory, and devotedness to the maintenance and propagation of His truth. Yet he failed, and the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our warning, instruction, and comfort, because the failure gave occasion for the display of God's grace towards His servant. How comforting to all, who are privileged to labour in the field, to contemplate the displays of grace to Paul. How often do we need it. Blessed be God, what was here shown to Paul can be shown to all His people. How could any, conscious of what they are in themselves, stand for one moment without the knowledge of it. If the Lord had displayed His power at Jerusalem, and manifested the efficacy of His word wherever preached, He will now display His grace to His servant, who has for the moment acted in accordance with his heart's desire, and not in accordance with the Lord's revealed will.

world is asleep, and Paul alone in his prison, the Lord Himself comes to him. Had he obeyed the Lord's word, would he have been there? He is not chided for his act; but surely this display of grace must have had for him a power, greater than any chiding or words of reproof. His disobedience is not passed over; but the Lord can show His grace. And now what honour is put on the lately failing servant. "As thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." How often have those, who have in the main served an earthly master faithfully, been dismissed in the most summary way for some trifling inattention or fault. But the Lord here tells His servant of other work in store for Him, the high honour of being a witness for Him in the capital of the world. To Rome then he goes, after imprisonment at Cesarea, in the company on shipboard of 275 souls. What cause had all on board to thank God for Paul's presence among them. Gifted by God with a prescience which the sailors have not (chap. xxvii. 10),

Paul purposed in spirit to go to Jerusalem, but the Holy Ghost on the way expressly forbade this. (Chap. xix. 21; xxi. 4.) Not even a Paul can act contrary to the Spirit's expressed will with impunity. He adheres to his purpose, and before the week is out he is a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. If he had turned away when warned at Tyre, he would have been free and able to labour as before. He goes to Jerusalem, but has no opportunity that we read of for active service. What is the result? He has disobeyed the direct word of the Holy Ghost. Will the Lord leave him now to himself? He must feel the consequences of his act, but he is also to experience the Lord's tender grace, manifested after failure. Alone in prison, with none who counselled his submission to the law to comfort him, the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul." What tenderness was there in this. It was no message from God like that by Nathan to David. It was no angel that He sent as at Bochim. But at night, when all the

he foresees and warns them of their danger. But they heed him not. A second time Paul breaks silence, when "neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them," to remind them of the previous warning which had come true, and to announce the safety of all on board, but the destruction of the ship (ver. 21—26) on a certain island. A third time he speaks, and this time the centurion gives ear, and the boat by which the sailors intended to escape is cut adrift, for Paul knew their purpose. (Ver. 31.) A fourth time he comes forward, and entreats all to take nourishment after an abstinence of fourteen days, assuring them that not an hair should fall from the head of any of them. (Ver. 34.) This time he gains the confidence of all. What a position did he occupy on board that ship. He cheered them when their misfortunes were at their height, and assures them of safety when no deliverance appeared at hand. To him all owe their deliverance from drowning (ver. 24) and the prisoners from death at the

hand of the soldiers. (Ver. 43.) Reaching the shore, he restores to health the father of Publius, and others also who were sick. He a prisoner dispenses blessings, by the favour of his God as he proceeds to the judgment-seat. Such honour is put on him by the Lord. He reaches Rome according to His word, and, though a prisoner in bonds, by teaching sets souls free. He, who had failed by going to Jerusalem, is an instrument the Lord uses and honours at Rome. His failure is not overlooked, his bonds attest that; but the favour of the Lord is as clearly evidenced by the place of service and prominent position to which He calls His servant.

Here the book closes, complete in itself. The Lord's presence with His people, the power of His word on the earth, His faithfulness to His own, such are the chief features of this striking history. On high He was yet thinking of them. From the Father's right hand He watched over them; and the Holy Ghost was with them, as a witness of the truth, and a director of their work.

insist upon. For certainly there is not a heart that has duly pondered the meaning and weight of the terms but will be disposed to adore God, first, for this gift to guilty, ruined men, and next, for the assured possession of it on grounds so wonderful and divine. But I may say, that it is inconceivable how much we lose of the enjoyment of that which is our proper portion in Christ—of God's gift to us in Him—by lightly passing over, through a too-common familiarity with them, the terms in which the revelation of His grace to us is expressed.

But I will endeavour briefly to unfold these passages in their connection and import for our establishment and profit in the grace in which we are set.

The object both of the Gospel and the Epistle is the presentation of "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And it is written, as to the ground of the possession of this life, "He that hath the Son hath life." The dread alternative too is equally given, "He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." In the

How precious is all this, and how sweet, that the last feature in the book should be the Lord's unfailing grace to His servant. For what He was then, that He is still. All that He was to Paul, that He will be to those who serve Him now. At this juncture the book concludes. The object in view is accomplished, and the historian lays down his pen.

ETERNAL LIFE.

"These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." (John xx. 31.) "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, who believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John v. 13.)

These two passages bind the gospel of John and the Epistle together in the common purpose to give to the believer the assurance of the possession of eternal life.

The grace and infinite goodness of God in this purpose, and of its moment to our souls, I need not here stay to

Gospel it is especially the presentation of the eternal life as it appeared amongst men in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that believing on Him, "we might have life through his name." Hence, in the outset of the Gospel, after the wonderful statement that, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," it is added, "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." This was what the Lord Jesus Christ was personally. He was God; and in Him was life. Life was in Him as in its proper fountain, and was possessed by Him. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Moreover, "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth [giveth life], even so the Son quickeneth [giveth life to] whom he will." And when it is said, "The life was the light of men," or conversely, "the light of men was the life," it speaks of it as communicated, but still retaining its essential character when communicated to us.

But this is further presented in that wondrous prayer of the Lord Jesus in John xvii. In the second verse the Lord says, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give *eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him." He then shows that eternal life comes to us through the knowledge of the only true God (that is, of the Father), and of Jesus Christ, whom the Father had sent. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It may be asked, how is this knowledge imparted? and, how is this life given? If we turn to the Epistle we shall find the answer. The apostle says, in the first chapter, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father," &c. The result of this on the part of those who receive the testimony is a common fellowship with the apostle, and also "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." But at the close of the Epistle we get an energetic sum-

laid open to the simplicity of faith? They may, indeed, be hidden from the wise and prudent of this world, but they are revealed unto babes; for herein alone consists the true knowledge of God, and everything short of this is atheism; not formal atheism, it may be, but real; for God is known only in the revelation of the Son. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." And this is the meaning of the words with which John closes his epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," coming after the statement, "this is the true God, and the eternal life." That is, he has presented to them, in this wonderful statement concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the true objective idea of the only true God and the eternal life; consequently every notion of God framed in the mind that is contrary to this is not a true conception of the true God, but is an idol of the mind—a mere vanity. But it needs not further comment.

In this presentation of Christ as the

ming up of all the truths that he had been insisting on in the Epistle; and here it is we find, doctrinally presented, that most wondrous comment on the words of the Lord Jesus already quoted from John xvii. 4. The apostle says, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God, and the eternal life.*"

Here it is concerning the Lord Jesus that the affirmation is made, "This (*ὁυτός*, this one) is the true God, and the eternal life." Hence we know the only true God. And we know Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent; which our Lord declares is eternal life. But it is still further stated, that we are "in him that is true," which shows the way in which this wondrous knowledge comes to us, and how it is possessed. As the Apostle Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation;" and, "I knew a man in Christ." But who can fathom these depths which are thus

eternal life it is not as if His sufferings and obedience and death and work were excluded, as the necessary grounds of our possession of that life. Far otherwise. These were necessary to the glory of God, without which no sinner could ever be admitted to His holy presence. For God cannot deny Himself. They are equally necessary to us as affording the ground on which God can be shown to be just, as well as the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. But who does not feel that this revelation on which we have been resting carries us far, far beyond all the questions which ordinarily occupy the souls of Christians even, such as pardon and peace and acceptance and hope, and law and obedience; in a word, beyond every question that can by possibility come back reflexly upon self, while it lands us in the depths of God's eternal love, and in the infinitude of His own being? "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and the eternal life."

What depth and force also does this revelation give to the declaration—too

often too lightly passed over—"that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." For if the source of the one stamps its indelible character on that which flows from it, no less does that also of the other. But I forbear; not because there is not infinite joy in pursuing these things, but because no explanation of man can give them their place in the heart. They can be only known in their power in the soul's intimacy of communion with God, and in giving to His wondrous word its full meaning and place. But what I have written may help some thirsting soul to drink more deeply at these eternal fountains and well-springs of eternal joy and refreshment.

"Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth, unmeasured, no man knows;
I see from far thy beauteous light,
And inly sigh for thy repose:
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest, till it find rest in thee."

G. Morrish, 24., Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row.

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—Eph. vi.

VOL. X.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1866.

THE

GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

A SERIES.

No. 17.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

If we rightly understood and weighed the circumstances under which the Lord took his seat on high; the state of things here; the sense of His rejection which led Him at the close of His ministry (Matt. xxii. 43, &c.) to quote Psalm cx. as indicating the course He was about to take, we should at once apprehend how morally necessary it is that His coming again should be the eager, constant expectation of His people here on the earth during His absence.

The Lord Jesus is called to sit down above until His enemies are made His footstool, and there He is now waiting; and the fact of His quoting Psalm cx. when He did, proved that He was aware

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2

THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

of His rejection, which was fully perpetrated at the stoning of Stephen.

He is set down at the right hand of power. All power has been given Him in heaven and earth. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the promised seed, the true Son of David, but being rejected; the Jews having refused the sure mercies of David, the times of refreshing, which should come from the Lord's presence on earth, are postponed, and He sits down at God's right hand waiting until His foes are made His footstool. Being rejected by His earthly people, He foregoes His right and rule for a season; but this very fact makes His return necessarily the *first* expectation of His people, as also the true criterion of the state of their hearts respecting Him.

Scripture supplies us with four reasons why the coming of the Lord should be the first of our expectations. First, It is the Lord's own desire to come. To the true heart there could be no greater incentive or motive for any expectation or desire, than the simple

assurance that it is its Lord's own desire to come. And is it not so? He says that He goes away until His foes are made His footstool; thus plainly intimating that it is because of His foes that He, for a time, is absent, and therefore it is the time of His patience, as John says, "the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ." He waits and has patience until the time of His returning arrives; but His heart is set on it. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." (John xiv.) When pressed by the chief priests and Pharisees, who sought false witness against Him to put Him to death, He says, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Insulted and afflicted as He was at that moment, He casts His eye forward and scans the day of His power, in contrast to the scene of shame and contempt which He was passing through. The most glorious announcement the Spirit

gives of Him is, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." (Rev. i. 7.) His own reply, when the Spirit and the Bride say "Come," is, "Behold, I come quickly." The assurance of the angels to the disciples who lingered gazing after Him as He was taken up (Acts i. 11), is "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." His reiterated warning to His disciples, was that they should watch for His return. He describes to them the fatal consequences which should befall them if they in heart should say, "My lord delayeth his coming:" the servants would then eat and drink with the drunken; there would be grievous intermixture of His servants with the world, and the worst forms of priestly domination would prevail in the Church; while, as shown by the parable of the ten virgins, the aspect of His people in the world would be that of sleep, until the cry of His coming should rekindle the flame of life wherever it was in the souls of any.

But not only did our blessed Lord set forth in the most forcible language the evil consequences of losing sight of His coming, but He also declared to them the blessing that should accrue to them if they were found waiting for their Lord. Such faithfulness of heart is so grateful to Him, that He pronounces, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily," He continues (His heart disclosing how He appreciates such a state of soul), "verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." No attitude, no condition of soul, so pleasing to Him as watching and waiting for His return; and to those who are thus engaged, there will be unbounded manifestations of His satisfaction in the rich servings of His love, and it could not be otherwise. If His people are true to Him they must be widows here, during His absence, and their heart demands it of them that they should wait for Him from heaven. (1 Thess. i.) It is His

own desire to come again to receive us unto Himself, and, therefore, surely the heart that is true to Him, that is *near* to Him, must respond to this, the desire of His heart; and keep ever before it the Lord's return, as its first and leading expectation. It is evident that souls had got away from Him, and were not in communion and nearness to Him, or they never could have lost the freshness and blessedness of looking for His return. The soul near Him would have imbibed His own purpose and desire, and would have been the more earnest in it as it felt the desolation here during His absence, and the misrule of everything because it was not the day of His power.

And this brings us to the second reason why His coming should be our first expectation, namely, Because His rights will not be established until He comes. What righteous soul, not to say what loving heart, can survey the disorder and misrule of this world now in the hands of man, under the god of this world, without being oppressed with

the sense that its rightful Lord is not here, that the King of kings and Lord of lords is neither owned nor ruling. We know that He is the rightful Lord, that God hath set all things under His feet, and yet we see not yet all things put under Him. (Heb. ii. 9.) We know that it is man's day, and therefore we judge nothing until the Lord comes, until the day of His power. The spiritual must have the sense that the Lord is not reigning. They feel that He whose right it is is not in His true place; that His place is occupied by another, and hence the faithful servant is in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. I am formally and characteristically here at the Lord's supper announcing the Lord's death until He comes. I take this place; it suits me during His absence, allowing nothing else to characterize me till He comes. The knowledge of His rights not yet entered on, but usurped by another, the greater it is, the more are we separated from the world—the system which rejects Him and occupies in men's hearts His proper

the response, "We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: that thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." The apostle (1 Tim. vi. 14—16) exhorts Timothy of the "appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." That was to be his incentive to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, because He, in the suited time, would display it; He the blessed and only potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. The heart necessarily turned to the time when He should be set in His true place, and in the full exercise of His power; and, therefore, in the Second Epistle he characterizes the saints as *loving* His appearing. It is His right to reign. He is now waiting until His appointed hour arrives; but every faithful servant is in His kingdom and patience, and, in the sense of His right, must, as he feels it and is oppressed by the confusion and evil here, desire above all things, and look out for His coming. Nay, the more troubled we are, the more we shall find out that our rest and our

place. We know that every knee shall bow to Him, but we see around us no recognition of His right and rule; and the more we are conscious of this, the more must we, because it is righteous, desire that He whose right it is should come and reign. He cannot reign until He comes. The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ were displayed in the holy mount. That was the kingdom of God come with power, disclosed for a moment to a few faithful ones on the earth. How blessed and how wondrous! It is impossible for me to have a true feeling sense of His right to rule over things here, and to see how everything is out of course and used against Him, not to be earnest and longing for the day of His glory when He will come and reign. I cannot be truly in His kingdom and patience without an eager longing for the time when He shall take to Himself His great power and reign. Hence no sooner does the seventh angel sound, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," than there is

relief will be only when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven. So that the establishment of His right will also be our gain, which is *another* reason why we should desire His coming.

Therefore Peter writes, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 13.) His coming, His exaltation, will confer the greatest blessings on the saints. First, the resurrection of the bodies of the saints does not take place until He comes.* "Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's at his *coming*." (1 Cor. xv. 23.) "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his

* It must not be supposed that because I here view the Coming in its most comprehensive sense, that I do not distinguish between the coming for the saints and with them, or that I confine it to one point of time. That an interval will elapse between the two is clear, how long we cannot say; but both belong to the day of His power, the dawn of which the rapture will be.

glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) When Christ enters on the day of His power, the first display of His power will be the resurrection. The moment He ceases to wait—when He takes to Himself His great power, even before there is a manifestation of His rule on earth, and before His appearing to the earth—the resurrection will take place; and the first action of His power will be to clothe His body, the Church, and all those who without us could not be made perfect in glorious bodies like unto His own. Again, John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We cannot see Him as He is until He appears; and if we desire to be like Him, we must desire to see Him as He is. His own desire is that we should be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory; and until He appears we cannot appear in glory; for it is when Christ, who is our life, shall ap-

us. The consummation does not take place, and it is suited and consistent that it should not take place, until the dawn of the day of the Lord, of which it is the first act of His power. Hence we wait for His coming "until the day dawn, until the day-star arise in our hearts." His coming will bring perfect blessing for us. We do not see Him till then; we are not like Him till then. The more our hearts are taken up with Him in His absence, the more must we desire His coming when all these varied and marvellous blessings will be perfected to us. A saint who departs is truly with the Lord, and in full and uninterrupted rest and nearness to Him, but he has not a resurrection body: he does not see Him, he is not yet like Him, nor can be until He comes. And more than this, we are not consciously or knowingly re-united with those gone before until He comes. It is when He comes that "the dead shall rise first; and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be for ever with

pear, that we also shall appear with Him in glory. Our appearance in glory is a consequence of His appearing. How many and how blessed are the provocations to our hearts to desire His coming? How suited it is that so much and such varied blessing for us should be thus inseparably connected with His coming. Our happiness in any blessing depends greatly in the happiness of those we love, and surely in our hearts we could not desire to reach perfect blessing while our Lord was still waiting for the consummation of His glory and position, and therefore it is grateful to us that our perfection in blessing occurs simultaneous with His coming to rule in all the largeness and fulness of His right. If the resurrection of the body be desired by us—and it is the full consummation of the eternal life given to us in Christ—the sense of eternal life in us now reaches on to the full manifested power of it. For if the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, He that raised Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in

the Lord." These are the words with which we are to "comfort one another." We do not pass the judgment-seat of Christ until He comes, that wondrous moment when all we have been, in the presence of His long-suffering and continued grace, will be brought forward and stand out in contrast. This cannot take place till He comes; and, lastly, there will be no rewards or defined sphere for us in our relation to Him until He comes. How could there be? Spirits absent from the body, present with the Lord, could have no definite sphere or reward until the Lord had come and taken to Himself the power "whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Surely, then, our hearts are not truly estimating the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, if we are not desiring His appearing and kingdom. And if our hearts *are* thus true, if we are in any degree impressed with the force and conclusiveness of the above reasons for desiring the coming of the Lord, the *fourth*, and last, reason would be simple

and only natural for us, namely, that our hearts would not consent to suggest anything else to Him but to *come*. Hence the Spirit and the Bride say "Come." There is no other suggestion to offer; no other action of our Lord could meet the necessity of the heart but His coming, and, therefore, it can suggest nothing save "come." If it could suggest anything else, it would imply that there was something which would be of more value to us than His coming, or be a substitute; whereas there can be nothing else so precious or so valuable to us. His coming is so connected with the desire of His own heart, with His rights, and with our great perfect blessing, that the Spirit who acts for Him here can say nothing else but "come." Neither can the bride; it is the one breathing of the heart of the bride. Nothing else can she say but "come." If we are in the Spirit we must say "come," for the desire of the Holy Ghost is for the day of His power, and His coming for the Church is the beginning of it, the day-star of it. The

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE, AND THE GROUNDS ON WHICH IT IS TO BE RECEIVED.

I desire to present a few thoughts on the subject of the authority of Scripture, and the grounds on which it claims to be received by us as divine.

The infidelity which nearly on every hand presents itself either in books or in the common intercourse of life almost of necessity throws the minds of thoughtful Christians, at least, upon a review of the grounds of their faith, and upon asking themselves the question, "What is it that we do believe, or profess to believe, and on what grounds? and how is it that we are henceforward to maintain our position against the world?" The only true answer to this questioning I have no difficulty in conceiving, and it will be the main object of this paper to place it before the reader's mind. Meantime I observe that Romanism and ritualism on the one hand, and Pantheism or a philosophy which is essentially pantheistic* on the other, are at the pre-

* That is, a philosophy, or a faith if you please which confounds God with the universe.

Bride, in the affection of her heart, and every one partaking of her affection, can say nought else but "come."

In conclusion, I may repeat that I have not here drawn any distinction between His coming and His appearing, my object being to set forth the moral of both rather than the details; and to engage the souls of saints with their Lord's *desire* and His *right*, as primary even to their own gain, great and wondrous though the latter be, as we have seen. The heart that is true to Him will readily discern the difference between the earlier and later actions of His coming; between the moment when He no longer waits but rises from the throne, and the full glow and power of the day when He *appears*, and when "every eye shall see him."

May He keep our hearts in such simple allegiance and devotedness to Himself, that we may not afford ourselves any other suggestion to Him but that which alone suits the love and fidelity of our hearts, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." Amen.

sent moment making advances in a manner that is extraordinary, and, perhaps, unexampled. They are winning the favour of multitudes around us, and are advancing as well in the upper as the lower classes of the community. These facts seem to be indisputable, and may be said to obtrude themselves upon us every day, and are indeed generally admitted, in tones either of triumph or of uneasiness and alarm.

This aspect of things, it is admitted, is sufficiently fraught with anxiety for those who are looking only at its possible effect on the christian institutions of the country; and for those also who have nothing more stable on which to base their convictions than their educational habits of reverence for Christianity, which it may be are already beginning uneasily to be felt as totally inadequate to resist the strain which any day may possibly be put upon them. But to the Christian who has consciously nothing to maintain but what the Scripture declares to be essential and of permanent and eternal bearing, and

whose faith has heretofore rested on this testimony as absolutely divine, there is nothing as regards himself to give him one moment's serious concern. He may be awakened by a knowledge of these facts, as he ought to be, to do one of two things. He may either fairly examine this infidelity or atheism that is at present so clamorous for a hearing, and then he will learn that under all its varied guises it is simply "IMPIETY CHRISTIANISED," as it has been rightly designated—and which he will feel at no loss how to dispose of. Or he may apply the fresh energy of an unsophisticated understanding to the pursuit of truth on its own ground the Scripture, and then he will soon be able to solve the problem before him, and will reach a ground that he will know to be immovable. And thus with faith proven anew, he will only be driven in, by what we have referred to, upon the only position where a stand can by any means be made, the authority of Scripture thus being held as absolute, and not to be abated with any other pretended sources of belief.

at least there will be felt an interest in the proofs by which it is authenticated. Not that for a moment I think anything can be added to the force of that proof without which all others are of slender value. I mean the proof which, if it be not satisfactory to the conviction of others, is to individual consciousness alone of real value, the proof resulting from having been brought into unquestionable living intercourse with God on the basis of what the divine record unfolds.

