

BIBLE HERALD 1878

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Herald 1878, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

69 Chapters

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The Blessing and the Blesser

Luke 17:11-49.

My object in directing your attention to this passage of Scripture is to bring before you the three conditions of soul, or rather that which answers to the three conditions of soul we find depicted here, This Scripture, and what it teaches, is suited to all; it is suited to the most advanced child of God, and suited to the one on whom the light of the truth of God is only just breaking, for we have here the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what is like this for the heart? Supposing you were challenged in the street as to the greatest favor bestowed upon you, you could at once say, the most wonderful favor, the greatest blessing that could be conferred, is that God should draw aside the veil from His glory above and give to your soul the personal known revelation of Christ in Heaven!

It is Christ, then, in all His blessedness that we have shown to us in this short narrative. The Lord Jesus is approaching the cross, knowing what is before Him, knowing that the enmity of man led on by Satan will end in this—still His face is set as a flint to go up to Jerusalem. On His way to Jerusalem, on His way to the cross, he passed through Samaria and Galilee. Mark it! Every word of Scripture has its own deep meaning. What was Samaria? Samaria was the place of mixed worship! I need not say that even in this day there is that which approaches Samaritan worship. Galilee was the place of complete rejection): we find the Pharisees saying to Nicodemus, “Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.” But Jesus, God’s own beloved Son, on His way to the Cross, passes through these two despised districts, and you will find, in the end of Matthew’s Gospel, that after his resurrection He is only to be found at Galilee.

“As He entered into a certain village there met Him ten men that were lepers” (Luke 17:11-20). I would have you remark who this was that was thus walking this earth in tender grace and pity, namely, the one who in His own person was the Christ, “over all, God blessed forever,” the Creator by whom and for whom all things were created. The everlasting, the blessed Son of God was here in the form of a man. I want you to go back one moment in your hearts to the morning of creation, before sin had brought its withering blight upon this world. I want you to think of the moment when God looked on Adam as he came fresh from His own hands, looked on the partner He had formed for him, and could see these creatures of His own making without a blemish, and could pronounce them “very good.”

The one who walked this earth in lowly love was the one who looked on Adam in Eden as He had created him, perfect; and now how things have changed! He goes to this village and is met by whom Ten children of this very Adam, covered over with a disease, loathsome and incurable, which could only be met by the direct power and interposition of the living God. Let the light of the morning of creation fall on this circumstance, and think what He must have felt! Oh there is nothing so delivers us from self as meditating upon what He passed through in this world; getting to see things as He saw them, to feel things as He felt them, to measure things as He measured them. Think what He, the Creator, must have felt as He gazed on these men in all their disease, misery,

and defilement— “ten lepers!” Why do you think it speaks of ten and not of nine or eleven? Surely it has its own blessed solemn instruction, specially for people who have been characterized as being a legal people. When God gave from Sinai the measure of His claim from man, how many commandments did He give? Ten. Ten was the number that expressed the measure of God’s claim from man when he stood before Him on the ground of his own righteousness. In Matthew 25, the kingdom of heaven is compared to ten virgins. In Numbers 14:22, the people tempted the Lord ten times. That is, the people who professed to stand before God in their own righteousness tempted Him “ten times.” I have no doubt “ten” is the number that represents the measure of man’s responsibility before God, on which ground man has absolutely failed, and that is what you and I must be brought to own.

Blessing is now no longer proposed to the sinner on the ground of what he can be for God; but is freely ministered by the hand of Christ to all who cast themselves on Him.

In this narrative of the ten lepers we have not only blessing, but degrees of blessing. The moment a soul has entered the pathway of blessing, Satan’s one desire then is to lead that soul to be content with a small measure of blessing. I ask you, what are you going in for? A small measure of blessing content with knowing you are delivered from hell and that heaven will be yours at the last? or are you going in for the greatest measure of blessing God can bestow upon you now in this world? I answer for my blessed Master; I tell you affectionately from Him there is nothing will so delight His heart as to lead you into the fullest blessing you can possibly enjoy on earth. You had a bright yesterday, you have had a brighter today, do not stop at that, go in for having a still brighter tomorrow.

I press upon you there are degrees of blessing, there are stages in that pathway which ends in eternal glory.

Verse 13. There was one fine characteristic about these ten men in their misery, and it was this, they knew what their condition was, and fully owned it. And has there not come a moment in your history when Divine light broke in on your soul, and what was its first effect? It manifested your condition, your sins, your utter unsuitableness for God. But then there is much more than this:

“Jesus the Lord our night broke through

And gave us light divine.”

What does this light from the glory, this “Gospel of the glory of Christ” mean? It is a message from God in the glory, proposing to contribute to man from the glory, but setting aside in man all that is unsuitable to the glory. Then if all that is unsuitable to the glory of God must go, I say, both root and branch must go, for everything in me is unsuitable to the glory, therefore everything must go; and faith can say more; faith can say everything is gone. Where? In the cross and grave of Christ! That is what faith accepts on God’s testimony.

“And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Go back in the memory of your souls and look at these ten men in their misery, picture them, ten lepers, and this blessed Son of God, and, who breaks the silence? Here are ten men in their misery meeting Jesus, and Jesus meeting these ten men. They break the silence, and what is the first word that falls from their lips? Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! not God merely, but Saviour. Do you not think the Lord

had a joy in hearing it? I believe He had a twofold joy on earth, one which was never interrupted, the joy He had as a dependent man in His Father, and the other which was often interrupted by proud independent man. He came freighted with all that could meet man's need for time and eternity, and the heart of man was closed against him, but wherever He met a heart to whom He could communicate the blessing, He had a joy in doing it, which He never could have had in glory.

I think it is beautiful to see these lepers owning their need of mercy, and the moment you own your need of mercy you own you have not one particle of claim to the favor of God; it is all pure grace.

In this short narrative you find three associations. 1st, the association of evil; 2nd, the association of blessing, and 3rd, the association with the Blessor, which is the highest character of blessing that can possibly be known on earth or in heaven either.

These ten men had been living in the same common association of evil, and now pass by the same pathway, the same channel from the association of evil to the association of blessing. You ask, perhaps, is there one way, one channel—what is it? Define it! I will in a few words. It is the obedience of faith! Faith is always obedient, unbelief is always disobedient. It is faith's obedience to the word of God that takes a soul out of the association of evil into the association of blessing.

“Go show yourselves unto the priests,” the Lord said to them; it was only the priest in Israel who could pronounce upon the leper in his defilement and in his cleansing, hence it would have been of no use to go and show themselves to the priest, unless they believed that some change would take place, that the work of cleansing would, in fact, set in; therefore it was faith only in the word of the Lord that could take these men to the priest. They did not look at themselves, they did not reason from what they were to what they should be when they got to the priest, they obeyed the word of the Lord, and as they went they were cleansed. Faith's obedience brought them to this point of being cleansed. What a moment in their history! When they knew they had passed from uncleanness, defilement, and unfitness for the presence of God, into a condition in which they could stand before Him, and this, simply and solely, through “the obedience of faith.”

You must own there was a visible break between the two conditions—First, they were partakers of one common lot of misery, and now by “the obedience of faith” they all passed into one common lot of blessing from the hand of Christ.

And now let me ask you, is not that where souls often stop; knowing the stains of sin have been washed away by the blood of Christ, and that their title is clear to everlasting glory? You know it is. We get one brilliant exception to the rule here. It is not often that you get a whole congregation to rise up and say, “Whatever our past has been, we go on from this day forward, not content to have the blessing alone, but to be found with the Blessor also;” you do, however, get one here and there to say this.

There was only one here out of ten—one solitary exception—and what did he do? “He turned back.” What did he turn his back on? On formalism, on ceremonialism, on Judaism about to be judged, on all that was empty, all that was hollow, all that was pharisaical and unsatisfying to His soul. And what did he turn his face to? To a living Christ! Do you think it was an easy thing for him? I believe that man never had such a conflict before, and never had such an one after. Do you think Satan let him go easily? There were nine against one. No doubt they opposed him. No doubt they said to him, Why go back? why not go on with us to the priest, is it not Jehovah's priest? No,

he seems to say, "I must turn even from Jehovah's priest to the one who has done all for me, to the one that claims me. I have got the blessing, but I must have the Blessor!" There is an energy of faith about the man that clings to the one who has blessed him. It is lovely—and oh, I ask you, are you content with anything short of this? There are none who are in greater danger of not having Christ personally before the heart than ourselves, we who have been so blessed by Him. I urge upon you, beloved friends, this question, How much have you got Christ Himself before your hearts? How much did you, when you broke with everything else besides, get Christ personally for your hearts, and how much now?

This man was out and out for Christ, there was no half-heartedness about him. I have the gift, he says, but I must have the giver, and so he turned back to Him. He was not ashamed to confess Him either. "With a loud voice he glorified God." He is a beautiful illustration of Romans 10:10—"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

What is his next act? He fell down, at His feet! That was the very consummation of all blessing. He has parted with his companions in blessing, and he is found now in company with the Blessor. It is beautiful to see how the feet of Jesus are brought before us in Luke. In the 7th of Luke we get a sinner standing at His feet. In the 10th we get a saint sitting at His feet; and here we get a cleansed man worshipping at His feet.

Tell me, what do you consider the unparalleled moment in a Christian's history as he travels through this world? It is when he gets to His feet, worshipping. There is nothing like it! worshipping at the feet of Jesus Not coming to ask anything, not coming to solicit anything, but coming to give something! This man had been a recipient from Christ, and now he comes to give to Christ. I believe thanksgiving is a part of worship. Coming to thank Him for what He has done, coming to praise Him for the deliverance He has wrought out; but the highest note of worship is when the soul finds its delight in adoring the one who has done it all, when you lose sight of your own blessing even, and are lost in adoration of the Blessor,

"Lost in wonder, love, and praise!"

Are you so lost?—everything else gone from your view, save the Son of God, the matchless, the blessed One, and you at His feet, you at His feet! Oh, I urge you, get there, get there. The devil will stop you if he can, he will let you have anything rather than the company of the Son of God, let you have service for Him, visiting the poor, anything or everything to prevent you from getting to His feet. Do not let him hinder you from getting to those blessed feet. Those feet today are not the same as they were on that day; then they were whole, today they have the marks of the nails, today they are wounded feet, pierced feet—pierced for you, for me.

"But," you say, "He was in the world then, He is in heaven today. We cannot fall at His feet and know what it is to be in His presence as the leper did." I say you can—by faith you can. To whom has He secured the fact of His own veritable presence? To those who are gathered together in His name—"there am I in the midst," He says.

Distinguish, I pray you, between the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church and the presence of Christ in the midst of those gathered in His name. Wait on the Lord in the Spirit, do not wait on the Spirit, or you will have nothing but weakness in your midst. Christ has said, "Where two or three

are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.” And that which is the mark of Christianity is this—that when we gather together we have an invisible Christ in our midst, unseen to mortal eye; but He is there: and, as one has well said, “Christ is the Object, and the Holy Ghost is the Agent.” There is blessed power and sure guidance when, counting on the Holy Ghost, you have Christ Himself before the soul.

I ask you, is there anything else to compare with it, that men and women, once lepers, once defiled, can come, gathered to Himself, sheltered by His name, Himself in their midst, to worship and adore, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the one who has brought them there, to lose themselves in wonder, love, and praise.

First then, we have had, in these degrees of blessing, the passage out of the association of evil, then the entrance into the association of blessing, and now we have the intense personal association with Him who is in our midst—the Blessor.

Is there apprehension in your soul to seize His presence? It is by the Holy Ghost I do it. I am dependent on the Holy Ghost for it. I may have it at the beginning of a meeting, and lose it at the end, because I am dependent on the Holy Ghost to keep it up in my soul. I am to be always in the Spirit.

This man, once a leper and a stranger, returned because he had been blessed to give something to the Blessor. I pray you, be you bright exceptions to what we have around us in Christendom. Assembled round His blessed person, let Him have from your hearts the tribute of praise, of worship, of loving adoration and thanksgiving, giving glory to His name. What I covet earnestly for you—the one solitary wish of my heart for you—is that you may be found at His blessed feet as worshippers.

Have You Met God?

I desire to press the fact that we all have to do with God. It is a thing we cannot escape. Naturally we would escape it if we could, and how deeply-seated is the shrinking from facing the truth of it in every one of us.

There is not one of us but would naturally put off the meeting God to as distant a date as possible. So long as we know Him not we keep away from Him, and forget that there is a moment coming when we shall give account to Him.

And how everything around us helps to strengthen this forgetfulness in us! Even the necessary cares of this life crowding in upon the mind, and demanding immediate and daily attention, leave but little time for reflection, even if desired; our fellowmen equally careless, help us further away from God, and Satan is busy to blind us to all that is of real importance to us, and a bad conscience, along with complete distrust of God, all tend to keep us away from Him and lead us to seek our enjoyment here. I speak of what is natural to us all.

But still, there stands the fact regarding all men without exception, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:11,12). Sooner or later God must be met, and all be perfectly manifested before Him.

What a solemn time will that be for those who have refused to bow to God now, but who have to appear before Him in the day of judgment! Carelessness will have no place then! Excuses will not be thought of! All the fine distinctions which man has made between sin and sinners will be fled, and man will have to answer to Him whose holiness he cannot fathom. How solemn!

This being God's declared truth that everyone shall give account to Him, how sadly solemn would it have been for all of us had not God Himself anticipated that day of judgment, and considered man's unfitness to stand before the throne! David, in Psalms 130:3, seemed to feel this when he said, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And I desire to press this, that it is impossible for man to stand when God judges. Again, David felt this when in Psalms 143:2, he says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," i.e., if God judges man there is but one result, viz., condemnation; who and what is man to answer to God? Supposing that God took you to task about one single sin, could you answer to Him? And what are God's thoughts of sin? Many a thing seems small to us, but what is it with God? e.g., "the thought of foolishness" may be unheeded by us, but with God it "is sin," Proverbs 24:9. How important I feel it to be that we should get the sense of its being impossible for us to stand in judgment with God, for if a person gets the sense of this it makes him turn from self to be wholly dependent on Christ, who alone could bear the judgment.

I have said our hearts naturally shrink from facing the fact of our "having to do with God," but I also feel how this clings to many a soul who has been really converted. I am convinced it is no uncommon state of soul to find those in who have been really born again and believed in Christ,

viz., they have not consciously met God. I do not say that the person has not met Christ and believed in Him as the Saviour, nor do I say that the work of Christ has not been relied on as the only ground of salvation, but there is a failing to see that that same Saviour is the Son of God. There is a fleeing to Christ for refuge, but a failing to realize that it is God's refuge provided by Him in the goodness of His heart. Hence, weakness—want of progress in souls—the question of salvation never finally settled in the mind, and how can it be settled if the person has not consciously met Him, whom he has sinned against? Did God send His Son that we might escape meeting Him? or did Christ “suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God?”

I do not say that such a person doubts his going to heaven; no, he has believed that Christ died to take him there, but he does not enjoy this truth as realizing that it was God's wish to bring him there, and in order to accomplish His purpose He gave His Son to suffer for sins.

I do not say that he is afraid of perishing in the day of judgment, for he has believed that Christ died to deliver him from the wrath to come, and that the Son of Man was lifted up that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life; but he fails to realize that it was God who gave His Son to be “lifted up,” for the Scripture does not merely say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up,” but also adds, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:11-17).

Nor do I say that the person has not times of happiness, but it is not “joying in God,” it is rather the delight of being safe from wrath to come and of being happy hereafter, but present peace with God as having had to do with Him is not realized, and that all that once troubled the conscience has been settled forever. The person has not the enjoyment of the truth that he is set in blessing because God wanted him there, the very God he had sinned against, and about whom he has had the hardest thoughts. He has not the joy of knowing that his blessing was a purpose with God, and had cost the giving up of Christ to suffer for sins, to bring him to Himself.

A great deal of the preaching of the present day fails to put the soul face to face with God. No doubt a Saviour is preached, and the truth that He was lifted up, but it is not of that kind which first of all makes a man feel that he has to do with God, and also brings him consciously to God to find in Him all that his awakened soul has sought after.

How is it with you? I ask the question because I know the cases are so common in which those who are really born again and have fled to Christ for refuge, if they think of God there is still a lurking fear. How many a one can say “Father,” but cannot with equal ease be in the presence of God as God. The conscience is not perfect. There is still something to be settled between the soul and God. Yet it must come. “Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer,” “when I kept silence my bones waxed old,” said David (Psa. 32:3,4). And God kept His hand on David until he confessed his transgressions, and the result was he realizes forgiveness from God Himself, and can speak of Him as his “hiding place.” Not like Adam, who hid himself from God, nor like Moses who “hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God,” nor like Peter who cried out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” But finding his “hiding place” in the very God he had sinned against. How many a one “keeps silence” before God! Yet God will bring a man sooner or later to own all before Him. The prodigal said, “I will arise and go to my Father, I will say to Him, I have sinned.” (Luke 15:18). Have you been to God about all that you have been as a sinner?

Now I shall say a little upon what gives us confidence to come to Him. If we thought that God was going to condemn us and raise the whole question of sin with us we would stay away: but the cross of His Son shows a different thing from God condemning us. He gave His Son to save. Have you believed and seen “that Jesus is the Son of God?” For if that One who was suffering there was the Son of God, how it tells us what God could be for us when we were only sinners. Let us look at that cross. What a scene! Is man the only witness of the sufferings of the blessed Jesus? Was not God looking down? Was He not witnessing the hatred that displayed itself there? Was it nothing for God to see His beloved Son hanging between two thieves crucified and slain? Was it nothing for God to hear His Son crying to Him from that tree? Could His heart be unaffected? Was not all His love put to the test by our sins? And could all our sins freeze up His heart against us? What happened? God at that very moment showed that His goodness was above all our evil, for He gave Jesus to “suffer for sins, the just for the unjust,” that He might bring us happily and righteously to Himself. Has that been consciously accomplished in your case? Has the Cross brought you to God? Do you say, “I have found a hiding place” in the very God I hated and sinned against; yea, more, I “joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:11).

And now, if we believe that God did all this for us and laid our sin on Christ, making Him to answer for it, we are free to go to Him and confess all, and thoroughly expose our hearts before Him, guile is taken out of our hearts. There is no need to cover up things from God now, for all that we were has been brought out into the light of His presence, it has been a manifested thing before Him at the Cross, and has been judged there. Now, God does not condemn. When we come to Him we find He never mentions our sins to us, “Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more” (Heb. 10:17).

The father never said a word to the prodigal about his sin, but he allowed and made that prodigal free to tell all to his father. And so with us, we do not meet a condemning God, but one who has met us in this world where all our sin has been committed, with His Son suffering for our sins to bring us to Himself, and that gives us confidence to come to Him and own all our state to Him, knowing that not one question shall be raised by Him.

How our hearts are made to bow in worship before His goodness. He that might justly have dealt with us about our sins mentions them not to us, but has dealt with His own Son about them to bring us happily to Himself. Again I ask, has this been accomplished in your case? Are you brought to God? “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Saved by Thy sovereign mercy, firmly I stand;
Grace gives me access to my LORD'S right hand;
Now, filled with lowly praises, glows my heart,
Wedded to my SAVIOUR, nevermore to part.
Praise fills the heavenly scene, praise to the LORD;
All praise the SAVIOUR'S name, with one accord:
Surely MY SAVIOUR should be praised by me:
None else is worthy of my praise but He.
DOWN from the throne of glory, CHRIST came to die:
Under my sins' dread burden, He did lie.
Raised now to "heavenly places," He appears
As a living SAVIOUR, on to endless years.
Grace fills the heavenly scene-free, boundless grace;
All saints, in JESUS' heart, now find a place.
Surely MY SAVIOUR all my trust should be,
None else is worthy of my trust but He.
Jesus my LORD and SAVIOUR, Thee will I own,
Love, serve, and follow Thee, and Thee alone.
Living and pleading at the throne above
In Thy blood I've cleansing: share Thy endless love.
Love fills the heavenly scene, Love from the LORD;
Love, love to JESUS, too, all hearts accord:
Surely MY SAVIOUR should be loved by me,
None else is worthy of my love but He.
CROSSING the desert dreary, He guides my way;
He, 'mid all foes and dangers, is my stay:

Conquerors, in love, He makes us, now to be;
Gives us, at His coming, glorious victory.
Know ye "that blessed Hope"-Jesus will come!
Take up His weary ones to His own Home,
Surely MY SAVIOUR all my hope should be,
None else is worthy of my hope but He.

Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 1 – Our Heavenly Calling

1st Peter 1:1-6.

The great truth brought out in Peter's 1st Epistle, is the government of God in relation to His own people—the righteous; while that same government, in view of the wicked, is the burden of his 2d Epistle.

That which is especially noticeable, however, in this chapter is the way the grace of God works now towards us, to sustain us in our pathway down here, in temptation and in trial of various kinds, and to give us needed encouragement. Chapter 1 gives us specially the trials of the Christian, and how he is sustained in them, while chap. 2 brings out the privileges of the Christian. You will notice who they are, to whom Peter is writing, namely, the "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia," &c. They were believing Jews, who were scattered abroad, through the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen. Peter takes up, as it were, the charge committed to him by the Lord at his public restoration, in John 21, "Feed my sheep." I say his public restoration, for there had been a private meeting between the Lord and Peter before this, as we see from Luke 24:34, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"; at that private meeting between the Lord and Peter, when no one else was near, no doubt everything as to his fall, and what led to it, had come out, though the details of what passed between them then we know not, but at the public restoration the Lord puts into Peter's hands that which he loves best, thus showing the confidence of His heart: for how could I most prove my confidence in a friend if I were going away? Surely it would not be by going to that one and telling him I had confidence in him, but by committing to his charge the person or the thing I loved most.

This then is the way grace restored the one who had so terribly broken down and failed. Three times Peter had denied that he knew his Master; three charges that Master gives him, concerning those He loves best. Peter had denied his Lord when he trusted himself—for self-confidence is at the root of all our failures—now it is beautiful to see how the Lord trusts him. Over what took place when they met alone, the Lord has drawn a veil, but before all the Lord, as it were, gives him back his place when he puts into his hands His sheep and His lambs to shepherd and to feed.

When Peter writes, everything Jewish was under sentence of judgment, and he unfolds to those who had been linked up with Judaism the heavenly calling, in place of the earthly calling which had been set aside. The heavenly calling is a more general thing than the Church. Abraham, though not in the Church, had the heavenly calling; "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is remarkable how the Spirit of God by the pen of the apostle of the circumcision writes to call the hearts of these scattered ones to heaven.

He begins by assuring them they are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit; unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He opens with the beautiful testimony of the place in which the grace of God had put them, and in this verse we have the blessed Trinity brought in. There are very few verses in Scripture in which we

have the Trinity. In this second verse I have the election of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the blood of the Son. If I think of the Father, He chooses me. Election is an individual thing before the foundation of the world. You never find the Church called elect in Scripture. "But," you may say, "is it not so called in the 13th verse of the 5th chapter of this very epistle?" Not at all—the word church is put in there, it simply is "She at Babylon," no doubt a sister there, no church at all. The Church is not viewed till Christ is dead and risen, (except as "the mystery which hath been hid in God from the beginning of the world"), whereas election is before the foundation of the world.

Let no one be troubled by this matter of election. It is a family secret. I would not preach election to the world. Election goes before all. I come to a certain door and I find written over it, "Whoever will may enter in," that is the Gospel: I enter, and on the other side of the door what do I find written "Whosoever gets in here will never get out!" that is my security, the fruit of election. There is nothing to trouble a soul in election, but contrariwise, much to comfort. "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," the things which are in heaven God is going to keep for you, and He is going to keep you for them.

This 2nd verse is in direct contrast with Judaism, for rather is the peculiar name of Christianity. El Shaddai had been the name by which God revealed himself to Abraham, and Abraham's perfection was to walk before the "Almighty God" as a pilgrim in dependence on Him. (Gen. 17:1.) Jehovah was the name by which He was known to His people Israel, and their perfection was obedience to His commandments (Deut. 18:13); but rather is the name by which He has revealed Himself to us, and our perfection is to be like our Father, "BE ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect," Matthew 5:48.

It is a wonderful thing for a soul to get the sense of God as his Father, to know this, that, through the work of the Son of God, I am put into relationship with the Father, so that He can say, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father." Is this the way, beloved friend, in which you know God as your Father?

We have here first, the election of the Father, and then the sanctification of the Spirit. Many would rather have the blood of Jesus brought in before the sanctification of the Spirit, but that is not God's way, and why? Because it is a most beautiful thing to know that in your conversion you were under the direct action of the Spirit of God. Remember the action of the Spirit of God on a man and the indwelling of the Spirit of God are two very different things. The Father chooses according to His own blessed foreknowledge. In eternity the Father set His eye on you. In time the Spirit of God begins to work in you and what is the first thing He does? He sets you apart for God. Here is a striking contrast to Judaism. What separated Israel to God? External ordinances! How are you separated? By the real deep work of the Spirit of God in your soul, and "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Would you like that sentence reversed? You will always find the soul passes this way before the sense of forgiveness through the blood becomes known. Take Saul of Tarsus, the pattern conversion in Scripture. When he called Jesus "Lord" the Spirit of God was working in him. Then he says, "What wilt thou have me to do?" There comes in obedience: he knew not the washing of the blood yet, but the will of the heart was broken; he was bent now on doing the will of God, but was in deep misery for three days: then Ananias comes to him and says, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,"

then he gets the knowledge of forgiveness. This is the way God works; the soul, under the gracious action of the Spirit of God, desires to obey the Word of the Lord, and then comes the knowledge of remission of sins by His blood.

Verses 3 and 4 present “a living hope,” and an unfading “inheritance.” Every Jewish hope was centered in the Messiah, but He had died, and therefore the hopes of the Jew were gone. This is all a contrast to Judaism, “A living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” The inheritance God brought His people into in olden days they corrupted, their own sins defiled it, and it faded away before their eyes when taken captive out of it. Oh, beloved, is it not sweet, in a world where everything fades away, and is corrupted and defiled, to know that you are called to a scene which is incorruptible, which nothing can defile and which lasts eternally, and the inheritance is kept for you and you are kept for the inheritance. The way the soul is kept is “by the power of God through faith.” We are kept morally through the energy of faith, the work of God’s Spirit, which He sustains by His own power and grace.