Sceptical thoughts are for the most part the result of viewing the Scriptures through what may be termed a human medium, that is, through the observations of men upon them, instead of in their own connected harmony and simplicity and power. At least I have found this to be the case in more than a single instance, especially amongst the young. Such an acquaintance with Scripture will never stand against the sophistries of disbelievers of the present or of any day. Nothing so tends to correct these thoughts [for I am writ-

Far happier is that state of mind where it exists, in which its possessor is carried on in the calm unquestioning enjoyment of what the inestimable word of God reveals, unvisited by the doubts and perplexities that agitate many bosoms around him, than it is to get the clearest answer (by going through them) to the unrestrained speculations of the human mind in a sphere that is altogether beyond its powers. I at least should feel indisposed to break in upon his calm. There is little profit in drawing attention to objections that men are bringing against God's revelation, though it were only to show how baseless is their character and how easily they could be overthrown. But there are times in which for a moment it may seem necessary to leave the quiet enjoyment of the house in which ordinarily we are in tranquil repose, to glance at the security of the foundation on which it rests. And wherever there is interest enough in the contents of the divine word to make it a matter of concern that it should be valid and true, there

ing for those to whom they are supposed to be unwelcome], as the quiet, diligent reading of the Scripture itself. It is thus that a thousand difficulties disappear, and proofs unquestionable of their divine origin arise upon the mind. To judge otherwise is like reasoning upon the existence and attributes of some object in nature, the real character of which has never been apprehended by the mind. At best, it is like attempting to judge of some natural scene that is extended around us, not as it is presented in the clear sun-light, but as it is seen in the dimness of twilight or enveloped in a mist. It is thus that an accomplished christian writer speaks of an antichristian work, a pretended life of Jesus, written with great fascination: "Are there any among us—on the christian side—who would wish to see a formal refutation of this illusory book? the best refutation of it is that which it receives when an ingenuous reader, in closing it, opens one of the gospels The feeling of revulsion and disgust is irresistible." The dreams and spectres

that haunted us in darkness and the night are driven off by light and morning.

It has long since been observed, that, "generally speaking, those who throw off all dependence upon revealed religion, with great inconsistency, attach their faith to some one leader as infallible, and embrace all his dogmas with the most slavish submission." Every fresh school of disbelief has its leader and apostle; and every phase of infidelity presents *man* to be believed in instead of *God*. Men avail themselves of the light of revelation as to the creation of the world, the being and attributes of God, an upholding and a controlling providence or power, &c., by which they escape, in their reasonings, the follies of the ancient philosophers, and then use the knowledge they have gained from Scripture to discredit its testimony. They readily appropriate the light that gives exaltation to man and his powers, and reject that which emphatically brings in God. They are content to use the clue which Scripture affords to guide themselves through an

disbelievers, the material atheist excepted, are obliged to take its testimony (*quoad hoc*) on its own authority. I mean that they are obliged to take the account which Scripture gives of the existing state of things, because there is no light upon it from any other source. But what is there in reason or consistency, that should make *me* stop here?

There *is* a creation. There is an existing uncaused cause of all. There is the presence of moral evil in a world that owes its existence to a God of goodness, as these disbelievers in a revelation would assert. In this world there are the most frightful anomalies. There is man with his constitution, his aspirations, his forebodings, his capacities,—undertrodden and oppressed, crushed under the iron heel of despotism—or, in more favoured circumstances, led by ten thousands to death and torture in sanguinary wars—and—ambition, luxury, avarice apart—the teeming millions of the population of the globe are as little accounted of as the sands of the desert. There is the accumulated mass of human

inextricable labyrinth, where all before them, who had not this clue, utterly lost their way, and then, from the eminence which Scripture has enabled them to gain, they seek to make themselves independent of its aid, and to discredit its testimony exactly at that point where man's moral condition is brought in, and where alone, in divine grace and love, its remedy has been disclosed.

No one ever so little acquainted with these reasonings can escape the conclusion, that the juster thoughts of the men, who possess a revelation, which they seek to overthrow, they owe to that very circumstance, and not to the superior powers of their mind. Just so far as the truth of Scripture remains abstract they are content to use it as a fulcrum to overthrow that part of it which marks out their present responsibility and insists on their future accountability to God. In this it will be seen that, so far, revelation or Scripture is its own witness, because it irradiates a sphere that never could be projected by the mind of man. Consequently all

misery around us, with its seething passions and brutalized ignorance, its dens of misery and crime, and its ten thousand oppressions. There is pain and suffering, and grinding poverty, and unmitigated sorrow, and there is death! These are all to be accounted for. Scripture, it is true, makes all plain. But without it, how are men to dispose of these difficulties? It matters not—the Christian, the infidel, and the atheist are on common ground here. They must take the world as it is, and account for its condition as best they may. Philosophy may speculate, but the hard problem of "the world as it is," stands before it unsolved.

But there is something else to account for. Interwoven with the world's history of the last two thousand years there is a religion which had its obscure commencement in Palestine, that, in less than three centuries from the ignominious death of its founder, in spite of persecutions, by its own energy, pervaded the entire extent of the Roman Empire, and, in some instances, traversed coun-

tries far beyond its limits. It is an unquestionable fact that, in spite of innumerable martyrdoms of its professors, this religion, within that period, changed the whole moral aspect and institutions of every country bordering on the shores of the Mediterranean. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the forests of Germany to North Africa and the Libyan desert, men of every condition of life, and of every species of moral and intellectual training, as well as communities, were to be found professing subjection to its sway. I do not dwell, as has been so often done, on its having ascended the throne of the Cæsars.

By those who are conversant with the history of this period, I know it may be objected that there was boundless corruption amongst its professors, and motives the most sordid had drawn innumerable hypocrites to its standard. Be it so. Still, whatever may be set off on this account, there *was* the standard, which it was worth their while to join, when the amphitheatre, and the gibbet,

has varied its ground, has been the witness of the unsuccessfulness of every other. The work unaccomplished has had to be done over again. And now, at length, the question is so narrowed, by the mere process of exhaustions, as to be nearly reduced to the single issue of whether the New Testament shall be received, on its own showing, as a divine revelation, or material atheism be embraced as the only consistent alternative. Constituted as the human mind is, it demands consistency in the grounds of its beliefs, or its disbeliefs, and things have been driven to this point by anti-christian writers themselves, that it exists no longer midway between the one and the other of these positions.

The authentication of the records in question is complete as a mere historical question, unless every fragment of ancient history that has come down to us on the stream of time is to be rejected. And criticism adverse and favourable has so effectually done its work that it is not possible for their import to be evaded. There is but another alternative.

That there are difficulties in Scripture all must admit. There are difficulties in chronology—difficulties in harmonising certain revelations of facts—difficulties arising from the range of matters treated of—difficulties inseparable from the briefness of the his-

the rack, and the mines were no longer the penalty of their faith.

But there is still something beyond this to account for. There is the collection of the writings of the New Testament, which, from the earliest periods, has been the subject of attack by disbelievers of every character and of every qualification, and, it might be added, almost of every clime. But to this day it remains in its integrity, after all the fiery ordeal it has had to sustain, at constantly recurring periods, for near two thousand years. Still it remains amongst us, like the "two prophets" in the Apocalypse, "to torment them that dwell on the earth."

The great body of infidel objections, which have been reproduced from age to age, were answered by Origen within a little of a hundred and fifty years after the latest books of the New Testament were written. And the various attacks which have been made upon it since have not merely been repelled by christian writers, but have been set aside as futile by succeeding writers on the anti-christian side. Every fresh attack, as it

stories, or rather the memoirs of histories, that are given. Is it wonderful that there should be difficulties in a record which embraces the whole course of time from the creation and the introduction of man into the world, to the final close of all earthly history? Is it extraordinary that there should be difficulties connected with numbers and genealogies, in a book in which endless details are given? especially if we think for a moment of the difficulties in connection with almost every ancient author that has come down to us, from corruptions of the text, from ignorance of customs and events, and from chronology? Is it wonderful, that there should be difficulties in a book that embraces such a boundless variety of subjects? that soars so high and descends so low? that interweaves itself with the histories of nations and dynasties, and at the same time condescends to the details of families and all the circumstantiality of domestic life? How wonderful is it that notwithstanding all this its thread should never be broken! It is almost passing wonder that every subsequent revelation should so recognize all that was prior, should so adapt itself to what had been declared of man's condition, should so acknowledge the hopes that promises had raised, and so conform itself to what prophecy had declared, that its various writers

in remote ages, and of dissimilar manners and without personal communication should be so found to harmonize, that if any book of Scripture were withdrawn the sense of incompleteness would be felt!

It may be asked, What should be done in reference to works in which these objections are urged, and which are occupied with the "free criticism" of the day, as it is called? This question may be answered by another. If I am convinced by a positive divine evidence of the truth of Scripture, is there any advantage in being occupied with the negative objections of unbelief? It may, perhaps, be the duty of some to read such books in order to refute them, or at least to see that they are refutable, but it seems to me that a person must hold the truth cheaply, and think but little of its author, who can, without necessity, take up works whose whole aim is to undermine his faith, and make what comes from God appear to be a forgery and a lie. I do not know that I owe so much respect to these brain-spun theories of men as to give them for an hour a lodging in my mind. For I repeat, the positive proofs of the inspiration of Scripture are all in itself. [The history of the transmission of the books of Scripture is altogether a separate question.]

First of all it is to be remembered that

LIBERTY AND SUBJECTION.

"Ye have been called unto liberty, only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." (Gal. v. 13.) "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

However natural it may be for men to assert their independence and to contend for liberty as their dearest birth-right, there is to Christians a liberty and a subjection altogether the reverse of this, and which belong to them by virtue of their subjection to a Lord which the world does not own. The natural liberty of men too often consists with bondage to sin and Satan, although they may be saying, "Who is lord over us?" The liberty and subjection of which we speak is not to be found apart from the grace that "delivers us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father."

Our first enquiry, therefore, must be into the nature and limits of the liberty the gospel introduces to, which may be so easily missed; and also into the nature of the subjection which it equally incul-

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the only due reception of a revelation from God is by faith. Then, whatever difficulties attach to its form may become the subject of patient enquiry or stand over till further light. Next, it should be borne in mind for what end distinctly this revelation is given, viz., that God may be known and His salvation personally received. Next in order of importance is the unfolding God's counsels and ways; but these, in order to be apprehended by us, demand a spiritual faculty. The harmony of Scripture, that is the coherency and congruity of its various parts, can only be appreciated as a result of understanding the meaning of Scripture, or in other words by the exercise of a spiritual understanding in Scripture itself. There is enough in Scripture that makes its appeal to man's conscience—enough in its declarations to leave him without excuse if rejected. Still without divine illumination God's revelations in His word will never be rightly received or understood. It was so with Christ's personal manifestation on earth with the Jews. He said, "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not . . . The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day."

I have but cursorily touched my subject, but opportunity may be given by God to return to it again.

34 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

cates with liberty. Human reasoning here would be out of place, and of no value, since the liberty and subjection we have to do with as Christians have no existence apart from Christianity, and consequently can own no subjection but to its laws. Hence, little else of course, is left, in the enquiry, but to adduce the authority of the New Testament in the various passages which have a bearing on the subject.

I only premise that, with the plainest direction of Scripture in our hands, there is a danger of our liberty degenerating into wilfulness, and of our subjection becoming superstitious and servile—subjection to men and not to God.

"Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." (1 Cor. vii. 23.)* This passage lies at the foundation of the subject before us. Here we find that he who has bought us—has paid the price of our redemption—claims us

* It is an odd and almost inconceivable use that ignorance has sometimes made of this passage, viz., that Christians ought not to be in the position of servants, as to their earthly condition.

as exclusively his own, to be in subjection only to his will. It is Christ who is absolutely the Lord and Master of those who are redeemed by Him, and not man; and in no circumstances can it comport with our obligations to Him to disregard or go contrary to his will. A slave (*δουλος*) owes subjection to the master who has purchased him. No one contrary to his master's will has the remotest claim of authority over him.

There was no liberty in connection with the systems of polytheism which Christianity superseded. Neither is there any liberty for the people, in connection with popery which has in effect grafted polytheism on the christian institute. Concerning the former the apostle says, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as ye were led." (1 Cor. xii. 2.) That is, the multitude were mutely and blindly led by an interested priesthood to the worship of idols, the mute creations of man's superstitions and fears. But the reverse of all this is presented in the calling of the believer through the gospel. In

worshipper and God in some necessary service to bring them together; in the other it is the communication of light and instruction to show the basis of communion which God Himself has laid, and thus to bring souls into direct personal intercourse with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is not, however, that priesthood is done away; far from it, for everything in divine grace hangs upon its effective exercise. But then it is Christ who is the high priest of our profession; and His priesthood is carried on in heaven and not upon earth at all. Neither is there now any priesthood on earth, in any speciality of function, except as all believers are declared to be "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And in another epistle it is said they have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Man naturally, since the fall, is the slave of sin; and by his sin even the inferior creation has been brought into subjection—not to sin, but to vanity.

accordance with the known and revealed character of the object of their worship—the living and true God revealed in all His moral attributes in the person and works, and words, and ways of His only-begotten Son, believers are called to present their "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord—that is their intelligent service." (Rom. xii. 1.)

There is no liberty in the nature of things where a priesthood prevails. There was not even under the priesthood of God's own establishing. This, as we know, was in connection with law or the covenant from Mount Sinai, which (the apostle says) "gendereth to bondage." Hence in the gospel, which is connected with the new covenant (of which, not Hagar the bondmaid, but Sarah the free-woman, was the type) there is presented as its distinctive characteristic a ministry, and not a priesthood. That is, the law gives a priesthood—the gospel a ministry; the functions of which are essentially opposite the one to the other. In the one case it is the intervention between the

It has thus far participated in man's fall, as the head of creation. But when the liberty of the redeemed will be, not the liberty of acceptance, or the liberty of service merely, but the liberty of glory, then creation that came under the bondage of corruption ("not willingly,") will participate in this liberty. "Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 21.) Redemption in its effects extends beyond man, the special subject of it, because it is Christ's glory and authority, as the second Adam and head of the new creation, that are connected with it.

But John viii. 31—36 is a passage that strikingly illustrates the truth of the nature and source of this liberty. But it does more than this. It forcibly presents the harmony of subsequent doctrinal truth, binding it all together in connection with His blessed person and work. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my dis-

ciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 31—36.)

Here we perceive it is "the knowledge of the truth" which Christ especially promises to His disciples. And further, He declares that it is the truth makes free, always remembering that it is Christ Himself who is the truth. The knowledge of the truth in the heart is like the rising of the sun in nature, which, by itself, dissipates the darkness and brings the light of day. The darkness of error and ignorance of themselves vanish before the light of truth. But the truth does more than this. It delivers from the fear and the power of

God, and the law presents no deliverance from this, but only brings out the evil in the shape of transgression, and puts him under the law's curse. It does not free man from the dominion of sin, and in other respects, as the apostle expresses it, it is "a yoke of bondage." This is the condition Christ addresses himself to, when he says, "the servant (or slave) abideth not in the house for ever." He has no rights, no authority, no permanent relationships. He is liable to be turned out of the house at any time. In application to those he was speaking to, it was equal to saying, You are but the slaves of sin, you are in danger any moment of being dismissed in judgment from God's house and presence. For this is in truth the point. "But the Son abides ever"—He has authority and permanent rights in the house. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

What I found upon this is that Christian liberty is nothing more than this, deliverance from the bondage of sin by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be

the prince of darkness who holds his usurped dominion in the soul alone by the power of ignorance and error. It is true there is "the bond and chain of our sins," and the hold which Satan has over us by our lusts; but all this gives way before "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So "the truth makes free."

Christ is Himself the truth. He is the truth of God's character in grace. He is the truth also as regards man's moral condition. His very position here in the world declared this. For He was the Son of man "come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Now it is plain that nothing but the participation of the truth as regards God, could ever put man in any acceptable relationship with Him, on which all happiness depends. But this the Lord Jesus, as the Son, alone could give. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Man, whether by nature or under law, is the servant or slave of sin. His nature is evil and contrary to

henceforth in absolute subjection to the authority of Christ as my Lord. Liberty, is liberty in everything to do the will of God and Christ, and not the will of men, nor my own. And this gives the limit of subjection also. I must be subject to God in every relationship in which I am placed and concerning which His will has been expressed.

Romans vi. 18 shows exactly this freedom. "Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." And also in verse 22, "Being made free from sin and become servants (or slaves) to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." Especially also it is expressed in chapter viii. 1, 2, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Again in 1 Peter ii. 16, "As free and not using your liberty as a cloak of covetousness, but as the servants of God." The action of this principle Peter had seen beautifully exemplified in the conduct of the

Lord regarding the demand upon him for the tribute money. In reply to Peter's answer our Lord said, "Then are the *children free*. Notwithstanding lest we should offend them," &c. (See Matt. xvii. 24—27.) In absolute contrast to this is that which is presented in 2 Peter ii. 19, "While they promise them liberty they themselves are the servants (slaves) of corruption." What kind of liberty can the slave of corruption promise—but that which man is ever seeking for—liberty from all restraint, that he may do his own will? But this is emphatically liberty only to become the headlong slave of his own lusts.

But there is a liberty which is to be jealously guarded against any infringement—the liberty of grace—which frees the believer from all the claims of legal rites and ordinances. Concerning this the apostle says, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. v. 1.) It is Christ that makes free that we may be in subjection to Him and

well," says the Lord Jesus, "ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition:" though the thing in question was only whether it was right to eat bread with unwashed hands, when it was contrary to "the tradition of the elders."

There is a liberty of another kind which Scripture also establishes. It is liberty from being bound by the scruples of other people's consciences. "Why," says the apostle, "is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" And he adds, "If I by grace (or with thanksgiving) be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" The point in question here is eating certain meats, or abstaining from them. In this he shows there is room for the exercise of charity toward the scruples of another; but at the same time asserts that individual christian liberty is regulated by no such punctilios; while he adds, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 29.) But this principle is utterly con-

not to the yoke of carnal ordinances. The full ground of this is unfolded in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians. But the principle is given by the apostle when he says, "To them that are without law as without law, being not without law to God, but under due subjection to Christ." (1 Cor. ix. 21.) But there is another point at which this liberty may be invaded, which requires to be jealously guarded. In the Epistle to the Galatians it is noticed that false brethren came in to spy out the liberty which the apostle and others had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring them into bondage. Here it is the bondage of human authority that is attempted to be established. But it was thus sternly met by the apostle, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour: that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal. ii. 5.) The thing attempted to be imposed by this authority may perhaps be indifferent in itself, but the principle is always in hostility to the Spirit of God. "Full

travened when rules or pledges of abstinence are brought in. It is a principle of Rome, and not of the gospel, that whatever may be abused is to be prohibited.

So as to the exercise of the christian ministry the apostle shows that the same principle obtains. He says, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free?" (1 Cor. ix. 1.) That is, none had a *claim* upon him for this service—often an unrequited service as to men—but Christ, whose servant he was, called him, after his own example, to be as one that served. So that as he says, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." (Ver. 19.)

Liberty of speech or teaching in the Church of God, or as it is called, "liberty of ministry," need not be insisted on here. It is only needful to say in this place that, like every other kind of liberty in the gospel, this also is balanced by subjection. "My brethren," says the Apostle James, "be not many teachers (*μη πολλοι διδάσκαλοι γένεσθε*), knowing that we shall receive the greater

condemnation" (or theseverer judgment.) And then he adds wholesome words of warning concerning the exercise of this gift, and, in general, the evils resulting from an unbridled use of the tongue. "For in many things," he says, "we all offend. If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (Jas. iii. 1, 2.)

In a word then the liberty of the gospel is never, and in no sense, to be confounded with natural independence of spirit. It is always, and in all circumstances, subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ *directly*, and intermediately subjection to all to which he has ordained subjection, as will be shown. Meantime, it may be said with the Apostle James, "So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." (Chap. ii. 12.) As he had said previously, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein this man shall be blessed in his deed." (Chap. i. 25.) That is, there must be reality in the professed subjection to this *law*. For indeed it is a law

be are ordained of God. . . . Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath [i.e., the fear of punishment], but also for conscience sake." (Rom. xiii. 1, 5.)

Then follows the subjection that is to be manifested in the Church of God.

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) This subjection is of God, and is always due in the Church, altogether apart from official appointment or formal order. This is manifest from 1 Corinthians xvi. 16, "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboreth." He who can find no room for this in his creed, has need to revise the articles of his belief.

A *bishop* must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own

—a "perfect law"—for its accomplishment is its own end. It is a law of *liberty*, because what the word of God unfolds as the rule of christian life, is according to the nature and will of God, and no less in accordance with the new nature of the believer.

The subjection of the believer is, as has been already stated, coextensive with his liberty in Christ. But it may be profitable just to glance at the various relations in which that subjection is enforced.

First, there is the general principle, as manifested in christian association, and the spirit marked from whence it flows. "Likewise ye younger *submit* yourselves unto the elder; yea all of you be *subject* one to another, and be clothed with *humility*." (1 Peter v. 5.)

Next, there is taught the subjection that is due to earthly governments, and also the principle on which it is to be rendered. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: [it is God in the power that is obeyed:] the powers that

house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" "Let the *deacons* be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." (1 Tim. iii. 4, 12.) In their rule subjection is to be seen. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." (1 Cor. xiv. 34.) "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The contrary is the subversion of God's natural order in regard to the sexes, and it is the contravention of His expressed will. But this is no licence for man's lordly authority, nor is it the exclusion of woman from her proper sphere, or service, or influence. But whatever puts woman apparently in the place of authority, is the subversion of the order of creation. Its consequences are—neglected duty, an unfeminine spirit, and disorder in domestic ties. Again, we have the subjection that is due in the various

relationships of life in connection with family association. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord. . . . *Children* obey your parents in the Lord. . . . *Servants* be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh . . . not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ. . . . *Masters* do the same things to them . . . knowing that *your* master also is in heaven." (Ephes. v. vi.) "Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands." These rules of subjection cannot be contemned or neglected without misery. But the age is impatient of restraint. But another reason is given—"that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus ii. 4, 5.)

There is another kind of subjection which the apostle presents, and which it is right to speak of before I close. He says, "The administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the

while the impelling motive is altogether of another kind from that of either ancient or modern philanthropy. Subjection to the gospel demands this exercise of the benevolent principle—"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are the household of faith."

In conclusion I would say that I have stated the principle of liberty and subjection, as presented in the New Testament; and I have done little more. I have not attempted to follow it out in its various details of practical application. These will readily suggest themselves to those who are desirous in all things to own and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. As to those who, though they profess to be His servants, are nevertheless seeking for power, and place, and distinction in the world, are intent on accumulating its riches, on interfering with its politics, and seeking its honours, whether these be civic or such as the legislature can bestow, I can only say they must be left to another code of morals than that which Christ

saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." (2 Cor. ix. 12, 13.) Here the active benevolence of these Christians of Macedonia and Achaia is adduced as a proof of their professed subjection to the gospel. But why this peculiarity of expression? Was kindness and benevolence unknown before the gospel? or does it never exist apart from subjection to the gospel? Far otherwise. There were always the feelings of natural kindness to draw upon as a resource for the relief of the miserable, the afflicted, and destitute. Still it has been and is the special province of Christianity to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to redeem the captive, to visit the sick. What the gospel has done in regard to efforts of benevolence is to give them the action and force of a fixed principle instead of leaving them to the fitful and uncertain impulse of crude feelings;

has left for the guidance of His servants. It would be well for them, and for us all, to ponder the heart-breaking words of the apostle: "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ . . . who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven."

"WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST."

(Exodus xxviii.)

We are told in Hebrews that "we have a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;" and again, "We have such an high Priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens;" and again, "If he were on earth he would not be a priest." The place of the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus is the heavens; and He has gone there as priest, "when he had by himself purged our sins." His priesthood follows redemption for us. He is gone as a priest there to sustain,

according to the light and perfections of God's presence, those whom He has redeemed. "We see not yet all things put under him," says the apostle, "but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." The same words (see LXX.) as those in verse 2 of our chapter, when speaking of Aaron's garments of "glory and beauty," or "honour;" so we find that what Aaron was typically and officially, when clothed in these garments, Christ is personally. But before we see Him thus as represented in our chapter, let us look on Him in His life down here, before the way into the holiest was made manifest. We read in Exodus xxvi. 31 of a vail which separated the holy place from the most holy, and concealed the glory of God within. A vail composed of "blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made." This vail figured to us the flesh of Christ, as we are told in Hebrews x. 20. The materials which composed the vail tell us of the purity and graces of Christ. We find that the

man, and He put forth His claims; but one after another they were refused, rejected and set aside. His earthly claims being thus refused, He must die and rise again that He may have a heavenly people, and bring them in divine righteousness before God. In verse 4 of the chapter before us, we find certain garments which were to be made: a breastplate, an ephod and a robe, a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle. Now the ephod was that which peculiarly characterized the priesthood. In 1 Sam. xxii. we read of Doeg the Edomite falling upon and slaying fourscore persons who wore the linen ephod. David, when he enquired of the Lord, put on the ephod. (1 Sam. xxiii. 9—12.) The ephod was composed of the same materials as the vail (without the cherubims), but there was one material *added* to those composing it, which was *gold*. Gold is the figure of divine righteousness in Scripture. The inner part of the tabernacle and the furniture and vessels were of gold. We learn from this, that while God's Son had come

"blue" was the first of these things, the heavenly colour. Heavenly was He in all His ways, walking through the world as "the Son of man who is in heaven." (John iii.) Truly perfect in His humanity, yet with a savour of heaven in all His ways. The royal colour, the "purple," was there too; born a king, as we read from the Gentile mouth, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" And then the "scarlet" which conveys to us the human glory of Jesus. (Psalm viii.) And "fine-twined linen," His own perfect personal spotlessness, and inherent righteousness. With the cherubims added, for God the Father had "given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," as we read in John v. The cherubims are always the companions of the throne, the judicial executive of the throne in government. (See them in Gen. iii., Ex. xxv., 2 Chron. iii., Ezek. i.—xi., Rev. iv., &c.) Thus we have in the vail that which concealed God within, and in it the figure of Christ's flesh. And He was thus presented to

down in divine and perfect love, and "had taken not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he had taken hold;" He who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." God took Him up and set Him, in divine righteousness, in His presence. He is "with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And we find Him thus set there in divine righteousness before God, and girded with the girdle of service for His people: to wash their feet and cleanse them practically according to the purity of what God *is*, not merely according to what they *ought to be*. We find Him thus in John xiii. All His earthly claims had been put forth before this and refused—as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man. (See John xi., xii.) He looks beyond it

all into the heavenly glory; and, in the washing of the disciples' feet, we learn that which He girded Himself to do in the glory into which He was about to go. He had come from God and went to God. In the end of chapter xiii. He speaks of His work that gives them a title to be there, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." And in chapter xiv. He enters into the Father's house, now as a glorified man, upon a title that brings others in too, and we find those others in our chapter, His people, associated with Him. (Ver. 9—29.) Their names are borne upon His shoulders and His heart; on the "stones of memorial" and the "breastplate of judgment;" and they are set in their places in *GOLD*! Brought in and set in *divine righteousness* in Him in the presence of God, "who hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He bears the weight and burden of His people on His shoulders before God Himself; and more, He cannot

God. Thus, as at Pentecost, as our great High Priest went into the holy place to heaven itself, He sent down the Holy Ghost to His people; and as the golden bells and pomegranates were on Aaron's robe, that "his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord." So was the sound of Jesus, the testimony and fruits of the Spirit (the golden bell which made the sound, the testimony; and the pomegranates, the fruit), heard upon earth at Pentecost, when He went in to the holy place.

But the precious fruits are often mingled in their purity with something of the flesh and the natural man; and we read that, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, *Holiness to the Lord*; and thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things (the testimony and fruits when mingled with

be there without representing them, for we read in verse 28, "They shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod and that the breastplate *be not loosed* from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." And, more than this, He bears their judgment according to the light and perfections (the Urim and Thummim) of God's holy presence. The robe of blue was under all the official garments—the personal, heavenly character of Christ. But when He went into the holy place, to "heaven itself," He left them behind to a "holy Father's" care. As the Father had sent Him into the world, even so does He send them into the world (John xvii.) to bear testimony to Him, and for His name; and to manifest the savour of His life on earth, to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of

anything of the flesh or the natural man) which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts: and it shall always be upon *his* forehead that *they* may be accepted before the Lord."

Precious and varied and beautiful are the offices He thus sustains for His people—sustains, not merely according to their inconsistencies, but according to the light and perfections and holiness of what God is, to whom they have been brought in Him. F. G. P.

"I WILL CONSIDER THY TESTIMONIES."

How varied and precious are the "considerations" set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, striking chord after chord in our hearts, and producing note after note of praise! In the first chapter the personal and official dignities and glories of the Lord Jesus Christ crowd themselves together and unfold themselves before our souls; while in the second chapter, we have the grace of Him, by whom God spake in these last days, in associating others with Himself when passing through death to the Headship of all things,

crowned with glory and honour: it is as thus set before us, we are told, as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, to "*consider*" Him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; to gaze on Him, and have our souls enlarged in contemplating Him, "who was faithful to him that appointed him."

But how can such as we sit down and feast ourselves with such considerations, with consciences unpurged and not at rest? In view of this need, and before the next "*consideration*" is presented to us, we are led, in chapters ix. and x., to see the altar of sin-offering receiving a victim, once and for ever, that has satisfied all its cravings, and which has fully answered all the demands of the glory of God as to sin and uncleanness; satisfied the need of the convicted conscience, and silenced every accusing foe. And with consciences thus at rest, we are set down to another consideration for our souls. We are told, in chapter x. 24, to "*consider* one another to provoke unto love and to good works." With the holy peace and calm of purged consciences we are thus, as it were, told that we have leisure to turn round and look one upon another with such an end in view, and so much the more as we see the "*day*" approaching.

ABBA FATHER.

Is there not a lack of a due knowledge of the Father in most saved souls?—a lack of the knowledge of their relationship as sons?—a want of *filial* affection and of communion with the name, and grace, and love of our heavenly Father? Surely there is, and a consequent loss of the blessing proper to that holy relationship, and a want of understanding of that wondrous word of the Lord Jesus, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, *for the Father himself loveth you*." (John xvi. 27.) I make bold to say that the gracious Lord, in teaching His poor disciples, sought to lead their minds and hearts to a knowledge of the Father's love, more than to aught else. He could tell them of His love—"as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you" (John xv.)—of washing the feet of His own, of heavenly mansions, and of His return for them, with other precious truths which fell from His lips as they flowed from His heart of love; yet, as it seems to me, nothing does He insist

But, you will say, there are the trials and difficulties of the way to contend with, and there are the weights and hindrances that would hamper and clog us in our journeying onwards to the glory. And, in view of these things, we are told to turn our eyes toward Him again, and we are exhorted, in chapter xii., to "*consider* him who endured," as One who has been in the way Himself, and understands the grace needed for every step, and who has learned "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah l.) at every stage of the journey to the place where He has Himself sat down, "lest we should be weary and faint in our minds."

And, lastly, as those who are in the midst of the things that are about to be shaken, and who are dwelling in spirit, and by faith amongst those things which, when all things are shaken, will remain, we are exhorted to "*consider*" the end of the conversation of those who minister amongst us—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Varied and precious are the "*considerations*" thus laid before us, and to which we are set down to contemplate, in their order and suitability, as every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of our God.

F. G. P.

upon so much as that they (and we) should understand the love and care of the Father. He who of Himself could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" came to reveal the Father, and marvellous it is, that while in His dependence as the humbled man on earth, He cried, "Abba Father." (Mark xiv. 26.) The Holy Ghost puts the same cry into the mouth of the sons: "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) Again, that remarkable passage in Galatians iv. 6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." It must be confessed that many believers are yet without solid peace with God, and this because, not having judged themselves as totally ruined and helpless, they are not thrown over (if I may use the expression) on Christ Himself for righteousness divine before God. They do not get a perfect conscience in His presence and cannot enjoy a fixed, settled peace, founded on Christ's efficacious work and glorious

person. Other saints again, from careless walk, alas! from sin and self, grieve the Holy Spirit of God, the sacred guest of the child of God, whose body is His temple. How can such have peace? A grieved Spirit, because He is the *Holy Spirit*, cannot be the spring of peace and joy to such, or of access to the Father. These all will be, according to their need, looking rather to a Saviour and a knowledge of redemption than entering into the joy of "access by one Spirit unto the Father"—to the blessed acquaintance of "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

But oh! as the loved apostle could witness, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The Father's heart of love was the spring, the living source of all our blessings and mercies. All flowed from Him according to His own grace and mercy, which is "from everlasting to everlasting." He would not spare, but gave freely "the Son who was in the

Dear reader, I would inquire plainly of you, whether you possess that confidence in your Father's love, that sense of relationship, and your full title to say, Abba Father, the strongest cord, as another has said, round man's heart—that you can be without fear before Him in worship, in making known all your requests with thanksgiving and have liberty to confess everything to Him? What a place it is! The sweet sense that a Father's heart rests in its love over you—His eye ever upon you—His ear open to every cry, yea groan (see Rom. viii. 26, 27)—His power (Almighty) causing "all things to work together for good." In John's Gospel, where the Lord Jesus is not revealed as Messiah, but in His full divine glory as Son of God and Son of the Father, what blessed unfoldings we have as to the Father. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father *seeketh* such to worship him" (iv. 23); "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it

bosom of the Father;" and the Son could say of His own, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." I would again refer to Scripture, and that affords its plentiful witness to us and a various and affecting testimony, meeting the children of God as it were on every side, whether as to the love of the Father or that which should mould their walk and draw out the affections of their souls to Him. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke we find the gracious Lord telling them that "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," that "the very hairs of their heads were all numbered." It was "the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom"—that they were to be "perfect as their Father in heaven was perfect." And how sweet that word, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him." Therefore, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find."

you;" "if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." And, to conclude these citations, allowed to speak for themselves in their surpassing sweetness, that most blessed word of Jesus in His prayer (xvii.), "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." I appeal again, reader, to you as I would to my own soul and conscience, do you enter into this, tasting of the love of God your Father, *and of such character of love?* Happy he who does so in any measure and walks in the power of an ungrieved Spirit! "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father."

To continue a little: and the reading of the precious Scriptures that bring the Father before us in the riches of His grace and glory, I feel to be most blessed. What a testimony does the Epistle to the Ephesians afford us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us

with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." This founded, I doubt not on the Lord's own declaration after His resurrection, "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John xx.), unfolding our standing in the same position with Himself, with His Father in redemption, and our blessed relationship. And the reader will observe how this pervades the epistle. Chapter i. 4, it is as God, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." It is as Father we are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." (Ver. 5.) Wondrous revelation of grace and love. He would have children to Himself. Sons near Himself! Further, as most know, the prayer of chapter i. is addressed "to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." That in chapter iii. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is as to communion, the former as to power. John tells us in his first epistle of "fel-

is to lessen our knowledge of, dependence and obedience to, our Lord Jesus; nay, but to increase it. The Father's eye and heart are ever on Him, and it is in communion with the Father that we really see the dignity of Christ's person. His beauty and glory as the Son of man who is in heaven. God has revealed Himself in the person of His dear Son, and in Him we find our all. Our life, righteousness, motive, strength, and wisdom. The true knowledge of the glory of Christ's person opens to us the counsels of God; and in Him, indeed, we know the Father. Let us by the eternal Spirit's power who dwelleth in us, and who down here is the spring of all our knowledge of the Father and the Son—for even the new man in us cannot "take of the things of Christ and show them" to itself—we are absolutely dependent on the Holy Ghost—let us, I would humbly say, in the hand of that blessed Spirit, ungrieved and unhindered, seek to have more fully "our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Amen.

lowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ:" the blood of Jesus Christ having cleansed us from all sin, so that we can "walk in the light, as he is in the light." And in a passage before quoted, he does not try to explain or define it, but calls our attention to the love "the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God," the blessed relationship flowing from His heart of love, and securing His children by such a word, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." However hateful sin is, yet provision is thus made, because "grace reigns through righteousness," and there is the advocacy of Christ. If I have quoted at some length from Scripture, dear reader, it was to bring out what the Holy Ghost reveals to us as to the Father and our deep heavenly blessing, heavenly sonship. And now I would say, let us seek to know more of the place of sons—the filial affection. Let us in more simplicity have confidence in our Father; more waiting on Him as dear children. It is not that it

THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—Heb. ix. 28.

The coming again of the Lord Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as one event, but with varying aspects according to the bearing and moral connections in which it is presented. It is my purpose, if the Lord will, to notice it in these different aspects for the stirring up of our souls to a more earnest desire for the accomplishment of this end of all our hopes.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints is very distinct in its aspect from His coming to the world. The grand distinction however which Scripture teaches us to make is between the *coming* of the Lord and the *day* of the Lord. The day of the Lord is always invested with terrors and never presented as the attractive object of hope. Whether spoken of in the Old Testament or in the New, it is always in connection with judgment. In Malachi iv. 5 it is called

"the great and dreadful day of the Lord;" and in Zephaniah i. 15 it is said, "that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress." And in the New Testament the Apostle Peter says, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter iii. 10.) But if there be one thing in Scripture more distinctive than another it is this, that as surely as faith in the object of our Lord's first coming delivers from the moral judgment of God on account of our sins, so His second coming delivers from all material judgment, which will be the world's portion on account of His rejection. If my heart has received Christ in His coming in grace, it gives me a personal, and distinctive, and essential connection with Him in His coming in glory. "When Christ who is our *life* shall appear [mark the term] then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Let it be said then that the primary

until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the limit of christian responsibility; and it is then, we are taught, that there will be the awards for service. For we must never forget, however bright may be our hope, that our Lord and Master has said, "Occupy till *I come*."

As to the general subject, it is of immense importance that we should ascertain for ourselves from Scripture, apart from any theories about it, whether or not it is presented there as an immediate hope; that is, however it may be delayed in God's long-suffering to the world, whether it is a hope whose accomplishment may be looked for at any time, or which must of necessity await the fulfilment of certain intervening prophetic events. With the hopes of Israel the events of prophecy have an intimate connection. But the church is not the subject, in any proper sense, of prophecy at all. Prophecy has its range in the events and circumstances of this world. The Apocalypse itself is

aspect of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Christian is that of simple, unconditional, unembarrassed hope. Our Lord has said, and He will surely not mock our expectations, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Here it is plain His coming again and our being with Him, in all the happiness of the Father's house, the happiness, and light, and eternal joy He rose to when He had accomplished redemption for us, is presented as the direct and immediate fruit of His own love and grace, and as dependent upon nothing else. Thus simply is the coming of the Lord presented in the divine word as our animating hope. But it has also another bearing to the Christian. It is connected with his responsibility to Christ. Hence the apostle's solemn charge to Timothy, "I give thee charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable,

no exception to this principle, since it takes up as its subject the general external profession of Christianity, as responsible to God, and traces its course onward to its issue in judgment. In this respect it is like "the olive-tree" of Romans xi. It is true that the church, as composed of the members of Christ, while it is continued in the world, must necessarily be found within the scope of this profession; but its peculiar relationship to Christ at the same time takes it out of the stream of earthly events and circumstances as to its position and hope. It is expressly declared that when Christ is manifested in glory, whether for the deliverance and establishment of His ancient people or for the judgment of the nations that have falsely professed His name, His saints, whom He acknowledges as members of His body, will be with Him. And in Revelation xix., where He is presented as coming forth to judge the array of man's evil and rebellion, whether as portrayed in "Babylon the great the mother of harlots and abominations

of the earth," or, "the beast and the false prophet," it is said that "the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean." It is not difficult to determine whom these armies in heaven comprise. Nor is it difficult to conclude that those who are to be with Christ when He is manifested in glory must have been taken to be with Him *before* He is thus manifested.

Morally, it is personal attachment to Christ, springing from our knowledge of Him and our intercourse with Him that makes His coming again a living and an animating hope. It is well to remove, if it may be done, the difficulties that beset the subject (though these are comparatively few when Scripture is allowed to speak for itself), and also to show the grounds of this hope from the divine word; but nothing can give it power in the soul except a true and real attachment to Christ as One known to the heart in the love He has manifested in dying for us, and especially in the revelation He has given us of the pre-

the order in which they are there given to us. And if I do so in a series of papers, which I propose, it will obviate the necessity of so pressing on with the isolated point of proof, as to pass over unnoticed that which is of equal importance, the connections in which the general truth is presented.

Formerly, it might have been necessary by argument and induction to endeavour to establish as a preliminary the certainty of the pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus; but I apprehend that this is no longer the case with those who seriously look to the Scriptures as their guide. The danger now to be feared is lest it should quietly take its place as an admitted truth with other admitted truths, and become, like them, uninfluential on the soul.

I assume, then, on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, that this was to be the moral attitude of His disciples from the time He left them to His coming again: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that

sent and eternal intimacy of our association with Himself. Let any one read John xvii., not merely as a portion of the abstract truth of the gospel, but as the outflow of the holy desires of that heart that beats in affection towards Himself as never heart beside could beat; and, above and beyond all the wondrous change of circumstances which His coming will introduce us to, let him ask if there is another desire that can rival that one of being with Him and seeing Him as He is?

I do not speak of the times in which we live, though I do not question that our subject, without overstepping the limits of revelation, might receive an enhancement from such a consideration. For what thoughtful mind is there that can fail to discern in the condition of society at large, especially in professedly christian countries, the moral signs and foreshadows of the last days? But leaving this, I pursue the subject as presented in the Scriptures of truth.

In doing this I propose to take up the divine testimonies of the word in

wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding." Now, however many generations of His servants may have fallen asleep since these words of our common Master were uttered, it is to me demonstrable that no length of time of His tarriance can give any of us a warrant to set aside this practical direction and to substitute something else in its place. It is equally demonstrable from Scripture, that however death, in the good pleasure of God, may supervene, Christians are never set to look for death as their hope, but for the coming of the Lord. Nor can the different moral effect of the one and of the other be estimated by those whose minds are not formed in this respect on the speciality of the revelation of the divine word. I may affirm that death is so abolished by Christ, and "life and immortality are [so] brought to light through the gospel," that death is not, in the New Testament, urged as a necessity to the Christian, much less is it ever held forth as an object of hope. I may, if the will of God be so,

through death be carried a stage forward toward my hope; but neither is *it* my hope nor do I by death reach my hope. "To depart and be with Christ is far better." Who would let this go, as giving its true character to a Christian's death? But it is not the attainment of the object of his hope. It is but waiting still. In happier circumstances it is true; but still it is waiting. If "the earnest expectation of the creation waits"—waits as with outstretched neck—it is "for the manifestation of the sons of God." But what do we, and all saints wait for, if our hope is that of Scripture? Let the apostle answer: "Ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is not until the redemption of his body from the grave that the believer enters into glory. If absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; but he is not glorified, nor in glory. This only results from Christ's own presence in glory. "Our conver-

this passage may have been seized as establishing the apostle's doctrine concerning the foreknowledge and purpose of God, it seems to me that its force as a positive statement concerning the final destiny of the children of God has been much overlooked. The full statement of the passage is, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." In a word, redemption, in its final results to those who are the subjects of it, is declared to be this, that they will be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is definite. And how wonderful a subject is it of contemplation and of sure expectancy! But this is redemption. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And that upon the principle that, "as *is* the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as *is* the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." This is a result now. Identity of nature is affirmed of the one and of the other; and it is declared that this will issue, in infinite grace, in identity

sation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus: who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body." This testimony of the word is decisive on this point (there are many others equally so) that whether we are in this world or in that world to which death transfers us it is to the coming of the Lord alone we must look as the time in which His power will wrest from death that trophy which he has yet in his keeping and make our vile bodies, even, partakers of His glory. As to the resurrection of the bodies of His saints it is said distinctly that this will be at Christ's coming ["Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"]; and it is also said, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [i.e., those who are alive at Christ's coming] shall be changed."

It is not enough dwelt upon that the ultimate purpose of God toward us in redemption is that we should be "conformed to the image of his Son." Now while the argumentative importance of

of likeness and condition ere long. Who can help saying, while this divine purpose of love is before the soul, "Come, Lord Jesus?"