(Verse 5), “Kept by the power of God.” In Peter’s Epistles you scarcely find a verse that has not a tacit touching allusion to his own pathway. He had not been kept because of his own self-confidence, but God will keep you, he says, by his power through faith. I believe when he said that, his heart turned back to the moment when the Lord told him that He had prayed for him that his faith might not fail—to the moment when in self-confidence he had thought that he could keep himself. Not is it only that we are kept for a time but “unto salvation.” Peter has always got his eye on the glory beyond, and salvation is, with him (save in vs. 9), always the deliverance of the saint out of this scene entirely, spirit, soul, and body to be with Christ in glory: and this salvation, he says, is “ready to be revealed.”

(Verse 6), “Wherein ye greatly rejoice.”—This gives joy you will find. If you are thinking of the scene where Christ is, and where we shall be with Him, if your hearts are dwelling on the thought of that inheritance which He is keeping for us, of the home which we, shall share with Him, where all is unfading brightness, you will be rejoicing. What can you do else but rejoice with such a prospect? Then he drops down to earth again in this 6th verse, and says you may be “put to grief” by various trials, not in “heaviness” as we think of heaviness, a soul being dull and heavy because out of communion with the Lord, but, under pressure, the Lord seeing the needs be, for the “manifold temptations.”

“If need be.” The Lord knows what He is about. We do not like the yoke not one of us does. Scripture says, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Why? Because then he gets patient as he gets older.

The Lord makes no mistakes. Whatever comes to us then, let our hearts just revert to the Father with the thought, “there is a needs be.” Moreover, these trials are not always chastisement, they are His training of His children. It is education, not instruction merely. He wants to draw out to develop, to make manifest that which is the result of His own grace working in our souls, that which is the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, long-suffering,” &c., and He must take His own way to do it.

Look at verse 10 and 11 of 2 Corinthians 4, there is a wonderful difference between the 10th and 11th verses. In the 10th we have Paul's desire coming out that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in his body; in the 11th we have God saying, as it were, "Well, Paul, I shall put you into circumstances where you will get your desire, where you cannot live anything else but the life of Jesus."

You and I may often not see the "needs be" for this or that trial, but what does our Father say? There is a needs be, and it is only for "a season," it is not to last forever, and this sustains the heart.

It is a wonderful thing for our souls always to seek to find the bright side! To have beaming, radiant faces all the while we are in deep trouble! Look at Paul and Silas at Philippi. What could be more dismal? Thrust into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks, and what do we find them doing? "They prayed and sang praises unto God." They were exercising their holy and their royal priesthoods in that prison. When they sang praises they were holy priests; when they said to the terrified jailer, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," they were royal priests. It is a charming picture! They are as full of joy as they can be, and they get that jailer converted! There was the wonderful result of their bleeding wounded backs, this soul was saved! Tribulation will come in various ways, but you must make up your minds to it while here, "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5.)

The Advocacy of Christ; or, What Is to Be Done With the Sins We Commit After We Have Been Saved?

The question often arises in the minds of the Lord's people, especially of those who are young in the faith, "What is to be done with the sins we commit after we have been saved?" Many a child of God has said, "I know that I have believed in Christ, and see that my sins were put away by His blood; but what troubles me is the sins I commit now, and what am I to do with them?" The direct answer to this question is found in 1 John 2:1-2— "My little children these things write I unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." This is clearly written to believers; for the Apostle addresses them as "My children;" that is, those who have been born of God. And again, "We have an advocate with the Father," as it is only those who are born again who can call God their Father.

The first thing for us to see, is, that as believers in the Lord Jesus, all our sins are put away before God by the one offering on the cross; as we get fully brought out in the epistle to the Hebrews; because till this is seen there must always be confusion in the mind, confounding our knowledge of forgiveness of sins with the work of Christ that put them all away when they were all future. In Heb. 10:11,12,14, we read, "And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this Man (Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The priests, under the law, stood and offered "oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins," therefore their work was never done; but this Man (Christ) offered one sacrifice, and "forever sat down on the right hand of God." There is only one sacrifice for sins, and there never will be another; so that, if all your sins were not answered for then, they never can be, for Christ is not going to die again.

People often say, "I know that my sins were put away up to my conversion," but Scripture never speaks in that way. When did Christ bear your sins? On the cross. Did He bear a part of your sins, or did He put them away up to the day of your conversion? No if He bore one, He bore them all when they were all future, when you had committed none of them, for, blessed be His name, He offered the "one sacrifice for sins," and then "forever sat down on the right hand of God." This word "forever" is not that which is used for everlasting, but it has the sense of continuously, uninterruptedly, never to rise up to offer another sacrifice or to complete the work; and the reason that He is so seated at the right hand of God is, that, "by one offering He hath perfected forever (same word) them that are sanctified." He has perfected us forever, therefore He has sat down forever. The value of His one offering, which put away all our sins, is, forever; therefore He has nothing more to do throughout eternity with regard to the putting away the sins of those that believe in His name.

Of course, when a soul is first awakened by the Holy Spirit, it could only be past sins that are brought to his knowledge, and that he knows are forgiven; but then, when we get the knowledge of

forgiveness, we see that the work that put our sins away was accomplished when they were all future, and the value of that one sacrifice was not only up to the day of our conversion. Now we see the One that did the work “forever sat down on the right hand of God,” because He has perfected us forever by that one offering; and God says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Heb. 10:17. Forgiveness of sins is the common portion of all Christians, as we read in 1 John 2:12, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.” There would be no sense in saying our future sins are forgiven, for we have not committed them, and we ought not to contemplate sinning in future, but we can always say, as Christians, as in Col. 1:14, “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” But many have thought if we have the “forgiveness of sins,” why do we read in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

There is another sense in which Scripture speaks of forgiveness; when a child of God has sinned, and his communion has been interrupted, and he confesses his sins, he gets forgiveness, not in the sense of non-imputation as in Rom. 4:7,8, (which ever remains) but, of communion and joy being restored which had been interrupted by the sin. The above vs. 1 John 1:9, is a general statement, and would apply either to a sinner first coming to God and confessing his sins, and so getting forgiveness once for all on the ground of the death of Christ, or to a child of God who has sinned and confesses, and gets forgiveness as a child by the Father. The one might be called justifying forgiveness in the case of the sinner, and the other, Fatherly, or governmental, forgiveness in the case of a saint; and it is very important to distinguish between the two. There are two things we need to be happy in God’s presence; the question of our sins to be settled and a new life and nature.

You find these two in 1 John 4:9,10. In vs. 9 “God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him”; and in vs. 10, “to be the propitiation for our sins.” In the former we have life and in the latter, propitiation for sins. Everyone is born into this world at a distance from God, ignorant of Him, and with a corrupt, fallen nature, which is enmity against Him; “dead in trespasses and sins,” without a spark of life or desire Godward; as we find in Rom. 3:11, “There is none that seeketh after God.” But God saw us in that dreadful condition, with nothing but death and eternal judgment before us, and loved us, and “sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him;” and we, by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, are born again, get a new life and nature; as in John 1:12, “As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” So that those who have received Christ; and have truly believed in Him, can say, on the authority of Scripture, that they are “sons of God” and born of Him. Those who are thus born of God, have a life and nature that loves God and delights in Him, and can have “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3); whereas the old Adam life has no communion with God whatever. What a wondrous word that is “fellowship (or communion) with the Father, and with His Son!” What does fellowship or communion mean? Common thoughts, joys, and interests.

“Fellowship with the Father!” One might well say, “How could such poor feeble things as we are have fellowship (communion or common thoughts) with the Father and His Son?” Suppose you are enjoying Christ and you get a glimpse of His glory and perfection, and you delight in Him; well, the Father delights in Him too, so that through grace you have common thoughts with the Father

about the Son, only, of course, in far different measure. And again, "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). If Christ reveal the Father in all His love to your soul, and then says, "My Father is now your Father," as in John 20:17, you have common thoughts with the Son about the Father, as far as you are able to enter into it. Of course, "fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" would include more than this, one could not limit it in any way. It is common thoughts, joys, and, interests with God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ, known in the power of the Holy Ghost, in part now, but unhindered by and bye. Oh! if all Christians knew more of this communion, which is our highest privilege, how blessed they would find it. Peace which was made by the blood of His cross cannot alter, or our standing in Christ, because it does not depend upon us, but upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; but our communion and joy may be broken by the merest trifle, even a foolish thought. But –

When Satan tempts me to despair,

And tells me all has failed within;

Upward I look and see Him there

Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Saviour died

My sinful soul is counted free;

For God, the Just, is satisfied

To look on Him and pardon me.

The Advocacy of Christ; or, What Is to Be Done With the Sins We Commit After We Have Been Saved?

Many children of God have been thrown into doubt and perplexity from not seeing their unchanging place in Christ. As long as their consciences are clear and they are going on happily with the Lord, all goes on well, but if through unwatchfulness, neglect of the word and prayer, or the cares, pleasures, or business of this life, they get away from the Lord, the happy feelings are all gone, appetite for the word of God is lost, and the things that are not seen lose their reality, and they feel truly wretched, and have often thought "I have got all wrong, and God is angry with me, and has turned His face away from me;" and often doubts come in, "Have I ever been converted at all? Perhaps I have been deceiving myself all the while?" But no, thank God, He never hides His face from a real Christian: Why? Because He never hides His face from Christ, and we are accepted in Him. God hid His face once from Christ when He was, in love and grace, taking our place, and was made sin for us on the cross, and uttered that terrible cry, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" when He cried and was not heard, Psalms 22:1,2. But that is all over, and He is now the risen Man before God, in the most perfect acceptance and favor; and "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17): Does God ever hide His face from that blessed One I Never; therefore, He never hides His face from those who are accepted in Him; so that nothing can touch the acceptance of a true child of God, because it is not a question of what we are, but of what Christ is.

Does this blessed truth give a license for sin? God forbid: on the contrary, I am convinced the knowledge of it gives us a power over sin, and a proper motive for not sinning. If I am accepted in Christ, I am to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6). If He is the measure of my acceptance, He is also the standard for my walk. But if we get away from the Lord in our souls, or should sin come in, though our acceptance is unchanged, we lose the sense and joy of it; or, in other words, our communion has been interrupted: it is as though a cloud came between us and the sun; the sun remains unchanged, but we do not feel its rays. It is here that the blessed service of love of our Lord as the Advocate comes in, when we have sinned, to restore us to the enjoyment of the communion we had lost through it: not to put the sins away, for that was done once for all by the "one sacrifice" on the cross. We read in 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." The common thought is, that when we have confessed our sins Christ goes to God and intercedes, and the sin is passed over. It does not, however, say, "If any man confess his sin," but "If any man sin (before he confesses it) we have an Advocate with the Father." An advocate means one who undertakes the cause of another, one who manages our affairs, and maintains our interests. What a comfort this is for us to know, that if we do sin there is One who loves us perfectly, understands us thoroughly, takes up our case, and undertakes for us with the Father: not, as before said, to put the sin away, or to procure righteousness for us, but to bring us back to communion. And who is the Advocate, the One who manages our affairs? Jesus Christ the Righteous, not the loving or merciful, as we might be inclined to think, but "the Righteous One," "and He is the propitiation¹ for our sins" (Ch. 2:2). It is very beautiful, and divinely perfect, the way this is brought in here. He is the Righteous One, our unchanging Righteousness; He has also done a work upon the cross, by which our sins have been put away, "and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." The terms "the Righteous One" and "the propitiation for our sins," would imply that a believer has an abiding righteousness before God, and that the question of his sins has been settled forever. Thus, if a child of God sins, his righteousness (Christ) remains unchanged, and the value of the "propitiation for our sins" is the same, and because this is the case it is now not a question of the sin being put away before God, or of procuring righteousness for us, but of restoration to communion. The very expression, "Advocate with the Father," would show this. Father, is a name of relationship: "The Father judgeth no man" (John 5:22). So that we may lay it down as a general principle, that when we find the word "Father" in relation to us, it is never a question of acceptance or of justification. It is not said it is the Father that justifies, but, "it is God that justifies." "We have peace with God," &c. Thus, if a child of God sins the Advocate is with the Father, who is also "the Righteous One" and the "propitiation for our sins;" and the result of His advocacy is, that the word of God is brought home to our consciences by the power of the Spirit. It is this action of the blessed Lord, in applying the word to us, that is spoken of in John 13, the Lord washing the disciples' feet.

The "hour was come when He should depart out of this world unto the Father" (vs. 1), a significant word which enables us to understand better the application of the truth in this chapter. The Lord said in verse 10, "he that is washed² (washed all over) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit, and ye are clean." Here the figure is water, not blood. It may refer to Leviticus 8, when the priests were consecrated, they were washed with water, verse 6; this was never repeated: but they had to wash their feet constantly in their service. Exodus 30:17,20. Water is used in Scripture constantly as a symbol of the word of God. See Ephesians 5:26; John 3:5; also 1 Peter 1:23, as a practical comment on John 3:5. The word is the instrument which is employed by

the Holy Ghost in giving us life (1 Peter 1:23). This is never repeated; but we get defiled in our walk through this wilderness, so the Lord, in His grace, applies the word to our consciences, in order to remove from us that which would hinder our communion; for the Lord would not have us at a distance from Him, but would have us near to Himself, not merely satisfied because we are saved, which is a cold heartless thing, but in the enjoyment of His love and of what He is Himself. Nothing else satisfies His heart of love! This action of the Lord, in applying the word to us, would be rather the result of His advocacy or its application to us: and when the word is applied to us by the power of the Spirit, we are made to feel how we have sinned, and, humbled about it, we go to God our Father, in the full confidence of children, and confess it to Him. How blessed it is that we can do so! And the very fact that the sin can never be imputed to us because Christ bore it, only humbles us the more as we think that Christ suffered all that agony on the cross that very thing that I have done. It is the advocacy of Christ that leads us to confession: His grace in restoring our souls; and when we do confess, we have the blessed assurance in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Mark the expression "faithful and just," not loving or merciful; but "faithful and just," not to the sinner, as some have thought, but to Christ, who is our Advocate and "the propitiation for our sins;" and not only does He "forgive us," but He cleanses us from all unrighteousness; He removes every trace of the "sins" from us: otherwise there would be a distance between us and the Lord. How blessed it is to think of the Lord's unchanging love and service to us He loved us and gave Himself for us, and answered for all our sins, and though now He is away, and we are left in this evil world, His love is still the same, and should we sin and get away from Him, He restores us to the communion we had lost "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

So now the answer is simple as to what a child of God is to do with his sins: we are to confess them to God our Father. But how blessed to know that when we have sinned and confess, that Christ has already been to the Father for us, and that we have the word "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," So, that if we have truly confessed and judged our sins, we ought to believe on the authority of the word that we have forgiveness. Confession is not merely a general confession of sins at the close of the day, that would be no real confession at all; but every time a sin is on our conscience it should be judged and confessed; and not only to judge ourselves for an act of sin, but for the state of soul we were in at the time, which is a far deeper thing; for if we had been in communion with the Lord we should not have committed it at all: for, depend upon it, a child of God does not fall into positive sin when in communion with the Lord; but there has been a getting away from Him first; and neglect of the word of God and prayer is generally the first cause of our departure from the Lord, and of positive falls. But what a blessed privilege, when we have sinned to be able to go to God our Father, and confess it all to Him; not as sinners to get salvation, or to be saved again; but as children to a Father who loves us perfectly, but at the same time is God who is "Light," and cannot have fellowship with anything that is evil or inconsistent with that "Light."

May you and I know more what it is to have enjoyed "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," that "our joy may be full" till we enter that blessed home where "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life;" where there will be no need of an "Advocate with the Father," because our walk will be perfectly in accordance with our standing; no more inconsistencies, failures, or sins, but we shall

be “holy and without blame before God in love;” the world the flesh, and the devil, and everything that hindered or marred our communion here, gone forever, and to know throughout eternity what uninterrupted communion means in the place of everlasting love and glory.

Priesthood in Hebrews is with God not for sins, but for weakness and to uphold us in our wilderness journey. Advocacy is with the Father, if we sin, to restore communion. Intercession is a general term that would include both (Rom. 8:34).

The God of Grace Revealed by His Own Acts

As Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue at Antioch, they were invited, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, to give the people a Word of exhortation (Acts 13).

Paul had readiness to address them in his heart, for he carried and represented the gospel of God, that system of divine active love that is ever waiting on sinners. But when out of the abundance of such a heart his mouth speaks, it is in such a way as the synagogue could not have expected. He does not make the people his subject, giving them exhortations as out of the law or the prophets, but he makes God and His acts his subjects, out of the historical books. He details a series of divine acts from the day of the Exodus to the resurrection of Jesus (acts of grace, every one of them), in which God had been rising up in the supremacy of His own love and power over all the various sad and evil condition of Israel, whether such had been brought on them by themselves, or by their enemies, through their own folly and wickedness, or by the hand of them that hated them.

He deals with facts, such facts as displayed God in grace, and humbled man. He brings God into the synagogue, and makes Him the great object of notice to the soul. And this, let me say, is God's own way in the Gospel. He makes room for Himself, as I may express it, in both our hearts and our consciences. He breaks us to pieces, leaving us without a word to say for ourselves, exposed, convicted, and condemned, that He may introduce His own salvation to the conscience and to the heart; that the one may find peace made by Himself for it, and the other be forever drinking of a love that flows to everlasting, as it has been flowing from everlasting.

This story of grace, which Paul reads in the synagogue at Antioch, brings out various actings of God's hand in behalf of His people. After choosing the fathers, He had of old delivered Israel out of Egypt in spite of Egypt's strength and enmity. He had then carried them through the wilderness for the space of forty years, well supplying all their need, in spite of their "manners" and their "murmurings." Then, He had beaten down the nations of Canaan before their face, and divided their lands among them. He had, after that, raised up a long line of judges or deliverers for them, to deliver them out of the hand of those oppressors, whom their own folly and faithlessness had armed against them. And still further, He had given them David, a man of His own choice, to be their shepherd, after they had proved the bitterness of the days of Saul, who had been the man of their choice.

Thus, in so many ways, and for so long a time, had He magnified His grace, and continued in it, unwearied by their need, changeful as it was, and unhindered by their faithlessness, persevering and rebellious as it was.

With this tale of grace Paul fills the synagogue at Antioch. But there was still another chapter in that story. Jesus the Messiah had been given to the nation, refused and crucified by the nation, but by God raised up and given again to them and in the name of this crucified and risen Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is now preached, and Israel called on to accept it.

Now, this was a tale of the constancy and variousness of the grace of God. Israel is seen to have enjoyed a series of accomplished blessings at the hand of God.

Redemption, support, victory, deliverance, and a kingdom, all had been theirs, in spite of the strength of enemies, and of their own unfaithfulness: and now, added to these, there was provision for the forgiveness of all their sins.

And, blessed to tell it, this crowning mercy, the forgiveness of sins, which Paul now preached, was a blessing as sure as any, established by as sure an arm, and made theirs by as clear a title. It was set upon the resurrection of Jesus. Redemption, and inheritance, and deliverance, and the like, had been, each and all in their day, infallible, and each and all in their turn and time enjoyed by Israel. And all had stood on solid ground, and in good warranty. The rod of Moses, adapted by the God of all power and might, was equal to work redemption, and Israel enjoyed redemption. The presence of God had supplied the camp, and the sword of the Lord in the hand of Joshua had conquered and divided the land. Judges could deliver from all oppressors, since the Lord of heaven and earth had raised them up; and the man after God's own heart had guided the flock of God with integrity and skillfulness: And now "the forgiveness of sins" takes its place among these blessings, for Jesus in resurrection in like infallibility can secure and dispense it. The manna from heaven had no more virtue to feed the camp morning by morning—and who could question that? than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus has to publish the forgiveness of sins to all that believe. Death is the wages of sin, and cannot be put away, but by sin being put away. To get rid of death we must get rid of sin. But Jesus had risen. He was alive from the dead, and on the ground of such a fact as that, of such accomplished victory, as His resurrection bespeaks, the forgiveness of sins is as infallibly secured, as surely and boldly published, as redemption was wrought by the rod of Moses, or victory and the division of the land by the sword of the Lord, and of Joshua.

Forgiveness of sins thus takes its place among the sure and accomplished blessings of grace. We can account for it, as simply as for any of those wrought out of old for Israel by Jehovah. We can see why sins may now be forgiven, as once we saw why Pharaoh's host lay dead on the seashore. Jehovah looked from the cloud then, and that was enough; Jesus is risen from the dead now, having been made sin for us, and that is enough. The danger is in despising—as the apostle closes his preaching, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." This was the apostle's exhortation.

The law and the prophets had been read in the synagogue, as we noticed, and the apostle had been invited to give the people a word of exhortation. But Paul read to the synagogue from the history of Israel. He stated facts, God's facts, such as told what He had done for His people, and thus what He was to them. And his exhortation is, not to despise those acts of grace. The resurrection is one of those acts. Jesus had died to sin. Sin and Jesus were in collision on the cross; or rather, Jesus owned the claim and fruit of sin there, and answered it, and bore it. Sin was never, we may say, in so intense a sense, the sting of death as then; nor was death ever, in so solemn a judgment, paid as the wages of sin. But armed as it was in that hour of its power, it was slain. The enmity was slain. Sin was put away. The veil of the Temple was rent, and the graves of the saints were opened.

“Made sin, He sin o’erthrew.” The claims of God in judgment upon sin were all vindicated, and he that had the power of death was destroyed. So that we may well say, with our apostle, looking at the death and resurrection of Jesus, “By this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”

This preaching at Antioch, thus, gives us a sweet witness how grace has been abounding in the ways of God from the beginning hitherto. But for further confirmation of our souls in God, let me observe, that both holiness and grace have had their several witnesses from the beginning; for God cannot but be just, while He is a Justifier; and the stability and rest of our consciences before Him come from this, that “truth” and “mercy,” “righteousness” and “peace,” together dispense salvation to us. God is never more holy than when forgiving sins, as has been long since said.

The ordinance of clean and unclean told of God’s holiness from the beginning, separating Him from the fallen and defiled creation. This ordinance, we know, is recognized so early as Genesis 8; His promise had already witnessed His grace, and that we get in Genesis 3. And so all through, that He is a Just God and a Saviour, has been His memorial here. He has ever had his two witnesses in this world of corruption and of misery, a witness to His holiness, and a witness to His grace and goodness. And the cross has redeemed all these pledges; for clean and unclean were distinguished there, and separated forever, and yet the forgiveness of sins was secured: and the soul ruined of old by the serpent is delivered forever.

Thus Paul brings God into the synagogue. The rulers would have had the people exhorted, but the Spirit in the apostle will have God revealed—revealed too, as is His way, by His own acts—that simplest, surest, most blessed way of revealing Him—the way in which “the wayfaring man” may not err, in which a child need not mistake the lesson. It is not by treatises or discourses, but by acts, that God makes Himself known to us. We might miss our lesson, had the former been His method—but His method is such that the simpler we are, the surer we shall reach Him and find Him, and know Him. And Paul thus deals with the synagogue at Antioch. He brings God in, Christ in, and that too in the divine way, in the light and revelation of His doings in the midst of us and for us. The law and the prophets have already been in the synagogue, as Moses and Elias were on the holy hill. But the voice from the exalted glory would draw Peter away from Moses and Elias, and fix him on Jesus, saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear Him.,” when Peter would have made equal tabernacles for Moses and Elias; and so here, Paul will leave the law and the prophets, and fix the assembly on God and His Christ.

And what was thus done in the synagogue at Antioch, is not only, thus, like what had been already done on the holy hill, but it is after the manner of the divine wisdom in all dispensations from the beginning, that the Christ of God should be the great object of faith, and the one great issue and result of all the education and learning of our souls—that we should be brought to Him, and then left with Him.

The Father's Matchless Love Revealed

We look not at the grave of Christ,
As though the Lord were there;
As though His work had not sufficed,
When all our guilt he bare.
The sinless one His life-blood shed;
For us He sin was made;
For us was numbered with the dead,
And in the grave was laid.
But death could not the Lord retain;
His grave is empty now;
On high He hath returned again;
Heaven's glory crowns His brow.
His blood is on the mercy-seat,
The veil in twain is rent;
And to declare His work complete,
The Holy Ghost is sent.
He tells of what the Lord hath done
Our guilty souls to save;
How He for us hath victory won
O'er Satan and the grave.
We look to Christ, the Lord above,
Learn there His saving grace;
And see the Father's matchless love
Revealed in Jesus' face.
As one in life with Him, on high,
We live for Him below;

And wait that day when he, with us,
His glorious life will show.

The Christian's Standing, Object, and Hope

We believe that in the third chapter of Philippians we have the model of a true Christian—a model on which every Christian should be formed. The man who is here introduced to our notice could say, by the Holy Ghost, “Brethren, be ye followers together of me.” Nor is it as an apostle that he here speaks to us—nor as one endowed with extraordinary gifts, and privileged to see unspeakable visions. It is not to Paul, the apostle, nor Paul, the gifted vessel, that we listen, in verse 17th of our chapter, but to Paul, the Christian. We could not follow him in his brilliant career as an apostle. We could not follow him in rapture to Paradise; but we can follow him in his Christian course, in this world; and it seems to us that we have in our chapter, a very full view of that course, and not only of the course itself, but also the starting-post and the goal. In other words, we have to consider, first, the Christian's standing; secondly, the Christian's object; and, thirdly, the Christian's hope. May God the Holy Ghost be our teacher, while we dwell for a little on these most weighty and most interesting points! And first as to

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDING. This point is unfolded in a double way in our chapter. We are not only told what the Christian's standing is, but also what it is not. If ever there was a man who could boast of having a righteousness of his own in which to stand before God, Paul was the man. “If,” says he, “any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning seal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

This is a most remarkable catalog, presenting everything that one could possibly desire for the formation of a standing in the flesh. No one could excel Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, of pure pedigree, in orderly fellowship, of blameless walk, of fervid zeal and unflinching devotedness. He was, in principle, a persecutor of the church. As a Jew, he could not but see that the very foundations of Judaism were assailed by the new economy of the Church of God. It was utterly impossible that Judaism and Christianity could subsist on the same platform, or hold sway over the same mind. One special feature of the former system was the strict separation of Jew and Gentile; a special feature of the latter was the intimate union of both in one body. Judaism erected and maintained the middle wall of partition; Christianity abolished that wall altogether.

Hence Saul, as an earnest Jew, could not but be a zealous persecutor of the Church of God. It was part of his religion—of that in which he “excelled many of his equals in his own nation”—of that in which he was “exceedingly zealous.” Whatever was to be had, in the shape of religiousness, Saul would have it; whatever height was to be attained, he would attain. He would leave no stone unturned in order to build up the superstructure of his own righteousness—righteousness in the flesh—righteousness in the old creation. He was permitted to possess himself of all the attractions of legal righteousness in order that he might fling them from him amid the brighter glories of a righteousness divine. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

And we should note here that the grand prominent thought in the above passage, is not that of a guilty sinner betaking himself to the blood of Jesus for pardon, but rather of a legalist casting aside, as dross, his own righteousness, because of having found a better. We need hardly say that Paul was a sinner— “the chief of sinners”—and that, as such, he betook himself to the precious blood of Christ, and there found pardon, peace, and acceptance with God. This is plainly taught us in many passages of the New Testament. But it is not the leading thought in the chapter now before us. Paul is not speaking of his sins, but of his gains. He is not occupied with his necessities, as a sinner, but with his advantages, as a man—a man in the flesh—a man in the old creation—a Jew—a legalist.

True it is, most blessedly true, that Paul brought all his sins to the cross, and had them washed away in the atoning blood of the divine sin-offering. But, in this noble passage, we see another thing. We see a legalist flinging far away from him his own righteousness, and esteeming it as a worthless and unsightly thing in contrast with a risen and glorified Christ who is the righteousness of the Christian—the righteousness which belongs to the new creation. Paul had sins to mourn over, and he had a righteousness to boast in. He had guilt on his conscience, and he had laurels on his brow. He had plenty to be ashamed of, and plenty to glory in. But the special point to be presented in Philippians 3:4-8 is not a sinner getting his sins pardoned, his guilt cleared, his shame covered, but a legalist laying aside his righteousness, a scholar casting away his laurels, and a man abandoning his vain glory, simply because he had found true glory, unfading laurels, and an everlasting righteousness in the Person of a victorious and exalted Christ. It was not merely that Paul, the sinner, needed a righteousness because, in reality, he had none of his own, but that Paul, the Pharisee, preferred the righteousness which was revealed to him in Christ, because it was infinitely better and more glorious than any other.

No doubt, Paul, as a sinner, needed, like every other sinner, a righteousness in which to stand before God; but that is not what he is bringing before us in our chapter. We are anxious that the reader should clearly apprehend this point. It is not merely that my sins drive me to Christ; but His excellencies draw me to Him. True, I have sins, and therefore I need Christ; but even if I had a righteousness, I should cast it from me, and gladly hide myself “in Him.” It would be a positive “loss” to me to have any righteousness of my own, seeing that God has graciously provided such a glorious righteousness for me in Christ. Like Adam, in the garden of Eden, he was naked, and therefore he made himself an apron; but it would have been a “loss” to him to retain the apron after that the Lord God had made him a coat. It was surely better far to have a God-made coat than a man-made apron. So thought Adam, so thought Paul, and so thought all the saints of God whose names are recorded upon the sacred page. It is better to stand in the righteousness of God, which is by faith, than to stand in the righteousness of man which is by works of law. It is not only mercy to get rid of my sins, through the remedy which God has provided, but to get rid of our righteousness, and accept, instead, the righteousness which God has revealed.

Thus, then, we see that the standing of the Christian is in Christ. "Found in him." This is Christian standing. Nothing less, nothing lower, nothing different. It is not partly in Christ, and partly in law—partly in Christ and partly in ordinances. No; it is "Found in him." This is the standing which Christianity furnishes. If this be touched, it is not Christianity at all. It may be some ancient ism, or some medieval ism, or some modern ism; but most surely it is not the Christianity of the New Testament if it be aught else than this, "Found in him."

We do therefore earnestly exhort the reader to look well to this our first point, "In Christ it is we stand." He is our righteousness. He Himself, the crucified, risen, exalted, glorified Christ. Yes; He is our righteousness. To be found in Him is proper Christian standing. It is not Judaism, Catholicism, nor any other ism. It is not the being a member of this church, that church, or the other church. It is to be in Christ. This is the great foundation of true practical Christianity. In a word, this is the standing of the Christian.

Let us now, in the second place, look at

2. THE CHRISTIAN'S OBJECT. Here again, Christianity shuts us up to Christ. "That I may know him," is the breathing of the true Christian. If to be "found in him" constitutes the Christian's standing, then "to know him" is the Christian's proper object. The ancient philosophy had a motto which it was continually sounding in the ears of its votaries, and that motto was, "Know thyself." Christianity, on the contrary, has a loftier motto, pointing to a nobler object. It tells us to know Christ to make Him our object—to fix our earnest gaze on Him.

This, and this alone, is the Christian's object. To have any other object is not Christianity at all. Alas! many Christians have other objects than Christ. And that is precisely the reason why we would impress upon our readers that it is Christianity and not the ways of Christians that we desire to hold up to their view. It matters not in the least what the object is: if it is not Christ, it is not Christianity. The true Christian's desire will ever be embodied in these words, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." It is not that I may get on in the world that I may make money—that I may attain a high position—that I may aggrandize my family—that I may make a name that I may be regarded as a great man, a rich man, a popular man. No; not one of these is a Christian object. It may be all very well for a man, who has got nothing better, to make such things his object. But the Christian has got Christ. This makes all the difference. It may be all well enough for a man who does not know Christ as his righteousness, to do the best he can in the way of working out a righteousness for himself; but to a man whose standing is in a risen Christ, the very fairest righteousness that could be produced by human efforts would be an actual loss. So is it exactly, in the matter of an object. The question is not, What harm is there in this or that? but, Is it a Christian object?

It is well to see this. We may depend upon it, beloved reader, that one great reason of the low tone which prevails amongst Christians will be found in the fact that the eye is taken off Christ and fixed upon some lower object. It may be a very laudable object for a mere man of the world—for one who merely sees his place in nature, or in the old creation. But the Christian is not this. He does not belong to this world at all, He is in it, but not of it. "They," says our blessed Lord, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17) "Our citizenship is in heaven;" and we should never be satisfied to propose to ourselves any lower object than Christ. It matters not in the least

what a man's position may be. He may be only a scavenger, or he may be a prince, or he may stand at the one end of the many gradations between these two extremes. It is all the same, provided Christ is his real, his only object. It is a man's object, not his position, that gives him his character.

Now, Paul's one object was Christ. Whether he was stationary, or whether he traveled; whether he preached the gospel, or gathered sticks; whether he planted churches, or made tents, Christ was his object. By night and by day, at home or abroad, by sea or by land, alone or in company, in public or private, he could say, "One thing I do." And this, be it remembered, was not merely Paul the laborious apostle, or Paul the raptured saint, but Paul, the living, acting, walking Christian—the one who addresses us in these words, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me." Nor should we ever be satisfied with anything less than this. True, we sadly fail; but let us always keep the true object before us. Like the school-boy at his copy, he can only expect to succeed by keeping his eye fixed upon his head-line. His tendency is to look at his own last written line, and thus each succeeding line is worse than the preceding one. Thus it is in our own case. We take our eye off the blessed and perfect LORD JESUS, and begin to look at ourselves, our own productions, our own character, our interests, our reputation. We begin to think of what would be consistent with our own principles; our profession, or our standing, instead of fixing the eye steadily upon that one object which Christianity presents, even Christ Himself.

But some will say, "Where will you find this?" Well, if it be meant, where are we to find it amongst the ranks of Christians, now-a-days, it might be difficult indeed. But we have it in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. This is enough for us. We have here a model of true Christianity, and let us ever and only aim thereat. If we find our hearts going after other things let us judge them. Let us compare our lines with the head-line, and earnestly seek to produce a faithful copy thereof. In this way, though we may have to weep over much failure, we shall always be kept occupied with our proper object, and thus have our character formed; for, let it never be forgotten, it is the object which forms the character. If money be my object, my character is covetous; if power, I am ambitious; if books, I am literary; if Christ, I am a Christian. It is not, here, a question of life or salvation, but only of practical Christianity. If we were asked for a simple definition of a Christian, we should, at once say, a Christian is a man who has Christ for his object. This is most simple. May we enter into its power and thus exhibit a more healthy and vigorous discipleship in this day, when so many, alas! are minding "earthly things."

We shall close this brief and imperfect sketch of a wide and weighty subject, with a line or two on

3. THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. This, our third and last point, is presented in our chapter in a manner quite as characteristic as the other two. The standing of the Christian is to be found in Christ; the object of the Christian is to know Christ; and the hope of the Christian is to be like Christ. How beautifully perfect is the connection between these three things! No sooner do I find myself in Christ as my righteousness, than I long to know Him as my object, and the more I know Him, the more ardently shall I long to be like Him, which hope can only be realized when I see Him as He is. Having a perfect righteousness, and a perfect object, I just want one thing more, and that is to be done with everything that hinders my enjoyment of that object. "For our conversation (or citizenship, *πολιτενμα* not *αναστροφη* Phil. 3:20,) 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.”

Now putting all these things together, we get a very complete view of true Christianity. We cannot attempt to elaborate any one of the three points above referred to; for, it may be truly said, each point would demand a volume to treat it fully. But we would ask the reader to pursue the marvelous theme for himself. Let him rise above all the imperfections and inconsistencies of Christians, and gaze upon the moral grandeur of Christianity, as exemplified in the life and character of the model man presented to our view in this chapter. And may the language of his heart be, “Let others do as they will, as for me, nothing short of this lovely model shall ever satisfy my heart. Let me turn away my eye from men altogether, and fix it intently upon Christ Himself, and find all my delight in Him as my righteousness, my object, my hope.” Thus may it be with the writer and the reader, for Jesus’ sake.

“Oh! fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee;

That with thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.”

Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 2 - The Trials and Joys of Faith

1 Peter 1:7-17.

"That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." There is faith on earth, and God tries it. He never gives faith that He does not prove it; and this brings forth the fruit that will appear by and bye, when everything is made manifest, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

I believe the trying "by fire," spoken of in this verse, is a beautiful allusion to the three Hebrew servants who were tried by fire, whom, as you remember, Nebuchadnezzar cast into the fiery furnace. What was the effect of the fire in their case? It only burnt off their bonds, and they were free. The Lord lets us get into the fire oftentimes, and the effect of it is to burn off the cords that bound us, —in our case often self-imposed cords—and we come out free. But what have we had in the fire? A sense of the presence and company of the Lord, as we never had it before. So with the Hebrew servants, one walked with them in the furnace, and the form of that one was "like unto the Son of God."

"Whom having not seen ye love." There cannot be a saint of God, who does not love the Lord. You do not love Him as you would like to do, nor as He deserves to be loved. Quite true; nor do I; but when God writes to His people, He says, I know you love my Son. To me there is a lovely connection between this verse, "Whom having not seen ye love," and the fourth verse of Revelation 22, "They shall see His face." There is nothing so touches my heart and softens my spirit as this, I shall see His face. Oh beloved, do you not long to see His face, to gaze on Jesus, your Lord, to be in His own very presence, to see Him with these very eyes, and to be in the intimate enjoyment of His love for evermore? To see His face! That face once was "marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men," for He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and it was for our sakes that face was marred. What will it be to gaze on that face?

"Believing ye rejoice," &c. Your trials and troubles will all turn to praise and honor, he says, at the Lord's appearing, and meantime faith is in exercise, and you rejoice with joy unspeakable. I should like this to be more true of us, beloved. I do not think there is among us this daily rejoicing and exulting, of which this Scripture speaks. It is in a person they joy and exult, not in what He has done for them—that comes next.

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Believing in Him what have you received? Not salvation in the full sense of Peter's epistle, but the salvation of the soul. In the fifth verse you are kept "through faith unto salvation," a thing you have not got yet, but will get through faith. In the ninth verse salvation is the salvation of our souls, which we have got now. You have not seen the Lord yet, but the moment you are resting on Him by faith, you get your soul saved.

Now three things come out in the following verses the testimony of the prophets; the preaching of the Holy Ghost; and the coming of the Lord—His appearing.

When the prophets had written their prophecies, they read them, and though there was the tale of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories that should follow, God revealed to them, it was not for themselves but for us Christians they wrote.

“Which things the angels desire to look into.” Though we are so negligent about the study of Scripture, though there is so little desire in our hearts to penetrate into its hidden depths of meaning, the angels desire to look into them. Angels never knew God, or saw God till they saw the babe in Bethlehem; there was no revelation of God till then. Angels beheld God for the first time when they saw that wonderful babe. At His birth there is a movement of the heavenly host. A multitude comes with the angel that announces His birth, and they sing praises to God. All heaven is occupied with what is taking place on earth, for the Son of God is in this world of ours. Angels minister to Him when “he was an hungered” in the wilderness, after dismissing Satan; and in the garden in His agony, angels come and minister to Him and strengthen Him. Angels have a wonderful interest in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, “which thing the angels desire to look into,” and yet He did not come for angels. They sang at His birth, but we do not hear of them singing at His resurrection. Why? “Oh,” they seemed to say, “here we stand aside and leave the note of praise for those whom it most nearly concerns;” they leave it for you and me. We are the ones for whom He died. Angels say, We love to trace his pathway in this world; love to look into His tomb; but we have no fitting note to suit this occasion, for He did not die for us.

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.” This is a figure that would be well known in the East; there they wore the flowing robe, and it would need to be girded up for a man to make any great progress. The loins are the secret of strength. There must be the steady application of your soul constantly to these things, Peter says; and Paul says, “Set your mind on things above:” not set your affections. People often say they must have something for their minds. Paul says, I will give you something for your minds, but in heaven.

“Hope to the end,” &c. You have in this chapter faith in the Lord, love towards Him, and then this hope. You will find ten times in New Testament Scripture faith, hope, and love going together. You have faith in a person, you love a person, and you hope for a person. It is all bound up in a person— “the person of the Christ.”

“For the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” What grace is this? The grace of being taken straight into His presence, to be with the Lord, and like Him, forever. Jude says, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and what mercy could be greater than for the Lord just to come, and lift us up out of this scene of sorrow, and trial, and distress, and weeping and death, and to be in His own bright presence forever and ever? What Jude calls mercy, Peter calls grace, and what could be greater grace?

Then having taken us on to the end, Peter brings us back again, and says this is how you are to walk meanwhile, “as obedient children.” Not doing what you like, but what your Father tells you and He looks for practical holiness from you.

“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” (vs. 17). This is not the judgment-seat of

Christ, but this is the Father keeping His eye on each child every day, watching what we do: and as we sow so we reap. The obedient child says: I should like that there be nothing in my path day by day that my Father would not be pleased to see. He is looking on, is coming in, too, in restraining, and in chastening likewise, oftentimes. That is how the Father judgeth, and that judgment is good and wholesome for our souls.

It is a great mistake to suppose that because the testimony of God in the present day, in the light of Christianity, is different from a former day under Judaism, that therefore the principles of the moral government of God have in anywise changed.

The moral government of God over His people is exactly the same today as in bye-gone days, and you or I can no more traverse the word or ways of God without suffering for it, though we are under grace, than those who were distinctly under law. Hence the exhortation.

“Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” This is not at all the fear that genders bondage; not fear as to redemption, or acceptance, or relationship, because the next thing we read is, “Forasmuch as ye know,” &c. Why am I to fear? Because I know certain things. The knowledge of redemption and the enjoyment of the blessed place God’s grace gives me in Christianity are to make my pathway characterized by fear, and there would be far less sorrow, far less dealing of the Lord in our day if we had more of this fear. The moment we cease to have this fear is the moment we fall; so long as we fear we are preserved and kept; the hour we cease to fear is the time we fall.

This verse speaks of the daily government of God over His children; not the judgment of the great white throne, nor the judgment-seat of Christ for the saints, but the fact that my Father has His eye on me today, and He will deal with me today or tomorrow according to what His eye has seen. “The Father judgeth according to every man’s work.”

“The Voice of My Beloved.”

Cant. 8:13,14,
Mine own Beloved's voice!
'Tis this I wait to hear!
No earthborn music half so choice,
No other tones so dear.
He soon will come again!
I shall his glory see!
He came long since in grief and pain,
To seek and ransom me.
He left His royal throne
To free the captive slave;
He found me – mark'd me for His own;
Oh, what a price He gave!
The costly price of blood
Deliver'd me from hell;
And made my title clear and good
With Him on high to dwell.
His love as death is strong,
No floods can drown its tide;
And loving Him, I pant and long
To shelter at His side.
Far more His heart doth yearn
To call His exile home;
A few short hours, He will return,
And I no more shall roam.
Within His garden fair

The milkwhite lilies grow;
“A little while” He tarries where
Yon living waters flow.
Make haste, Beloved, make haste!
Desire my spirit thrills;
Apart from Thee, the world's a waste,
Come quickly o'er the hills!

The Path of Christ and the Path of the Christian

The character of Colossians is this, that the saint is looked at as risen. It is not hope so much, but you get their “affection.” Then it brings out another side, that is life, “Christ our life;” that is more fully brought out here than anywhere; you get it everywhere, but more fully developed here. And Christ in us, Christ that made the hope. The way the saints are looked at is as risen, not as yet as in Ephesians sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. There you get the Spirit of God dwelling in us, and revealing the things above. And here you have the person dead, and risen with Christ; but the hope is laid up for him in heaven. He is looked at as walking in this world, but as a risen man, not as in Ephesians for you cannot talk of sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus here.

In Romans you get a living man walking in this world, justified and the hope of glory before him, but a living man down here. In Romans it is that a man is to yield himself to God, as one alive from the dead; but in Ephesians he is looked at as alive to God. In Romans it is yield yourselves to God, offer your bodies a “living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” It is not like a sacrifice of bulls and goats. You are to give yourselves up as a living sacrifice unto God, In Ephesians you are to be “imitators of God,” What Colossians gives is being dead with Christ, dead to sin, the law, and the world, and then that life is developed. We get in this chapter the way the Christian is to live, and that founded upon the place he is put into in grace. Then he speaks of Christ Himself. He is going to reconcile all things in heaven and earth; the whole scene is to be brought back, and then we whom He has reconciled come in.

First we have the great truth of what our life is, and then what it is founded on in the place we have in grace. What he prays for is this— “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.” It is our walk down here, that is what his prayer was about— “that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” It is not merely that they should avoid sins, but there is a path in this world the spring and character of which is God’s will, a path that the vultures’ eye hath not seen, but we have seen it in Christ. He was subject in everything, and he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. He has given a path through this world which has nothing to do with the character of it:— “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” It is a path in which Christ is displayed. It is “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,” You see the privilege on which it is founded, that is the privilege of being like Christ walking down here. The whole character of His life was the manifestation of this heavenly thing in the midst of this world, There was not one single motive in the world that governed Christ. It is expressed in “the wilderness,” That is the Christian’s path. Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” “If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.” If my body is not full of light my eye is not single, it is not that its always visible. This is a path that is of God. Christ comes down from heaven, the word made of flesh, and treads a path that there is nothing at all like.

The character of this obedience is, that God's will is its motive. Christ did not do anything that was not God's will: it was his motive. Satan says, "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." A voice from heaven had just said, "Thou art my beloved Son," He takes our place before God there; then He is led of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, but when Satan comes he says, "If thou be the Son of God, &c." There is no harm in eating when you are hungry (people say there is no harm in this and that), but He had taken upon Him the form of a servant, and there was no command for this. So in the case of Martha and Mary, they sent to say, "He whom thou lovest is sick." You would have said He would have been off at once, but he remains two days in that place. He suffered him to die that there might be the testimony of the power that could raise Him from the dead. It is the knowledge of God's will, it is not what you say, it is the right thing to do, it is "filled with the knowledge of His will" it is knowledge that with God decides the state of a soul—if I have this divine wisdom, where I am more spiritual these things become a matter of course to me.

Our path is that which the saint has to find, it is God's path, and God puts him to walk in it to test the state of his soul, to try if he sees what to do. "If thy whole body, therefore, be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." A candle is to give light, Christ is the perfect light. The principle of it all is, that "ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will." As to the state of the soul it is "wisdom and spiritual understanding." Then you get the measure of it. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." That shows how necessary the real knowledge of Christ is. Suppose a man tells me to walk worthy of my father, how can I unless I know his mind. Then the object always gives character to our walk. When Christ is that we get the eye opened to see all that He is.

You have "walking worthy" thrice. We are called to walk worthy of God, who has called us unto His kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12). That is the place we are to have with Him in glory, when all is complete. We are to walk worthy of it here. Christ displays the mind of God in this world. We are to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Eph. 4-1). The third is walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col. 1:10). We have the Holy Ghost to lead us. As a calling we are to walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, increasing in the knowledge of God. You are growing in the knowledge of God, and your heart, and affections, your mind, and walk, are formed by that. That is the walk of the Christian.

Then you get the power that we are walking in. "Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power." What struck me is the way it works. We do need strength, and we have "strengthening with all might." That is the strength we have to walk in it. "Unto all patience and long-suffering, &c," it is to all patience that is the secret of being right. A man's patience is not his control over his will, but he goes through things in patience, that is the secret, of it. We often want to hurry God, we would hurry Him even in such a thing as restoring a soul. Take an example in the call of the Syrophenician woman, when she asked Him to heal her daughter. He did not answer a word. The disciples wanted to get rid of her, she had no promise or anything, but she says, "Lord, help me." "No, I cannot cast the children's bread to dogs;" it looked hard but it brought her to know what God was, and what she was. The Lord did not say there is a promise to Israel, but you are not in it. He brought her to say, I have no promise, but God is good enough to give me what I want. It seemed hard, just as in the case of Martha and Mary, but there was no perfect patience till the thing came out as God would have it. That requires thorough confidence in God, and thorough

having done with self. It is for me to do His will, as Christ did in everything. If there is patience there is none of my own will, I go on in long-suffering for others and joyfulness. Christ was characterized by patience. He could say, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Do I always do things as He did? There we get the stay of the soul. You see the privilege upon which it is all based. What are the signs of an apostle, "patience" is one of them. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience." There were other signs too, but he does everything as God pleases, even in healing a friend. Epaphroditus was sick, nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and there was his love and labor, he was going on a message from Paul, God had mercy on him, Paul waited for this.

Now, the saint, is not of this world, he is in it, but he has to walk in the spirit and character of Christ, with spiritual understanding of God's will, and having spiritual strength, and then doing God's will, as James says, "Let patience have her perfect work, &c." I have no will of my own in patience.

Now, as regards the Christian as fully as can be, he leads us into this: Paul says, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." All the patience and walking worthy is founded upon that, and mark here it is a very strong passage, it is not, who has justified and given us a title to glory: that is very true, but it is "who hath made us meet." You have seen the path and walk of the Christian, and the grace which put us into it, but the thief could go straight to Paradise with Christ for he was fit to be there, fit to be Christ's companion. Blessed testimony that, when all deserted Him, the thief comforts Him! to think that when He was there on the cross he should just settle in his mind that He was coming in glory; not a cloud was upon his soul, and yet he was in agony and pain in this lingering death, but he never thinks about it,—all he thinks of is to be with Christ, and a perfect work of confidence is wrought in his soul. We must remark he did not go through the desert, but he was fit to be with Christ in Paradise. It is the most striking instance of conversion you find anywhere: he was the only person who was a comfort to Christ on the cross. You get this blessed truth, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, making it up there in seeing that very place of perfection He has made us meet, and fit for it." Then you get another thing. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." I get Satan as the ruler of the darkness of this world, and that we are delivered from him. We may get into evil, but still we are delivered from the power of darkness. The prince of this world sets up for glory, which has nothing to do with God, and was revealed in Christ to us. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." The world (although there are mercies in it) is a world that has rejected the Son of God. "This is your hour"—and what was that "the power of darkness." I dread the things of the world for saints. If a man commit a plain sin there is nothing but what is evident and unmistakable in that; but the world slips in by back doors. The world began with Cain who rejected the mercy of God, killed his brother, and when God remonstrated with him, he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." And he was a vagabond on the earth—he went out from the presence of God, and he builded a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, and that is what the world has done; it has settled itself when it was driven out from God. Then you cannot have a stupid city without anything in it, so you get wealth, then instruments of brass and iron, and so on. People say what harm is there in brass and iron? No harm at all; God made them, but in a world of that character man must try and get on well because he is away from God. There is no harm in them,

but the harm is that they were using them to be happy away from God. I have got into the light, but that is not all, I have this blessing, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, &c." I have not only God as light, but love; those are the two essential names of God. I do not mean names given in a dispensational way as Jehovah; but the two essential names as characteristic of his essential nature are Love and Light. We are delivered from the power of darkness, and brought not simply into the light, but into the kingdom of the Son of His love, where all God's love displays itself towards His Son. That is where I am; "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." It is the light of course, but it is also the kingdom of the Son of His love. Then he adds the how of it. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It makes me fit to walk there, we are brought into the light as white as snow. It shows what a blessed place we are brought into, partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I am in Him, I have this blessing, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." I have my sins all forgiven, and I stand with my conscience clear. We have the walk of the saint, founded upon this place he is in. We have another most blessed thing here, but that is connected with every day responsibility. It takes up the whole question on another ground. We have the character and perfectness and the fullness of the grace we have got in Christ.

Then he takes up what God's ways, and plans are in Christ, then reconciliation comes in; everything will be reconciled in the new heaven and new earth. Look at vs. 15—(having got the groundwork, Christ, and the place in which He is, and having seen the place in which we are) we get "Who is the image of the invisible God." He revealed Him as God, He is the image of the invisible God. Then when I get the created system which God has been so pleased to have, He is the head of it, the ground of that is, that He was the creator of it.