If it is not given to us to lift the veil from death that we may see the final condition, and experience, and employments of those who have passed its portals in the faith of the Lord Jesus, still it is wonderful to note the definiteness of Scripture as to the immediate result of the transition from the seen to the unseen world, and to trace the various steps in the divine actings by which the full and final issue will be brought about. What more wonderful and definite than the order and application of the divine power in the resurrection, as presented in 1 Corinthians xv.? What more wonderful and definite than the details it gives concerning the resurrection of the body, and of the positive characteristics of that body, so far as it is possible that they should in our present state be intelligibly given and apprehended? How unlike is all this to the dreams of

poetry, or the conclusions of philosophy! We have not here the reasonings of a Plato—"It must be so;" but the positive assertions and details concerning the application of the divine power in the refashioning of our *bodies*, that go to dust, that philosophy never dreamt of. I do not speak now of the infinitely superior brightness of the Christian's hope in death; but of the definiteness with which things that lie beyond death are brought out to view. But what could possibly have advanced the apprehensions of ordinance-bound Jews, so immeasurably beyond the utmost limits of the speculations of the discursive philosophy of Greece? It is answered in the single sentence of the apostle, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." And to Christians it may be well said, given the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and everything else, as the apostle argues, most naturally follows. His resurrection is indeed the demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity; but it is a great deal more. It is that which alone gives coherence and consistency to

COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS. 89

joyed in all their attractiveness and in all their grandeur. And in another scene less prosaic than the last, and though presented in highest symbol, I learn the joyousness of that company which the Lamb will gather around Himself, and the divine harmony which his blessed presence will create. "I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne." And surely if the soul lists, it may catch the vibrations of this multitudinous joy and hear the pealing of this wondrous anthem. And oh! is there nothing in the thought of Him we shall meet there, and whose voice shall lead these heavenly chants in which with our harps of gold we shall so soon be joining that makes us feel—I long to be there? Is there nothing definite as to the character of heaven's happiness to be learnt in the declaration, "And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Al-

every conviction of faith and every aspiration of hope that ever through the gospel found its lodgment in a christian heart. Take the resurrection of Christ from that chapter to which I have referred, and all the apostle's reasoning rushes to confusion. It is nothing but the consciousness that we are in the arms of Christ that makes the difference between the triumphant exit of the soul with the expression, "thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and its shuddering departure to an unknown, dark, and fathomless abyss!

But beyond this, in Hebrews xii. 22—24, we have what I believe to be, not the presentation of an array of theological truths in figurative language, but the showing of the company we shall meet in heaven, and the order which is kept in the heavenly Jerusalem. And when the apostle says, "Ye are come," &c., he teaches us with what scenes and associations our faith allies us, and which only await the removal of the curtain of time and sense to be revealed and en-

mighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life?" (Rev. xxi. 21—27.)

But I turn now from these general remarks, and observe in the prosecution of our subject that it is very important to notice when the coming again of the Lord Jesus is presented to believers as their animating hope, it is altogether apart from any question of their responsibility and unembarrassed by any conditions. It is the direct and simple fruit, in glory, of that grace which was

brought to them by Christ's first appearing. "The Lord will give grace and glory." The two are in God's purpose indissolubly conjoined. If believers are looked at as members of Christ's body, it is but a natural consequence that they should be brought to share in the glory of their Head. And this is the force of that passage in Colossians i. 27, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

The natural order of the testimony of Scripture, which I hope to take up, is that of the gospels first, and then how this hope is sustained and combined with the fuller exposition of doctrine in the epistles and subsequent books of the New Testament. The witness of the Old Testament cannot be directly adduced in relation to the coming of Christ as the hope of the Church. It may, indeed, with regard to its effects on the earth and its inhabitants under the millennial reign of Christ, as the Apostle Peter shows when speaking in the Acts, of "the times of restitution of all things" at the coming of Christ. He says, as to these "times of restitution,"

NOTES ON 1 JOHN II. 8.

(Continued from page 192 of Vol. IX.)

All God's ways now are presenting His *moral* manifestation. It will next be His *judicial* manifestation. If the moral manifestation is not received, "the word that I have spoken shall judge him at the last day." The Lord did not accompany the word with judgment when it was spoken; but that word will judge him at the last day, and he will be condemned. Antichrist will only bring out by God's judicial action towards him what He has taught all the way through. Antichrist will be brought out in full display, and God has to *shew what He is*, and to act towards him in that *character*. The first way God taught them was in the Lord Jesus Christ, but being rejected, and having ascended up on high and become the expression of what we should be, the Church should be the manifestation of what Christ is. Then comes the communication of the life from Him in heaven. This was the new thing—"a new commandment I give unto you that

that "God hath spoken of them by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." The testimony of the Psalms also fills up a striking place as to this. Still the bearing is not direct and immediate on the position of those who are gathered to Christ during the time of Israel's rejection. The further prosecution of the subject I leave to the next number.

THE END OF THE AGE.

On us the age's end is come,
Our pathway leads through deep'ning gloom;
The shadows that about us lie
Are shades of doom.

But we for a salvation wait,
Long-promised, and that draweth near;
The word is "In the age's end
It shall appear."

O promise fraught with deepest joy!
Let us with loins well girded stand,
Watch through the last short fleeting hour,
For He's at hand.

Bid disappointment's murmur cease,
And hush the clamour of distress;
Christ cometh with the breaking dawn
And brings redress.

Robes of surpassing brightness,—crowns
That cannot wither—then shall be
The tokens of a love past language deep,
To thee and me.

ye love one another." It was not a new commandment to love one another. It was the old commandment and yet *new*, because it was now given in the power of it; being not merely commanded in His word, but communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost to reproduce in us the life of Christ, and that is a new thing, and we are to manifest it. The Church of God is to be that vessel for the manifestation of Christ down here according to the power of the life in its Head in heaven. God acted in government towards Israel when He dwelt in the thick darkness. He acted in government according to a known law, but He was hid behind a vail—"set bounds about the mount;" but now when Christ died, the darkness was past in the cross, and there was a full display of the holiness of God. At the same moment that His wrath burst forth against sin, the light burst forth which fully manifested His character. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." The vail is rent and we can now enter into the presence of God Himself into the holiest which is now

opened to us. "Walk in the light, as God is in the light;" "You were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Nothing is to be allowed that cannot bear the light. My fellowship is with light. Men perish for lack of knowledge. "The true light now shineth," by Christ's death. He ascended up on high—the vail is rent—God is fully manifested in truth and love. If He had been only just we should have perished; if He had been only love, there would have been no justice; but there was justice and holiness with love, and God has been glorified about our sins in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The light now is shining, Christ the source of that light is to be manifested in us, "which thing is true in him and in you." It is an old commandment which was from the beginning—Christ Himself. You cannot have a better than that, and now the manifestation of it is learned in us; and if we want it as a test, it must not be the imperfect light that is in us, but in Christ Himself. While it is given to us as the means of detecting these

SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

I fear the following brief opening up of the structure of the Epistle to the Romans will be very dry; and, with a view to edification, I should prefer to add more by way of application to the heart and conscience. At present that is not possible, and I think what I may be able to give on the structure of the Epistle, with some passing remarks, may supply materials to those who study the word for their own edification through grace, with the ever needed, but ever ready help of the Spirit of God. I think I shall be able to set out the structure of the Epistle more perfectly than I have ever myself done it, though I have often latterly partially referred to it in oral teaching. And, first, this structure as a scheme. Chapters i. 1—17; i. 18—iii. 20; iii. 21—v. 11; v. 12 to end of viii.; ix—xi.; xii. to the end.

The first 17 verses are an introduction, only the writer states the sub-

errors, it is also to build us up in what Christ is; and in looking at these traits we discover more and more that it is thoroughly divine. I learn in Christ such and such a trait of perfectness, and I say that is "God manifest in the flesh;" and thus I learn all I shall know in heaven. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." We learn the beauty in Jesus and learn it is divine, and learning what God is we are happy and peaceful. And if you have seen a saint dying, if he has apprehended the blood of Christ, he will have peace; but if you look for joy, it must spring from the affections being acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will sometimes see a saint, and there is *joy*, and by and by his *peace* is gone. That is where the soul is not settled. There ought to be both; the blood gives peace, but it is my acquaintance with and knowledge of Christ that gives me joy. The apostle always speaks of the abstract principle, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

ject of the gospel: Christ accomplishment of promises and Son of God in power. Then comes the ground on which the righteousness of God, therein mentioned, has had to be revealed, namely, that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Then follows the demonstration of the sin of both these classes. This second part begins with chapter i. 18 and ends with verse 20, of chapter iii. whereupon the apostle returns to the unfolding the righteousness of God, chapter i, 18. is the thesis of the part I now refer to, the rest is the carrying out of the proof. Chapter i. 19, to the end of chapter i. as to the heathen in general. Chapter ii. 1—16 as to moralists especially, such as philosophers, but whoever they may be. Verse 17 to the end of the chapter the two, only that there is introduced in connection with the hypocritical judgment of the moralist the sure judgment of God to those without law, and those under law. It is the reality of this

judgment, and the immutability of God's estimate of good and evil, which introduces the judgment of the Jew. (Ver. 11, 17, to 29.) Did this set aside the advantages of the Jews? In no wise. They had many, specially the possession of the oracles of God. The apostle now therefore takes them up upon the ground, not of God's true and righteous judgment of men's hearts and acts in the day of judgment, when all will be brought to light, and God must have realities, but on the ground of the revelation which they had, and in which they boasted, and by a selection of passages from that proves them, for that revelation was theirs and applied to them, utterly guilty, and thus every mouth was stopped, the Gentiles confessedly already, and now the Jews by their own Scriptures which they boasted of as exclusively theirs. The world was guilty before God. Verse 20 stands in a certain sense alone, and is a connecting link of what precedes with what follows, touching a subject which was an urgent one with the apostle. By the works of

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redemption or here ransom, justification of the believer, freely by God's grace, but through the ransom of redemption and so righteously, and God is approached at a mercy-seat, that is, bloodshedding on the throne of judgment according to the holiness and righteousness of God. God is approached according to this perfectness as well as man delivered. This is through blood. It has a double aspect. It proves God's righteousness in the remission of Old Testament sins, when He had shewn forbearance. It is divine righteousness itself declared now, as fully just and justifying him that believes, so that he is in righteousness before God. Thus a man is justified by faith without works of law, and God is the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew. He justifies the Jew on the principle of faith, and if the Gentile has faith he is justified through it. Law is established thus. It convicts him who is under it of guilt, and is given all its force too in this respect, and its claims are met by the blood of Christ. This then reveals jus-

the law no flesh could be justified; for the law brought the knowledge of sin, not sins. Natural conscience often gave that, but of the state of sin in which men were. And that is what is described in the preceding verses quoted. In verse 21 we come to the remedy, the great revelation of the gospel. And first as to sins. Apart from law, which was the rule of man's righteousness, God's righteousness has been manifested, the law and prophets having borne witness to it. Hence, as apart from law, and being God's, universal in its character, God's righteousness to all—Jew or Gentile; and upon all those that believe, for it is the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus. It is *δια πιστεως εις παντας*, by faith to all; *επι παντας τους πιστευοντας*, on all who believe consequently. All who return take up God again in grace by Jesus Christ, for all have sinned. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Him. God has set Him forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. We have

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tification by blood for those who have sinned. He has closed with Gentiles and law. But what of Abraham, the root of promise? He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. How does a simple narrative provide, because of an eternal Spirit, the deepest principles of truth for all ages. And this David confirms, shewing the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. As regards then not imputing sin, forgiving, and imputing righteousness are all the same, for actual sins are in question, judicially in question. It is not holding a man to be innocent, but the non-imputation of what he has done, he is judicially held to have no charge against him, he is justified or accounted righteous. It is added from Abraham's case that it comes on Gentiles as on Jews, for Abraham was uncircumcised when he got it, and he got it by the power of resurrection, faith in God's power to accomplish it, we by believing that He has done so. Thus the resurrection of Christ, God's raising Him out of the

place where He had gone because of offences, as satisfied as to those offences, and bringing Him into a wholly new place where He was accepted. And as it was all done for us, we say He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. All this applies, Christ's death and Christ's resurrection, to our sins. Only having suffered for them, He came into a new place.

Chapter v. 1—11 gives the glorious conclusion and consequence of Christ's dying for our sins and rising again: peace, present favour, hope of glory. Our complete, actual place before God; but we glory in tribulations also on the way because of patience and its fruits; and we have the key to all in God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. The perfect ground of this is there stated, and the conclusions drawn to our security in that love. Nor that alone, we glory in God Himself through Christ, by whom we have received this perfect reconciliation with Him. Verse 11 closes the whole sub-

jection from anything but our living place in Christ. Justification of life, we are constituted righteous, and it goes to a fuller presentation even of this truth—"There is no condemnation." Nothing of the sort can apply to one who is *in Christ*. Thus though God is not so fully presented in sovereign grace, our state before God is much more fully entered into, and that connected with death, life, obedience and connection with Christ. This flows on from the consideration of the common objection of flesh. If by the obedience of one I am constituted righteous, no matter what I do, I may live on in sin. But this obedience was unto death; by my public profession of Christianity I have gone down to death, been planted together in the likeness of death. If, as alive through Adam, I have taken my place in death, where Christ's perfect obedience for me was, I cannot live on in that life. A dead man cannot continue in sin, nor can he be charged with sin. A dead man cannot be said to have lusts or will. Here then Christ is looked

ject of our reconciliation by Christ's death and resurrection. God has cleared us, commended His love to us, so that we joy in Him; and all that He does by the way is only a means of blessing. The whole question of our actual guilt has been settled, but our state has not been touched. The apostle shews that it was not a mere question of law but of sin, and so applied to man and not merely to the Jew; for sin was there from Adam to Moses, when law was not, and death proved it. Thus the rest is traced up to Adam, and it is shewn that grace must be as of wide an application; and Christ refers to all, to Gentile as well as to Jew. Chapter iii. 20 to v. 11, inclusive, treat then the question of sins. Chapter v. 12 to the end of viii. that of sin, and our condition through the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ. If it be a question of sins each has his own; if of sin, we are all one lump. This is the ground taken from chapter v. 12, though, of course, the sins come in as fruit. Hence justification is not seen as justi-

at, not as having died for our sins, but to sin. Our old man crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin. The believer is to reckon himself dead consequently to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This, let me remark in passing, has a very full character; for Christ in the sense of personal walk and perfectness always lived to God. But while down here had always to deal with sin, to be tempted, to be exercised in obedience, and keep His feet from the paths of the destroyer; and, finally, knowing no sin, to be made sin for us. All testing and trial only brought out His perfectness; still He had to do with it, live above it, not let in what would have been sin and disobedience, or want of absolute obedience. Blessed be God, we know He did not and could not fail, nor was there the smallest answer or movement in Him to answer from incessant temptations from without, but He lived in the sphere in which one was moving, as the air around Him, and died to it. Now *in that He lives*, He

lives to God. All that He had to do with sin in this world was to *die* to sin. He died and suffered rather than not accomplish absolute obedience to, and glorify, His Father. But now as man, God is the one sole object filling, satisfying, occupying the life in which He lives. There is no other object to claim its movements, no movements which turn towards anything else. "*In that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*" So we reckon ourselves dead to sin as crucified with Him, and alive only to God—a wondrous word. Our old man is crucified with Him, for the destroying the body of sin; and if I am alive at all, it is through Jesus Christ our Lord, and so alive to God. Life has no other object nor produce of thought and feeling. Hence I have not to serve sin. He does not say continue in it, that supposes life of and from it, i.e., pure flesh, but not to serve or submit to it as a master even, a different thing, and which more directly concerns the Christian. And I have a right to speak, for it shall not have dominion over me as if I was under

Jesus, so in His life are we privileged to do.

Chapter vii., as often studied and commented on, applies this principle of death to law. The law has power over a man as long as he lives, but we have died in Christ, the bond with our first husband, if we have been under law, and being born of God without the knowledge of redemption, put us under it in spirit, a state described at the end of the chapter, is dissolved by our death, and we are to another, Christ raised from the dead. We have therefore besides death and a new life, the bond of relationship in which we are, wholly to Christ and no longer to the law to which we have died. The state of a soul knowing, as quickened, the spirituality of the law, consenting to it, and delighting in it, but unable to keep it, and looking for deliverance, is there described, and deliverance found to be in Christ. The natures still remain the same. This state of deliverance is then unfolded in chapter viii. The man is in Christ. No condemnation is therefore

law (in which case it would, even if I hated it), but under grace. Thus I am set free, and in a happy and good sense my own master. Whom am I going to serve, to whom yield myself? To God, and my members as instruments—that is all they are now—of righteousness to God. It is an absolute *yielding ourselves* up to God. Blessed privilege. And here I get fruit. In the slavery of sin, none; only it ended in death (guilt and judgment are not the subject here, but state); but now I have fruit unto holiness; walking in obedient righteousness, I learn God, His ways, I have fruit in separatedness and affections of heart to Him: so Moses, "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me thy way, that I may know thee, and that I may find grace in thy sight." There is added one word which brings all back to grace, lest living to God might be wrongfully reckoned to man. "The *wages* of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But it is a blessed thing to be allowed to yield ourselves to God. So did

possible. Such is the result. He is in the place into which Christ's perfect work has brought him, in that state in Him. The manner of the whole thing is then stated. Its ground as to our status down here. The power of divine life in Christ Jesus, the raised One, in Him, now alive, who was dead, has set me free from the condition in which I stood, the law of sin and death under which I was in the first Adam. But I have died out of that and am alive in Christ. So freed from it. But this is not all. The law had the pretension to set me in righteousness, in a righteous place and standing before God; but it could not succeed. It was weak through the flesh, which was not subject to it, nor could be. The sin and flesh remained independent and unsubdued. But God has set us before Him. He has sent His own Son in the likeness of this sinful flesh (Himself sinless) and as a sacrifice for sin, thus sin in the flesh was condemned perfectly and fully according to God (for there is no forgiveness of a nature) and He perfectly

glorified as to it, but by death, in Christ's dying, so that while righteously condemned, Christ has died as regards the state in which He was in the likeness of it and had to say to it (though perfect Himself and as perfect) and we in Him, so that while the sin *has been* condemned, so that God has no more to say as to it. I have passed wholly out of the state in which I had to say to it, was in it before God because I have died in Christ. While the efficacy of His sacrifice secures the glory of God and the putting away of sin. A few words will give the close of this part of the epistle. The first eleven verses unfold this deliverance and the natures concerned in it, but with the additional truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost which gives power and liberty, the effect of this, not merely as life and resurrection, even of the body, already noted, but as leading, guiding, bearing, personally witness, first for that we are children and heirs, then for the joy that belongs to us, but this giving a divine yet human sense of the sorrow and bondage

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ix., x., xi. reconcile the doctrine of the difference between Jew and Gentile with the promises to the Jews. Chapter ix. shews that their own history forces them to accept the principle of sovereign grace, otherwise the Ishmaelites and Edomites must be admitted, and they would have been cut off because of the golden calf. God will use this sovereignty to bring in the Gentiles. Chapter x. shews they stumbled at the stumbling-stone, and all had been predicted. Chapter xi. that the stumbling was not final, but for the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles, and that if the Gentiles did not continue in God's goodness they would be cut off, and the Jews grafted in again. The rest of the epistle consists of detail of exhortation, founded on our offering ourselves up to God, a living sacrifice to God, proving what His will is. The doctrine of the body comes out here; each is to fill up the measure of his own gift, and not to pretend to more. We have also the instruction as to Christ, that He was a minister of the circum-

of corruption around us in which yet our bodies have a part. But this leads to sympathy and the expression by the Holy Ghost in us of the sense of this sorrow in a divine way. He who searches the hearts finds there the mind of the Spirit and the Holy Ghost Himself interceding in it. Such is our blessed place as regards present evil—read, 'according to God.' We do not know what to ask for, but we express the need according to God, a groan sure to be heard. What a place as in us the Holy Ghost has here. The rest of the chapter is the conclusion of all this part of the epistle. If God be for us, who can be against us? For us as to gift, He has given His Son; for us as to justification, He justifies us; in us as to all the difficulties. Nothing separates us from His love in Christ in them. They have been or are the scenes of His love. All difficulties are of the creature. His love is divine, yet has gone down to every depth and is exercised at the highest height. This is all the proper doctrine of the epistle. Chapters

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cision (i.e., to the Jews) for the *truth* of God to confirm *promises* (this is not law), and that the Gentiles should glorify God for His *mercy*. And, lastly, that the mystery now revealed was hidden in all the ages of time, and now made known to the nations by prophetic scriptures. J. N. D.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER VI.

ISAAC AND JACOB.

Isaac was seventy-five years old at the death of his father. He was married at forty years of age. His two sons, Esau and Jacob, were born in his sixtieth year, and they were at the age of fifteen at the death of Abraham.

In reviewing the history of Isaac and Jacob in order to ascertain the testimony sustained by them, we must bear in mind that they are rather the continuation of the testimony committed to Abraham, each in a distinct way, than the leaders of any new or advanced line.

We are to learn in and by them how the testimony committed to Abraham fails in the hands of those who are called to support it; but in their history also is presented to us all the difficulties with which one set in their place is beset; and therefore we shall find therein disclosures of the grace of God peculiar and blessed to meet and sustain His people, hindered and embarrassed by nature in the maintenance of His truth (for that is always His testimony). In a word, we shall find in Isaac how feeble mere nature is to sustain the path in which the testimony sets him; and in Jacob we shall find that not only nature, but all the powers which affect nature, and can use it against God, are brought to bear on him. How wilful he is, and how he yields. How God delivers in both cases, exemplifying to us the nature of the difficulties in the way, but at the same time also the greatness of the resource that there is in God when one looks simply to Him.

In Abraham I have the difficulties which a man of faith has to encounter

the character of faith exemplified by Isaac. Before the birth of Esau and Jacob the Lord communicates to Rebecca the grand outline of their history; the patient maintenance of the testimony being that which devolves on Isaac. His trials are of the order to disturb and contravene patience. They are the ordinary ones of daily life, and his failures are always in giving way to his nature. Isaac's history is given us in order to present to us how a man in nature, however amiable, is tried when set as God's witness in the earth, and called to walk in dependence on Him in a strange land, where as yet he had no inheritance. The feebleness of nature to support this testimony is disclosed, and then God establishes His servant in the line committed to him.

Isaac and Jacob, as we have said, properly, only follow up the testimony given to Abraham, and therefore in Hebrews xi., and in other places, they are classed together. We are to look at Isaac as occupying the place of testimony to which his father had been called,

always; namely, *bye-paths* to the ways of faith. In Isaac I have the trials and weakness of one who would keep the path of faith appointed, without any of the exercises of soul which leads into it. In Jacob I have one who trusts to his nature and his own devices more than to God; who seeks to secure the blessings of the path more than the path itself, and who discovers in the end that what he leant on was but a broken reed, which had pierced him through when he leant on it.