"For (that is the reason) by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, &c." There I get this blessed truth for us, that while He created all things, He is the Son of His love, "they were created by Him and for Him." He is going to reconcile all things unto Himself, but will not do so without our being reconciled first. The time is coming when the whole state and order of things will be put in order. Satan will be cast out and the saints introduced into it, and Christ will be the head of it. As Adam was the head of the old creation so Christ is the Head of this new creation. As in Hebrews, "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, &c." It is spoken about the Son, but He did not take it (the headship) as God simply, but He that ascendeth (as man) has descended; has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. He went down into death that ruined the creature, looked at as to his condition and state; He goes down into death, the grave, and hales, and ascends up to the right hand of God, and fills all things in redemption. And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Not merely simply as God but in the power of redemption. He has not brought the things into order yet, but is sitting at the right hand of God, in the Majesty in the heavens till His enemies be made His footstool. He has not yet taken to Him His great power and reigned, but He has perfected us; that we have got already— "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The same Epistle says, "Now, we see not yet all things put under Him—but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."

A part of the eighth Psalm was fulfilled. He has taken His place, not on His own throne yet, but on His Father's, and He must reign till He has put all things in subjection under Him. He is now sitting on the Father's right hand while He is gathering out the joint heirs. The time will come to reconcile all things, all will be reconciled in Christ. And He is in that way the First-born of every creature. "And He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead." You get there a special relationship, a double headship, the headship of Christ to the Church, which is the body of Him who is the head; but over everything: one is over, the other is to. It is over everything that Christ created to the Church, which is His body. "He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead," and there I get the special place in which the Church is. So that He is not only Head over everything that He created, but also Head to the Church which is His body.

It is not only a fact, but involves a great deal. He had to become a man for the suffering of death, and has met the whole case that our sins had brought in, been under death, met Satan's power, drank the cup of judgment, and now He is above all that. This is after the evil had come in, after God's judgment is executed. He as man entered into a place that innocent Adam never could be in. He is there after death, after judgment, after sin had been all dealt with, He is in this glorious place: it is a totally new place. He is our life in that place. "I am the living One." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, &c." "In Him was life." The Godhead too, but there was life in Himself. The life was the light of men. He became a man, and takes the whole consequence of responsibility on the cross, and goes into a new place in God's glory. It is for us. He will be head over everything, but then taking this place as man, He is also the first-born from the dead. All the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Him (Col. 2:9.) "It pleased the Father, that in Him should all fullness dwell." By Him all is to be reconciled, there are two things—by Him I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, then I get the other point, "And you... yet now hath He reconciled." You get it again in the V. of 2nd Cor, vs. 18, that He has reconciled us. That is a blessed truth, and gives more than acceptance. It is our present condition of soul with God.

I have learned that my sins are gone, my heart has trusted this love of God, and my soul is brought into it by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only that I am going to heaven, but even here I am with God, without a cloud.

If it is a question of men being reconciled, they are not so, but we are reconciled, it is our condition in this purpose of God. It is not only this, but it goes on to bring us into our responsibility in connection with it. We are reconciled, consequently we have got back to God, with a sense of more love than if we had never sinned. The seal of the grace of God is God's love in not sparing His Son. Now, I can joy in God. I am reconciled now. That brings us into the path where responsibility is exercised, and conscience too. It is the place as a present thing now, I am in the path with God. As with Israel, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

We are reconciled to Him, the heart is brought really back. That is the reason you find what is a very touching thing in John. He has sent His Son that we might live through Him, and has given His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and here in this love in giving His Son, it is that as He is, so are we in this world. But we love Him, because He first loved us. The heart has drunk in all this

love that brought eternal life to us, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in Him." You know it by the Holy Ghost; it all streams into the heart of the saint, Take a child, it would say, "if you only knew my mother, though I so often forget her wishes, still I find her heart all love." "We love Him because He first loved us"—that is reconciliation! He loved us, we love Him, it is the divine nature in us. Having seen that whereas the state of things is not reconciled yet, and cannot be until Christ comes; righteousness will reign then and dwell where the whole thing is new; but we are reconciled in an unreconciled world. The present effect of that is to put us upon Our responsibility to go on to the end. When Israel was in bondage, God called them (I take it as a figure) there, the wilderness forms no part of God's purpose, but of His ways it does (see Exod. 3:6-15).

God was going to give them Canaan, but in point of fact He led them through the desert, that is what He does with us, The case of the thief shows that it was not a merely necessary thing to go through the desert.

It is with the desert the if's are connected. It is no question of purpose, nay, of the accomplishments of it but in bringing about the ways of God. He puts the Christian through this world exercising and trying, and so on, to see if he will keep His commandments or not. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight. That is his purpose. Then he says, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." He puts them through the wilderness where they are tested and proved as to their obedience and dependence upon God. It is not a question of redemption if we are in Christ. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you. There is never an if there, but the moment He takes me as an actual living man in the flesh here, He says, "You must run that you may obtain." It is not that I am not fit to be with Christ, but now the thing is, I am sent to travel through the desert. If any man serve me, let him follow me. And where I am there shall also my servant be.

But what is my confidence? It is another and a blessed thing. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous. Christ is my righteousness, there is no if there. Why am I kept by the power of God? We are in danger of stumbling, but God will keep us to the end, we have to be kept, would not you stumble if you were not kept of God. Take that passage in Mat 10th, "I give unto them eternal life."

What is the good of saying, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," if they were not in danger of being plucked? it is the same word as "catcheth" in vs. 12, "the wolf catcheth them"—but Christ says, "they will never catch them out of my hand." There is perfect security in the Lord's faithfulness. I get the way He keeps me; I have prayed for thee "that thy faith fail not." Peter's faith did not fail.

Take another instance, is it not so blessed as that in John? Paul says to the Corinthians, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." What makes it so striking is, they were going on badly, he blames them for what they were doing, but still he says, "Who shall confirm you unto the end." We are put through the difficulties and trials of the way. We may fail, and do fail, but we have got this, "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." And therefore the responsibility of leaning upon this grace

every moment, not calling in question our redemption, while walking through the wilderness.

We are put through this every day, so that we in the sense of our weakness may lean upon the Lord—so that we may go on day by day leaning upon Him, that we may be with Him at the end of the journey. It is not a question of redemption or acceptance, but it is a question of His putting you through this process. He puts you through it in perfect faithfulness to bring you through, but to bring you through knowing Him, and knowing yourself too. We should find out not merely that God has accomplished perfect redemption, but that He never withdraws His eyes from the righteous. He loves and chastens, but puts us here and says, “You must get to the end of the journey.” He says, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12-9). The apostle was in danger of being puffed up, the Lord sends him the messenger of Satan, it made his speech contemptible, and when he learned that he was reduced to utter weakness, then it is that he says, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

We have all to go through this. I have the perfect settled consciousness that I am reconciled to God. He will present us in that day without fault, we have the promise that that will be done (Jude 24)—but we have exercises all the way, to see how far we will walk worthy. When you speak of the desert then you find all these ifs. You never find “if Christ is my righteousness” —that has nothing to do with if. The case of the thief showed us the desert was not necessary; and it is God’s way to put us through it. Just as with Job he was saying, “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me”—he was getting pleased with himself, and God reveals Himself, and He says, “Now, mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself.” Then can God bring in all the blessings.

There is no uncertainty as to the perfectness of Christ’s work. No uncertainty as to being in glory. “You hath He reconciled.” He wants our hearts to get into this place. He is earnestly exercising our souls, but with the blessed promise that He will never fail. The soul can always lean on that blessed truth. “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

There may be wandering away, or the tendency to it, and therefore you get, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” We are every day exercised all the way, and we gain immensely by it. Paul does not say I believe, but “I know whom I have believed”—he knew Him. “He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” I get this full and blessed knowledge of Christ—we get that in passing through the wilderness. My soul gets perfect rest by being able to say, “I know whom I have believed.”

I add one word from the Old Testament, “The Lord is my shepherd.” It is not that He has given me great blessings, but THE LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want even walking through the valley of the shadow of death. God spreads a table for me in the midst of mine enemies goodness and mercy shall follow me all the day of my life. He had learned through all the power of death, the Lord had kept him through all this, and he was in the knowledge of what the Lord was. Whatever comes in our path, we get the assurance of God’s faithfulness. He can never fail.

There are three things.

First we walk worthy of the Lord, that is what we are called to.

Worthy of God who hath called us with an holy calling. Then we get the blessed consciousness that if it is a question of responsibility, we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

And the third thing is, God has carried you through the wilderness, where all the motives of the heart are exercised. And thus you learn and know Him.

It is wonderful to think that God should think of the difficulties and dangers and so on, but will never cease to carry us along the road.

Are You Happy With God?

Psalms 32

It is a great comfort when we come to God's word to find how very simply He speaks to us. He stoops to speak in such a manner as we can understand Him. One great fault with us is, that we are not simple enough with God. For God has been very simple in His dealings with man, and has adapted Himself to man's feebleness, speaking and acting in such a way as to draw out his confidence towards Himself. Happy is it for the man with whom this is accomplished! How charming is the condescension of God! He who is so much above us and beyond us, whom by searching and by all our best efforts we could never find out has come near to us to make Himself known, and to win our confidence. Is it won in your case? Are you happy with God?

Thus we find that the "scriptures" are not wholly taken up with doctrine or precept, there is much more. For instance, in reading this Psalm we see that God has allowed David to detail for our benefit somewhat of his experience, and of God's dealings with Him, and the exercises of soul through which he passed ere he entered into the blessings which God was leading him to, God in His goodness has anticipated all our need, and considered every groan and inquiry of the heart that seeks after Him.

What a comfort it is then to find in the scriptures the experience of a man of like passions as ourselves, and who says, "Come, I'll tell you what I found. God to be for me when I discovered myself to be a sinner; I will tell you all that God said to me, and all I said to Him and the blessing I found at His hands!"

It is an important question, "What is God for us when we are sinners?" There is a vast difference between what we ought to be for God and what God is for us. The law spake of the former thing, the gospel tells us of the latter. Suppose I visit a dying man who has lived all his days without God, and I read the ten commandments to him, and press upon him what he ought to be for God, what would he say if he had any anxiety about the future? Would it not be this, "Tell me not at this late hour of what I should be for God, I know full well I have not been what I ought to have been, I own that I have added sin to sin and am guilty in God's sight; and I know my life and time are gone, soon I shall have to appear before Him whom I have fled from all my days, but if you can tell me while I am still here what God is for a sinner, what He is for one that has hated him, if you can tell me that there is grace in His heart for me and that He receives such, you will bring comfort to my soul."

Thus it is with all of us that inquire after Him. The thing that brings rest to our hearts is the knowledge of what God is and has done for us when we have been only sinners.

But there is a great difference between the blessing God has in store for us and the way by which we enter consciously into it. This latter thing is often a long process. Let us look at it.

There were three things (whatever else) took place with regard to man at his fall, as recorded in Genesis 3. Firstly, He lost confidence in God. Secondly, He became guilty. Thirdly, He left God to do his own will. Hence, when the grace of God meets a man, it meets him in that state, viz.: Doing his own will—guilty—and having no confidence in God—and with these three things God deals. He removes the guilt. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,” verses 1-2. He restores confidence. “Thou art my hiding place,” verse 7—and He turns the man right round to do His will and to lead and instruct him in the way he should go. Accompanying this want of confidence in God, there is guile in the spirit of man, which leads him to hide up his sin from his conscience and from God—he will seek to excuse the sin or excuse himself, lay the blame on others and even justify himself—and worse than all, even seek to blame God for it. But if man seeks to pacify his conscience by excuses, that will never do for God. He must have “truth in the inward parts,” and remove guile from the heart. When God saves us He brings us into His thoughts about sin and about ourselves. We may kick against it for long, we may “keep silence” like David, verse 3—but we shall prove how God lays His hand heavily upon us until we confess to Him. We would naturally choose another way. The language of our hearts by nature is “let us off”—“let us escape the judgment,” that is all we want. But God’s way is different, blessed be His Holy Name. He brings us to right thoughts of sin, to be “partakers of His holiness,” and to condemn ourselves. We say, “I have sinned and am not worthy to be called Thy son.” We own we have forfeited every right to blessing and come back to cast ourselves on God. It is humbling for us, still it is the only way by which we enter into blessing. For notice, verse 5, when David acknowledges his sin to God and hides nothing, he finds God forgives the iniquity of his sin. God answers the confessing soul with full acquittal. Guile must be taken out of our hearts, and confidence restored. How hard is this process for flesh and blood. Still God will make man to own his state and his sin before Him, in whose presence all is manifest. Let none shrink from it.

But now let us look at what produces confidence in us to go to God to confess all without guile.

How is guile taken from our hearts? If we thought God was going to impute the sin to us and to condemn us for it we should keep away from Him, and if forced to meet Him we would seek to cover up and conceal our sin, or seek to tone it down in order to make ourselves more acceptable before Him, for we should reason thus, “The more I tell the greater will be my condemnation, the less I tell the better and safer it will be for me.”

Now, if God took up our sins with us we could never stand, we could never be justified, Psalms 130:3, but He comes to tell us that He took all up with Christ, and has been so satisfied and glorified that He freely forgives all trespasses.

He who knows all our sins and knows our life, having seen all our ways and counted all our steps, He who could justly have imputed our sins to us has come near to assure us that He laid all on Christ in order to justify us. It is through having confidence in His testimony to that, that we are made free to tell all our sin to Him, conscious that He knows all, that all our evil was a present thing to Him when He laid it on Christ, conscious too and resting in the truth which love has discovered to us that what distressed our conscience was what caused Christ His agony. We see all borne by Him, owned by Him to God for us. Thus we seek not to hide sin from God, which was all brought to light at the cross and judged there.

Lastly, God takes us thoroughly in hand. He turns us right round to Himself, with new desires and to do His will, and He says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye."

Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 3 - Redeemed and Renewed

1 Peter 1:18-25, 2:1-2.

Two things come out clearly in this part of our chapter, redemption by blood, and renewal, —being born again by the word of God. You have been redeemed, he says, by this precious blood. How then can you go on in the ways of the old man?

If you have been touched by the wondrous love of God, and have been redeemed completely from under the bondage of Satan, what kind of conversation will yours be now? It was “vain conversation” before, but you are redeemed, not merely purchased.

Redemption and purchase are two very different things. Redemption is the slave being set free from his condition as a slave, and brought into liberty. Mere purchase leaves him a slave. Still, though the master be different, every unconverted soul belongs to the Lord. It is the Lord that bought them. He bought “the field,” that is, the world, and every inhabitant of it belongs to Him, and deny Him though men may, and do, now, the day is fast approaching when they will have to own Him Lord.

You are redeemed, you are set free, to serve Him with purpose of heart. There is not an element of bondage left now for the children of God. He has brought them into a place of perfect liberty, not liberty for the flesh, but for the enjoyment of that into which His grace has brought them.

The apostle, you must remember, is speaking to those who had Jewish thoughts and minds, which makes his language the more forcible. In referring to the blood of the Lamb, what would that say to an Israelite? It would speak to him of that night in Egypt when the blood of the slain Lamb, sprinkled on the door-posts, kept God out, when He passed by in judgment. It would speak to him, too, of how that blood maintained their place before God in the wilderness. When the Spirit of God could say through Balaam, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel,” was there none? Yes, plenty, but He saw none. Is there not iniquity and perverseness too in us? Yes, but God sees none. He sees that blood which has brought you into His own presence in peace and in blessing. You never can get beyond it, even in glory. There the theme of everlasting praise is the Lamb slain.

Note, it is “the precious blood of Christ.” Scripture does not often use adjectives, specially so when speaking of the Lord Himself, but here the Spirit of God does use an adjective, “the precious blood.” That is God’s estimate of it, “precious.” It avails to cleanse from every sin, its efficacy is now fresh before God.

These words “the precious blood of Christ” fell with sweetness on believers’ ears 1800 years ago, when Peter first penned the words, they fall with equal sweetness on believers ears today, because it is this precious blood that gives us a place before God. You may fail, and I may fail, but that precious blood of Christ can never fail.

“Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.” The introduction of the Lamb of God, was no afterthought with God, it was pre-ordained before the foundation of the world. Why before the foundation of the world? Because the blessing of the people was thought of before the foundation of the world.

If you get an earthly people spoken of, “from the foundation of the world” is the word used; but if it be the present moment of the richest display of the grace of God, and the church comes in, you get “before the foundation of the world.” (Compare Ephesians 1:4; Titus 1:2; and; Peter 1:20, with Matthew 25:8-34; Revelation 13:8, and 17:8.)

The moment the world came in God says I am going to have a people in the world, (the Jews) but the church does not belong to the world at all, the church is a heavenly thing and was thought of in eternity.

Verse 21. “Who by him do believe in God.” It is not by creation man knows God. Man seeks to know God by creation, but he does not know Him, nor does he find Him out by His providential dealings up to Moses’ time, nor by His revelations from Sinai, for man could not come near Him, if but a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through. God dwelt in thick darkness, which no one could approach unto. It is neither by creation nor by providence, nor by law that man knows God, but by this One who came down, and walked this earth as a man, and revealed the heart of God towards man, and then who died for man, and who has gone up again to the glory above—the Lamb of God.

Do you believe in God, I ask you, Are you thoroughly at home with God? Are you happy with God? “Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.” It is of the deepest importance to the soul to get hold of this, that the man Christ Jesus was the expression of the heart of God.

Perhaps in your minds you have a little different thought of God, from what the thought of Jesus presents to you.

Tell me, is Jesus, that man of sorrows who walked this earth, that blessed compassionate man, is this One your thought of God? Any thought of God that is not the perfect counterpart of what Jesus was, is an idol; hence, says the Apostle John, “Little children keep yourselves from idols.” So Peter says, you have every reason for the fullest hope, no reason for distrust of God, but on the contrary the most perfect confidence in Him; no diffidence about the future but the most blessed hope that He who has raised up from the dead, the Lord Jesus, will raise you up also in like manner. Nothing but the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus could give the soul this blessed peace and hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed. The Lord give us to know Him better, and delight in Him more as we travel on from day to day.

Verse 22. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit; unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” Your soul has been practically purified from its old thoughts and wishes, and now what comes out instead? “Unfeigned love of the brethren.” You had been wandering through the world restless and unhappy, perhaps, and the grace of God came and worked in your heart, and you woke up to find yourself among your brethren. Now, he says, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” It is very easy to love loveable people, nothing is easier, but that is not “love out of a

pure heart." Love out of a pure heart is a love that loves, not because the object is deserving, but when it is the reverse; it is like the love of God, who loved us when there was nothing to love about us.

In Romans 5 the apostle says, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die." A righteous man is a hard kind of man, who pays every one and expects everyone to pay him, but does not win much love, and scarcely for such an one will one die. "Yet, peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die," for a Howard or a Peabody, a philanthropist, one whose life was spent in benefitting others, for such, the apostle says peradventure some would even dare to die.

But when we were destitute of righteousness and stripped of goodness, that was the very Moment when God loved us. That was "love out of a pure heart," and that is the kind of love the Lord would stir us up to.

It is a very poor thing when people complain of want of love. I believe when we get to this state, that we fail to find people loving us, we may lay it down as an axiom, that we are not loving them.

You may say, "It is impossible to love some." Peter says otherwise. You ought to love them, he says, because they are redeemed, and you have the power to love them because you are renewed. They are redeemed by the blood of Christ, there is your motive for loving them, and you are born again by the word of God, there is your power.

Verses 24,25. "All flesh is grass." This is a beautiful quotation from Isaiah 40. Do you think you have a better nature than your neighbor, or your neighbor than you? God says all flesh is grass, and He says this when comforting His people. It is not the way you and I would comfort each other, to tell each other we are utterly worthless. That is the Way God begins to comfort.

Nature is like grass, God says, but His word is abiding and enduring forever, and God has put in your soul a principle of blessing that is immutable, and unchanging and eternal, and from Himself and like Himself. I have told you what you are, God says, now I will tell you what I am.

You are grass, Peter says, and God is everlasting, and His word endures forever, and He has put his word in your heart, and now you have a nature like Himself.

How easy, if I only get this new life fed and nourished, for the child to be like the Father, There is no effort in love, it is like water finding its own level, and if we are in the enjoyment of the love of God, feeling its blessedness to us, it will come out from us to others.

When we were utterly worthless there was something put into us by the love of God, His word living and abiding, that enables the child to be like the Father, and to love out of a pure heart as He loves.

You are redeemed and you are renewed and in the energy of the new life, you desire to follow in the wake of your Father's action. To please Him is to act like Him, you love the Father and you love the children.

Then having got this new life there are things to be laid aside, Chap 2:1, "Laying aside all malice, and all guile." Guile is not liking to be read through, having something sinister behind. How beautiful is the Lord's word about Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

Without guile is transparent, Was the Lord ever double? He was as transparent as the light, for He was “the light.”

“Hypocrisies” too are to be laid aside, i.e., seeming to be what one is not and hiding what one is—“And envies and all evil speakings.” Scripture turns us inside out, and shows us what is in our hearts. There is no other book that reveals God, and no other book that reveals man. If we were but subject to what we have before us in this second chapter, there would not spring up these weeds in the garden of the Lord, which alas so often damage and disfigure it. It is very easy to pick a flaw in other people. Nothing easier. It needs no microscope to see the defects in others, but is that the way to help them?

“As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby up to salvation.” These last three words should be inserted here.

In the first chapter you were born by the word, here it is the food of the new life. The word gave you life, the word sustains and nourishes that life all along the way. You will never be a grown-up person till you reach the Lord in glory, all along the way you are to be in this character of a new born babe.

In proportion as we are feeding upon and delighting in the word of the Lord so our souls grow, and so are the things that are reprehended kept out.

The Lord give us to love His word and delight in it more and more, and walk more in simple obedience to it till we see His face by and bye.

We are too apt to take what others think about the word, that is, to take it adulterated. If we are going to be happy, we must get the word for ourselves. If We give it up we shall certainly lose everything else, If the sap of a tree is gone, so is the health and fruit bearing. The word of God is everything to the soul, Do we then buy up the opportunities that are given us for the study of the word? We may not all be able to give hours to it at one time, but do we use up our minutes?

You never were caught by Satan and tripped-up, you never made a mistake in your history, that it was not the direct result of neglect of the word of God.

The Lord answered and defeated Satan as the result of having lived by the word of God, not because He Himself was God, and when we have been beaten by Satan, it was because we had not the word of the Lord to go by.

I believe there is in the Word, Divine guidance for your soul and mine for every step of our history from first to last. There are principles to be found in it that would guide us if we were subject to it at all times.

I would press upon you, my reader, more careful and prayerful and constant study of the word of the Lord to get to know His mind. Comparatively speaking the Bible is a small book, how is it we know so little about it? I believe because there is a profundity in it, to begin with, that no other book has, and it must be read in dependence on God in order to be understood, and then too Satan does his very best to prevent our storing it up in our hearts, because he knows its value.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,” the Lord says, “I will manifest myself to him,” i.e., I will pay him a visit, but he that “keeps my word” keeps me,” says Christ, “we will come unto him and make our abode with him.” In proportion as our souls heed the written word we shall find the Spirit of God giving us the enjoyment of Him who is the Living Word.

I do not wonder Peter commends them so earnestly to the word of the Lord because he so often so touchingly alludes to his own denial of Him. Had He remembered the word of the Lord to him he would never have denied him in Pilate’s hall.

Individual Experience of Forgiveness

It is remarkable how individual the experience given in Psalms 32 is. The writer of it had been taken up by God, as a shepherd boy, and put on the throne. There he committed three of the most awful sins that the law of God condemned, adultery, murder, and corruption. He used the very throne to which he had been raised from the sheep-cote—the throne of Jehovah, as the place, not only for his own shame to come out to light in, but to put dishonor on Jehovah Himself.

But when his soul had passed through this process with God, he found he had gained immensely, he was thrown, not only as a poor sinner, at the feet of Jesus, but right on to that great master-thought of Godliest mercy and compassion. God said to Moses, “I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy.” The law of Moses is like a magnificent glass, to discover whether man had really met the mind of God the Creator when a ruined creature, and if he do not get beyond the thought, “God is examining me to see how well I walk,” he does not know God at all.

Have you been in the same class David was put into? into that place where the creature is under the light of God’s eye, and knows himself there, finds all the hypocrisy and double dealing of his own nature trying to push off the mercy, which is, his portion for eternity? We must be in it one way or another because God, the Holy Ghost, makes a quotation from this Psalm when speaking of God’s principles of dealing with man, in His gospel of grace now; and it gives out the principle of blessing at God’s hand.

In Romans 4 we get Paul’s statement of God’s principle of blessing. He does not bless a man according to his works. In God’s dealing with man, He finds all the positive evil in man, and not only says, “If I am to bless you it must be without works, but the blessing is the very test of the character of the man whose works are bad. The mercy of God is the only pathway for Jew or Gentile into the favor of God.”

This is God’s declaration in His gospel, verse 1 “Blessed is the man,” &c. What do we understand by “Blessed”? The primary idea of the word is “prosperous;” and a prosperous man before God is one who knows his sins, and finds the answer to them in God. This is true of a man marked by happiness. When we look at man, not only as in time, but for eternity, there is no man so prosperous as he who says, “I have nothing but sin in myself, but all my rest is in God.” That man has something to sing of, in which—whichsoever way he turns it—he finds some fresh note of gladness and joy connected with it.

“Transgression forgiven; Sin covered”! Transgression is quite different from sin—transgression is when a person has wandered from a marked path. Sin is the principle of self-willed independence in the heart of man. David made discovery of both these things in himself, and that they did not suit the heart of the creature in the presence of God. Directly he got them forgiven and covered then he could understand what prosperity it was to find that all the wanderings might be sung of as connected with God who had forgiven them. Have you got some knowledge of having come short of the glory of God? Has God come in and said, “I have nothing to reckon to you, nothing against

you?" Do you find in yourself the principle of self-willed independence? It often breaks out still in the child of God, though in a different form from David or Job. God says, "I know all about it, but I have put my hand upon it and covered it. Your ground of confidence is not that I do not know about it, but that I have judged it." Does God know all about the transgression and the independence? Paul, all rapturous of Christ and wanting to serve Him, had to go back and learn it all, though the sins were all forgiven and covered by God. It is a searching question to put to our own soul—how far I know that, as a creature standing before God the Creator (apart from the work of redemption), there is nothing seen by God in me but iniquity—nothing fit for His presence. When the eye of God comes down on me, when I look at what my nature is, do I know what it is to say, "it is iniquity?" I ought to know it if it be the Lord's pleasure not to impute it. He has hid it, and asks urn what I think about Christ, who bore the punishment, being in glory now, or would I rather have a good thought about myself? What a different ground for a soul to be on, to say, "I know all—nothing can ever rise and startle me at all—I know it, for it was all imputed to Him more than 1800 years ago and judged by God on the cross."