Isaac does not come prominently before us until after the birth of Esau and Jacob. He presents to us characteristically man in nature, supporting the testimony of God. He has little to contend with except what attracts his nature. His first trial as heir and maintainer of the testimony is that he has no children. For twenty years he was without an heir, and he entreated the Lord, and the Lord was entreated of by him. The patient continuance year after year in a country where one is a stranger, without any prospect or clue to inheritance, is

and in which he has grown up without learning any of the difficulties or exercises of reaching it, which peculiarly and singularly belonged to his father. But his history presents to us how God leads and deals with him, a man like unto ourselves in it; and yet all his hindrances are of himself and natural. He does not cease to be God's witness, but the indulgence of nature hinders and obstructs his testimony. There is an absence of self-denial in him, and therefore he must learn that all his troubles mainly spring from his own weakness. However, notwithstanding all his failure, he was a witness, for as such the Holy Ghost owns him; he "confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim;" he had no hope on earth but from God. For twenty years he, the promised seed, had no heir: but then God hears his prayers and Esau and Jacob are born unto him. It is important for us to note the difference of trials according to the order of testimony. Abraham, we have seen, had to contend with *bye-paths*, which proposed

to him an issue similar to what faith proposed. Isaac, on the other hand, is seduced from the position of faith which he occupies, to consider for himself and his own ease therein. The one has to suffer in gaining the position, the other in maintaining what is gained. The art of the adversary, with regard to the first, must be to divert him from the true line; while to the latter, it would be to engross him with his own interests, and thus lead him through self-gratification to compromise his position as the witness of God.

Into this snare Isaac falls. Esau's hunting and acquisitions warp Isaac's mind and judgment because they minister to himself. He loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; and the witness for God on earth, the one whose history in connection with his testimony He has seen fit to record for us, while maintaining the place he was set in, is hindered, and attempts to run counter to the mind of God, because he had yielded himself to his own self-pleasing, and, as a consequence the testimony suffers.

and tells him not to go to Egypt, but to "dwell in the land which I will tell thee of." This word of the Lord is but a renewal of the call to Abraham, and, with it, a confirming of all the promises made to Abraham. Isaac is now instructed in the mind of God, and how, as His witness, he ought to comport himself: but he must not trust in man. He does not go down into Egypt, but he dwells in Gerar, which was within the precincts of the land but in the hands of the Philistines, and hence the Philistines represent to us the flesh obtaining a place in the sphere entirely belonging to God. Isaac learns here not to trust in the flesh; he denies his wife; and afterwards suffers at the hands of the Philistines because of the prosperity given him of God. This suffering was in order to separate him from them, for he was God's witness; but it is slowly he does so from Esek (contention) to Sitnah (hatred) and then to Rehoboth (room); and when he obtains the sense of *room*, the true liberty, he goes entirely outside the land of the

How little we contemplate or take into account the responsibility of being God's witness on the earth, and how impressed we are with the purpose and grace of God, when we begin to note the way in which He makes His chosen vessels to fulfil His pleasure and do His will. We may be God's witness on earth, and in the very position to which faith has called us, and yet like Isaac, be diverted from the support and resource which faith always gives by that which addresses our nature and gratifies it.

The land is the scene of this testimony. There is another famine in the land (Gen. xxvi.), beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham, and Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, into Gerar. Thus the pressure of circumstances induces him to go down where man could afford him succour. God in His mercy appears to him and warns him not to go down into Egypt. The Philistines typified the support of man. This Isaac sought, for he was going "south," bordering on Egypt: but the Lord appears unto him,

Philistines unto Beersheba, a place already recording how the servant of God can stand outside and apart from all human support; and in doing so is owned by man as having God on his side. When Isaac, in the energy of faith revived, reaches this spot, the Lord appears to him "that night," and renews to him the promises made to Abraham; and there Isaac builded an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. The separation from the Philistine obtains for him true ground where God can appear to him, and where Isaac, in his own soul, can know that he is on God's side and for God on the earth. "Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar; and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army; and Isaac said, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee."

The testimony we see is confined to the land. Esau had already sold his birthright. His natural engagements which were so pleasing to Isaac had

brought forth bitter fruit, but their own proper fruit, for Esau, hungry (destitute of natural resources) had despised openly what was of God even his birth-right; and had sold it for a mess of pottage to his brother Jacob; and now in his fortieth year, when Isaac was an hundred years old, Esau marries two wives of the people of the country, both Hittites, which were a "grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebecca his wife." And such it must have been to see their firstborn son in this close affinity with the people of the land. Nevertheless, Isaac does not investigate the course and the habit of life which had led to this crisis; and because he fails to see the spring of it all, he becomes implicated in it himself. He grieves at Esau's marriage, but he gratifies himself with the result of Esau's works. Surely this is recorded for us that we may see what can spoil the testimony of God, and how subtle the snare by which we can be allured from the simple path of testimony. Isaac, failing in time to stay and correct this evil work-

holiness, distinct and peculiar discipline. The working of nature in Isaac had led to the working of nature in Rebecca; and because of it, the testimony is passing away from Isaac; but as the way in which it devolves on Jacob is polluted by the same working of nature, he must be subjected to discipline before he can fully be the witness of God on the earth according to the place of blessing now from the lips of Jacob conferred on him. How interesting and momentous it is for us to note and grasp the patience of God in continuing through all opposition and failure one line of testimony. Varied and different is the opposition urged and levelled against it in the histories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The frailty and feebleness of man are exposed in the witnesses, yet God in His mercy and patience bears His witness above all, though (necessarily, because of His holiness) in a reduced condition or state of things which only marks the unfaithfulness which led into it.

Jacob now blessed is God's witness

ing, actually paves the way for the declension and suspension of testimony in the land. His expressed wishes to Esau, marked as they are with that vein of self-gratification which had led him astray, being overheard by Rebecca, cause her also to work carnally, and to counterplot in order to secure the blessing for Jacob. "Make me," he says, "savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee before I die." Deceived by his natural partiality for Esau, he fails as God's witness, loses his power and due influence, and is inapprehensive of the mind of God; for he would have conferred the blessing on the son of his choice instead of on the one for whom God had designed it. Thus he falls from the place of testimony and Jacob henceforth comes before us as the one on whom it has devolved, because of the blessing conferred on him in spite of all the intentions of Isaac.

The manner, however, in which this blessing was obtained was not of God; and therefore demanded because of God's

on the earth, but he must fly from the land, which was the proper sphere of his testimony. The manner in which he had obtained the blessing which set him in the place of testimony being by natural device, he must now learn that he cannot maintain the divine position without first in practical confession, declaring the end and weakness of himself—of that nature by which he had obtained it. In a word, he must be humbled first. At this juncture, Jacob was seventy-six years old (about one year older than Abram when he first entered the land), and at the counsel and instigation of his mother, he flies from the land for fear of his brother Esau. Isaac renews the blessing to him and sends him away, directing him to take a wife of the daughters of Laban; and adds to the blessing these words, "That thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger." Peculiarly interesting is it to grasp and comprehend the nature of the testimony at this moment! The failure of the witnesses to maintain the truth committed to them subjects them

to the most humiliating trials. Jacob has to abandon the land, and Isaac to endure the double trial of seeing his son Esau openly and avowedly departing from the position to which he was called of God, and to be obliged with his own lips to consent and approve of Jacob's retiring from the land, a consent forced upon him on account of the unhallowed marriage of Esau. The testimony, once bright in the land (how bright in the day of Abraham!) has gradually declined in the hands of Isaac, and is now, we may say, for a time suspended. True, Isaac survived and lived for forty years more, even to see Jacob again renewing the testimony—a lovely and touching instance of the grace and faithfulness of God! The stock of the old tree of testimony is not removed until the new one is fitted to replace it.

Jacob then leaves the land. (Chap. xxviii.) He went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. When he reached Luz the sun did set and he tarried there all night. Then and there

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER VI.

ISAAC AND JACOB.

(Concluded from page 128.)

O! may not some of us lay this to heart while we may trace in our own histories the will and self-seeking that has driven us from the path of testimony to the distant land in which we have had to endure discipline for the carnality which proved our incompetence to be witnesses for God. Alas! the testimony has suffered. The witness is under discipline far off from his true place and under a cloud; but thy compassions, O God, fail not! Jacob is recalled. Gifted he is of God, but so little dependent on Him, that he can be no witness for the truth given of God until he has ceased to trust in his own plans, and rests simply on God. And thus it is with every saint now called of God to testify of Christ. There is neither power nor opportunity to do so, while he is seeking his own will and pleasure. Nay, before

God appears to him and thus in his exit from the land, and in this moment of the declension and almost suspension of the testimony God shews him that in the land is the place where He will display Himself, and that there is the house of God, and He sees therefore the gate of heaven.

After a period of twenty years (Gen. xxxi. 11—12), the history of which I pass over, our subject being that of testimony and not Jacob's personal history, God in His infinite mercy releases His servant from obscurity and calls him to resume his place of testimony for Him. "The angel of God spake to Jacob in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me. Now arise get thee out from this land and return to the land of thy kindred." *How holy and patient and faithful is His mercy!* The testimony for twenty years, one might say, was under a cloud; Isaac in the shade; Jacob subjected to discipline before he could be permitted to occupy the place.

(To be continued.)

he can be used in his proper place he must be subjected to painful discipline, in order that he may seek Christ with a true heart, as one wearied with himself, and thankful that he is not debtor to the flesh, to live after the flesh; but that he is through God's eternal love in Christ Jesus a new creation of His Spirit and life.

It is evident, I think, that Jacob had not fallen into idolatry, though living with idolators (even Rachael was one); nay, rather that Laban knew his faith, as we speak; for he says, "The God of your father spake to me yesternight." Thus, even in this very feeble way, the truth of the living God was again maintained in the land of Syria; and doubtless the interposition of God on Jacob's behalf, and the sequel of his sojourn there, must have had weight and testimony to many. Jacob returns to Galeed before Laban overtakes him, and without meeting with any reverse. There they both make a covenant in the name of the God of Abraham, and part company on good terms.

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." (Chap. xxxii. 1.) God in this distinct manner guards and inaugurates his return to the land. Jacob is now at Jordan, at the ford of Jabbok, in order to pass over with his family and his possessions. But *here*, and ere he accomplishes the passage, must he learn in the spirit of his mind what real, simple dependence on God is. He is not fit or competent to be a witness of it until he knows in himself the spirit and power of it. How little he yet knew it! He is now "greatly afraid and distressed" because Esau and four hundred men with him are coming to meet him; and he says, "O God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewn unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands; deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau."

and displayed in him. Jacob's name is now Israel. Laban had owned that the hand of God was with him; Esau must own it too. Walking with God, dependent on Him was now the line of testimony, and one marked with distinct and open blessing. Men see the power and the greatness of God.

Jacob however, again ensnared, tarries at Shechem for seven years (chap. xxxiii. 18), nor does he truly resume the path of testimony until he reaches Bethel, and erects there an altar called El-Bethel (God of the house of God), and there the name Israel is confirmed to him. (Chap. xxxiv. 10); "And God said, Thy name is Jacob, thy name shall not any more be called Jacob, but Israel shall thy name be; and he called his name Israel."

Jacob is now witness for God in the land, and hence we read of the death of his father Isaac more than forty years subsequent to his flight from the land. "And Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Isaac and Jacob so-

Jacob is now learning dependence upon God; but not as Abraham learnt it. He "went out, not knowing whither he went." With Jacob it is quite different. As God's witness he has been subjected to discipline because of his wilfulness, and now as restored of God to the path of testimony, his first lesson before he crosses the Jordan must be that only in God can he be preserved from that which his own evil had provoked—from Esau. Fine and wondrous is the character of the scene in which he learns this, portraying and presenting to us how God restores and replaces His servant in the true line of testimony.

"Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him till break of day." *God contends with him*, and in that unique and peculiar time he gets a double blessing. The marvel of grace is effected. Jacob is silenced; yet at the same moment he is conscious that as a prince he has power with God and with man. That which resisted God in him is overcome, and that of God, which "overcometh all things" is developed

journed, and the days of Isaac were a hundred and eighty years." Consequently Jacob at that time was a hundred and twenty years old, and he dwells in the land in which his father was a stranger (chap. xxxvi. 1), in the land of Canaan.

From this time on, until Israel removes into Egypt, we have but one continued series of the evils of his children without any check of the grace of God in them, until at length on account of a famine they all desert the land, and go down to Egypt; a chapter in the history of God's testimony on earth which no one can read without seeing how sadly man fails in the place where God sets him, and how wondrous is the forbearance of God; how long-suffering and patient; not finally removing the people from the place of testimony until they had in every way and manner proved themselves not only incompetent, but, worse than all, indifferent both to His calling and His testimony.

THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

(Continued from page 92.)

In resuming the subject of the coming again of the Lord Jesus, I shall take up in their order the various testimonies of the Gospels and the Acts, and the other books of the New Testament, to this wonderful event, so full of terror to the world, because of its rejection of Christ and the salvation which was wrought by His first coming, but so full of hope and triumph to those who, through grace, have been taught to love His appearing.

As an introductory remark it may be said, that the coming again of the Lord as presented in the Gospels and the Acts in its general aspect is connected with the establishment of His power on earth, in what is designated "the kingdom of the Son of man." There is a sphere of divine power and rule, which in Matthew is characteristically called "the kingdom of heaven," or the reign or rule of heaven; and in Luke, "the

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nal home—the Father's house in heaven—by Jesus as the Son of God, of those whom His unbounded grace has made partakers of life and the privilege of sonship with Himself. It is this His people are called to look for. O! infinite joy to find at last such a home, and such a welcome there!

But there are other aspects of his coming. In the mere reading of Matthew xxiv., which I now briefly notice, it is impossible, I think, not to see that our Lord's announced return here connects itself, and its results, especially with the people among whom He exercised His personal ministry in His first advent. It presents to us emphatically the sign of His coming as "the Son of man"—the title he assumed in Israel on the rejection of His claims as the Messiah—and "the end of the age." Now it is important to remember that Matthew xiii. shews the judgment of the wicked, under the figure of the tares of the field, to be in "the end of the age." And it is also said in the same chapter, "the harvest is the end of the

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kingdom of God," or the reign or rule of God. In this sphere, whether for judgment or subsequent blessing—so largely dwelt on in Old Testament prophecy—the power of the Lord Jesus Christ will be exercised on His return. The Gospel of John, however, is an exception to this. In the opening of Christ's ministry in John, we do not find Him calling the nation of Israel to repentance, and announcing "the reign of heaven" as at hand; but the declaration of this truth, that "he came to his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons (or children) of God." In accordance with this, therefore, in the fourteenth chapter, which I do not now dwell upon, He speaks of His coming again in the sole and single aspect of coming to receive these children of God to Himself, that they may be with Him, where He is, in the place which He has prepared for them in His Father's house. This is not His rule or reign. It is the promised introduction to His own eter-

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age." But this plainly, as the chapter shews, closes the history of Christianity upon earth, as commenced by the ministry of Christ. He Himself explains the parable thus, "He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man," &c. So that we have thus the main statements of our chapter totally taken away from any supposed connection with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The question of the disciples, in the third verse, was, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of *thy coming*, and of the end of the age?" To this our Lord replies by presenting (as He only could, for time and eternity are alike within His view) the general course of things in the world, in the declaration that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," &c., giving at the same time a specific warning against false Christs and false prophets. This is closed by the statement (in verse 14) that this gospel of the reign should be preached in all the habitable earth for a *witness* to all the nations, and then the end

would come. From verse 15 and onward, it is plain that Jerusalem and Judæa become the centre of that scene upon which the coming of the Son of man breaks with the suddenness and vividness of the lightning's flash, which covers the whole horizon with its lurid gleam, and arrests the attention of every eye. This is not the symbol of hope and peace, like "the morning star," but of terror and of judgment. Moreover, the coming of "the Son of man in the clouds of heaven," links this event with that which is given in the prophet Daniel, chapter vii. 13, 14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In consonance with this, our chapter

From verse 45 to the end of the chapter it is plain that our Lord's instructions are *moral*, and not *local* in their application, as before. But I quote the passage in full. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here we have the Lord's committal of a trust to his servants for the care and instruction and ordering of His household, while He is away and until His return. This trust was to be exercised

presents the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, and the shortening of the days of tribulation lest "no flesh should be saved." That is, if they were not shortened all living men in the sphere of this "great tribulation" would be cut off. There is also the warning against false Christs and false prophets: and it should be remarked that this is a second warning of the like kind. The first evidently connected itself with what took place before the destruction of Jerusalem and at the time. The second (ver. 23, 24) as certainly looks on to the closing scenes, precursory of the coming of the Son of man "with power and great glory." Then there is the sign of vengeance taken upon an apostate people—the eagles gathered to the carcase. Further, there is the warning of the days of Noah and the judgment of the flood; and, finally, there is the gathering together of the elect from the four winds." This gathering, it is to be remarked, takes place after the coming of the Son of man is seen, at least where His glory is first displayed.

in the constant sense of responsibility to Christ as Lord, and could only be duly kept alive by the habitual expectation of his coming again. Then follows the blessing and reward of those who have faithfully and watchfully fulfilled this allotted trust; and the unexpected coming of the Lord in judgment upon those by whom it has been betrayed. But if this be the plain expression of the general thoughts of the passage, its own vividness and force will be returned to by every faithful heart. By its terms alone a chord is struck which no comment can ever reach.

Now it is apparently on the consummation of this scene of betrayed trust that our Lord introduces the parable of the ten virgins, and in just sequence. Few can have read chapter xxv. without having been arrested with the peculiar form of its commencement. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened," &c. It seems as if the contemplation of the ecclesiastical domination and worldliness, of which Christendom presents so striking an example,

and to which this figurative language of our Lord has been, I believe, justly applied, afforded a starting-point for the parable by which it is followed. In the previous chapter we have seen unfaithfulness and the spirit and habits of the world traced back, by an unerring hand, to the thought of the heart which is thus expressed, "my lord delayeth his coming"—he will not come yet. Now the special object of the parable of the ten virgins is to recal what was the first animating hope and position of Christians, and to restore them again to it, after it had been long forgotten and practically lost. If this be a just conclusion, it will at once be felt that those who desire to be faithful to Christ have a more than ordinary interest in the right apprehension of this divine instruction. For, if the parable shews a long period in which the true hope of the Christian had lapsed and become practically extinct, it also presents the recovery of this hope, and the practical position connected with it, on the part of those who are truly Christ's, just on the eve of His return.

bers of people in such a case. But, as I have said, the parable glances back to the original call of Christians to be separate from the world while they waited for God's Son from heaven; and it looks forward also to a time when there shall be an awakening up from a state of supineness to resume the original position of preparedness and expectancy.

In the interpretation of the passage, however, it must be remembered that it is a similitude. It is a similitude of the reign of heaven—"Then shall the reign of heaven be likened," &c. The coming of the Lord is not here presented as the attractive hope of the Christian, but in its bearing on the duty of watchfulness and separation from the scene around. It is a figurative representation of what takes place in the history of Christianity, from the period of Christ's departure until all responsibility is closed by His return. That which is in prominence in the figure, is the preparation of persons to join a bridal procession at night, the moment it appears. But let

The history of Christianity, alas! is too faithfully sketched in this parable, to allow of mistake in its application. Christians mingled with an increasing mass of false profession, and gaining power and position in the world, in very early times were tempted to give up, *in heart, at least*, the vivid hope and expectation of the Lord's return, which characterized the Church in apostolic days. The power and wealth and corruption which flowed in upon the so-called church, and so abundantly generated the spirit of ecclesiastical and worldly ambition, under the Roman Cæsars, obliterated from the minds of the professed followers of Christ the words that were addressed to the men of Galilee as they stood gazing up into heaven after their departed Lord—"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Nursed in security and ease, what had the Church *then* to do with the thought of the Lord's return? It could only be like a nightmare, to alarm and oppress the slum-

us have the inimitable scene before us. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know

you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." * (Matt. xxv. 1—13.)

Now, though we know from other scriptures that Christ sustains the character of bridegroom, it is not the purpose of the parable to present him in that title here. Neither are Christians in it viewed in any corporate character as the bride. Other scriptures present that. But here the bride is not in the scene at all; nor the bridegroom, except in figure. What is presented, is Christians in their individual capacity, and especially in their being called out to separation in heart and purpose from the world, to be waiting in the expectation of Christ's return. True Christians are represented as having forgotten this (alas! how true in fact!), and the mass of those who are Christians only in profession have forgotten it too. There is, however, this distinction—true Christians have that within them which is divine, and answers at once and

* The chief editors omit the words, "wherein the Son of man cometh."

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to present the catching up of the saints, nor even the joyous thought of the Father's house. These are the subjects of other revelations. Here it is that which comes within the range of "the reign of heaven."

Mark xiii. gives the same general truths as those presented in Matthew xxiv.; but it does not, in the object of the present paper, demand any special remark. It is well to observe, however, that no truth which we may have received, or position in which we may be placed by it, puts us beyond the application of the exhortation of the closing verses of the chapter—"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time 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: watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning.) Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you,

fully to the announcement of the Lord's return. But mere profession can in no sense answer to this. It may indeed supply people with notions and forms, and perhaps build them up in orthodox views; but it can never separate them from the world, or impart to them the love of Christ's appearing. The difference is expressed by those who "took their lamps and took no oil with them," and those who "took oil in their vessels with their lamps." In the ordinary history of profession, the two classes may have gone on together, but the parable teaches us that there will come a time when this will be no longer possible. The midnight cry may awaken *all*—but it is only those that are *ready* who go in with the bridegroom to the marriage. The others, alas! are awakened, but it is only to the consciousness of their own unpreparedness, and come but to find that the door is shut. While the solemn admonition to all is, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour."

It is not in the scope of the parable

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I say unto all, Watch." (Mark xiii. 33—37.)

As presented in Luke xii., to which I now turn, it is the "kingdom of God," or reign of God, that gives its special character to the coming again of the Lord Jesus. In verse 31 the Lord places it before his disciples as the supreme object of their desire and care. If they had belonged to the world, in estrangement from the knowledge of a Father in heaven and His gracious care, whether Jew or Gentile, they must needs have other and inferior objects to seek. But His disciples through this revelation are delivered from this. To them he says, "But rather seek ye . . . the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." They would be secured by their Father's care to those whose hearts were given up to the accomplishment of His will. And the Lord adds, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 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." Upon the kingdom of God their interests were to be henceforth concentrated, and to them it was their Father's good pleasure to give it. Their position in the world, as we see, was to be at once adjusted to this hope and expectation. Earthly possessions were no longer to be esteemed by them as their proper portion; but on the contrary the incumbrance of them was to be got rid of; and what was possessed was to be used alone and supremely in the objects of the Lord's beneficence; while they reserved to themselves an unfailing treasure in the heavens. This is a result that is instinctively reached wherever the paramount interests of that kingdom strongly seize upon the heart—for where the treasure is, there the heart will be. Such can have no part in this world but that of strangers in it, acknowledging allegiance and loyalty only to an absent Lord.

forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

How the heart at once feels that the grace here presented is altogether and absolutely divine! Such a result of watching and service, if that service were far different from what we are conscious it is, might well seem strange to us. But it is not strange to his heart who has already sacrificed so much to gain us for Himself. And well sure we may be of this, that if His life of humiliation and sorrow has been so fruitful of love and grace to us, His life of glory will present Him still the same in unchanged affection, and will yield its correspondent results. But so it is. That which the blessed Lord presents to His disciples is this, that in His reign in glory, when the kingdom of God shall indeed be come, He will in a sense change places with them; so that as they had owned Him as their Lord and Master, and had watched and waited for Him, in a world that was contrary

In verses 85, 86, are sketched in a brief and graphic manner what is the truthful moral position of those who are the expectants of this kingdom. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." This figure is the same as that of Matthew xxv., but varied thus, that here it is the master of the house returning from the wedding to his house, and the responsibility of his servants is not to go out to meet him, but to be in instant readiness to receive him when he comes. It is the beautiful and varied instruction of one who does not confound the different aspects in which his people are viewed. The application of the figure to His disciples, is given by the Lord in verses 37, 38. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come

to them and Him, so now he will serve them in a sphere where all is correspondent to His will, and all subordinated to His infinite love. When will the day dawn and the shadows flee away?

I connect this 37th verse with what is presented by the Lord in chapter xxii. 18. "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." He had said that He would not eat any more of the passover, which was the symbol of redemption, until its fulfilment in the kingdom of God, when He would again participate with His followers in its accomplished results. So also He would reserve His joy, of which the cup was the symbol, until He could share it with them in the kingdom of God, who, on earth, had been rejected for His sake. In Matthew xxvi. 29, He also says, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." This gives the other aspect of the kingdom, and corresponds with that which he taught his disciples to

pray for:—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In this sphere will eventually be found the blessed results of earthly service and responsibility. Other scriptures open other relationships to Christ and other positions of those who are partakers of His grace, but here it is His relationship of Lord to His disciples and their responsibility toward Him, and their reward. This is especially seen in verses 41 to 48, where the responsibility of "the faithful and wise steward" is brought out; and who at his Lord's coming is made ruler over all that he has. It presents also the punishment of the unfaithful servant who said in his heart "my lord delayeth his coming." It was no object to him that his lord should soon, or at all, return; but the reverse. It is true that he bore the name of servant, but he had carried himself like one who was a stranger to all subjection, and had used his lord's household as if it were his own, and made it only the sphere for the indulgence of his lusts and domination. Its

hended] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are the principles which characterize the kingdom or rule of God; and within the sphere of divine power and goodness so designated, they will be established by Christ. In the subsequent verses the same subject is opened to His disciples. "And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here, or see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe: so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

moral application is, alas! too plain to require being pointed out.

The instruction of Luke xvii. concerning the coming of the Lord is introduced by the question of the Pharisees, verses 20, 21, "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there: for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (or among you). It was an answer appealing to their moral condition and responsibility. Here was the Lord in the midst of them, who had already proclaimed that kingdom, and whose character and works proclaimed it more fully; but they still remained ignorant of Himself and of the character of that reign about which they as ignorantly inquired. His doctrine had unfolded the principles of that reign, but they neither understood it nor received it. For, as Scripture declares, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink [this they could have compre-

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered, and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

(Ver. 22—37.) Here the condition of the world is especially presented, and the effect upon it of the revelation of the Son of man. It is the even course of the world's procedure, and the total discomfiture that the coming of the Lord will bring upon all that men are enjoying and pursuing: of which the judgment of the flood and of Sodom, from which Lot escaped as by fire, are the foreshadows. "Remember Lot's wife" has at least a moral warning for us all. It is a warning against a Christian's having his affections lingering in the world, upon which the coming of the Lord will bring certain judgment. And of this we may rest assured that there is nothing in the calling or hopes of Christians that legitimately takes them out of the range of such a warning.

We have advanced, as yet, but a little way in the testimony of Scripture, but it is striking to observe how entirely it presents this event as bounding the horizon of the Christian, in whatever aspect he may be viewed. If he be ensnared by the world in the pursuit

THE CHAIN OF TRUTH IN JOHN'S GOSPEL.

At the end of chapter xx. it is written, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing, ye might have life through his name." This distinctly informs us that it is one piece of truth that is opened out so far in this book, and therefore it is important that we should be able to grasp it as one unbroken chain.

My desire and intention is, if the Lord enable me, to point out the links and mark their connection, and thus make the chain more easy of apprehension to the general reader. I shall adhere to the chapters for the most part, only marking the moral sequence when necessary if broken or interrupted by the chapter-division.

Chapter i.—The first chapter is properly an epitome of Christ. Here is presented to us the whole range of Christ, from His being with God and being God, unto the point where the

of its gains, its luxuries, or ambitions, so as to feel that he has a stake in its continuance and prosperity, this he is told will be suddenly and rudely broken up by the coming again of the Lord. If Christianity be looked at in its course on the earth, this, we are told, will be cut short by the coming of the Lord, resulting from the cry at midnight, "Behold the bridegroom cometh." Men may have other thoughts, and Christians too; but whether we contemplate the world or the Church; the destinies of Israel or the career of the nations; whether it be judgment or deliverance that is looked for—all will be met, and alone met, in its varied aspects, by the coming of the Lord. But the Christian alone, who is watching and waiting, can say, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

"Lord Jesus! come
And take thy people home;
That all thy flock, so scatter'd here,
With thee in glory shall appear.
Lord Jesus come!"

(To be continued.)

angels of God ascend and descend on Him as the Son of man on earth. The whole distance is spanned; while in the interval are unfolded all the great virtues and ways of working of this blessed one. He is the Word with God, and who *was* God. Word signifies the expression, declarative of *mind*; while an act signifies rather an expression declarative of a *purpose*.

"All things were made by him." The acts followed and were effected by Him who was the Word. He is the creator of all things. He had life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." There was no light anywhere else. The light shines in darkness. Wonderful fact! The light is manifested where it is needed, but the darkness did not comprehend it; did not apprehend how appropriate and suited it was to its need. So much is stated as showing the greatness and nature of the Word, and His manifestation to men. And then we are told of a *man* who was sent from God to bear witness of the light; and his name is given to mark

the definiteness of his mission. A man of men is sent to announce that this light is come in order that all might believe through Him. The light does not shine to exhibit itself; but this man (John) is sent to bear witness to it that all might believe. How gracious and blessed! He was not the Light himself; he must not be mistaken for it. The power of the true light is that it lighted every man which cometh into the world. No other could. He not only made man, but man is dependent on Him for light.

Verse 10.—We have Him now as come into the world; but He is unknown. "He came unto his own things and his own people received him not." His rejection is noted; but as many as received Him, to them is given power to become children of God. It was simply owning Him as the only light of men. As many as received Him, received new and distinct blessing from Him; they believed on His name. He is come to bless. Received in faith, He blesses entirely anew. They are born

distinctly declared just as it was on every side—man's ruin and God's love, which had been denied. This is *truth*; and this with the favour, the abundant grace, came by Him. He who is the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared the Father, shown Him out, made Him manifest; so that this only-begotten Son was not only the Word, the verbal expression, but He was the perfect manifestation of God. May we worship as we behold.

Next, we have a summary of John's testimony (verse 19, &c.); the character of the opposition to it; and John's announcement that there was One standing in their midst whom they knew not. Their non-reception of Him is noted.

The place where these things were done, "beyond Jordan" (called Bethany), is striking and significant.

The next day (ver. 29) (we now get into a new day) he, the witness, sees Jesus coming unto him. And now for the public announcement of Him personally. He is, so to speak, presented

of God; not of blood, nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man—in no known or existing way, but entirely of God. Seeing Him in faith was attended with the effectual results of new-birth; and not to see Him thus, was darkness. Then, verse 14, we have Him in *flesh* not only as the light shining; but come as a man among men in the world. But though in flesh, it was not the glory of the flesh that He bore; but the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Now being presented in His true form on earth, John's testimony is again alluded to. (Ver. 19.) He not only proclaims Christ's superiority, but also the effects that have accrued to them who believe. It is no mere man; but of His fulness (whose glory was superior to the glory of the flesh) have we all received, and grace for grace—grace qualifying for still more.

But there is another thing; the law was given by Moses, but by this blessed Man *came* grace and truth, unmerited favour; and yet everything openly and

thus: Behold the Lamb of God, the taker away, or taking away the sin of the world. Then he reverts to his previous testimony, and adds, although I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water; intimating that baptism would declare that they were prepared to meet Him. Again, the instruction given to John about Him was peculiar and distinct, and not gathered from any previous prophecy. "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 baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." We have now an important addition respecting this blessed One. The Holy Ghost, in bodily shape like a dove, abides upon Him. He is owned of God as in His mighty mission, as revealer of the Father, starting with this announcement, that He would take away the sin of the world. Verse 35. Now we have another day; this was

John's last day, or, at least, when his disciples passed from him to Christ. Seeing Jesus walking, he says, Behold the Lamb of God—a term which implied sacrifice on this earth. For this purpose he had previously added what is left out here—"who taketh away the sin of the world." John's two disciples hear him, and they follow Jesus. They hear the testimony and follow this lonely One, God's Lamb on the earth! What a sight! He had no one with Him, but when He heard them following, He turned, and on seeing them said, "What seek ye?" This solitary Stranger might well put such a question to them; and how comprehensive and expressive is their reply! "Where dwellest thou?" I can in no way better express my desire to become acquainted with anyone, than in seeking to be with him in his own abode; and it was no small matter to see and know this wondrous Stranger in His own home. "Come and see," is His ready reply; and so grateful and pleasant is it to them that they remained there that day—it was the tenth hour,

Nathaniel and announces to him, "We have found him whom Moses wrote of and the prophets: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." Nathaniel is doubtful because of the place: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We must take care how we judge of people by the mere circumstances in which they are found, for they may rise quite above them and thus prove their own moral greatness. Nathaniel comes to Jesus, and the Lord anticipates him by disclosing to him not only that His eye had been on him at a moment when he had little thought of it; but that the same eye had discerned all that was in his heart; for the Lord's words immediately impart to Nathaniel the sense that he is *known of Him*. Wonderful charm this and amazing power in binding the heart to Him! convincing it that the One with whom it has to do is Almighty; and not only so, but with the distinct intimation that He ever keeps His eye on His own. Nathaniel is here a sample of the true remnant of Israel. Seen and watched over by their

within two hours of evening, our six o'clock. There is something very touching and significant in this incident. It tells the nature and manner of the Lord's reception to every one who seeks company with Him and His acquaintance; and, therefore, it represents to us the character of the relationship and intimacy which He accords at this moment to His people. The millennial scene is different, when He will be publicly seen as the centre of all blessing. Here He is peculiarly known at home; and it describes to us our place and nearness to Him at this *present time*. It was Andrew who brought Simon, son of Jonas, to Jesus, and he is named Cephas (a stone), which is significant as relating to testimony.

The next day the Lord would go forth into Cana of Galilee, and He finds Philip. The different ways by which souls are led to him is interesting to notice. I suppose the manner of their introduction gives a character to their course. Philip was of the same city as Andrew and Peter. Philip finds

Lord and Messiah but not yet seeing Him, they will mourn for Him as one mourning for his only son, until He reveals Himself to them in His greatness as both God and man, and they exclaim like Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel." To him accordingly the Lord now unfolds His own place in the great millennial day which is henceforth ready to be revealed, the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.

Thus in this chapter are epitomized, as I may say, all the wonderful characteristics of the Blessed One who has come from God to reveal the Father.

Chapter ii.—In this chapter is related how the only-begotten Son, who having spanned the interval between God and man, so that though He was God, the angels of God may henceforth ascend and descend on Him, the Son of man begins or enters on His mission and work on earth. It is detailed to us in this book how He found man and how He dealt with him. The mere fact of

there being a marriage in Cana of Galilee would have had no significance if He had not gone. The mother of Jesus was there. This seems to be His link, or the reason of His being invited with His disciples to the marriage. His mother occupies a prominent place. I apprehend that she represents the Jewish people cognizant of their state, telling Him they have no wine, or rather that the wine was out. Now this marriage scene represents man in his own condition. A wedding is a scene which presents man naturally in his brightest, happiest estate; and with Israel this ought to have been so after a special manner, for they were blessed in the basket and in the store with plenty of corn and wine. Yet here the wine was out and the mother of Jesus feels the need, and looks to Him to supply the deficiency. Man in his own condition is a failure, even when offered of God the richest and fullest natural blessings. He cannot appropriate them, much less retain them. Solomon is a witness, who was raised to the highest natural state both in riches

sign—something to confirm them in it—we reach what man is in a double way; the two branches meet in the one point, a condition truly defective and unhappy—the wine is out!

When the mother of Jesus called His attention to the fact, His reply intimated, "It does not now concern us: my time is not yet come." She, however, understanding that He would act in grace, directs the servants to be obedient. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." The Jews had there six water-pots of stone for purifying; I suppose with reference to the Red Heifer. The Lord uses these vessels to communicate the good wine. The good wine will flow from purification. Man is a failure in his condition; but the Lord, while seeing the utter and hopeless failure of man to repair his own condition—for if the wine is out, if there be a cloud in the brightest moment, in the moment when he concentrates his utmost—what must there be at other times? But the Lord, while seeing it, shows here anti-cipatively, how He will repair all. He

and wisdom (not one apart from the other), which many would plead as an excuse for themselves; but he had plenty of wisdom and plenty of means to effect any ends he might devise. And what then? Did he arrive at happiness? Was the wine never exhausted with him? Did he not own and write that all his efforts to reach anything securely happy were in vain? Nay, that it was not only vanity but vexation of spirit? Surely *his* wine was out. Man himself is oppressed with a sense of a coming cloud in his brightest moment. The more beautiful anything is, the more it suggests the sorrow connected with it; because it will, it must, fade away. The Lord is here present to see and understand man in his own condition, his sun going down at noon-day, the sense of need breaking in and checking, instead of the fulness of supply sustaining, the hour and season of human happiness. Whether we look at man without revelation consummated in philosophy as its reformation, and still seeking wisdom, or at the Jew with revelation seeking a

will bring the new and the better wine through water of purification, and thus give on the earth full and established happiness, in the great millennial day.

The next great subject in this chapter commences with verse 13. The Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There he sees man, even the favoured people of God, in relation to God. He had seen and been a witness to man's failure as to his own condition; and now the Jew, in his relation toward God, is a scandal. God's name, through the temple which exemplified Him on earth, instead of being honoured, was used to subserve the selfish interests of man. His house was a den of thieves. As we know, whether with the Jew or in Christendom, the name of God is used to promote and secure the selfish and covetous desires of man. The history of religion, divinely introduced, comprises the worst displays of human evil! Could anything be more condemnatory to man than that in his relation to God, and the more light granted him, he exposed

the evil workings of his nature more than elsewhere: the house of God a den of thieves! Jesus maintains not only the honour of God—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"—but He will repair all, bring in all new. Destroy this temple, and I will rear it up in three days; but He spake of the temple of His body. Jesus now knows all. He commits not Himself to any. He knows what is in man. Man is found out to be a failure as to his own condition, and a scandal in his relation toward God. He will repair all, but He will in no wise commit Himself unto that which He knows is so wanting and worthless.

(To be continued, D. V.)

THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

(Continued from page 160.)

In the order of Scripture, which, in the prosecution of my subject, I have proposed to make the order of my re-

is only, I imagine, an apparent discrepancy. Here it is said there shall be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." While in chapter xvii. it is said, "They did eat, they drank, they married wives and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom," &c. How can any thoughtful person fail to see (whatever he may imagine it will issue in) in these descriptions a picture of the present condition of this country and of the whole of (what is called) the civilized world? Was there ever a period in which men universally were so set upon material improvement, and enjoyment, and luxury, and advancement of all that ministers to social and personal aggrandizement? And was there ever a period in which men's

marks, the next passage which presents its testimony in the gospels to the coming again of the Lord, is Luke xxi.

In this chapter we get "Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." That is, the Jews and their land will not be delivered from the oppression of the nations by whom they have been subjugated, ever since the Babylonian conquest, until the last form of Gentile power will be destroyed by "the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Precursory signs are given, and encouragement is thus held forth to those who will be called to pass through that day to see the blessedness of Messiah's reign and the rule of God, when the domination of oppressing earthly power shall for ever be done away. "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." The condition of things in the world, as described in this chapter, and that which has been noticed in chapter xvii., may, at first sight, seem to be at variance, but it

minds were so fevered with anxiety and dread lest some event should suddenly turn up—they know not what—to threaten or destroy its continuance? There they must be left while we listen to the words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Ver. 33—36.)

It is plain that Israel's redemption is here to be the special result of the coming of the Lord, which will issue in the establishment of the reign of God in the hands of the Son of man. It is also plain that it is the "day" that in these closing verses is warned against. But what is it that delivers morally

from that day, if it be not a heart to listen to the injunctions here presented?

But we come now (in John xiv.) to view the return of the Lord Jesus in an entirely different aspect from that in which it has been presented in the scriptures that have hitherto been considered. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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." (Chap. xiv. 1—3.) Here the coming again of the Lord, as has been already observed, is presented to the believer in all its brightness as the object of unclouded hope. The form of its announcement is that of a spontaneous promise and assurance on the part of the Lord in order to soothe the sorrow and sustain the expectations of his disciples whose hearts were saddened and in grief at the anticipation of His departure from them.

is not now the call of a people to repentance in the expectation of a long-promised Messiah, or the announcement of a kingdom, which in His person would be set up. The only mention by Him of the kingdom is to announce the truth that a man must be born again—born of God, in truth—in order to see or to enter into it. And that this might be in accordance with man's condition and the exigency of God's holiness, it is declared that, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Thus deeply must be laid the foundations of man's restoration to God. Consequently those who are in connection with Christ in this gospel, are declared to be in connection with Him as sons of God: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become [or privilege to be] the sons of God." And as he was manifested as the eternal life, so that which was directly received from Him, in the reception of Himself, was eternal life. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." "For as the

This is in harmony with the character of the gospel. In the Gospel of John our Lord comes before us at once in His divine character as the only-begotten Son of God. Hence, all dispensational relations between Him and the people amongst whom He was manifested, which have more or less prominence in the other gospels, in this are seen to fade away and disappear. Here he is shewn to be (however veiled in human form) the eternal Creator of all things, who in the beginning [before creation had a beginning—before the earth, or sun, or moon, or stars, or angels of God, existed] was with God, and was God. It was in this character, as John's gospel shews, that He was present with men. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"—pitched His tent with us. And the glory that was manifested in Him—so dwelling with men—was the glory of an only-begotten Son with a Father—"full of GRACE and TRUTH." Hence, He is presented as "in the world," and the distinctions of Jew and Gentile are comparatively lost. It

Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth; even so the Son quickeneth [giveth life to] whom he will." Hence, on His anticipated departure from His disciples, He does not speak to them of the ruin of the temple, or of wars and famines and pestilences; of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and the array of sorrows that lined on either hand the long vista of ages through which alone the kingdom could be looked forward to in its establishment. But as He that knew "that he came from God and went to God," He opens to His disciples directly, and as none other could, the *home* from whence He came, and to which He was now about to return. In a word, He declares to them that His home—the "Father's house"—should no longer be His alone, but theirs also: and theirs in the same relationship as Himself to the Father, whom He came into the world especially to reveal.

He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Whatever God at any time

had been to those that trusted in Him, that He had been to their faith. "No man hath seen God at any time." His revelation of Himself from the beginning, from Abel downward, had been to faith. But on that account was His mercy, His truth, His compassion, His care, His sustainment, His access to the soul, the heart's repose in Him—all that He was as God—less true, or less real? No. And now the Lord Himself was about to become the object of their *faith* also. But would His love to them on that account be less real? Would His power to sustain them be diminished? Would His interest in them decay? or His character, as they had known Him, be changed?" Far otherwise. It was of this same blessed One, presented to the faith of succeeding ages, that our apostle, afterward in his epistle, thus speaks: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And he adds, "These things write we unto you,

our redemption, by dying in our place, and has returned thither again, tells us that, *to us*, that unseen world will disclose only the many mansions, or abodes, which mark the amplitude of His Father's house. So that when I think of heaven and of being in the presence of God, it is not with some vague notion of vastness, or brightness, or dazzling thoughts of glory, but of being at home with God, and with Christ, whose infinite love will bring me there, and with all God's children, for whom the fatherhood of God has provided a home worthy of His greatness and His heavenly grace; and who, as a loving Father, will delight to have His family in happiness around Him, and in the glory where He dwells. This brings the greater rest to the soul—the rest of calm expectancy—that it is the *home* of Christ, the home which He, in love, for a season left to be with man in his home and his sorrows, and to which He did but return again when He left this world. In speaking of the Father's house, He describes no unknown, unfamiliar place to Him.

that your joy may be full." It was not a mere mitigation of their sorrow that the Lord presents in His wondrous living words. It was the spring, as we see, of the fulness of joy: and it teaches us as nothing else can how our hearts should estimate a written Christ, and how important it is that they should be filled with thoughts of Him.