"In whose spirit there is no guile." This has nothing to do with guilt—guilt is the condition of a man having transgressed who has not got an answer to his sin; guile is artifice. While David was trying to patch up himself he was forgetting that it was all exposed before his people. To think that, he could try to be before God as an unruined creature, when, the man of God's own heart, he had taken the place of a model sinner! It would not do. God says, I know all the iniquity, but I do not impute it. Why then wear any false appearance any longer? I know it all and make you know that I know it and do not impute it. A man can take his place before God, not as a guileful sinner, but knowing God as one who says, "I have mercy of my own to forgive and not to impute." As soon as David knew of mercy he could get up and walk without any attempt to cover anything. He knew the blessedness of the man in whom there is no guile.

Verses 3,4. Often a process goes on in the mind (and a terrible experience it is) when the natural man won't recognize God's mercy and compassion as the ground on which he is placed and accepted before God, and is trying by artifice to pass things off and cover the heart a little better than it was covered before.

"My bones waxed old," &c. are figures used to show the pain of the lesson David had learned. Has the Christian got to pass through that now? Not in the same way, because the first thing presented to our mind is Christ crucified, dead, and risen again for us. When I read the Romans, I find Paul learning the ruin of human nature and the creature—and through the learning of those doctrines on himself, he was put through a very deep process, and he is brought down entirely to his wits end. Then he cries out, "Oh! wretched man that I am," &c.

People often do not see that the difficulty is not in things around, above, or below, but in one's self. "Who shall deliver me from myself?" Has God saved me from myself? Yes. He that is identified with Christ is identified with Him in crucifixion, death, and burial, therefore, I am to reckon myself dead.

But I am not dead, you say, I find myself alive – But I have to reckon myself dead. This comes with a great struggle, because these principles are not fully established in our hearts. But the doctrine of Rom. 6 and 7 must be learned.

The way that David got deliverance was, he just simply opened his bosom and poured out all that was there! What have you got to give God? What has man got to give? One thing (though he may start at the thought) sin and sins! That is all! If ever you gave God anything that He accepted it was your sins. Give your sinful self to Him, and let Him write up death and judgment on it, and everything will come afterward. Then He will not turn from the lowest thing you can do. Nothing is too little. The first thing is to understand what our relation to God is. That is God's thought. Do you wonder at it? There is a great deal of appearing in the best colors before man—God wants reality. If He has one leading trait it is "He cannot lie." God's mind attaches so much importance to reality He cannot do away with it for a moment.

David had not reckoned about this. What did he do when he found God's ground. God says, "Are you on the ground of making yourself out a little sinner? How are we to get on? Is God to be satisfied with it? You, my representative on the throne, how can I say it is a little thing you have done? I am upon the ground of mercy." Directly it got hold of David's soul, and he was driven in, then he opens his bosom and pours all out. Have your souls got there? What is to startle me if my soul is in this place, that I do not know on earth a person in nature more completely come short of the glory of God, than my own self—but just because God was not ruined where I was ruined, He says, "I shall take occasion by your very ruin to shew my mercy. The very fact of your being a sinner is the motive of my coming out to glorify Myself. You know My Son has died for such, and is now at My right hand." Am I there? What further discoveries can come out if, to my mind, the blood of the Lord Jesus shed on Calvary be the measure for all my sins, and the judgment of the cross, the condemnation of the iniquity of my nature? If God wants to have a people whom does He choose? A righteous people? No a people who when all the earth shall be under the power of darkness and sin, He shall save and redeem to Himself, a people that shall be made to slip Satan and live for Him in spite of what they are.

God has a people who find they cannot get along unless they know their ruin, and how God has even turned that to His own glory, and know God as a refuge from their ruin. He is their hiding place. There is a height in Him of grace altogether beyond what the creature can measure. Who could have thought of such a thing as that the unruined. God should come in and say, "I know how to turn your very ruin to my glory. I am altogether above you in the range of my thoughts. I shall do as I choose." "I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy," &c. Who is to say to God, stop, "Thou wilt not?" He is the only One who can say, "I will," and it shall stand. What else does it show? God, as the God of resources! It seemed utterly impossible that now, if God's character were what it was said to be, the rays of His character could so blend, as to meet the sinner. But He was a God of resources: He had one Son, and in Him on the cross all the rays of the character of God could be shown out, and God stands forth inviting, attracting, alluring, commanding the ruined creature, not to stand out for the first Adam, but to come to God and acknowledge his sinnership, and confess his sins on the ground of the Person and work of Him, whom God delighteth to honor. The beauty of the Lamb that sits on the throne of God is part of my felicity as a poor sinner.

Is that a ground that will break down? No! When the heart is simple in the renunciation of everything one has as a mere creature, and gets on the ground of Christ's work in salvation and redemption, Satan himself has nothing to say against it. If all the devils come, if my conscience accuse me, they can say nothing to what God has said against me, when He put His Son on the cross for me. I can say, "What do you think, Satan, of this, that Christ bore my curse?" I have

boldness before God, when the Lamb is my boldness. Ruined in myself I no doubt am, and not worth speaking about, but my ruin is taken occasion of by God, because God wants a people on earth who can speak well of Him, walk as His Son walked and resist Satan, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. If this is to be, you must know your ruin. You must take God's exposition of what His divine counsels were about the sin found in us, and you will find a standard of ruin a standard of happiness for the Christian, that in the darkest pit in which he could be, he has the mercy of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost sealing on the heart the bright light of the truth that God has found an answer to the ruin. The devil will have his own way with you if you look for any good in yourself. If you are to stand up in any way you must be emptied of all fancied goodness and human strength and have God's mercy meeting your ruin, and Christ's strength made perfect in your weakness.

The Revelation of Christ to the Soul

Wherever the Spirit of God reveals truth, it is the revelation of Christ to the soul. It is essentially practical. It fills the soul, the affections with Christ. The Lord said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." The foundation once laid, God forms and fashions the soul by the revelation of Christ, at the same time delivering us from the present things and associating us with Himself.

What characterizes the Christian is that which takes him out of the world altogether (he has his relationships to fulfill in this life) makes him an epistle of Christ, manifesting the life of Christ, and leading him to long for the time when he shall find himself in the Father's home, like Christ, with Christ forever, nothing more to jar.

God has associated Him with Himself and with that place; and our part is, as Christ's was here, to manifest that our place even now is there. Aye, our place is in the last Adam, not in the first.

This "charge," the "end of the commandment," was Timothy's commission (1 Tim. 1). His mandate, as it were, was to make manifest this place which saints had in association with the life of Christ. He speaks of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." We are called to inherit blessing, to inherit it from one who dwells in blessing. "The glorious gospel" tells me how man is brought back to God, and thus shows the triumph of God and blessing over evil.

The first beginning of the history of man gives us the triumph of evil over natural blessing. Consequent on this came judgment. Next comes the law, a requisition from man who had pretensions to good. A rule was given of righteousness (if man could make it out). There was no triumph of good here, but a requirement from man of what man ought to be. The law was not given to Adam, the law was given to sinners—to fallen man. The law would have been of no use to Adam before the fall; he would not have understood "Thou shalt not steal," etc. The law brings out evil to our consciences. Who has loved God today as he should have done? Who has loved his neighbor as himself? It is not the blessed truth of the triumph of good over evil; but it is most useful to bring to the consciences these two things: first, not only that we have sinned, but why you and I have sinned. Shall I tell you why? Because we liked it. "In me, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing;" and, what is more, when I desire to do good evil is present with me.

If we are to be with God, we must be fit for Him. When Isaiah saw His glory he felt he was a man of unclean lips. I cannot go back to paradise and natural blessing; I cannot stay where I am; but I must be able to look into the light of that glory and say it is my joy, or I cannot walk with God who is light. To this end I must learn what verse 5 speaks of "the end of the commandment," love, faith, and a pure conscience.

A good conscience is only conscious of what the pure heart should be in the presence of God, having an entire unclouded confidence (faith unfeigned) in God. "That your faith and hope might be IN God." If I fail, I fly back to God if I am weak, I fly back to God with faith unfeigned in Him, as the One who has delivered me; counting upon God, as the One that is for me, to bring me back to my place.

The law never gives life; the law never gives strength; the law never gives an object (vs. 8 and 9.). If the law could have given life, righteousness would have been by it. The law gives no power against sin, but slays. The law gives no object. But when we turn to Christ, in His person we find—the One good, all purity, all goodness, perfectly divine. Oh! if I could get such—as Paul says, “win Christ.” One above all my wretchedness; One who comprehends me, but in so doing brings such grace and peace; One who was brought into the midst of evil, but who was superior to it. When He is once known, we do not want to excuse sin, we want to get rid of it. Does He hide sin? Nay, he would have truth in the inward parts (not the truth of doctrine now). When once thus known, God is trusted in all love. In the Gospels we have a full, perfect exhibition of the triumph of good over evil. See the woman taken in adultery, the leper who was not only defiled, but whose touch defiled another, but not Christ. What grace (however imperfectly) to know God! I discharge my heart into the bosom of Him whom I can trust. To whom could I ever tell out all sin? not to any friend out and out, but to Him unreservedly. And mark how He carries me on. Having opened my heart by the goodness He has shown me in bringing me into His presence, I learn sin put away by Him who needed not to be spared, but was able to bear the full brunt of God’s judgment for sin.

Oh, that one work by which he put away sin! God being perfectly glorified by that which met sin. Not as the Jewish sacrifices did—sin and sacrifice—sin and sacrifice—and sin again: but done forever! I get then this truth, that in virtue of what Christ has done, this Christ is set at His right hand; God having stepped in; this blessed One having met sin and put it away. It is done! If it is not done, when is it to be done? Can Christ die over again? It never can be done. He cannot return from glory to do it. It is done, and now we see why it is called “the Gospel of the glory.”

I am brought into light. No light is like the light which shines on the cross. Your sins were as scarlet, they are made white as snow. I am brought in conscience through a new and living way, into God’s presence, spotless. By the Comforter sent, I get the power of it. The good conscience is one that knows nothing in the heart but what the Holy Ghost puts there. The estimates of the conscience are always according to the presence it is in. Duties flow from the place we are already in. Some think the knowledge of grace releases us from duties. Nay, it founds them. A child of God forever, I have the duties of a child forever. A pure heart will reject what is contrary to the Holy Ghost. In a good conscience Christ is all. Whenever I have failed, I have left Christ out.

Faith unfeigned trusts Him ever, and keeps a good conscience; a perfect and pure heart confides in that love, and whence did it come? It sprang from Himself. By Him we believe in God, and what He expects from us is not only that we should know that we are blessed in Him, but with Him. His perfect love is shown by bringing us into blessing with Himself. Driven out of earthly paradise by sin, we are brought into heavenly paradise by redemption; and he leads our thoughts, desires, and affections after it, founded on His perfect work; faith unfeigned giving us the knowledge of his heart, a heart to enter into all our sorrows and trials.

The smallest thing jars, let in contrary to Him. We belong not to ourselves: we are Christ’s, not our own. We ought not to have good consciences if indulging in what is contrary to Him.

I ask if He came this night would He find you with a whole heap of things to huddle out of your heart, or is it ready? Is your heart waiting, full of affection for Him? There is no truth so powerful to empty the heart of all that is contrary to Him. If waiting, how much freer and looser should we sit from all on earth. The Lord apply the question to your hearts, whether, if He came, you could open

to Him immediately, and so look with joy unclouded to see Him.

The Place of Power

Elijah's path had been a peculiar one. It had been marked by testimony against evil; and it had been, I judge, more or less one of loneliness. But it was about to close, and it would seem to me that it closed characteristically. "The Lord would take up Elijah into heaven," it says, "by a whirlwind" (2 Kings 2). His ministry, I judge, was of a whirlwind character. In one sense rightly so.

But his course was closing, and "Elijah," it says, "went with Elisha from Gilgal."

Now the character of Gilgal was, as shown, Joshua 5, separation to God on the part of Israel when they had crossed the Jordan. In such separation and power did God start His people when first the Spirit was sent forth according to Acts 2, &c.

But it says further on "they went down to Bethel." Now, Bethel was one of the places where Jeroboam set the golden calves. It was the mark of the distinct religious apostacy of the Ten Tribes. Alas! Israel in its history got from Gilgal to Bethel. Such, too, has been the history of the Church. It should have been united in itself, separate from the world. It has been thoroughly divided within itself, and united with the world. Religious apostacy has taken place, and now intelligent faith has to act in such a scene as Elijah did in his day.

Further on it says, "So they came to Jericho." Now Jericho told another tale respecting Israel. Destroyed by the immediate intervention of God, it was left as a standing monument of His judgment. A curse was pronounced against the man that should rebuild it. But it was rebuilt in the days of Ahab (1 Kings 16:34.)—one sad proof of the state of things. It was an external proof of departure from God. The two things go together—spiritual departure from God, and external failure of walk. It is God's way to let it come out thus, though the walk with God is the deeper question. I may notice that in Rev. 1. we get two things—"stars" and "candlesticks" (lamps). It suggests to my mind the double character of responsibility which the saints have: a star gives light in heaven, a candlestick shines upon earth. Thus the saints in responsibility have to meet God. (Wondrous privilege in one sense). "I have not found thy works," it says (Rev. 3:2), "perfect before God," They should yield a light to men, too. But the former is the deeper thing; and when there is failure in heart before God, corporately, or individually, the Lord may let it come out before men. Thus the Ephesian Church had begun to fail as the star ("thou hast left thy first love"); and the threat was, they should fail as the candlestick, too, unless there was return of heart to God, according to verse 5. It further says the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches; and the angel is addressed in the vision in each case, suggesting, it would appear to me, a oneness in an assembly, a corporate character—a character attaching to a particular assembly. There might be one or more persons in a given assembly embodying that character; but that is a different question. Nor does it, I judge, refer in any way to a person presiding in any way on earth.

In a scene, then, characterized by Bethel and Jericho, Elijah had to move. But he was going to have done with it, and now was led by God, I judge, in some special sense, over the ground. Happy thought, that those things which have cost us so much pain and sorrow upon earth, if

faithfully met, will be sources of joy above, according to that word: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Thus, then, we may meet the Bethels and Jerichos.

Further on it says “they two stood by Jordan.” Jordan, to my mind, represents Death met in victory—in resurrection victory. Israel had crossed the Jordan to reach the land of Canaan on the other side. Elijah was crossing, I believe, the other way, and, as the expression that God, in one sense, had gone out of the Israel of the Ten Tribes. Still, it was the expression, typically, of resurrection-power.

And so it says: “It came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee,” etc. Yes, to know ourselves risen with Christ, that is the place of power. Taken out of this scene, taken out of the first Adam, and put into the second Adam, there as a member of the one Church! How few Christians know that they are on the other side of Jordan, altogether there with Christ. Yet there is the place of power—to know that, and, in connection with it, the Spirit dwelling in us down here, as thus united to Christ. And so, answerably to this “double portion of the Spirit,” we get Christ presented, in John 14:12, as on the other side of Jordan, and saying, “Greater works than these shall he do.” How far do we use the power that belongs to us? And so important is this truth that we get the word, “If thou see me, as I am taken from thee, it shall be so,” etc. Intelligent communion with the Exalted One—with Him who has been taken away, as rejected by man, but who has been glorified and exalted by the Father, is power indeed. Ah! blessed to know that that Exalted One belongs to us. He does not belong merely to Himself, in one sense; as Elisha says, when it was a chariot of fire and horses of fire for Elijah, “the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.” Blessed always to get in the Lord’s people, whatever blessing is given. But “he rent his clothes.” Yes; He is in the repose and glory of the Father, we are amidst the sorrow of the world and the Church. But there will be a reunion.

Let us notice, further, the conduct of Elisha. In the first instance, Elijah takes him over the Jordan; in the second case, he takes himself over. Happy type of the saint who has been taken over the Jordan, as to his standing before God—his sins taken away by Christ—himself lifted up by Christ in company with Himself— “raised up together with Christ, and seated with him in the heavenly places,” but who, as put there, has to walk on this side of Jordan for a season—should walk on this side, as one who is really on the other side with Christ. In John 20 we have, I believe, both principles: the other side in verse 17, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God,” etc.; and this side in verse 21— “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

There was power in Elisha’s case, and I believe it manifested itself, as witnessed in the sons of the prophets.

I just add one thing more as to this wondrous journey, as to verse 17. Similarly judged it will be when the Church is taken. It is a wondrous mystery that sinful men here on earth—that what I may call sinner—saints in our present condition—should be one with Christ in heaven. (Their sins, of course, are clean gone as to condemnation.) But so it is; it is a wondrous mystery, and the end, I believe, will be according to the whole thing. It will be a mystery—a thing, in a certain sense, between Christ and ourselves. The world will miss us, I doubt not, when we are gone. But we are gone. And, beloved brethren, I judge that blessed event will be soon. Happy the solemn consideration!

Let me, then, dear brethren, put this solemn consideration to our souls: Have we got both our feet on the other side of Jordan? We shall be there, I believe, in person soon. How far is it true in spirit now?

Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 4 - Our Holy and Royal Priesthood

1 Peter 2:4-10

Having shown us in the first chapter that the Christian is redeemed and renewed, the apostle now passes on to unfold our new relationships, and shows that Christians are not only builded together as a spiritual house, but are a holy and a royal priesthood; holy looking God-ward, royal looking man-ward, and this all flows from coming to Christ.

"To whom coming as unto a living stone," (vs. 4). Peter is very fond of this word living. You will remember his confession of Jesus in Matthew 16 "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." You have come to a living stone, he says here; and this is God's estimate of Him, "Chosen of God and precious!"

It is to whom coming, i.e., you are brought to have to do with a Person. Do you know what this is? Have you had to do in the history of your soul with a living Person? If you have, what is the result? "Ye also as living stones are built up."

What is a Christian? You say a "living stone." And what is a stone? A stone is a bit of a rock. See what security it gives? Where first do we get the illustration? In Peter's own case. Peter is brought to Jesus, and what does Jesus say? "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone," John 1:42.

This act of the Lord's was most significant. He takes the place of being Simon's Lord, and his possessor. Changing the name always indicated that the person whose name was changed became the possession or vassal of the one who changed his name. How does this change of name take place? The Lord speaks to Peter! How do we become living stones? Because we have heard the voice of the Son of God! "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

A Christian is a living stone, having come to Christ. What a sense of security it gives the soul! You have had to do with the living One! He is a living stone, and you are a living stone; you have rock-life, the same as His. Can you ever be separated from Him? Never! His life is now yours, and "your life is hid with Christ in God." The spiritual house, of which Peter speaks, is the nearest approach to Paul's doctrine of the "body." What Paul calls the "body," Peter calls the "house," but that is not at all what Paul means by the house; he is talking of a great mass of profession when using that expression. If you want to see the spiritual house in perfection, you must look at Revelation 21. How beautifully the stones shine there! They are exactly the same stones as are being built up here, but by the time we get there, we have been on the great Lapidary's wheel to the uttermost; and every bit of dirt and every ugly excrescence has been taken off, and the wheel has rendered the stone translucent. But the stones that shine so brightly there, ought to shine for Christ here! What a beautiful thing it would be if the world could read Christ in you and me here! By-and-bye the nations will walk in the light of that city; they will see Christ coming out then in grace and love, and they ought to see Him now, reflected in our life and ways day by day.

Ye are “an holy priesthood.” The idea of man about a priest is of one who comes between the soul and God, and does the business of the soul with God. That was all true in old Testament times, but who are the priests now? Every saved soul is a priest. Am I then exercising my priesthood? We are not all ministers, for God has not given us all power to minister the word of the Lord, but we are all priests.

Ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift, and the means of conveying truth from God to the souls of men, therefore every person ought to have the deepest sense in his soul, if he rises to minister, “I have something from God for the people before me.” But while public ministry is limited according to gift, priesthood belongs to the youngest, feeblest, weakest believer, it belongs to women as well as to men.

Worship is the result of the exercise of the holy priesthood; ministry is the exercise of the gift the Lord has given to His servants. Worship is from the soul to God. Ministry is from God to the soul.

The holy priests offer up spiritual sacrifices. Hebrews 13:15, says, “By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” There should be rising from the hearts of the saints continually blessing, and praise, and worship.

The Lord has put us together first of all to praise and thank and bless God. We must have God first – not even preaching the Gospel first: and this is where Christendom has gone wrong. It has put the world first, and made the salvation of souls the first object. Now this is not what God looks for to be our first object.

What is God's great work now, from the day of Pentecost onward? What has He been seeking? The Father seeks worshippers, and because the Father seeks worshippers, the Son says, I must go and seek sinners, and when I have found them, turn them into worshippers. When once we are worshippers and holy priests, it is easy to slip into the place of royal priests. Are you a royal priest? Looking to God we are holy priests, passing through the world we are to be royal priests, and what does royalty give? It gives dignity!

I feel we are very apt to lose the sense of our individual responsibility as royal priests. It is our privilege and solemn responsibility to “show forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” But first we must exercise our holy priesthood. If we are built a spiritual house and given the privilege of being holy priests, are we exercising this privilege? Are our souls answering to the mind of God? The thing is very simple. Peter says these spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God. It is that which the Lord looks for, delights in, and wants. It is what His blessed Son came into the world for.

What a picture the priesthood in the Old Testament gives us of our position now. What does God put into our hands now? It is Christ! He puts Christ into our hands to offer up. He does not look for us to be occupied with ourselves, either with our own position or our own blessing, but to be occupied with all that Christ is, as the One that God finds precious, and whom our hearts find precious too.

“Unto you, therefore which believe he is precious,” i.e., what God sees precious, you see precious. Faith sees exactly what God sees.

It would be an immense help, if in our meetings for worship this filled us, that we are there as priests, to offer to God what He delights in, and that is Christ. I press this thought, that our condition individually largely affects our assemblies. Supposing a large proportion of the holy priests are flat and listless, and with little enjoyment of Christ, you must have the whole assembly affected by that. Oh if our souls were bright with God, what meetings for worship ours would be. It would be all Christ and Christ alone. The Lord lead us into the enjoyment of what it is to be holy priests, those whose hearts are satisfied with Christ, and bringing Him to God continually, Whom we find precious and Whom God finds precious.

But if we are to be holy priests we are also to be royal priests. What is the royal priesthood? Clearly of the same nature as the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. Now the Lord is exercising priesthood after the Aaronic type. He is thinking of us poor weak souls down here. The exercise of His priesthood is Aaronic, its order that of Melchizedek. Now He is meeting weakness and infirmities; when He comes out as the Melchizedek Priest by-and-bye, there is no weakness to meet; all is pure blessing consequent on victory. But now before Christ exhibits the Melchizedek priesthood, He says, You must exhibit it! He is going to be a blessing to everybody by-and-bye, and He says, That is what you may be now in every possible way in which Christian love and grace may carry you out in devotedness to meet every need whether of body or soul. You may have to carry a piece of bread to a hungry person, or to visit a sick ones to comfort a mourning heart, or to speak a word to a troubled conscience; it all flows from the fact of your being a royal priest.

We have seen in Hebrews 13:15 our holy priesthood, offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, and in verse 16 our royal priesthood comes out. "But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The sacrifice of praise is the first thing, and the sacrifice of active benevolence is the next, i.e. reproducing the character of God.

The world is to look at you and me, and to see in us the character of the One whom it cannot see, who is now hidden—by the coming out in us of what He is, in all our words and ways.

Christ says, as it were, I depute you to exercise the Melchizedek priesthood before the day when I come out.

What is the Melchizedek priesthood? A priesthood of unmixed blessing! What is a Christian? person who is blessed, and who becomes a blessing. What are you left in this world for? Christ has left you, in this world to be a person whose heart is always going out to God in praise and thankfulness, in the midst of a thankless world, and going out to men in acts of benevolence and unselfishness, in the midst of a selfish world. To God thankfulness and praise; to men benevolence and unselfishness, that is to be your life. The Lord grant that His grace may so work in our hearts as to produce these spiritual fruits.

Verses 7 and 8. Why do they stumble at the word? Because they will not obey God. "Whereunto also they were appointed." Appointed to what? Appointed as a nation to have this stone put before them. God gave them the most wonderful privilege possible, to have Christ put before them and they stumbled over Him. Because He came in lowly grace the nation stumbled over Him.

"But ye are a chosen generation," &c. Peter is addressing himself there particularly to the believing remnant of Israel, the Jewish believers whom God had turned to Himself. The nation stumbled

over Him, he says, but you poor feeble believers have all the blessings that God had promised the nation.

As a nation, God had said of them in Exodus 19 that if they were obedient they should be a peculiar treasure to Him, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. They were disobedient, and lost it all, and now Peter says, you feeble remnant have got this blessing, in spite of the disobedience of the nation, through the grace of God and the obedience of Christ.

“Which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God.” A word from Hosea 2. Because of their wickedness and sin God had said that they would not get mercy and were not His people. The nation had lost the blessing through their disobedience. In the 2nd chapter, the Lord promises to give it back. In spite of their sin and disobedience and unfaithfulness, and My judgment—too, I will bring them into blessing by-and-bye, God says, and in the very spot where they were judged, there they will be blessed. Judgment had gone by, and mercy rejoices against judgment, for even disobedience cannot frustrate the purposes of God in grace.

God will fulfill His promises to Israel and bless them through His own grace, and they will go to the valley of Achor, the place where the first judgment came on Israel in the land, for profaning themselves with the forbidden thing, and there where they had been judged they get the blessing through mercy, and now, Peter says, you believing remnant get this position before the time comes when God will restore the nation.