"In my Father's house are many abodes: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." I want to think rightly of that world to which I am going—the world where I shall be brought into immediate contact with the things that are unseen and that are eternal. I want to have true and right thoughts of God, whose presence will, in a little while, absorb every faculty of my being. I want to know how Christ thinks of me now, and how He will meet me when He comes again, and what will be my eternal place and portion with Him whom I have loved and trusted here in this sinful and dying world. Well! He who came down from heaven to accomplish

And His occupation now in heaven He declares is that of preparing a place for us, the place of sons, in His Father's house. It is plain that we are here so far away from all earthly events and circumstances that might be affected by the coming of the Lord, that they are entirely overlooked, and treated as if they were non-existent. He comes to His disciples to take them out of the world to be with Himself. He adds, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Their leaving this world would be to them but leaving their own home and circumstances of sorrow to rejoin Him in His home of blessedness and glory. And His promise is that He will come for them Himself in order to bring them there. Thus do we see how entirely the thoughts of the Lord span the interval, which we think so wide, between the time of His departure and the time of His coming again. He does not speak of death, nor of their departing to be with Him, but of His own coming

again, which will be the accomplishment of God's counsels in the Captain of salvation, having been made perfect through sufferings, that He might bring "many sons to glory." How wonderful is it that this is still the true position of believers—the position that links them with the first disciples and earliest Christians, and enables them to appropriate to themselves Christ's words of encouragement and hope to His sorrowing disciples! But it is so. For we are set by the very truth of the gospel "to wait for God's Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."

We pass now, by means of the stream of revelation, into entirely different scenes. In Acts i. our Lord is risen from the dead, and is again in intercourse with the men of Galilee. In perfect accordance with these circumstances and associations, we find Him no longer speaking of the Father's house and His coming to bring His disciples there; but His communications to them

complement of the things which they had so lately heard from their divine Master pertaining to the kingdom of God. "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Ver. 10, 11.)

In Acts iii. we have the witness of the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Peter to this same event. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Ver. 19—21.) The import of this statement is too plain to be misunderstood. The coming again of the Lord

now, during the forty days He is seen by them, are "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." But there is no disorder in this. There is no contradiction in it. The Acts, we must remember, are a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, and there we have found the Lord directing the expectations of His followers to His coming again to establish the kingdom, or rule, of God. While here, as risen from the dead and among them again, He takes up the subject where it was broken off by His death.

Intermediately, it is true, there were other things in the counsels of God to be accomplished before the restoration again of the kingdom to Israel; and other services to be rendered by the apostles before they would enter on the authority and the rewards of the kingdom. Still it is plain that the import of the words of the two men that stood by them in white apparel, while the disciples stood gazing up into heaven after their ascended Lord, whom a cloud had received out of their sight, was to connect their expectations with the ac-

as here presented is restricted in its bearing upon Israel's hopes, and will be accomplished on Israel's repentance. "Even unto this day," says the apostle, "when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it [i.e., their heart] shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away." These "times of refreshing" will come by the presence of the Lord, and especially by His presence amongst His ancient people. To them especially pertained the bright testimony of the prophets concerning the blessings of Messiah's reign; and in their midst these "times of restitution of all things" will run their happy course: however the overflowing cup of Israel's blessing will extend to the other nations then existing upon earth.

I do not stay to prove that Peter's testimony here to Israel relates especially to their earthly blessing. This will be best proved by carefully reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. For of these "times of restitution of all things," he declares that "God hath

spoken by all his holy prophets since the world began." But this testimony, bright and happy as it is that indicates the blessing, and peace, and glory flowing from Christ's presence upon earth, does not belong to our present subject.

In Acts x. 42 there is a latent, but solemn testimony concerning the coming of the Lord which was attached to the very preaching of Christ in apostolic days. I but adduce the passage, which needs not a comment. Peter, in his address to Cornelius, says, "He (God) commanded us to preach unto the people that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." All, but infidels, believe that Christ, at the end of the world—at the last day—will judge *the dead*. But who believes in His coming to judge the living? Albeit Scripture declares, "Behold the judge standeth before the door!"

There is also a similar declaration by the Apostle Paul addressed explicitly to Gentiles—a declaration which in its solemn import will not allow the world

"THE SONG OF SOLOMON."

[I send you a brief paper on this interesting book of Scripture. It may differ in its character from your ordinary communications, but I trust it may not on that account be uninteresting or useless to your readers.]

It is exceedingly important in this day for Christians to have their minds firmly established in the principle of the entirely human and at the same time absolutely divine character of the Scriptures. The books of Scripture, like all other books, are writings which are subject to the laws of human language, and, like them, are the communications of thought through an absolutely human medium. The peculiarities of mind and of human character, and style too, stand out as distinctly in the various writings of the books of Scripture as they would do if there were no such thing as inspiration connected with them. This is the case when the form of the writing is that of historic narration, or in the didactic portions of the Scriptures. But it is more especially manifest when it takes

to think that there are no retributive consequences connected with its rejection of Christ—or that because He has been once got rid of out of the world, He will never come to trouble it with His presence again. No; the apostle says, "God now commands all men everywhere 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." (Acts xvii. 31.) This is not the judgment of the dead. The term employed fixes it to the world of living men. It is this habitable earth that Christ is coming back to judge. The brightest hope of the Christian—Christ's coming again and presence—is the world's greatest terror! It must needs be so. For every knee must bow to Him. But how bow to One whose love has been despised, and whose authority is spurned? But who must now be met, clothed with infinite almighty power?

(To be continued.)

the mould of poetry, and language is subjected to the artificial requisitions of versification, which is the case to a great extent in the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament, as in the Book of Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, &c. Nevertheless the divine thought is as absolutely conveyed as if it were subject to none of these conditions; if indeed an unconditioned mode of conveyance of the divine mind to man generally as a revelation could be conceived.

This principle is perhaps more perfectly illustrated in the structure and character of the elaborate composition of "The Song of Songs," than in any other book of the Old Testament:—in which only, and not in the New, the element of poetry is found. If this be laid hold of clearly it will go far toward establishing the ground on which it is to be interpreted as a divine communication.

These true "Idyls of a King" would not have found their place in the canon of Scripture, and thus have become the vehicle of delight and edification to the

godly in every age, if they had not been the communication of the divine thought submitting itself to the poetic and idyllic form. And yet it is plain that if this writing had come down to us apart from the books of Scripture, as some fragment gathered from the wrecks of a former age, it would, indeed, have been admired as a poem for its vividness and ornate beauty, but it would not have produced the thought that there was anything beyond the delectation of the reader in its design. In a word, it would have been to us but a *pastoral*; distinguished indeed from all other pastorals by the chaste and simple dignity of its loves, and the freshness and sparkling beauty of the scenes in nature which it depicts, and the perfectness and purity of every emblem and of every figure that is laid under contribution for its embellishment.

As to its form, it is the passionate expression of conjugal affections that have never known a cloud and never experienced a chill, combined with the tranquillity and attractive freedom of

element—which breaks away from the luxuries of a palace and the scenes of the crowded city, and goes back in thought to the simpler life of patriarchal times, if not to the scenes of enjoyment and of holy love in Paradise itself, before sin had defiled the bowers of Eden. Thence the writer seems to gather the primeval elements of human happiness and to weave them together in the texture of his song. Justly has it been said that, "The tradition of a Paradise is the germ of poetry." And what poetry like that of holy writ, which the Spirit of God has consecrated to His use!

But that which awakens the delight and wonder of the soul is that God should take up these elements, and in this form, and through these tastes, should convey His perfect thoughts to us! The medium of their conveyance in the book before us is pre-eminently human, and yet the thoughts conveyed are perfectly and absolutely divine.

From the religious affections which the perusal of this divine poem—as I

rural scenes. It combines, indeed, the luxuries of a palace with the purer taste and more quiet enjoyment that attaches to the scenes of nature, and develops itself in the tranquil homes of rustic life. There are the orchard, the garden, the vineyard, the hill side, the flowing streams, the flowers, the singing of birds, the flocks, the shepherds' tents, the freshness of spring, the fruits of autumn. What inartificial freshness breathes in these lines:—

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away:
For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over—is gone;
The flowers appear on the earth,
The time of the singing is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree hath ripened her green figs;
And the vines—the tender grape—give fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

In such scenes of tranquil beauty can the spirit of the inhabitant of a palace take delight. In poetry the two may be brought together, however they are sundered in actual experience. It tells perhaps of the uncorrupted taste of the writer—for I am speaking of the human

may call it, or series of poems—has so constantly set in motion, perhaps it has seldom struck the mind of devout persons that the name of God does not so much as occur throughout the composition. And amidst the divine enjoyment it has so constantly ministered to the purest minds, perhaps it has been as seldom reflected on that, apart from its mystic meaning, there is not a single divine truth or principle enunciated in it, or a single utterance of piety proper to an individual believer throughout.

Now this, so far from its being used as an objection to its incorporation with the books of Scripture, as it has sometimes been, if rightly viewed, may become a very strong argument in its favour. Being found in the canon of Scripture, it has been assumed, both by Jewish and by Christian writers, to be a presentation under the form of the mutual expressions of conjugal love, of the reciprocations of confidence and affection of a heavenly bridegroom and His bride. But then this is so entirely beneath the surface—its under

and hidden meaning—that had a single expression obtruded itself of a didactic kind, or had there been a single utterance of individual piety directly expressed, it would have destroyed the harmony and divine instruction of the whole. It could no longer have been taken as an illustration of the principle of the apostle's words—"This is a great mystery; but I speak of Christ and the church."* It would then have been individual piety, and no longer a sustained and mystic instruction, which the soul must penetrate, in order to reach the divine element in this book of heavenly purpose. Critics have had no difficulty in discerning the human element, but have lacked the divine intelligence which is necessary for the discernment of that which is divine.

It must be observed, that all the elements of grace, all that there is to attract the heart in his moral beauty,

* I speak only of the principle of its mystic instruction, of which the apostle presents marriage as a type, without entering into the question of a Jewish or a heavenly bride.

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figures with the natural thought and feelings of the heart toward Christ, that they are taken up oftentimes without even the consciousness that they owe their force entirely to their figurative and mystic meaning.

It has not been my purpose to present any interpretation of this book, which perhaps more than any other in Scripture has been commented on, and not without profit, it may be, wherever true spiritual affections have been brought to the task. Mine has been a simpler purpose; having chiefly to do with the human structure of a book, through which the divine thought and inspiration of God have been conveyed to man.

THE HISTORY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER VII.

JOSEPH.

The testimony connected with Joseph properly begins from the time he is made

all that can draw forth affection and confidence and desire toward Christ is presented in the mystic utterances of the bridegroom; while all the worship of the heart, and delight of the soul in Christ, and all the yearnings of spiritual affection toward Him, are exhibited in the ardent responses of love of the mystic bride. So that there is no place for what might be the sentiments of piety suitable to the heart of a godly man and woman, looked at in their individuality, and apart from the purport of presenting a mystic picture of the divine affections that are reciprocated by Christ and His people. To the careless and unspiritual mind, this book has always appeared to have no claim beyond that of an amatory poem, marked by singular grace and dignity and beauty—"an epithalamium," as it has been termed. But those who have looked beneath the surface to its latent meaning, as a book of Scripture, have as invariably found in it the perfection of enjoyment and delight. So interwoven are many of its expressions and

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governor of Egypt; and this event occurred shortly after the death of Isaac. Jacob is now dwelling in the land wherein his father was a stranger. Isaac dies, and Jacob occupies the place of testimony; but before his death, before Jacob is left alone to maintain it, his sons had, in their fearful moral declension, given evidence of their entire unfitness to support it. Their hatred of Joseph drives them to an utter disregard of their father's feelings; their malice must be consummated in spite of all barriers, even divine ones; for their father's love for Joseph only exasperated the evil that it would check. Reuben the eldest may remonstrate, indicating that a spark of conscience remained; but it is in vain. Joseph is sold into Egypt; but this is not all. Genesis xxxvii. details how degraded in every sense Judah had become, though there too the voice of conscience is not yet silenced.

The testimony is now transferred to Egypt in the person of Joseph: after thirteen years of sore and heavy afflictions in which he is disciplined accord-

ing to the will of God for the post he should fill, he is called from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

We shall do well to bear in mind the way and manner of God at this time. The testimony for God had failed in the land of promise. The one whom God would use as His witness, and of whom He testified and forewarned by dreams, his brethren had refused; and not only refused, hating him the more for his dreams, they had determined on his death, and sold him into Egypt; while his father Jacob, who observed these dreams, was nevertheless unable to check the wide-spread iniquity of his children, and thus represents the faithful remnant; true, but unable to stem the torrent of evil. The testimony is thus diverted from its true place by the working of evil in those who should have supported it, and God's vessel is fearlessly and ruthlessly cast out. God, however, in His boundless mercy causes that the fall of Joseph's brethren should be the riches of the world, and His servant after the needed preparation; first a

Isaac and Jacob in supporting the testimony was what first led to the open departure from the line and principles of it, in their children. The children or successors always expose, retributively, as I may say, the dereliction of their heads to whom was committed the truth of God. In Genesis xxxv. we get Esau the son of Isaac setting himself in rule and power in the world independently of God; and in Genesis xxxvii. Judah is presented to us as morally degraded; so that we may say that in both the outward circle and the inward, the declension from their first calling is so great, that there could be no testimony for God; nay, the witness who walked in any power must first separate himself from those who assumed to be such, or rather from the position they occupied. The evil of the children of Jacob has now come to a head; they have sealed their iniquity by putting an end as they supposed to God's chosen vessel and the testimony only lingers in the land.

There is much interesting and important instruction for us in all this.

slave seven years to the captain of the guard, and afterward six years in prison, comes forth to maintain His name and truth—riches to the Gentiles—and in relation to His people who had dishonoured Him in Canaan how much more their fulness. In the land of Egypt, entirely apart from the land that was promised them, God in His unchanging faithfulness continues the testimony, but where evil is allowed He cannot continue it, and when the force of intent and will is to get rid of the witness, the opposition is in reality against Himself. Hence it shews itself in its dire hate of the one chosen of God. There is no room or place for the testimony, when the instrument which God would use to maintain it, is rejected and refused. Thus was the Jew tried and found wanting. They saw no beauty in the only begotten of the Father. With wicked hands they crucified and slew Him. "Now they have no cloak for their sin; they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

The unfaithfulness and feebleness of

It is recorded in order that we may understand the ways of God. God's purpose from the beginning was to declare Himself; and in proportion as He declared Himself, the wondrous fact was established; that man, lost as he was, was an object of His love. God had raised up a testimony to Himself, and the purposes of His grace in Canaan as His own inheritance. While the witnesses walked in any truthfulness of conscience, grace and help were afforded them; so that in spite of many failures, there was still recovery, and they were continued in the place of testimony. The long-suffering of God in the history of testimony is very touching and instructive. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, each respectively had been borne with and restored; but now when the evil of the parents works unchecked in the children, it reaches its height in rejection of the chosen of God; the one whom he had ordained to be chief of the family. The solitary spark of the fear of God found in Reuben, God will respect, and in future mercy to the nation acknowledge; but

He will not continue the testimony where it has been openly refused and rejected. Joseph the future witness must be led through many and deep trials to declare His name in a scene and sphere entirely new and untried. God, let us note, never foregoes His purpose; but when evil arises—departure from the principle on which it is based—in the place where He would testify of it, He turns aside to another place. We have many instances of this principle in Scripture. God's testimony springs up in Babylon when Jerusalem is in the hands of the Assyrian, because of Israel's apostacy. The grace of God in the gospel is carried out unto the ends of the earth when by the murder of Stephen the Jew had formally driven the testimony from the land. The principle is plain, that the testimony which God has set up must continue until He sets it aside; but if those to whom He has committed it prove themselves unworthy of it, He consigns it to other hands; and I believe, as a rule, effects a change of place as to it also.

Let us ponder for a moment and survey how God's testimony is maintained at that period on the earth—a dark age we may say! It was the winter which was maturing His plant for an early and fruitful spring. See Jacob scarcely recovered from his sorrow at the death of Rachel, still only on his way to his father Isaac; and now in his seventeenth year, Joseph is sold into Egypt, and the testimony consequently is transferred thither; for he is the vessel of it chosen of God.

Many and varied are the trials to which he is subjected for thirteen years, whether in the house of Potiphar or in prison, but in each he shines brightly as God's witness, the rebuker of evil and corruption in the one, and the interpreter of God's mind and counsels in the other, himself the sufferer for righteousness' sake in both. What a dignity there is in such a witness, and what an ordeal must such an one be subjected to! Here is one, a slave in the house of the chief captain of the guard, not only resisting temptation,

Certainly the candlestick (not the light but the lamp which should hold the light), was removed from Ephesus, but God's testimony in and through the Church must continue until He Himself sets it aside. I would call attention to this principle, because I think it explains how in the history of the Church God has used a knot or company of saints at their start for testifying of His truth, which, after a time were superseded by another company more earnest and faithful. And so it must be, I am persuaded, to the end; so much so, that I should hold myself ready through His grace to attach myself, and to walk in company with any knot or company of saints who I saw were led of Him, and were empowered by Him to maintain His testimony. May we walk in such self-denying faithfulness, that we shall be ever ready to accompany the most faithful and earnest.

The principle I have dwelt on is distinctly set forth in the history of Joseph. The evil of his brethren was at its height and he is sold into Egypt!

but exposing himself because he resisted it, to the malice of the ungodly, who could not corrupt or turn him aside from his path for God, and is thus a warning voice to the unrestrained evil in that day, if known only to Satan. There is something more than mere testimony here. It is not that the vessel chosen of God can at any time at once and openly assume and present himself as a witness, be he either a Paul or a Luther; but there is a struggling for the very existence of the testimony in the hand of the witness who is called to endure because of the evil which had grown up among the people of God. He must wade through, as I may say, in suffering, all the evil in which he is found, bearing it on himself personally, as if it were all his own or caused by himself, even as it is said of our blessed Lord, of whom Joseph is so marked a type: "He bare our sicknesses and carried our sorrows." Joseph, cast out by his own and as one dead to them, is from that moment ever rising up from the dead, from the depths to which he is reduced,

to the place where he can fully assume and maintain the testimony of God. The steps, slow, measured, and sorrowful by which he wended his way to that position have a voice for us. He first wins the confidence of the captain of the guard who sees that the Lord is with him, and that the Lord made all that he had to prosper in his hand. But though the world can bear God's witness while he contributes to its gain, when in true self-denial and fear of God he rebukes and refuses its unholy allurements, it cannot endure him, and stoops to every malicious device to compass his ruin. Thus after seven years' faithful service, Joseph is cast into prison, and for six years more in this new and sorrowful sphere, he is acknowledged as God's servant. "The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper." Satan outwits himself in driving the witness from place to place. Like as Paul cast into the prison at Philippi there found

ineffectual to resolve the difficulty which has presented itself, when a slave, reckoned as a malefactor, is called forth from prison and all the great and wise ones of the earth are silent and subject while this unknown one, as the witness of God, expounds the purpose of God! How wondrously and beautifully the testimony is raised up and renewed! All man's power and glory are placed in abeyance before the power and word of God in the Hebrew stranger. God as the God of mercy and compassion is declared to the whole world.

Joseph is now governor of Egypt and a witness to the whole world of the goodness of God. Dispenser of blessing and plenty in the time of famine, the wisdom of God which had distinguished him as a witness in humiliation is as pre-eminent in his elevation; and through him the God of Israel is heard of, owned, and feared in many a land, for all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn; and God thus declares Himself and the compassions of His heart through His faithful witness.

the "Macedonian," so here Joseph, cast into prison at the instigation of unsuccessful corruption, not only sets forth in such a sphere what is the power and favour of God, but also is distinguished by Him as possessor of that which, hidden from man, belongs only to God. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" says Joseph to Pharaoh's officers, who are powerless to interpret their own dreams. But Joseph, the witness, has the mind of God, and he can say, "Tell me them, I pray you," and then declares the interpretation of them.

Two years longer he remains in prison, but now his time was come: the ruler of the people sets him free. He had witnessed for God and declared His mind in humiliation. He is now to do so in the court of Pharaoh, and prove that he has the secret of God when all the magicians and wise men of Egypt had failed. Who can adequately portray the scene now transpiring in the court of the then best organized country in the world! All its wisdom and power are at a standstill, and are entirely

And not only to the world at large, to Joseph's father and brethren the mercy and faithfulness of God in a glorious manner are declared. Joseph's dreams must be verified, and the circle which had so failed as to the testimony and rejected the witness, must own him now as lord of all.

It is beside my subject to dwell on the deeply interesting and affecting way in which the lately rejected but now glorious one leads his brethren to estimate their own sin and bloodguiltiness in compassing the death of him now about to be revealed to them as their saviour, inimitable as is the history in its detail; nor can I here trace it as typifying that of the true Joseph in the day of His power. My subject is that of testimony. It was in the ninth year of Joseph's governorship over Egypt that his father joins him. Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of

his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." Jacob had forfeited the place of testimony in Canaan; but still, as true of heart, he is to be blessed now in the *place* to which the testimony is transferred, and in connection with the witness—God's chosen one, whom his sons had rejected. All his blessing now (and he was richly provided for in Goshen) is apart from the land of promise, and in virtue of his connection with Joseph; but with the promise that, though God will chasten His people, He will eventually restore them to their true place and inheritance: He will bring them up again out of Egypt.

Jacob lived seventeen years in the land of Egypt, but now the time is come

association and had no painful reminiscences connected with it. God's counsel has its place in their hearts. Jacob gives the pre-eminence to Joseph; he is to have a double portion in the land, the true seat of testimony. "Moreover (he says), I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow." And when in his closing hours he, by the Spirit of God, unfolds the history of his seed on the earth, Joseph occupies his mind in the fullest and most blessed way, concluding with, "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Wonderful burst of light! Remarkable instance of how God vouchsafes light and knowledge to His people when faithful, though previous unfaithfulness may have reduced them to very painful circumstances, even to a house of bondage.

Jacob dies and Joseph went up to

that he must die. (Gen. xlvii. 29.) His heart clings to the land of promise. In Joseph is his confidence, and to Joseph he looks to separate him from Egypt after death. "Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. And he said, Swear unto me. And he swore unto him." Jacob is sick, nigh unto death; his heart bound more closely than ever to the land. The testimony has revived, but not there, and his dependence is on him in whom it *had* revived—on Joseph, as the minister of God. And in this association of heart and spirit, Jacob is bright and full of divine wisdom. Joseph brings his two sons to him, and Jacob, after rehearsing how God had given to his seed Canaan for an everlasting possession, adopts them as his own—"As Reuben and Simeon shall they be mine." Whenever there is faithfulness to God under any circumstances, there the purpose of God, according to His own will, engages the heart of the faithful. Joseph and Jacob are as full of Canaan and interested about it as if they were living there in the happiest

bury his father. The testimony as we have seen is revived, but the inheritance is only enjoyed in hope. In Canaan *there is a grievous mourning*. Joseph must return into Egypt, and there he survived his father sixty-four years, having lived a hundred and ten years in all. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die, and God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Thus, having set forth the name of God in the earth, and having manifested His grace and forbearance to his own people, Joseph sinks into the tomb, in vigorous faith of the future of Israel, making mention of their exodus, and giving commandment respecting his bones, in hope of a glorious resurrection. God's line of purpose was fully maintained. While the witness submitted to the low estate and humiliating position to which God in His righteousness subjected him, because of the evil of his people who had dishonoured God in the land, but whom God would yet in His longsuffering mercy care for and correct, but never abandon.

POPERY AND PANTHEISM.

Popery knows how to make use of the loosening of men's minds from the authority of Scripture, which is now so extensively going on. Infidelity in every form is only negative in its character. But the human mind is not formed to find a rest in negative conclusions. If the authority of Scripture is undermined as the standard of truth and ground of appeal, Popery stands ready with its traditionary claims as the depositary of truth; while its dogma of infallibility seems to present an anchoring ground to minds that are drifting they know not where. Pantheism and Romanism are equally tolerant of each other. It has been well said that, "Romanism, under cover of mysticism, reserves a place for Pantheism." Pantheism has been used to say, and is now saying aloud, "Inasmuch as the mass of mankind—the herd, high and low—must and will have a dogmatic belief of some sort, and must have an ostentatious worship, Romanism supplies both in a mode that is well adapted to satisfy

the instincts and to meet the prejudices of the unthinking many." Nothing but adherence to the divine word will secure from the one or the other of these evils of the present day, but this will. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10.)

NOTES ON I JOHN II. 12—27.

"I write unto you, children" [not "*little* children," but all saints], "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." It is a settled thing; you are not Christians at all without your sins are forgiven you. The poor jailor wanted salvation and that is what he got. "He cried out, What must I do *to be saved*?" That is what he wanted. If I come to hear the testimony of God, what I want is *to be saved*, to get life. Nicodemus came by night with his questions; the Lord said, "You must be

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born again." "He that is in Christ is a new creation." The jailor did not know what being in Christ meant, but he believed: what is the consequence? He was saved by a work which was accomplished before ever he asked to be saved. If he believed in Christ he was saved; he got eternal life.

There is difficulty now of Christians having peace. Before Christianity became a profession in the world, a Christian was counted and understood to be saved; but now *all* pretend to be Christians, and they who are really so want to know if they are true Christians; whereby the simple fact of redemption is very much lost sight of; viz., that "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." God's judgment is passed already on your sins in Christ. If I look to Christ to be saved, as bearing my sins, His judgment is you have eternal life; that is just as much the judgment of God as if Christ had pronounced it on the great white throne. He knows the value of the work of His Son. *He* is the judge, and not *you*. "I

222 THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

write unto you, little children." He can add a great deal to the little children; but to the fathers he has only one thing to say, "You have known him that is from the beginning." Whatever else it might be it ends all in this, "Known him that is from the beginning," that is Christ. If anything is brought to me that is not Christ, I reject it. If I know a person it is *himself* that I know. I am to know that my sins are forgiven me for His name's sake; but I am to know Him that is from the beginning also. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father."

The apostle distinguishes growth—The fathers have known Christ from the beginning, the true Christ—that guards the soul—knowing him perfectly; no ambiguity, no uncertainty; and all the exercises and *experiences* of the Christian, which are often so much dwelt on, are but the scaffolding of the soul to get at this—"known him that is from the beginning." The young Christian is full of joy, and is thus taken up with himself; whereas the old Christian

speaks less about the joy, but says, "It is Christ Himself possessed that makes me happy." His heart trusts in the Lord. The things of the world, even the things of the Church, do not disturb him; he counts on the love, ever watchful and certain in its eye, and is not afraid at any evil tidings. He knows though heaven and earth were to dissolve or crumble into pieces, and the Church itself (which is impossible), *His throne* remains. There is a steadiness in the man's soul because he knows "Him that is from the beginning," knows a manifested Christ, One whom he hath "looked upon with his eyes, and his hands have handled." The apostle was speaking of a Christ he had known and seen and handled, and which was from the beginning, and says, There is the fathers' character, and he has nothing to add.

How far have your souls found steady rest in Christ? or, how far are they satisfied with Christ? Forsaken of friends are you still satisfied with Him? Or how far are these things that you crave and have to resist? Have you

THE PROMISE OF THE LORD.

Matthew xviii.

It is a point not to be lost sight of in the study or ministry of the divine word that particular passages of Scripture ordinarily mainly depend for their force and bearing and their legitimate application on the connections in which they are found. The force of any given passage may be sought to be practically realized, but it will not be so unless the mind is in accordance with the conditions on which its realization is made to hinge. It is the same in regard to all true advancement in knowledge, as our Lord so plainly shews in His memorable words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Perhaps there is no passage with which my readers are more familiar than verse 20 of this chapter. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Certainly there is not one on which more is made to depend,

done with the world? not as tired of its vanities and weary of its pleasure, but because your souls have found something in Christ that satisfies for all? Is He found such a manifestation of God to your souls that you rest in Him? then you can say, "None of these things move me." The two points to young men and children are—first, that they have overcome the wicked one, the prince of this world; secondly, that they have known the Father through believing in Christ, and have therefore the Spirit of adoption, and no doubt of the Father's love. The young men overcoming the wicked one is connected with their having the word of God abiding in them and overcoming the world; "Love not the world," &c. Then the little children are warned against the seductions of false doctrines, &c.; and he adds, "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."

and consequently the danger is the greater of its being misapplied. It is viewed generally as embodying the fundamental principle which distinguishes, as it is thought, christian from sectarian association. As such it is claimed by those for whom I write as a sort of watchword or summary charter of their special privileges. But it may be asked are there no conditions on which the truth of Christ's presence and power, which are often on the ground of this promise so confidently claimed, made to depend? Or will the mere acknowledgment of it as a dogma ensure its desired results?

In the first place, as an available resource (it can hardly be claimed as the normal characteristic of church association), it is essential that there be the exercise of faith. No divine principle is more certain in its action than this, "According to your faith be it unto you." But there is more than this. It is plain to me that there is the most intimate connection between this central truth of the chapter and all that pre-

cedes and all that follows it. It is indeed the gracious provision of the Lord Jesus in all times for His disciples, provided their moral condition and their position be found to answer to that which it was manifestly intended to meet. That which it presents is a resource for the despised, the consciously weak and dependent; and not a position of vaunting for pride and superciliousness. If any are willing, morally, and in spirit and purpose, to conform to what in this place is so markedly unfolded as the temper and mind of heaven, here is their gracious retreat, where in companionship with their Lord, who was rejected and spit upon by the religionists of the world, they may find the solace of His love, and the sanction of His authority to what they do.

So that whether the disciple of Christ be looked at individually, or considered in regard to his association with others, the one thing above all others that he is called upon to cultivate, is a childlike spirit. For it is plainly to the possessors of this spirit that the Lord pro-

of a little child. This is presented in absolute contrast to the spirit which originated the question of the disciples, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And it is in equal contrast to those emulations which have in every age been the bane of the Church in its earthly course.

And here I may note that before this point of relative greatness in a sphere where heaven's principles have their sway is settled by our Lord, He directs attention to the fact that there is another and a previous question to be considered, namely, that of the conditions on which an entrance to the kingdom of heaven will alone be allowed. That spirit which will alone gain an entrance there is given in sharp and well-defined contrast to that which so universally makes its way in this world, and which men in their self-love are apt to think may avail them in the next as well as this. But no. "Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as

mises His presence where two or three are gathered together in His name.

I know well that, in this hard age, to set people to the study of such a lesson will be deemed by the "wise and prudent" to savour more of childlike simplicity than of the trampling manhood-wisdom that is in universal repute not in the world alone but in that which styles itself the Church. Be it so. Nevertheless the declaration of our Lord and Master remains; "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." It is on this authority therefore I assert that no advancement in knowledge, no clearness of doctrine, no energy or zeal, no laboriousness in service can ever come into competition with this spirit or supersede the necessity of this paramount study. It is not that these characteristics might not develope themselves variously in the disciples who were thus addressed by their Lord and ours, but that the substratum of all, the foundation on which all else was to be built, was this spirit

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Here then I find the Lord Jesus turning men back upon their course (for that is the meaning of the term *converted*) until they reach that temper and spirit, which it may be they have left behind them for many a year, until all their self-sufficiency, and self-consequence, and self-dependence is renounced, and the lowliness, and dependence, and simplicity of purpose of their childhood is regained. To such alone, and to such a spirit, the Lord declares will the gates of admission be opened to that heavenly sphere.

The question here, it must be remembered, is not of the activity of grace which meets a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, but of that condition of moral feeling to which a man must be brought (by grace no doubt), in order to be in unison with the mind of heaven, and to find himself in association with that company which is looking for the perfection of its happiness in the eternal presence of God and Christ in heaven.

Let us remember this then, when we find our admiration going forth, or when disposed to challenge for ourselves the attention and consideration of others, that this is what God and Christ approve—"the meekness of wisdom"—the simplicity of a childlike spirit. We live in a busy, active, pretentious, ambitious age; and in the world through which we are moving we cannot fail to see that what carries it with men is boastful pretension, energy of purpose, and an iron will. In the Church too, where nothing should be seen but the "meekness and gentleness of Christ," we are in danger of the contagion which reigns around, for we are men. But this does not change the temper of heaven nor the temper which heaven approves. It is still on record, for our instruction or correction, as the case may be, that "whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Now it seems to me that we are all greatly lacking in this characteristic of the true disciples of the Lord Jesus

study? How do we handle this living model of what morally we ought to be? Is there any aptness in us to seize upon the one ruling characteristic that this living unconscious instructor embodies in every motion, and every look, and every word? Remember it is not an infant clinging to its mother's breast—the very expression of helplessness and absolute dependence—on which we are called to fix an inquiring gaze. It is a little child, old enough to understand the Saviour's call, and gentle enough to do implicitly His gentle bidding. Here stands our monitor then unconscious of its being set to teach the profoundest lesson that a human heart can learn. And, I ask again, what do we make of it? One thing we may well assure ourselves of, that it is practice and not theory that this child is set to teach. And, let me ask, is there no prevailing characteristic of childhood that is at once discerned by the observant mind, as there are the unmistakable characteristics of old age? If we have not noticed this, it is time we took our

Christ; and, moreover, that it is very little the object of our study and pursuit. Other things are so much more attractive to the mind, and tell so much more immediately and effectively on the natural apprehension, and upon Christians that are walking as men, that this first of all pursuits, in the estimation of Christ, is in danger of being left greatly in the rear. It is in this way, I believe, that we must account for the little progress in truth and knowledge that is made by the majority of Christians, and for the little power that accompanies the possession of truth amongst those who profess and feel themselves to be so much in advance of all others.

Let us look then for a moment—if we can find time for such a contemplation—at this expressive symbol of a true christian temper and spirit. "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." Here stands then this child, placed before us for our instruction by a Master who declares of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." What do we make of this

lessons in the nursery again. Is not a little child the embodiment of a genuine simplicity that is untainted by the guilefulness of art? Is it not the expression of unquestioning candour, and unsuspecting trust, and unambitious aims?

Are we prepared for such lore as a little child can teach? Or are we impatient to push aside our monitor, that we may turn again to the schools of divinity or the halls of science in order to obtain the wisdom which is in far higher estimation in the world, and in the Church, and has a readier currency in both, than attaches to the spirit of a little child? Let us hear on this the decision of Him who places before us this model, and sets us down to study the lessons it would teach: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And in what estimation

this spirit in His followers is held by the Lord Jesus, we further learn from verse 6 of our chapter: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

But here another point arises to our view. "Woe unto *the world* because of offences!" We have already heard from the lips of our Lord what maledictions will fall on those who are guilty of casting stumblingblocks in the path of His believing little ones. But now the scene is changed, and the warning is reversed. It is, Woe unto *the world* because of offences (or stumblingblocks). If the followers of Christ, instead of exhibiting a childlike spirit, are seeking to be great, like the world, they become simply stumblingblocks in the way of the world's reception of Christ. The world is quick to discover the inconsistency between the profession and the conduct of those who profess to be the followers of Christ, but whose claims

into hell fire." The exigency of the followers of a Master who was spit upon in this world and whose path to heavenly glory lay through the ignominy of the cross, is such that sacrifices the most painful must be resolutely encountered, and humiliations the most intense must be willingly met, rather than the eternal issues of their course should be for one moment endangered. And again our Lord turns the attention of His disciples to the little child He had set before them. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Ver. 10.)

There is a deep lesson in this. But it is one that is so simple and natural that we are in the greatest danger of losing its point. It is simply this, that a Christian must take care whenever he meets a little child not to pass it by as an object unworthy of his regard. But it will be said, "This is only a feeling of nature." Be it so. Still it has its action and its reaction on the deepest

are so ill sustained by those who bear His name. The result is that men turn away in disgust from a profession of that which claims to be from heaven, and to represent that which is heavenly, when they see in it only the worst features of the temper of earth, and which bears upon it, as they judge, the marks of hypocrisy to boot. The history of the Church, in every department of it, alas! has afforded but too sad a comment on the words, "Woe to the world because of offences!" and also on those which follow: "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" It is this which gives occasion to the solemn exhortations of verses 8, 9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast

principles by which the christian character is formed. It is in perfect keeping with the spirit and aims of the world that the simplicity and dependence of childhood should be pushed aside. Of course it is a mere incumbrance when its important business and its ambitions are to be pursued. What can childhood contribute when greatness, or glory, or distinction is in view? Ah! what indeed? But to those who are called to disallow these aims it has its instruction and its voice; and we can never too often or too lovingly look upon an object that the world naturally passes by, but of whom it is said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Do we think it a mere expression of sentimental tenderness, designed to touch only a fond mother's heart, when "Jesus said, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them?" No! It is an expression and an action that tells

as directly of the mind of heaven as the mightiest work that Jesus ever wrought. And in the recognition of the moral bearing of the Lord's instructions in this chapter, it is well to remember the place which the natural symbol all through it holds. If there is found in it the disciple that is like a little child, there is no less prominence given to the little child which we are to be like. And the Lord Jesus says, "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The point to which we are next introduced is the practical doctrine of the Church—the Church in its simplest and most gracious elements. All that is brought before us here is the common tie of brotherhood, direct and unlimited and unrestricted intercourse with a Father in heaven, and immediate subjection to an ever present Lord. Such is the Church which in its practical position and working our Lord Jesus thus brings before us. Connected with this there is the gracious, simple, unin-

in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Ver. 19, 20.) Then, lastly, the necessity for the exercise of unlimited forgiveness on the part of the disciples one toward another is insisted on—illustrated by the parable of the two debtors, which runs on to the end of the chapter. And supposing there be seen a dispensational bearing in this parable, it would be a most dangerous mode of dealing with the moral force of our Lord's instructions, if on that ground we should discharge our consciences from the obligation of according to our brethren the measure of unlimited forgiveness, on the score that we *have* received, and do daily receive, unlimited forgiveness from our Father in heaven. But in truth our Lord has bound it upon us in terms from which there is no escape. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Ver. 35.)

Such then, as it appears to me, must be the moral characteristics; such the position; such the simplicity of depen-

cumbered rule for the correction of offences—the internal discipline of the Church. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," &c. (Ver. 15—17.) Then there is presented the solemn assurance of heaven's seal being appended to such a course, so contrasting with man's corruption in his ecclesiastical courts to which in some shape or other Christians generally have been contented to refer: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Next there is opened the special secret of this ecclesiastical power—united dependence and prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, with the promise of His special intervention, whatever the case may be; and also direct and immediate subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together

dence and subjection; such the practical spirit of those who would claim as their fundamental principle "the promise of the Lord," "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Blessed be God! it is a foundation that will not fail wherever there is simplicity enough in two or three—if only two or three—that are content to rest on that and on nothing else. But if assumed only as a dogma it will end in a condition common to every sectarian movement, in which the rule and authority of man has ultimately become supreme, and the blessed rule and authority of Christ has been foregone. D.

THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS

(Concluded from page 192.)

(Titus ii. 11—14.)

It was intended, when the series of papers bearing this title was commenced, to have gone through the sum of the

New Testament witness upon the subject; but the last paper completed only the testimony of the Gospels and the Acts, leaving the large field of the Epistles and the Revelation unentered on. The limit of a very few pages, so far as the present publication is concerned, necessarily *now* leaves this amongst the many lapsed purposes of man's heart, while "the counsel of the Lord it shall stand;" and His truth, amidst all earthly changes, remains unchanged and is eternal.

The statements of this striking passage have their own direct and independent force relative to the hope that is designed by our Lord to animate His people's hearts. But their true bearing can hardly be seized when insulated from the important connections in which they are found. Like every part of revealed truth, the hope of the Lord's coming as presented in Scripture is intended to be pre-eminently practical. The subject may be taken up as an intellectual study, and you may get artistic

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 10—14.)

This is a wonderful summary of the living practical character of Christianity, traced downward from its source, displaying its moral transforming power in men, and issuing in eternal association in glory with Him whose appearing in grace has made salvation ours.

First of all it is stated that the grace of God, which brings salvation to *all men*, has appeared. It is not restrictive in its character, i.e., to Jew or Gentile. The grace is salvation-bringing to all men; and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ it has appeared. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In Him it was embodied and presented; and it brought the salvation to all men, which was needed by all. But the

groupings of its various aspects. In Scripture it is always presented either as stimulating the responsibilities, or encouraging the patience, or animating the expectations, or, as here, forming the character of those who, whatever their relative condition on earth, are redeemed by Christ to have a common home in heaven. It is never given as a picture of the imagination.

The homeliest exhortations as to the conduct of old men and old women, the behaviour that is becoming in young women and young men, and the warning of servants against insolence and filching from their masters—and these all gathered by the gospel from a people whose national characteristic was that of incorrigible lying, and who are described by one of their own poets as "evil beasts and slow-bellies"—these introduce to our attention the wondrous declaration, "That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness

special point here is that as there has been a living personal appearing of the grace, there will also be a living personal appearing of the glory also. Our faith and hope are alike in God, and both are linked with the first and second appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who brought the grace will bring the glory too. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many [the essential basis of salvation]; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation:" [i.e., for final deliverance or glory.]

Next there is presented the power of Christianity in its subjects, as they are viewed in this world intermediate to the reception of the grace and their attainment of the glory. The first necessity of our souls is *salvation*—deliverance from the guilt and condemnation under which we lie as sinners against God. Hence that touching expression of grace, "God so loved the world that he gave his onlybegotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should *not perish*, but have everlasting life." It is the grace

of God that "brings salvation." But grace is transformative of the character also, and conforms in affections and aims to Him by whom it comes. It disciplines the soul in the ways of God. It teaches the denial of all impiety and worldly desires. It emancipates from the domination of the world and its evil principles, by the introduction of the claims of another Lord to the subjection of the soul. Still it is the grace that teaches this, and teaches it on the ground of a necessary conformity to the character of Him in whom the grace has been displayed. "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It teaches us "that we should live soberly [with due restraint as to our own desires], righteously [in uprightness as regards the claims of others], and piously [in all that regards our relationship to God] in this present age." Grace teaches this, because the glory is coming; and our moral habits are to bear witness, both to the one and to the

adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." In 1 Corinthians i. 7, 8 there is a speciality in connection with the possession and exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in responsibility to Christ, that can only be indicated and left. "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Chapter xv. of the same epistle presents it in connection with the resurrection of the believer and the establishment of the kingdom of God and Christ's supremacy. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies

other. They are to bear witness to the grace which has brought us deliverance from all that enslaves the men of this present age; and to the glory which is about to be manifested, which will introduce us to the associations of the age to come: "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I will now only briefly notice some of the passages relating to this blessed hope which, under other circumstances, might have been unfolded in their special connections. In Romans viii. 21—23 it is presented in connection with the redemption of the body from the power of death, and the creation's participation in the believer's glory. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the

under his feet." (Ver. 21—25.) In Philippians it is connected with the obtaining of "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And the apostle says, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Chap. iii. 20, 21.) In Colossians it is the issue in glory of the position in grace which presents us as risen with Christ. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: 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. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Chap. iii. 1—4.) In Thessalonians its various aspects are interwoven with the whole position of the Christian from the first hour of his

conversion to God, through every responsibility and every trial until that solemn moment is reached, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess. i. 7—10.) The first chapter of the First Epistle presents this hope in connection with the preaching and reception of the gospel. "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (Ver. 9, 10.) Chapter ii. connects it

velation of (what is now technically called) "the rapture of the saints." "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (Ver. 13—18.) Chapter v. gives the believer's moral position in the world in the prospect of "the day of the Lord," which will bring judgment upon the world. The whole

with the final joy of uninterrupted fellowship between the apostle and his beloved converts. "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (Ver. 17—20.) Chapter iii. gives the object and issue of all pastoral anxiety and labour on account of the sheep of Christ. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (Ver. 12, 13.) Chapter iv. presents this hope in connection with sorrow on account of departed friends, and brings in the special re-

passage should be read, concluding with verse 23. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Second Epistle presents the righteous judgment of God upon the enemies of the gospel, and glory to those who have believed. This is specially in connection with the kingdom of God, as well as the truth of the First Epistle. This is seen in the First Epistle, chapter ii. 12. "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory;" and also in the Second Epistle, chapter i. 5. "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." Chapter ii. of the Second Epistle unfolds the apostasy and the man of sin, and the delusions of the last days of the history of Christianity on earth, until "that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Ver. 8.)

In 1 Timothy vi. 13 it is presented in connection with a good confession and its responsibilities. "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ver. 13, 14.)

The rest I must pass over, and close with the remark that the Book of Revelation begins with the declaration "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Chap. i. 7.) And it closes with the declaration, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." And "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

So full, so rich, is the divine testimony concerning "that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great

God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," though that fulness has been but imperfectly sketched in the passages adduced. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ."

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Editor has seen reason, the grounds of which it is not important here to state, for discontinuing the publication of the present work. If it should be resumed in another form, due notice will be given.

8, *Belle Vue, Clifton*,
July, 1866.