The Attractive Power of Christ

There are three parts in John 1. In the first, extending down to verse 28, we get the personal glory of the Son of God, as Creator of heaven and earth, the One in whom the eternal life is; and secondly as the only begotten Son and the revealer of the Father. From verse 29 we get certain official glories of Christ; certain positions He has taken up, because He has to do certain works; and from verse 35 to the end how He gives the benefit of the things He has accomplished. The two latter portions I want to speak on just now; and first on verse 29.

The title, "Lamb of God," clearly a title of humiliation, first brought to mind when Abraham was asked of Isaac, what was the meaning of taking up all the things necessary for the sacrifice, but no sacrifice. Abraham's answer is "The Lord will provide himself, a lamb, for a burnt offering." Isaac was the one, and Abraham knew it. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. The title is one of humbleness on the part of Christ; it always is, but remark, in verse 10, John's mind goes back, to all the eternal glory that this Christ displayed before He became "the Lamb." The expression here is not atonement for our sins—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is not sins, for, if so, the world would be saved. It is not, on the other hand, the Lamb that maketh atonement; but the Lamb that taketh away, the sin of the world; it is a very remarkable expression, and it puts the ground on which the people are, that hear about Christ, very vividly before the mind.

You and I are in a world, which, to the mind of God, has got sin, that marks it on every part. Look at 2 Peter 3:10-13, "The day of the Lord will come," &c. A man down here on earth; the range of his mind will not go beyond the heavens and the earth. Very often, he is very satisfied with himself, because, instead of being occupied with the earth, he is studying the heavenly bodies; but it is the whole system that is to pass away. If all were set on fire to-night, where would you be? Is that Christ of God any way connected with you? He will spare no sin. He must have a new heavens and earth, no serpent trail—no mark of self will be in the place He is going to set up. What have you got, if that be what Christ is after? He has come to abolish all that He has no part with. He has got perfect power to do it; the elements are all under His hand.. Clearly, if this system is going on to this end; is thus coming under the judicial hand of Christ; the only Person that can be positively counted on is that Christ.

The 2nd official glory is marked by the Holy Ghost coming down on Him, verse 32. On what other man did the Holy Ghost as a dove come down? It marked Him as a particular Person. What is connected with this? The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. When did He baptize with the Holy Ghost? Have we been baptized with the Holy Ghost? Have we to go far to find sin, to find individuals unlike Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father? If Christ came into the world, the will-less One, what will God do to me, having got a strong will of my own—who am continually seeking something for self? He came to seek something for God. Yes! if the whole creation be a ruined thing—and I have part of that ruined thing myself—I have the answer in this, One come down who gives virtue from Himself, and who has given me that virtue. That virtue, which he has

given me, has marked something of fellowship between me and Himself.

Verse 35. These men had rightly followed. John, and John must not point out the Lord to them till the right time, as the person who had the right to gather to Himself. Has Christ gathered you to Himself? Christ, in dealing with men down here on earth, knew just how to take up each soul according to the state it was in, making the soul He picks up know that He knows everything about it, and that He draws it in His wake. He takes them up as the Person seeking them, and, somehow or other, gets holds of their hearts, loathing themselves it is true, but still following Him to the end.

This is what is sometimes called the attractive power of Christ—but if so, has He attracted? I might hold up a magnet, and tell of its power; but it would be a different thing to hold it up where there is steel.

The people who are the Lord's, they know this and cannot deny there is One person who has to do with them—who has discovered nothing good, who never flatters them, but is the One who has got the confidence of their hearts.

My mind has been brought to know a living person; and this living person has discovered to me all myself, things I never knew before, and He has drawn me in His blessed wake, and I follow after Him. If there be nothing but sin in the world, the person following Christ, is the exception to the general rule. People do not see that in the end of this chapter are instances of the attractive power of Christ. But this is so.

Verse 37. Something acts on the mind of the two disciples: we are very accustomed to note the workings of a new principle on our minds. They thought it well to follow the Lord. It was the expression really that He had got hold of their minds, though they knew it not. He says to them, after a little, "What seek ye?" It was giving them graciously the opportunity of getting into converse with Him. There is something very wonderful when we go back to where the word of God first reached our souls. I am sure, if in talking to them afterward, one had asked, "How came you to be disciples of this Jesus?" Well, one day we got our hearts turned to that Person; when John let out a word about Him, our hearts went out after Him, and then He stopped and said to us, "What seek ye?" That was the first word we heard Him speak.

Verse 38. Their answer was a very simple one, "Master," &c. Had He ever taught them anything? His blessed grace was drawing their hearts, but He had taught them nothing— "Master, where dwellest thou?"—a very strange question, they put to Him! Where did He dwell? "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests; but He had not where to lay his head." Paul had his own hired house, but where did the Lord dwell? It was not really the point on their minds, what they wanted was to know something about Himself. He knew it and saith unto them, "Come and see." They go with Him and they spend the time with Him. What passed between Him and them we have not the word for; but from that day the word had got hold of their hearts, and they follow the Lord, and they are among those that are mentioned when the Lord appeared in resurrection after the sheep were scattered.

God and Christ knew how to accredit Themselves to the heart; it is not to the mind only. Saul, of Tarsus, did not know of righteousness or atonement; but when the Lord spoke a word, it was all up with Saul of Tarsus. He must follow out the thoughts of that Person, that had spoken to him, and nothing else would satisfy him. Something always passes from the Lord, who knows how to put

the word so that it reaches and attracts the heart of the poor sinner. When the Lord burns up all the globe with fire, will he forget the people that he has drawn after Him?

Well, another instance opens—not only does Christ know how to pick up a poor sheep, but He knows every separate individual, and deals with every separate individual just in the state he is in; each one becomes subject to Him.

Verses 40,41. It is not here, the power in Christ to reproduce life in a poor sinner, but it is the tendency of that life put into the poor sinner, to diffuse the blessing. If you had questioned that man about Christ, he could not have given as intelligent an answer as a mere child in our Sunday Schools; but his heart was won to Christ, and it could not but want to spread abroad the blessing to others.

The Lord's Knowledge of His Own

It is not, now, "Rabbi," &c., but "we have found the Messiah," John 1:41. See! the appropriating character of faith. We should say that Christ had found them; but when the soul first tastes, it says, "We have found," &c. A little further on in their history they would tell us that it was Christ who had found them; but now it is, "We have found." He is a private possession of our own; we have found this particular Person for whom all the nation is waiting.

Verse 42. "And he brought him to Jesus, and when Jesus beheld him, He said, thou art Simon the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas." Peter knew nothing about himself; but there was before the Lord's eye at that moment all he would be afterward, and the character of the man too! And the Lord begins in a remarkable way—Not, "What seek ye?"—7, but "I know you—led by your brother to see if I am 'Messiah.' Well! I have exercised my mind on you—before now: be it known to you, I knew all about you—beforehand. I am going to change your name." It is the expression of power; but Christ does it in all calmness and perfect power, as the One accustomed to say, "Let there be light." I ask, what was there before His mind then? All the dark pages in poor Peter's history. You never discovered anything in yourself that Christ did not know was there. He can read the heart and knows everything that can come out of it. He makes us know that He knows us thoroughly. Can you say, children of God, that that is your comfort before Him? He sees sin. No goodness whatever in you! He knows all about every bit of you—that is where the rest of the soul comes to a man like Peter. Oh! if Peter in that time, after the death of the Lord, before they knew how things were going, if he quietly thought of that first interview when He had brought His right hand under his heart, it must not only have pulled him down but put Christ up in the most adorable position before him. "He knew me from the beginning and all about me but He was not going to turn His back on me." His eye is familiar with the soul of every person; and the rest of the soul is in knowing Him to be such an One as that. It is very gracious of the Lord to put honor on John's word and on Andrew's, but really He had originated it. He loves grace.

The graciousness of His way, in dealing with the saint or the sinner, is very wonderful! Christ was not going to send Ananias to such a one as Saul. He meets him Himself and lays him low, and then Ananias is told to go to him. What a gracious thing of the Lord! He, Himself prostrates and cripples, and then puts the honor on His servant of being the messenger of His grace. When Christ said to me, "Follow me," the power of that word was like that word, "Let there be light." There was something that passed from Him to me; some Word addressed to myself by Him. Something came out from the Lord to me, individually, when I was in the world, and I have followed Him since; and He that said "Follow me," meant me to go on after Him. I want to press on you the power Christ makes to go with His word.

Now, for a moment, let us look at the last instance in this chapter.

Verse 45. Are you and I living so near the Lord, as for the Lord to send a message by us? Philip fell into the very line of service Christ was on, when he goes off to Nathaniel and says, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." It is

a large description, because referring to all God had said in the word of the Messiah—the One who was the grand subject of testimony in scripture, and then we get the simplicity of faith. We get the great swelling description side by side with Jesus of Nazareth the Son of Joseph. It never struck Philip that the Person, the subject of testimony from Moses downward, was the son of a carpenter. Why not? Because he was occupied with the Person: such an One that he never thought of a second like Him. Nathaniel was a very thoughtful man. He says: Do you want me to believe that the One of whom Moses and the prophets did write has come out of Nazareth?

It is beautiful the way a soul that is under the drawing of Christ makes Christ everything. Philip could not believe that any one could look the Lord in the face and not discover what He is. “Come and see.” Let a person who has found in this Christ One who knows him—let him speak a word and it is sure to have effect. Let the woman of Samaria testify of One who has told her of all that ever she did, and her word is not without its effect. Oh! the mighty power of showing we have tasted of the Son of God ourselves!

Verse 47. “Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.” What was the “Israelite indeed?” Turn to poor Jacob, when he had tried crafty ways, God called him “Israel”—he had prevailed with God. Jacob had once or twice been at his wit’s end and had turned to God. God says to the soul that, in its extremity, turns to His heart, knows what a large giver He is “I will put honor on you. You are a prince with Me.” Oh! what a place for a poor sinner, saved by grace, to have God’s eye watching him, and God’s ear open to him, and God saying—I can rejoice in that man that uses his needs as the opportunity of trusting in me. I pressed on him the difficulties, to force out that cry, and now that you have turned your want to my credit, I call you a “prince with God” and “Israel.”

Verse 48. “When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee.” Only think of Christ being conscious of a person under a fig tree! Is He conscious of your being under a shrub in your garden? Is that the sort of Person He is? He not only knows everything in the heart, but He knows all about the way. What did it signify? It signifies volumes. It told that the Lord knew whatever was passing in his mind under the fig tree. I have a heart to care for a man, under a fig tree; but that again, like the finger coming down on a tender place, when there is no skin on the body, touches to the very quick the soul of Nathaniel, and he says at once, “Rabbi, doctor, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.” What titles come out from Nathaniel’s heart, about this blessed One! he knew God only could read the mind, search him, and know him.

Verse 51. Then the Lord brings out another glory. Do not you think, Nathaniel, the thing in my mind is, “King of Israel.” “Henceforth ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” That is what my heart is now on, and you will see me the center and object of all God’s counsels by-and-bye.

It is told in a very simple way, and Nathaniel is attracted to the Lord—we find his name among those to whom He appeared after His resurrection, in John 21. How did He separate all these? Just by letting something about Himself into their souls, saying, “I want thee.”—I do not believe a person can have heard that word and not be conscious of it. What I that One has spoken to me and got hold of my heart and I not know it! What am I? A child of God. I was a descendant of the first Adam, but the last Adam has spoken the word to my soul, and that has formed an incorruptible seed of life.

Where is the soul of you who have never heard the voice of Christ? The time is fast coming when the power of the world will show itself over all who have not the word of Christ in them.

Individual Walk With God

Faith sets a man with God, and, as an individual, alone with God. Abel acted as an individual; Enoch walked alone with God; Noah found grace in His sight; Abram was called out from all, and was the friend of God. Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Daniel, and all the worthies of Faith's household, each found his springs to be in God—and his guidance to be from God.

How individual and solitary too (not only on the ground of His being the only sinless, the only perfect One, but also in the mode of His walk), was the blessed Lord! "Lo I come to do thy will O God." "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" These were the mottoes of His life here below.

How beautifully, too, in the thief upon the cross, do we find his faith (divinely taught) setting Him alone with God—able to condemn, not only his own past course, but all that the religious of that day were doing: and able to give to Christ a title true of him alone from among men. "This man hath done nothing amiss." He adds, "Lord! remember me... in Thy kingdom!" And the Lord's word to Peter is to be noted; "If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, what is that to thee? FOLLOW THOU ME."

The secret of all practical holiness in a believer is found in this individual walk with God—a walk which, as it keeps him in the light, where Christ is at the right hand of God., keeps him in humble self-judgment, because he sees the contrasts between Christ and himself—yet in firmness, because he has to do with God, and acts for and from God.

Directly I can say, God's word proclaims a thing to be unholy, I am to cease from it at once. It is unholy to me at least, and to tamper with it would be defilement. Every godly soul (that knows even Rom. 14) would assent to this: every godly soul must say, "Obey God rather than man; obey God according to your light, and do not go beyond it."

I have been asked (alas for the askers!) when so acting, "Are you infallible? Are you going to lord it over the conscience of others?" My answer is simple: "I walk with God, and judge myself; not an inch for me on the road. God's word seems to me to prohibit; right onward where the word enjoins me to go forward."

'Tis replied, "How do you know you are right?" I answer, "While walking in dependence upon God alone to lead me to see His mind, that I may do it—do you think He'll not be faithful to Himself? (John 7:17). And, as to the consciences of others, I lord it over no soul. Let each walk with God; but only let each remember, that if my walk is with God, alas! for him whose walk is not in the same pathway: be he before me or behind."

There is no holiness in communion no "communion of saints," apart from this solitary walk with God—of the saints as individuals.

The restless disquietude of many around convinces me they are not walking with God. Philippians 4:6-9.

Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 5 - The Pathway of Pilgrims and Strangers

1 Peter 2:11-25

It is very noticeable in every part of the Word of God, that exhortations are always based upon the unfolding of the doctrine of the soul's relationship with God most distinctly and clearly, and this chapter is no exception to the general rule.

You will see at a glance how simply and naturally the exhortations come in here. Peter has been calling these people to heaven. He has been unfolding the heavenly calling, in the first chapter; has shown them that they are chosen by the Father, separated by the work of the Spirit, and sheltered by the blood of the Son of God; that an inheritance in heaven is kept for them, and they are kept for it; that in the meantime they go through trouble down here, but rejoice in Him, whom having not seen they love. Then he has shown them, that they are children of the Father, but redeemed by the blood of the Son, and renewed by the Spirit and the Word of God.

In the second chapter he has been setting forth their new position, as being a spiritual house in which God dwells, and, moreover that they are both holy and royal priests—holy priests in offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, and royal priests in showing forth the “virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light:” then that they are His people, and have obtained mercy, and mercy is a very sweet thing. Mercy we need all through our walk on earth.

This then is the place in which the believer stands; this is Peter's view of Christianity, left down here to yield, to God what He ought to get from man, and to show to man what God is, in the grace and love of His heart towards man. After this are we not prepared for any exhortation?

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” He addresses the Christian as a stranger and a pilgrim. Why are you a stranger? Because you are away from home. Why are you a pilgrim? Because you are journeying to a spot which you want to reach. You are a stranger because your hopes, your joys, and the One you love best, are all in heaven. The One you love best is in heaven, and that is what makes heaven the home of your heart.

Born from heaven, you belong to heaven. Your Father is in heaven, your Saviour is in heaven, your springs of supply are in heaven; your hopes, your joys, are all in heaven; in short, you are like an exotic plant down here, a stranger to this clime. You are a pilgrim, too, and a pilgrim never thinks his pilgrimage over till he reaches the spot towards which his course is bent.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts,” &c. Peter is talking of the inner life of the soul, of those thousand and one little things that come in to spoil communion with God, and to hinder growth, and the knowledge of Christ.

You know what is a snare to you, what will trip you up, and, he says, you must be prepared to deny yourselves the things that are a hindrance, or, in other words, “which war against the soul.” You must use, in fact, the knife of circumcision. After Israel crossed the Jordan to take possession of the promised land, there had to be sharp knives used before they could use sharp swords: and why? Because the sharp knives were for themselves, and they must be right themselves, before they can war against the enemy. If you are going to have outward power, you must have inward purity. If you are going to have happiness, you must have holiness. Happiness always walks a little behind holiness, and the man that is not holy cannot be happy. By holiness I mean practical judging of oneself and one’s ways; practically setting oneself to work to keep the flesh in the place of death where God has put it by the cross of Christ. There must be holiness within, and there will be happiness without. He that would be happy must be holy.

Verse 12. “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles,” &c. Now the apostle turns outside. If you have your heart practically purified by the Lord, you will find yourself all right outside. But mark, you must make up your mind at once for the Gentiles to speak against you. Who are the Gentiles? Unbelievers. If you are going to follow the Lord closely, you will find that, not only unbelievers, but worldly Christians—will have a good deal to say against you. What will be the result? They will have, by-and-bye, to confess before God that your works were worthy of the Lord; and though they spoke evil of you, they knew that God was working in you and by you.

It is a great thing for a Christian to stand for the Lord. What must you expect? That your old friends will have a great deal to say about you, and it will all be evil, of course. We must expect it, and if we are expecting it, we are not surprised when it comes.

“Our conversation honest;” that is, our walk so up to the mark that no one can put a finger on anything and say, This is not right, or, That is not fair, or, The other thing is not lovely. There ought not to be even a suspicion of evil, much less a proof.

The 11th verse is the subjugating of the inward life, the 12th verse is the right ordering of the outward life, and in verse 13, I have to submit to the powers that be for the Lord’s sake. If the governing powers of the land were to institute an impost ever so unrighteous, the Christian’s duty is to submit. Could there have been a more wicked king than Nero? Yet in Nero’s time, Paul writes to the Roman Christians to be subject to the higher powers, because they are ordained of God.

The Lord Jesus Himself came into the world to have no rights, to be scorned and buffeted, and finally to be turned out of the world His hands had made, and a Christian is to follow Christ, to have no rights either. Whatever the thing is, unless it infringe on the revealed will of God, you are to submit for the Lord’s sake; that is, you are to act as royal priests, showing forth the virtues that are in Him. If Christians are moved to strife, or are siding with the world, there is no testimony as to patience, and forbearance, and the like.

Verse 16. Here the Christian gets the place of being thoroughly free, not belonging to the world, but belonging to heaven, and not using his liberty as a cloak of maliciousness but as the servant of God, seeking only to be a servant; and a servant’s business is simply to follow the will of God, and His will is that I should submit. If I take things into my own hands, the Lord says, as it were, “You have taken up the cudgels, and I leave you to fight it out,” and the consequence is, when this is the case, we are always beaten.

Verse 17, &c. Now Peter begins to take up the relationships of life. I am to give honor to whom honor is due. Be it a title, or whatever it is, I am to give it. It is often a little pride in the heart that does not like to yield this honor—but, believe me, there is nothing more contrary to God, nothing more deadening, nothing more thoroughly of the devil than radicalism, or what is called “leveling,” and the end of the whole thing is Antichrist, upsetting all authority and power, only that it may shift hands.

Among Christians there is but one standing-place before God; all are saints, and are one in Christ Jesus. God raised up His Son Jesus Christ, and with Him He has put in His own presence every believer. What wonderful exaltation! In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free. This is the doctrine of Christ—the doctrine of the church. How then ought I to act? Like Christ! I ought to speak like Christ, to act like Him. But then there is “the doctrine of God;” and what is that? If I am a servant I am to act as one if I do not I set everything out of order.

The doctrine of Christ is, that there is not a shade of difference between saint and saint, but the doctrine of God is, that God says, there are those to whom I am to give honor, and I am not walking with God if I am not ready to do this, not grudgingly but with all heartiness. There is something very beautiful in these four things going together in the 17th verse. Peter talks of the world, of the brotherhood, of God, and of the king. It is vain for us to say we are fearing God, if we are not giving to all men that which God would have us give. There is no real fear of God, unless I am seeking to maintain, in His presence, every relationship in which I am placed down here, exactly as He would have me maintain it, according to His own mind and heart.

Verse 18. Peter is speaking here not to slaves, but domestic servants, and what is the word? “Be subject with all fear.” They may be very hard masters, be very ill-tempered persons, that is not to excuse the Christian servant from subjection. Let us acknowledge our weakness but never seek to extenuate it, and acknowledge our feebleness but never let us justify it!

What is the fear spoken of here? fear lest, in my position as a servant, I should misrepresent God, that is the fear. My master or mistress might be unconverted, and I have to represent God to them.

Verse 19. If you do right, and get hard words for it, and take it patiently, you put God in debt, as it were. He says, “thank” to you. How beautiful! If you do good, suffer for it, take it patiently, and get no thanks from your master, never mind, you are going to get a surprise by-and-bye; there is a “thank” to come from God to you for this beautiful exhibition of patience under most trying circumstances. The motive for you to act like this is most blessed, it is because Christ did the same, because He suffered for us.

Peter speaks of suffering for conscience sake, for righteousness sake, for Christ’s sake, and for evil doing. I may possibly suffer for my own sin, but ought never to, and why? Because Christ has suffered for sins. I may suffer for conscience sake,—because there may come a question of doing something which a master orders, but which is contrary to God, and then of course God must be obeyed rather than man. Obedience to God is the first thing—the great ruling principle of the Christian’s life. If in obeying a master I must disobey God, I am shut up to what Peter says in the 4th of Acts, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” It never can be right to disobey God in order to obey man, and the saint is never supposed to do such a thing.

In such a case I may suffer for conscience sake, but the soul gets the recompense made to it of the Lord's favor and blessing, and of His enjoyed presence as its blessed reward.

Peter gives Christ as a beautiful example of this, "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

Christ put His case wholly into God's hands, and you must do the same, Peter says. Christ said, I take it entirely from God's hands, accept it as coming from Him, and when we do the same the sting is gone, and it is only fraught with blessing for the soul, Then this leads him to the very extent of Christ's sufferings, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Your sins, my sins, led Him to the tree, and now we are dead to sins but alive to God.

Jesus always did right; we went wrong, went astray, but we are brought back to have to do with this blessed One, who is the Overseer, the One that takes care of the soul, the Shepherd who goes after the sheep.

The Lord give us to delight our hearts more and more in Him, to follow Him, to learn of Him, to have His word more as the daily joy of our souls, and to bring forth fruit in our lives.

“We Shall Be Like Him.”

“We shall be like Him!” With all the affections of children, and all their hopes-with all the schooling of God, with all the judgment of self, with all the truehearted prayer that a saint pours out for himself, and for God’s dear people-how will the groans, nevertheless, come out from the heart-“So little attained so little of power!” Never mind; go on climbing up the hill. We shall be like Him. We shall yet have no taste for anything that He has not a taste for, no mind save for that for which He has a mind. Like Christ! clothed with immortality, incorruptibility and glory! And not only like Him outside, even in a scene where all can shine out without disturbance, but like Him all within, from the quickened soul upwards and outwards. All in harmony with Christ! What a word to have in one’s heart, “I shall be” like Him! His name written on my forehead; I clothed upon with His likeness, for I shall see Him as He is.

Now we see through a glass darkly, and yet, if in any measure we see, we are molded into the same image; but then eye to eye. Go onward. Onward in darkness? No, still in light, because it is onward to Christ. While the heart is occupied with Him, each step leads it nearer. Every spot that is unlike Christ becomes odious. We purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

Joshua and Hebrews

If I ask your attention to the fact, that the epistles usually applied to elucidate the typical meaning of Joshua, are the Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians (and rightly too), and that neither of these touches Priesthood, as such, you will not wonder at my asking, whether there is not yet an epistle, which as distinctly concerns itself with priesthood, and the Ark, on its passage “out of the wilderness,” into “the promised rest?” Of course my own mind turns to “the Hebrews,” and particularly as embracing these two points, viz., “the time of need,” and “entering into God’s rest.” In continuance I may add, that “the heavenly calling” in no way interferes with the Colossian, or Ephesian truth, or to the Son of man in, heaven, or the sitting in heavenly places; but on the contrary, supplies what is wanting between them and the Romans.

Indeed, I have followed with delight the antitypical Ark (as the Messiah, of the remnant) and as the covenant of “the Lord your God,” as well as “the God of the whole earth,” through the descending steps of the first chapter, with “His fellows,” under the anointing of the oil of gladness! How the “Ark of the covenant” is seen to be of fine gold, within and without, as the Messiah walked forth in the midst of the earth, as He “who loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” When His path too lay in the midst of “enemies, who are to be made His footstool!”—See Joshua.

The “great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord” beautifully begins the second chapter, between God and His people, with “the captain of our salvation,” who meets the swellings of Jordan, and “destroys him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivers them who through fear of death were subject to bondage.”

Our leader and commander, is “made perfect through sufferings” by the way of the Red Sea, and now in the overflow of Jordan. Moreover, as to the redeemed, “He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one,” as identified with Christ, like the twelve stones set up in the river, and the twelve carried out—for “which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” &c. Besides this, we find in chapter 2 the “appointed heir of all things” in dominion, according to the 8th Psalm, and extending over the whole inheritance of land and sea. “Though we see not yet all things put under Him,” &c., &c. “It became Him for whom are all things,” &c. is a splendid beginning of the way across Jordan, and by which to bring “the many sons unto glory.” It is initiatory!

Thus in connection with these two titles, or relations of God to the people by the Ark, in chapter 1 by the Messiah, and Son—and then its passage through the depths and swellings of Jordan, with “the heirs of promise,” into the inheritance “of God’s rest,” as in chapter 2—this priesthood becomes established, and the “holy brethren” are met by “the apostle and high priest of our profession” on the other side.

I think, “Shiloh, with the tabernacle” in the land were as necessary to Eleazar and the heirs for sustaining their relations with Jehovah as were Joshua and Gilgal for circumcision and the power of the Spirit in conflict, and for “driving out the enemies,” but I stop myself. J. E. B.

The Two Priesthoods and the Two Covenants

Hebrews 5:8.

First, then, as to the two priesthoods,—the Aaronic and the Melchisedec priesthoods. The priesthood of the Aaronic character is a by-gone thing. The priesthood of the Melchisedec character is, in one great sense, still future. The three passages in the Book of God where Melchisedec is referred to, are Genesis 14, Psalms 110, and the passage before us. The Epistle to the Hebrews refers to the two places in the Old Testament where he is looked at. In Genesis 14 we find the battle of the four kings, and as they were returning with the spoils of victory, it was told to Abram that his brother Lot had been taken prisoner. While it was a mere fight between the potsherds of the earth, Abram took no part in it; but when he found Lot was involved, it became the duty of the kinsman to bestir himself. Such is the intelligence of faith. He knew when to be quiet and when to be active. So out to the fight he goes, and rescues Lot and brings back the spoil. On his return he is met by an august personage of whom we have never heard till now; he is met by Melchisedec, coming forth from the sanctuary of Zion, where he dwelt, exercising the priesthood of the God of heaven and earth.

Now I am going to introduce you to the different way which the Spirit is looking at Melchisedec, in Genesis 14 and in Psalms 110. In Genesis 14 he is shown to you in his actings. In Psalms 110 you do not see him in his actings, but in his consecration. Now his actings are millennial actings; his consecration is resurrection consecration. While you are looking at Melchisedec's actings you are in the millennium. Because Abraham had finished his warfare and brought back the spoils of the victory when Melchisedec met him. And what did he get? Did he want the relief of the Aaronic sin-offering, or the cleansings of the sanctuary? No, he was a weary conqueror. He presented himself in the laurels of victory, and all Melchisedec had to do was to welcome him with the refreshments of the kingdom. In the same way the Lord Jesus will come forth from His hiding-place, but not till the warfare is accomplished; the Lord Jesus at present is acting in Aaronic grace, and He can greet His people who have gone through their conflict not till the due millennial hour. The blessing suited to the lips of Aaron we read in Numbers 6, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," etc. Did Abraham want that blessing now? Did he want to be kept? Did he lack grace and peace? He was in the full bloom of his triumph and wanted the refreshments of the weary conqueror, not the cleansing of the defiled saint. The Lord Jesus is both Aaron and Melchisedec and by-and-by His saints will be greeted by a blessing, not from Him who has comforts for sorrows, but from Him who has kingly refreshments for conquerors. The moment you look at Melchisedec in his actings, you are in the future. But now, when we turn to Psalms 110, we see him in resurrection consecration, and there we get a present Christ.

The Psalms 110 is very important and is variously used by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. Now we will read and analyze it a little. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That is Jehovah's language to Christ when He ascended from the Mount of Olives and took His place at the right hand of God. I believe His response is

found in Psalms 16, "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Then when He has taken His seat, in verses 2,3, and 4, the Spirit addresses Christ at the right hand and says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." He must wait there for a certain time, the heavens must retain Him, but in due time he will come forth to the day of Revelation 19. Then, "Thy people shall be willing." The moment His enemies are made His footstool, He will gather His people together, and, the Spirit calls it here, "the dew of thy youth." This will be "in the day of thy power." Your dignity is, that you have been made willing in the day of His weakness. It will be a blessed thing for the Jew to own Him in His millennial power, but the dignity of the Church is to own Him in the day of His rejection and weakness. She has been allied to Him in the day of His humiliation. The Jew will never have companionship with Him in His weakness. Then in verse 4, He is addressed in His own personal dignity, and it is with that that the argument of the Hebrews links itself. This is the consecration of Melchisedec; and it is what makes the Lord Jesus a priest, this moment, after the order of Melchisedec. He is not now acting after the Dimmer of Melchisedec; He is acting after the manner of Aaron; but He is consecrated with the consecration of Melchisedec. It would have been unworthy of Him to be consecrated after the pattern of Aaron—a dying man who was to be succeeded by another; Christ is a living priest. Aaron went through his life and service, and died. Could God be satisfied with that? But the moment the Lord proves Himself the Conqueror of death, not only have I a living priest, but God is satisfied. Jesus in resurrection is life in victory, and that is His consecration. And consequently, we find in Hebrews, that He was not a priest while he was here. He had not yet abolished death. He must first destroy death, and in resurrection display life in victory. Then God put Him into office after the manner of Melchisedec, who had "neither beginning of days nor end of life;" that is, there is no record of him. He was a shadow of the risen, living priesthood of the Son of God.

Again I say, when we come to look at Aaron, who sets forth the present actings of Christ, Aaron was to meet you in your present defilement. He had a sin-offering, a trespass-offering, a Eucharistic-offering in his hand for you. All that the Lord Jesus is doing now. Do you want your defilement cleansed? He washes your feet. Do you want your sacrifices of praise presented to God? They go by Christ to Him, the Aaron for you, and by-and-by He will act as Melchisedec, in greeting His elect, after their journey and war fare are accomplished, with kingly refreshments.

Now our next subject we get in Heb. chapter 8. This treats of the two covenants. As to this subject of the covenants, you may look at them as the patriarchal, the legal, and the evangelic covenants. The patriarchal covenant was all on the ground of promise. There were not two parties to it. When we get under law, the very form and phase of the covenant is changed. The Israelites had to act their part in the covenant just as much as God. It is no longer a covenant of promise but of works. It is no longer one undertaking to do and the other bowing the head in the dependence of faith, but one undertaking to do this, and the other undertaking to do that; that is the legal covenant. Then in the Prophets we get the new covenant, which falls back on the patriarchal covenant, and shows it to be simple promise. That is what the New Testament takes up, and calls "the new covenant."

Hebrews 8 shows you that the Lord found fault with the old covenant, and why? Because it made him a receiver. He rests in the new covenant, because it puts Him in the place of Giver, and the sinner in the place of receiver. He takes delight in it, because He has found it "more blessed to give than to receive."

Of that style of thing, Paul declares himself the minister. It is not prophetically fulfilled yet, but it will be, with the house of Israel and Judah in the day of their repentance. Paul is the minister of that which makes God a Giver and me a receiver. So there is an element in both these things that is prophetic. We must wait for His millennial actings, and wait for the accomplishment of the new covenant in the day of Israel's repentance.

May the blessed Lord shut up our thoughts and affections with Christ in the Scriptures, and make us wise with God and in God, in this day of human wisdom. Amen.

The Father's Love

"For the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."—John 16:27.

Our Lord Jesus Christ received these precious words from the Father, who commanded Him to speak them for our comfort (Ch. 12:49). They sweetly assure us of the Father's love. We read of God's love "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We read also of Christ's love—"Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25); and of the Father's love, which is exercised toward those who, through grace, have been brought into relationship with Himself—"the Father Himself loveth you."

The Father's love has wrought for us in accomplishing redemption through the death of His Son, and in Him risen and ascended, according to His eternal purpose; thus giving us life in Christ, and bringing us into the relationship of children, as well as uniting us to Christ by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The Father's love has wrought in us in revealing His Son unto us. When our Lord said to Peter "Whom say ye that I am?" and he replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus immediately said, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-17). Thus we see that everyone who has apprehended the person of "the Christ, the Son of the living God," has only done so because of a distinct revelation of the Father to the heart. Without this, whatever else we may have known, we should have been in darkness as to the person of the Son, concerning whom it is said, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (John 5:12). To apprehend the person of the Son of God is entirely beyond the scope of the natural man. He may have heard of His name and of His works, he may be acquainted with the external circumstances of His death on Calvary, and of the fact of His resurrection, and yet not know Him. Though to the natural eye Jesus was like another man, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," yet Peter saw, by the revelation of the Father, that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The Father has also wrought in us in having drawn us to Christ as sinners to a Saviour. It is only by the working of the Father's grace in our hearts that we have thus had to do with Him whom the Father sent. Unless the Father had specially wrought in us in this way it is certain we should never have found our true place, as hell-deserving ones, at the feet of a gracious Saviour. It is well to have the sense of this fact constantly fresh in our souls, for Jesus said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him;" and again, "No man can come to Me, except it were given to him of my Father" (John 6:44-65). Thus we see that the Father's love has accomplished redemption for us, brought us into nearness to Himself, called us into the relationship of children, given us the Spirit, revealed His Son to us, and drawn us to Him as our Saviour. How sweet to think of the various yet distinct actions of the Father's love! Well might an inspired servant cry out, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!"

How astonishing then is the fact that there are those on the earth who, though poor and feeble in their own eyes, sensible too of much failure, coldness, and forgetfulness of Him, are the constant objects of the Father's love; those on whom He ever looks with a Father's watchful eye, and ministers unto with fatherly care. He is the perfect Father. He knows the state of heart, as well as the need, peculiarities, and circumstances of each child, and withholds or gives, sends adversity or prosperity, as is most for our real good. He disciplines and chastens for our profit that we may be in subjection to Him, and be partakers of His holiness. It is well that we should receive all from Him, for all is dealt out in infinite wisdom by the hand of perfect love for

"A father's heart can never cause

His child a needless tear."

He desires us to cast all our care upon Him for He careth for us, to make all our requests known unto Him by prayer and supplication; and in this our Lord encouraged us by saying, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11).

But one of the children of God may inquire, "How much does the Father love me?" We are told that the Father loves us as He loves Jesus (John 17:23). Our blessed Lord said to His disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you;" His love to us then is the same as the Father's love to Him; and elsewhere we find He prayed that by-and-bye the world may know that the Father loves us as He loves His Son. Thus we find that the infinite, eternal, unchanging love of the Father to the Son is the measure of His love to us His children. This too will be manifested ere long in answer to His prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word... and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23). In perfect keeping with the activity of this infinite, eternal, unchanging love, "the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1. 3). Thus we are always before His eye in all nearness, acceptance, righteousness, and life of Christ, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings; and all this and more to be known now for our present enjoyment, and power for service and conflict. What a precious assurance for our poor hearts are in these few words of our adorable Lord— "The Father Himself loveth you." It is indeed a great secret for our souls when such words are received in faith, and we grasp them as infallible and settled forever. We shall then be able to say in the hour of deepest sorrow and affliction

"Although my cup seems fill'd with gall,

There's something secret sweetens all."

But why do we not enjoy more than we do the Father's love? Because the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, by whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts is grieved. When we walk obediently we abide in His love, and enjoy the presence of the Father and the Son. To be loved by the Father is a precious fact for every child of God; but to enjoy the Father's love and presence is the privilege of those only who are walking obediently to His will, Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto Him and make our abode with Him" (John 14:23). Let no believer imagine then that he will have the comfort of the Father's

love if he is not walking in the truth according to the Father's will. In the path of disobedience the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, is grieved, and we are not in the place where the Father's presence can be known. Our blessed Lord said to His own loved ones for their encouragement, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

We are told here who are the objects of the Father's love; all those who "have loved Jesus, and have believed that He came out from God." Not those who say this and that, but those who have the two grand cardinal points of vital Christianity—faith and love. They always go together, when there is a divinely wrought work in the soul, for faith worketh by love. Every true believer loves. He loves the Lord Jesus and all that are His. He loves the brethren, the truth, the service of the Lord, and all that is in association with Him. The believer loves and He who loves believes. Without this love, whatever else he may boast of, he is as "a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." Love is a vitally important point, for "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha" (1 Cor. 16:22). We love because we believe the love of God to us. "We love Him, because He first loved us." We most certainly believe that Jesus came out from God. We have no doubt of it. We grasp the divine love that gave Him, and we cannot but love Jesus. We believe and love. Oh the preciousness of the Saviour's words, "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

A Striking Contrast

Have you ever noticed the striking contrast between verse 19 and 22 in Luke 12? So instructive in the every-day life of a child of God— “Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,” arising from much goods laid up for many years, &c. “Take no thought, nor be of doubtful mind, arising from the assurance of what your Father knoweth, and is! Two grand motives should act on us as Christians; one, that our Father in heaven takes thought for us; and the other, that our precious Lord is coming from heaven to take us thither. Thus our faith has another horizon than sight and sense, one peculiarity its own; and our heart’s treasure the Morning Star of another day, and cherish the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Lord, whose day it is. Till then, three things are at work in the inner man: the power of the Spirit, whereby we are strengthened with might—loyalty and devotedness in the true confession of Christ Jesus the Lord—and the Father’s love maintained in our hearts by the Spirit of adoption, the true spring of all dying obedience. Whilst in the world as it is, but of which we form no real part, the only proper use we can now make of it is, to shine as lights therein; and if there be a secondary one, to make it the trial place of our faith that it may be found “unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

“Blinded.”

Worldliness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the minds and hardened the hearts of Christians, nowadays, to an extent very few have any idea of. There are, I am persuaded, very few cases touching upon the safety, and well-being of the Church of God, which, can be left to be judged by the mass of believers. On whom can one cast one's burden of responsibility as to the spirituality of the saint's walk and conduct? In cases innumerable which have occurred, I have found that the affections to the person of Christ have not been lively enough to make Christians indignant at open insults put upon Him—and they have had neither the heart nor the mind to stand apart from that which was the expression of indifferentism to Him.

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A negative Christianity is a bad thing, because it has a bad positive side; there are always things kept in reservation in my heart—things that I am not prepared to give up. But the moment I get the sense of what the new man is—that he is thoroughly away from home—that he has nothing here to nourish him or cherish him—that his heart is above—his home above—when I recognize that I must be supported entirely from above—it is then I find out what I cannot go on with here, and what are the things that will clash with this new life. (J. B.)

## The Passage of the Jordan

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### Joshua 3-5

The people are now to enter the promised land; but how enter it? For Jordan with its flood at the highest, lay as a barrier before the people of God guarding the territory of those that oppose their hopes. Now Jordan represents death, but death looked at rather as the end of human life, and the token of the enemy's power, than as the fruit and testimony of the just judgment of God.

The passage of the Red Sea was also death: but the people were there, as participating (in type) in the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishing their redemption, and setting them free forever from Egypt, their house of bondage—that is, from every claim of Satan. It was then that the people entered upon their pilgrimage in the wilderness. Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Christ, introduces the Christian into this pilgrimage. With God, he only passes through the world as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed.

1. THE HEAVENLY LIFE. There is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in OUR daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises, and of heavenly privileges, as men already dead and risen, as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the Christian life. Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict; to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan. It is, then, death and resurrection in Christ, looked at in their spiritual power not as to their efficacy for the justification of a sinner, but as their realization for his life in the heavenly places, into which Christ has entered.

A comparison between Philippians 3 and Colossians 2 and 3 shows how death and resurrection are bound up with the true character of the circumcision of Christ. In Philippians 3 the return of Christ is introduced as completing the work by the resurrection of the body. In both passages the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing; but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life. This influence was perfect and entire in the case of the Lord Jesus; but His life in connection with men, although the ever-perfect expression of the effect of His life of heavenly communion, was evidently distinct from it. The joy of the heavenly life entirely set aside all the motives of the lower life; and leading to the sufferings of His earthly life, in connection with men, produced a life of perfect patience before God. In Him all was sinless; but His joys were elsewhere.

Thus, also, with the Christian; there is nothing in common between these two lives. Nature has no part whatever in that above; in that below there are things which belong to nature and the world, not in the bad sense of the word "world," but considered as creation. Nothing of this enters into the

life of Canaan. Christ alone could pass through death, and exhaust its strength, in being in it as shedding the blood of the everlasting covenant; and He alone could rise again from death, according to the power of the life that was in Him, "for in him was life." He has opened this way; He has converted death into a power that destroys this flesh which shackles us, and a deliverance from that in us that gives advantage to the enemy with whom we have to fight, being thenceforward brought into Canaan. Therefore the apostle says, "All things are yours, whether life or death." Now, every true Christian is dead and risen in Christ: the knowing and realizing it is another thing; but the word of God sets Christian privilege before us according to its real power in Christ.

2. THE ARK. The ark of the Lord passed over before the people, who were to leave the space of two thousand cubits between it and them, "that they might know the way by which they must go; for they had not passed this way before." Who, indeed, had passed through death, to rise above its power, until Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, had opened this way? Man, whether innocent or sinful, could do nothing here. This way was alike unknown to both, as was also the heavenly life that follows. This life is altogether beyond Jordan; the scenes of spiritual conflict do not belong to man in his life below. No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything to do with it, although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way. But Christ has destroyed all the power of the enemy and the token of his dominion. It is now but the witness of the power of Jesus. It is indeed death; but, as we have said, it is the death of that which fetters us.

3. LORD OF ALL THE EARTH. I will add some brief remarks. "Lord of all the earth" is the title Joshua repeats, as that which God had here taken; for it is in testimony to this great truth that God had planted Israel in Canaan. Hereafter He will establish in power, according to His counsels, that which had been put into the hands of Israel, that they might keep it according to their responsibility. This last principle is the key to the whole history of the Bible, as to man, Israel, the law, and all it has to do with. All is first trusted to man, who ever fails, and then God accomplishes it in blessing and power.

Thus this chapter supplies us with very clear indications of that which God has promised to accomplish in the last days, when He will indeed show Himself to be "Lord of all the earth" in Israel brought back to grace by His mighty power. And we must attend to this testimony of the purpose of God in establishing Israel in their land. Harvest time will come, and the strength of the enemy will overflow its banks; but we, as Christians are already on the other side. The strength of the enemy passed all bounds in the death of Jesus; and we do not say now, "Lord of all the earth," but "All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth."

4. VICTORY CERTAIN. Let us remark, also, how God encourages His people. They must combat; the sole of the foot must tread on every part of the promised land to possess it; and it must be in conflict that the power of the enemy and entire dependence upon God are realized. But while fighting boldly for Him, He would have—as know that victory is certain. The spies said to Joshua, "truly the Lord hath delivered, into our hands all the land, for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." This is what we know and prove by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so different from that of the flesh, as brought by the ten who came back with Caleb and Joshua.

5. THE MEMORIAL. But if we are introduced into a life which is on the other side of death, by the power of the Spirit of God, as being dead and risen in Christ, there must be the remembrance of

that death which is on this side of it, of the ruin of man, as he now is, and of the fallen creation to which he belongs. Twelve men, one out of each tribe, were to bring stones from the midst of Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the Ark, while all Israel passed over on dry ground. The Holy Ghost brings with Him—so to speak—the touching memorial of the death of Jesus, by the mighty power of which He has turned all the effect of the enemy's strength into life and deliverance. Death comes with us from the grave of Jesus: no longer now as death, it is become life unto us. This memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. The meaning of this circumstance will be considered in the next chapter; we will only dwell here on the memorial itself. The twelve stones, for the twelve tribes, represented the tribes of God as a whole. This number is the symbol of perfection in human agency, in connection here as elsewhere, with Christ, as in the case of the showbread.

Here also the Spirit sets us—Christians—in a more advanced position. There were twelve loaves of the showbread, and we form but one in our life of union by the Holy Ghost with Christ our Head, which is the life we speak of here. Now, it is His death that is recalled to us, in the memorial left us by the loving-kindness of our Lord., who condescends to value our remembrance of his love. I only speak here of this memorial as the sign of that which should be always a reality. We eat His flesh, we drink His life given for us. Being one now in the power for our union with Christ risen, dead to the world and to sin, it is from the bottom of the river into which He went to make it the way of life—heavenly life—for us, that we bring back the precious memorial of His love, and of the place in which He fulfilled His work. It is a broken body which we eat, a poured out blood which we drink; and this is the reason why blood was entirely prohibited to Israel after the flesh; for how can death be drunk by those who are mortal? but we drink it because the death of Christ is our life, and it is in realizing the death of that which is mortal that we live with Him. The remembrance of Jordan, of death when Christ was in it, is the remembrance of that power, which secured our salvation in the last stronghold of him who had the power of death. It is the remembrance of that love which went down into death, in order that, as to us, it should lose all its power; except that of doing us good, and being a witness unto us of infinite and unchangeable love.

6. GILGAL. The power of resurrection—life takes all strength from Satan: “He who is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy; and the creature has no strength against him, even though it should not be drawn away into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But if this be true, it is also necessary to realize it practically. “Ye are dead... Mortify therefore,” (Col. 3) This is what Gilgal means.

7. CIRCUMCISION. The matter in hand was not yet the taking of cities, the realization of God's magnificent promises. Self must first of all be mortified. Before conquering Midian, Gideon must cast down the altar that was in his own house. The wilderness is not the place where circumcision is carried out, even though we may have been faithful there. Circumcision is the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh in him who has fellowship with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore Paul says, (Phil. 3) “We are the circumcision.” As to an outwardly moral life, Paul had that before. Had he now added true piety to his religion of forms, the true fear of God to his good works? It was far more than that. Christ had taken the place of all in him—first

of all as to righteousness, which is the groundwork; but, further, the apostle says, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." Therefore it is in "pressing towards the mark" that he waits for the coming of Jesus to accomplish this resurrection as to his body. In the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, he speaks to us of the circumcision of Christ. Is it only that he has ceased to sin? (the certain effect indeed of this work of God.) No; for in describing this work, he adds, "Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead." The consequences of this heavenly life are found in chapter 3 verse 1, which is in immediate connection with the verse just quoted. Here also the work is crowned by the manifestation of the saints with Jesus when He shall appear in glory.

8. MORTIFY THEREFORE. Our Gilgal is in the 5th verse. "Mortify therefore." We see that it is founded on grace. It rests on the power of that which is already true to faith. "Ye are dead.... Mortify therefore." This being the standing, it is realized. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead," said the apostle (Rom. 6) when speaking on the same subject. This is the practical power of the type of the stones brought from Jordan. They are a symbol of our union with Christ who was dead. Raised up together with Him, we can say that we were dead with Him, He has been once dead for sin: God has quickened us together with Him. All that He did was for us. Associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Spirit, I appropriate to myself, or rather God ascribes to me, all that He has done, as though it had happened to myself. He is dead to sin, in Him I am dead to sin. Therefore I can "mortify," which I could not do as being still in the flesh. Where was the nature, the life, to do it in? Now, circumcision being the practical application of that of which we have been speaking, we remember the death of Christ, and the mortification of our members on the earth is accomplished through grace in the consciousness of grace. Otherwise it would only be the effort of a soul under the law, and in that case there would be a bad conscience and no strength. This is what sincere monks attempted; but their efforts were not made in the power of grace, of Christ and His strength. If there was sincerity, there was also the deepest spiritual misery. In order to die, there must be life: and if we have life, we have already died in Him who died for us. The stones set up in Gilgal were taken out of the midst of Jordan, and Jordan was already crossed before Israel was circumcised. The memorial of grace, and of death as the witness to us of a love which wrought out our salvation, by taking up our sins in grace, stood in the place where mortification was to be effected. Christ dying for sins, in perfect love, in unfailing efficacy, is our strength in dying unto sin. In every circumstance, then, we must remember that we are dead, and say to ourselves, If through grace I am dead, what have I to do with sin, which supposes me to be alive? Christ is in this death, in the beauty and in the power of His grace; it is deliverance itself. As to growth, the apostle says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

9. THE REPROACH OF EGYPT ROLLED AWAY. Thus, in being dead, and only thus, will the reproach of Egypt be taken away. Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. It is only the heavenly man, who has died with Christ, that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt. The life of the flesh always cleaves to Egypt; but the principle of worldliness is uprooted in him who is dead and risen with Christ, and living a heavenly life. There is in the life of a man a necessary link with the world as God sees it, that is, corrupt and sinful; with a dead man there is no such link. The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who

possesses this life may pass through the world and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but as to his life and his object, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ risen and ascended up on high, is his life. He subdues his flesh—he mortifies it—for in point of fact he is down here, but he does not live in it. The camp was always at Gilgal. The people—the army of the Lord—returned thither, after their victories and their conquests. If we do not do the same, we shall be feeble, the flesh will betray us; we shall fall before the enemy in the hour of conflict, even though it may be honestly entered into in the service of God. It is at Gilgal the monument of the stones from Jordan is set up; for if the consciousness of being dead with Christ is necessary to enable us to mortify the flesh, it is through this mortification that we attain to the knowledge of what is to be thus dead. We do not realize the inward communion, (I am not speaking now of justification,) the sweet and divine enjoyment of the death of Jesus for us, if the flesh is unmortified. It is impossible. But if we return to Gilgal, to the blessed mortification of our own flesh, we find there all the sweetness, (and it is infinite,) all the powerful efficacy of this communion with the death of Jesus—with the love manifested in it. “Always bearing about in the body,” says the apostle, “the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal body.” Thus we do not remain in Jordan; but there remains in the heart all the preciousness of this glorious work, a work which the angels desire to look into, which is for us, and which Christ in his love appropriates to us. We find Him with us at Gilgal—a place of no outward show or victory to attract the eyes of men, but where He, who is the source of all victory, is found in the power and communion which enables us to overcome.

10. THE TWELVE STONES IN JORDAN. But there were also twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan; and, indeed, if we apply the power of the death of Christ to mortify the flesh, the heart—exercised in, and fully enjoying heavenly things—loves to turn again to Jordan, to the place where Jesus went down in the power of life and obedience, and to gaze upon that Ark of the Covenant, which stood there, and stayed those impetuous waters till all the people had passed over. One loves, now that He is risen, while viewing the power of death in all its extent, to behold Jesus there who went down into it; but who destroyed its power for us. In the overflowing of the nations, Christ will be the security and the salvation of Israel; but He has been our security and our salvation with respect to much more terrible enemies. The heart loves to stand on the banks of that river—already crossed—and to realize, while studying what Jesus was, the work and the wondrous love of Him who went down into it alone, until all was accomplished. But in one sense we were there. The twelve stones show that the people had to do with this work, although the ark was there alone when the waters were to be restrained. In the Psalms we can especially there contemplate the Lord, now that we are in peace on the other side the stream. Oh, if the Church knew how to seat herself there, and there meditate on Jesus! In doctrine, the Psalms set forth also the connection between the death of Jesus and the residue of Israel passing through the waters of tribulation in the last days.

Behold, then, the people out of Egypt and in Canaan, according to the faithfulness of God's promise; not only redeemed out of Egypt, but brought into Canaan; the reproach of Egypt being rolled away, and the people of God having taken their place at Gilgal—the true circumcision of heart of which we have spoken.

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 6 - Our Pathway of Suffering

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### 1 Peter 3

The soul cannot help being struck in reading the Epistle of Peter with this thought, that he is always, contemplating difficulties in the road of the saint, and how to get along so as to glorify God in the very midst of them.

This remark applies very specially to this chapter. He begins with the wives, and supposes that many may have unconverted husbands. Subjection was that which the Lord had laid on the wife, but this thought might arise in her heart, I have a husband who is unconverted. Never mind, the Lord says, you be in subjection. Then the difficulty might come, what if he asked me to do anything that would lead to the dishonor of God? The answer is simple. It never can be the path of a Christian to dishonor Christ.

There might come in even the very point that the wife sees the privilege of the Table of the Lord, and the husband forbids her going. What is she to do? I believe her path is clear, it is not a command or the Lord but a privilege, and therefore if the husband forbids, it is the duty of the wife to be subject, till God clear the way, which, in His own time, He may do. The principle is subjection, and that God owns, and we can never traverse the word of the Lord without distinct retributive judgment following, sooner or later from the Lord. How much better is it quietly to wait on the Lord for Him to remove the difficulty, than for us to take the bit in our teeth and say "It is a privilege and I mean to have it."

What is the thought the Lord holds out to the wife? That the husband may be won by her life, her "chaste conversation coupled with fear." It is a wonderful thing to get a soul converted to God by a life. I can conceive no testimony higher of any saint, than that their quiet walk of subjection to God has been the means of showing Christ to a soul Converted through the silent godly testimony of a woman, who always did the right thing, because always thinking of pleasing God. The fear is the danger of overstepping one word of the Lord's—the fear of misrepresenting Him.

Then there is a beautiful allusion to the fashions, because there is nothing so changeable as fashion, but, the apostle says, you are to have an ornament that is ever the same. Oh to be the possessor of that, which in the sight of God is of great price, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit! It is not shown in what the world around notices, it can only be seen and understood by those who are thrown in contact with it.

It is a beautiful thing to be able even to dress to please the Lord, because the, body belongs to Him. Spirit, soul, and body are all His, and we are always to be living to God, having the eye on God, walking before Him.

Verse 7. The wife was to give to the husband subjection, and the husband was to give to the wife honor, he was to be the one who should cherish and care for her, as the one given him of God..

“That your prayers be not hindered.” There must be some special reason for the apostle speaking of this. Take care, he says, that you so dwell, that your prayers be not hindered. You are heirs together of the grace of life, i.e., you possess the life that springs from Christ, and you are heirs together of the grace that flows from Christ, now be watchful lest anything come in to hinder your prayers.

Depend upon it the secret of power does not depend on the public prayer meeting, but on cultivating the spirit of prayer, and this applies when we are but one or two together. It is a beautiful broad principle in Scripture, and nothing so tends to real fellowship as bowing the knee together.

Verse 8. We have a lovely word here, because the tendency is for different minds to come in and have different interests. Do not have it so, the apostle says, have sympathy one with the other, be pitiful, be not courteous merely, but humble-minded.

Verse 9. “Not rendering evil for evil.” Evil will rise, he says, you are going through an evil world, and what is the blessed privilege of the child of God in a place where he may get evil every day? To pay it back with good. What a wonderful privilege for a saint of God! He is called to blessing himself and to be a blessing.

Verses 10,11,12. Now we come to a quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures, the 34th Psalm. It is very instructive to see how in this epistle the apostle lays his hand, by the Spirit of God, on the three great sections of Scripture, and uses them for our edification. In the first chapter he quotes from the law, in the 2nd from the prophets, and now in the 3rd from the Psalms. They are all beautifully brought to bear upon us, for what Peter is about in this epistle is, presenting the moral government of God over His people in this world.

Verse 10. It would be a wonderful thing for us to know a little more of this restraining power. You will not find a happy bright Christian who allows himself in the unrestrained use of his tongue. He will not be bright, he will not be happy, and he does not see good days; on the contrary he sees miserable days, unhappy, dull days, because he has done the thing the Lord told him not to, and he suffers for it.

Verse 11. You are to seek peace, and pursue it; it is the thing the heart is to be really set on in going through this world, and if anything would come in to trouble it, you will say “No, I will seek peace.”

Verse 12. Do I shrink from the eyes of the Lord being upon me? Certainly not, if my heart is right with Him. No! Let Him see everything, for the enjoyed presence of God is what gives me a good conscience, not only with Him, but before the enemy.

“The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.” Sweet word! Peter feels the necessity of prayer, and dependence, and if your walk is right, he says the Lord is attentive to your prayers. “But,” you say, “He does not answer;” well, perhaps He may be having a controversy with you. “But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,” and that is as true of a child of God as of an unconverted person. If the soul is doing right; what is the result? You have the eyes of the Lord upon you, and the ears of the Lord open to you, i.e., you have the presence of the Lord as the result of a walk that is suited to God. Then you are not a bit afraid of

Satan's power, or of Satan's wiles. The only way in which we can get along is by enjoying God.

Verse 13. Evil is all about, he says, and you must expect to meet with difficulty and trial but going through this scene, if you walk before the Lord, who will harm you? People do not harm those that do good, but those that do evil: people are pretty sure to escape who do good.

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye." Do what is thoroughly right and you must suffer for it in this world, and a happy thing if we do thus suffer in this beautiful way. Very much as Paul comforted the Thessalonians when they were undergoing trouble. "Sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts." (It is not "the Lord God.") He says, You sanctify in your hearts the One whom God has exalted as Messiah and set at His own right hand.

Verse 15. You are always to be able to give a reason for the joyful expectation that you have. Hope is never uncertainty in Scripture, but the joyful expectation of a certainty. It is a very good thing to be pulled up to give a reason for the joyful expectation that we have. We ought to be able to give a very distinct reason, but our answer is to be given in "meekness and fear", i.e., in a manner that shuts out all levity or lightness, a manner that conveys to the soul that asks the question, this: "It is the most wonderful favor of God to give such a hope to a sinner like me, but I got it through His grace and you may get it likewise."

Verse 16. If I have not a good conscience I am utterly powerless. If I have a bad conscience I cannot meet Satan and I cannot meet man, but I can go and meet God, because I shall meet His mercy, and His grace will give me the sense of cleansing and pardon, and when I have got a purged conscience I can meet both Satan and man.

Paul says "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense." If I exercise myself, I keep a good conscience; if I have an exercised conscience I have a bad conscience. Conscience and communion never work together. If I am in communion with God what am I doing? I am occupied with God. If I have an exercised conscience I am occupied with myself, or with what I have done that is wrong. The shield of faith is confidence in God, the breastplate of righteousness is a practical thing, that I have not done a thing that God would have me not do, or that man could take hold of.

Verse 17. I grant you it may seem a hard thing to carry out this verse but it is what Christ did. He did well and suffered for it and took it patiently. Why ought, the Christian never to suffer as an evil doer? Because Christ once suffered for sins—let that be enough. The apostle says, If you suffer for righteousness sake be happy in it, if for Christ's sake glory in it, but for doing evil let not a Christian suffer, because Christ has once suffered for those very sins: a most touching reason.

Verse 18. That is His wondrous suffering for sins on the cross, and then the glorious effect of that is that I am brought to God, not brought to heaven or brought to glory, but brought to God in Christ, in His own blessed person. "Being put to death in the flesh" that is dying as a man, "but quickened by the Spirit," and now he says "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

Verse 19. That which led to the Apostle's giving this unfolding was, that these Jewish believers were a little company who were met and taunted because of their faith in a Christ who did not exist on the earth. They were twitted and taunted with the fact of their Christ not being present. Yes, says the Apostle, and I can tell you something else, the Spirit of Christ went and preached in

Noah's days, and He was not present then, and there were but a few, even eight saved then the little flock with Noah was all right, and the mass of the world was all wrong, judgment overtook the mass of the people in that day, and as it did then, so will judgment overtake the mass of the Jewish nation in this day.

Christendom believes that the Lord between the crucifixion and the resurrection went down to hell, and during the time that His spirit was absent from the body preached in hell to the spirits who had been disobedient in Noah's time. But it is very peculiar that Christ should preach only to the disobedient in Noah's day, and leave all the rest. He would not have been so particular as to His audience I trow. Not hades is a condition, not a place. There is a hades of the blessed dead, as well as a hades of the wicked dead.

The Spirit of Christ in Noah really preached to the people in Noah's day. How the Spirit of Christ? We have seen in the first chapter of this Epistle that very expression. (Chs. 1:10,11.) The Spirit of Christ in the prophets could write Scripture, and then search Scripture. So the Spirit of Christ in Noah could proclaim the gospel to the Antediluvians, while they were men on the earth. In Gen. 6 God says "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." There is the very word. The Spirit of the Lord strove with them for 120 years, the Spirit of Christ in Noah proclaimed the Gospel at that time. It was preaching righteousness and coming judgment. The spirits of these men are in prison now, because they were disobedient to the word preached.

I believe the apostle introduced the passage for two reasons. This little company of Jewish believers was looked down upon by the rest of the nation, because they were so few in number, and because Christ was not corporeally among them, and He would comfort them as to both points, for only a few, eight persons, were in the right, and saved in Noah's time, and the Spirit of Christ preached then, though He Himself was not present.

Then he draws an allusion to our present condition as believers, the consequence and result of the Lord being raised from the dead.

Water which was the very thing that was the death of the world saved Noah. "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us." Not baptism but that of which baptism is the figure.

It is not the answer of a good conscience here, but the request of a good conscience, because the moment a soul is quickened he wants to know how it can stand before God in righteousness. Well, Peter says, this is how you get it. It is not the purgation of any evil by ourselves, but Christ tided and put my sins away. In baptism death is accepted. Like Noah, the believer is on the other side of death and judgment.

I look up, Peter says, and see Christ raised from the dead, and gone into heaven, angels being made subject to Him. This was a beautiful touch for the believing Jew. I have a good conscience and a seated Christ in glory, and I am on the other side of death and judgment, seated in Christ at God's right hand. This is the blessed portion of the Christian in this world.

## On the Value of Meetings for the Study of the Word; or, for Christian Edification

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Beloved brother,—Your packet was forwarded to me at M—, in Wiltshire, to which place I was invited for a Good-Friday meeting, which we have had, through the Lord's unfailing love to us.

It is always a grave problem to me, after these select meetings (such as at Notting Hill, or our more frequent gatherings, as this at M—and other places) are over, and broken up—what is their real value to the many who were present, either at the session, or afterward? I have never solved this query to my satisfaction, but I have thoughts of this kind, about our provincial or our metropolitan meetings, which I will tell you. Perhaps it is not possible to estimate at the time what we gain from them, by any precise standard, or gauge—but we are all more than usually conscious of being in the presence of God, and of waiting upon Him, for a closer and richer communion with Himself, in all the counsels and intentions, which He is carrying out for His own eternal glory, and the glory of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory of the church.

At such a time, one is fully alive to the fact, that a great deal out of His precious Word has occupied us, and has passed through our minds and hearts; yea, and has spoken to us inwardly, so that all the capabilities of our spiritual and moral being, have been reached and engaged. But the effect, or if we may so say, the result must be waited for, and watched diligently.

The process at such meetings is too sudden to be calculated by any of our ordinary rules; and the transition too rapid from one subject to another, and these again in their various combinations, to be tested by weight and measure.

The palpable good at the time, may be this—that like a view from the top of one of the Swiss mountains at sunrise, we are conscious of looking out upon an expanse, so various and so immense, as to bring up a conviction in us, that we are surrounded, and lost in the midst of what is so overwhelming.

This may fall to our lot, once, twice, or thrice in a life-time, but it neither admits of definition nor description—only we are sure of the great fact—that we have been enveloped and borne away, by a length and a breadth, a depth and a height, that are more heavenly than earthly, in their nature—more eternal than temporal, in their character—and altogether outside of us, and our merely ordinary life, in the midst of men and things, where Christ is rejected.

Four or five days' occupation and study of the word of God—or a Good-Friday meeting (especially when it quietly robs its right and left hand neighbors of many hours) having for their object a ministry by the Holy Ghost to souls, and which makes the Father, and His glory known to us, in connection with His beloved Son, must not be ranked with common causes, and their effects. They stand apart and alone in their known greatness, and bide their time.

Such a feeling as this is does one good, and because it is so new and strange to us. It carries its own conviction with it, that we have had to do with Him, who is without beginning of days, or end of

years—who is the eternal God, and from everlasting to everlasting—and yet that He has come, so close to us, so very close, as to have cleansed us from every stain and spot, and seal us by His Spirit for the day of our full redemption, and His own glory. One, who has laid His hand upon us in infinite love, so that we can no longer feel as creatures merely, in the presence of a Creator—but as those who are in another relation to Him, as redeemed by the blood of His own Son, and He our Father, by this very work, which has made us known to one another, as united by His grace to Christ, the Son of His own love. It is this union by the Holy Ghost, that carries our best and choicest affections after Him, and settles them above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

To think, yea, and more than this, to know that our life is hid with Christ in God; and that we now stand before the Father as new creatures, in a new order of manhood, and one with His Son, who is the beginning of the new creation of God it is this immense love which overpowers us—so that whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell. It is indeed a translation out of darkness into light now, and into glory when the Lord comes; and makes one wonder where one is, by the greater wonder of what one is.

Brought in truth so very nigh to God, as to be loved by Him as He loves His own Son; and so one with that Son, as for Him to say, “as Christ is, so are you in this world,” puts one almost beside oneself—so that a vast and mighty feeling takes possession of us all, which defies either our minds or understandings fully to comprehend, or our tongues to declare.

Indeed, I think effects like these should follow a ministry when in the power of the Spirit—a ministration of life and righteousness and glory, from the risen Head, to His members on the earth, out of His fullness.

On this account I could not check a brother (and he, not a young one,) who said, “I could not tell what to do, to hold myself in”—at the M— meeting – and on being advised, “to let himself out before the Lord”—he replied, “why then I don’t know what I should do,” but “The spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets.”

As to the ministry of the word, the subject with which we started was the blessed one, “That God takes care of His own glory in the midst of all that Satan has done and is still doing.” The charm of this is found for us that God does this now in the person of man, the Son of man. Jesus could enter into the strong man’s house, saying, “Lo I come to do thy will, O my God”—and on leaving it, lift up His eyes to heaven and say, “I have glorified thee upon the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” The four gospels tell us how, and in what way Jesus did this on earth—and the Acts how He was raised up to do it in heaven, till He comes back from the opened heavens to fill the whole world with the glory of God.

The church is the new creation, and called out between these two periods “the little while” in which Christians are invited to the ascended Son of man in glory, by the descent of the Holy Ghost. This is how God is now taking care of His own glory and the glory of Christ as the Son of His love and the glory of the church as His Body and the Bride. He has made known to us the mystery, which was hidden in God from before the foundation of the world.

We then considered the manner in which God was preparing new vessels to receive the heavenly treasure for Christ’s glory—and how fitted for the Master’s use in testimony to others. The 120

were named to us, as the pattern for this period—a new company—men in Christ, and waiting for “the promise of the Father.” These prepared vessels were to be endued with power from on high—and as a receiver, we selected Stephen for our study, and were greatly encouraged at the outset of his history in Ch. 6 to witness the power of God in grace, over all the outbreak of evil and sin, on the neglect of the widows. These very murmurings were so over-ruled by the Holy Ghost, as to become the birth-place and cradle of the first martyr. The one man upon the earth after Pentecost, filled with the Holy Ghost, who looked up steadfastly into heaven, and was knit to the One Man in the glory of God. The model Son of man on high, at the right hand of the Father, and in the glory of God, and the model man below filled with the Holy Ghost, laying down his life in testimony for God during the times of Israel’s history—for the Messiah during His ministry upon the earth—and for the Holy Ghost whom they were then resisting.

Some profitable remarks were made as to the way Stephen was fashioned in the sixth chapter, in order to make him what he was in the seventh. In other words, he was receptive to a degree in the former, that he might be without a fault in the latter. In truth Stephen’s receptivity was so continuous that its effects on the beholders was, as if his face was as the face of an angel—but this was preparative. The main object was to form and fill Stephen as a vessel of testimony for chapter seven—so that all this receptive power with which his vessel was charged, should only be the measure of its outlet, and of its conductivity (like a telegram) as he flashes his testimony round the wide sphere of all God’s actings from the day He appeared to Abraham, to the hour of their resistance of the Holy Ghost. The power of this conductivity in Stephen was so perfect that he could by the Spirit write the sentence of death upon the betrayers and murderers of Christ, that they even gnashed upon him with their teeth. Its conductivity was equally perfect upward to the Son of man, so that it wrote the assurance of glory on Stephen who called out, and said, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.”

Its conductivity rose yet higher in its quality, when “he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” It completes itself and is perfected in the comment of the Holy Ghost, “When he had said this, he fell asleep”—for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The opposite of this was then brought forward from Samson and Delilah, as a proof of Satan’s crafty power against the Nazarite. It is wonderful to see that as long as he held the secret of his great power between himself and God untold, he could do anything, and propound his riddle gained out of “the lion’s carcass,” to the Philistines. Delilah’s lap, and the Nazarite’s head on her knees, oh what a contrast to the head of the beloved disciple on the bosom of his Lord and asking who is it that betrayeth thee? Conscious love reclining on the breast makes John as bold as a lion—whilst conversely Samson got his meat out of the eater. The receptivity and conductivity of the Nazarite and the beloved disciple were in their nature alike at that moment—but their relation is snapped when the secret is divulged. The prison-house, and the eyes put out, and Samson making sport for the Philistines follow weep your secret of Nazariteship in the unshaven locks upon the head and of receptivity out of the fullness of Christ, maintained in the power of the Holy Ghost—and you may propound the riddle, or the mystery of God and of Christ to the wisdom of the world, and they will never unravel it. The conductive power and completeness of work in the Lord’s service, will agree with the receptivity of the vessel. The face of a man will shine like an angel to others, whilst we look steadfastly up into heaven and see the Son of man in the glory of God.

We can then bear testimony, that He gives “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, to shine into the hearts” of all that receive Him.

These were our morning and afternoon meditations in the main. The meetings or ministry in the evening was likewise very profitable and interesting—from Psa. 84, and by another from an extract of Exodus and Numbers.

We were occupied with Col. 3 as “dead and risen with Christ,” and then we walked on the sea with Peter naked; and after the great take of fish had been brought to shore, and numbered, we sat down to dinner with him, and the Lord. After they had dined we were much moved by the ways of the Bishop and Shepherd with His strayed sheep, and Peter’s restoration. We were very much struck with the way the Great and Good Shepherd makes, and appoints Peter as an under-shepherd after his recovery. “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep” was very assuring to Peter and how diligently he went about this work is evident from his first epistle, and particularly the beginning of the last chapter, where “he holds out the crown of glory to the elders,” when the Chief Shepherd appears.

But I must leave this for the present – only adding that our God “who takes care of His own glory” took care also that His apostle Peter should not be without a crown of glory at the appearing of Christ. The Lord likewise took care to set Peter in His own path, of laying down his life in this world, as He did to the martyr Stephen, telling the secret to Peter, by what death he should glorify God!

So that we concluded “everything works together for good now – and whatever goes beyond good, will only work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

May the Lord grant that our receptiveness when sitting together at M—in His presence to learn of Him, may prove to have been like Stephen’s – both to live or die for Him. And further, that the power of conductivity in us by the Holy Ghost may flash the sentence of death upon the hearts of men all around us, who are as yet in the flesh and in their sins; in order the more effectually to prepare their vessels for the reception of light and grace from the crucified Christ below, and from the glorified Son above, that they may be saved with an everlasting salvation, and be like men who wait for the Lord! Yours affectionately, J.E.B.

## Priesthood

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The definition of High Priesthood, given us by the Lord the Spirit, (Heb. 2, 5, 8) is “Headship for men in things pertaining to God.” In this concise description three parties are placed before us; on the one side Deity, on the other side man, and the person of the high priest the connecting link between them. No accurate idea of priesthood can exist where this double relationship and this double service are not perceived. In Jesus alone, the subject of our consideration has been fully exemplified. He is the connecting link between heaven and earth, the only Mediator between God and man. From Deity above He is the Mediator downward to man beneath, and from man beneath He is the Head upward to Deity. This surely is a blessed subject of meditation, as presenting us with the full body of all truth in the person of Jesus. Let us look at it a little more closely. The term God, as one has observed, denotes proximity in external things; in other words, it implies relationship. This is shown from our Lord’s most striking argument in Matt. 22:31-32. “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (See also Is. 40 and context.) The honors of the priesthood and the majesty and dignity proper to it, are, if this be so, at once seen: Jehovah stands in the relationship with a people: for He is the God spoken of as connected, through the High Priest, with the sons of men. But who can measure the riches of Jehovah’s glory? Infinite in wisdom, infinite in power, infinite in love, infinite in everything excellent and good. He stands in recognized and honored relationship with the sons of men. Relationship with such an One must be blessed, most glorious! A self-existing, ever-flowing spring pours forth its pure and living, its healing and life-giving waters. What would a world in harmony with Jehovah be, and not in harmony only, but whose harmony, in every put, bore the full impress of His own glorious likeness!

## A Letter on Reconciliation

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With regard to reconciliation, as in 2 Cor. 5:19, as you say, we are nearly at one; for you admit that the world is not (in the usual and literal sense of the word) reconciled to God, but the very opposite. The only difference seems to be about the grammar and the construction of the passage—whether was ought to be looked at as joined with in Christ or with reconciling: you say the latter: I say the former. Where was God? “God was in Christ” in contrast with law. What was God’s gracious object when He was here “in Christ?” “Reconciling.” But was the world reconciled, then, when He was here in that mind and attitude? No. It refused the reconciliation through a living Christ and rejected and slew Him.

This closed God’s dealings with the world, or in other words with man in the flesh, as if he were recoverable: for so bad had man proved himself to be, being utter enmity and opposition to God, that there was no hope for him but through Christ’s death, which ended man and his world, and that God, rich in mercy, began a new work on the basis of the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus; and then a new ministry goes out from a risen and glorified Christ, telling of life and righteousness brought to us, and that we are “reconciled to God through the death of his Son.” The basis of reconciliation is no longer Christ in life with us, displaying God in His goodness and grace, but the death of Christ whereby all that God is has been glorified, and man has been redeemed and brought into the presence of God on an entirely new footing.

But where many seem to stick fast in traditionary teaching is that, as God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, the world was, in point of fact, reconciled (whatever is meant by the word), whereas Scripture informs us that the very opposite took place—they killed the Prince of life, the divine agent in this gracious mission of reconciliation. “Now is the judgment of this world” not its reconciliation. “God was in Christ” in the spirit of reconciliation seeking in divine goodness to break down man’s enmity, but when on man’s side there was refusal and the display of man’s utmost enmity, God’s attitude could be only that of judgment; and there remained nothing for it but the execution of judgment had there not been the coming in of the further grace of Christ giving Himself for God’s glory and our redemption, and being made sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. The ground of the reconciliation is shifted; man in himself being proved incorrigible, Christ dies and rises for us; and, in resurrection, and on the ground of new creation in Christ, we are reconciled to God, being brought into a state of happy and peaceful relationship through the death of God’s Son, and in view of all God has made Him to be unto us—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in order that we might glory in the Lord.

I believe that what you say about the reconciliation of enemies being by the death of God’s Son has led to the seeking to find a meaning for it very much the same as propitiation. But is this not a mistake? The word will not admit of such a meaning. It would entirely change the doctrine of Scripture by taking away from the precision of its language. Reconciliation is neither atonement, propitiation, nor justification. It is an actual bringing back into friendly and peaceful relationship

those who were formerly in an alienated condition (see Jew and Gentile, Eph. 2). But with regard to God and us the enmity and alienation were on our side, not on His. Hence we are said to be reconciled: He is not.

If you admit two proposals of reconciliation on two different grounds, all is plain. (1) God was in Christ reconciling; and, on account of man's incorrigibleness, this reconciliation of the world through a living Christ came to nothing. It failed on man's side as the law had done: but (2) The ministry of reconciliation from the place where Christ now is in glory as put in the apostles—the whole being in God's hands and the basis the death of Christ, and the power to effect all being that of a glorified Christ in the ministry of the Holy Ghost, there is no failure; for all believers whose sins Christ expiated by His death are reconciled to God. All is made smooth with God through Christ's death for our reconciliation, and this must be apprehended by faith before there can be a making of our boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation, i.e., this bringing back of us into a happy state of peaceful relationship with God as the One who loves us and has brought us to Himself through the death of His Son—redeemed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and having the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. Then neither has God been reconciled nor the world: only believers., And if the theologians say (altering the meaning of the word) that God reconciled the world to Himself, meaning by this that Christ bore its sins, and that God is not now imputing them, and will not condemn for them, then I would affirm, that there is not a line of Scripture for this that I can see.

This is indeed true, that the blood of the Mediator is now on the mercy-seat before God so that any sinner may come to God through that blood and Him who shed it and be pardoned and saved. The sin-question was fully gone into and settled forever between God and Christ when He shed His blood on Calvary's Cross, and that both according to God's nature and the requirements of His throne, and the need of guilty sinners who are to be brought into the enjoyment of all the effects flowing from it. He is not only the propitiation for our sins, but also for the whole world, because this respects the great work of Christ God-ward, and the blood put upon the mercy-seat: but only such as believe are entitled to say Christ bore our sins. Propitiation is one thing, and substitution is another.

But I fear, when the doctors in the Lutheran Church say that Christ reconciled the world, they mean that Christ bore its sins. If so, then the whole world must be saved. But this will not do, for there is no reconciliation without faith in what God has wrought in Christ and in His death. But being dependent on faith and having no existence where faith is not reconciliation could not possibly have taken place when Christ died, any more than justification. Does not this dispose of this thought? The work wrought by grace in me by faith in the death of Christ is, though connected, not the same thing as the basis of God's providing for His own sake, on which the reconciliation takes place. Propitiation and reconciliation are intended to convey different thoughts, and we dare not alter Scripture, but must abide by the divine intention.

I observe that you still write "was reconciling," and of this I would say again, that it is unexampled in the New Testament, and probably in the Greek language to join was with reconciling, severed as they are not only so widely but especially by a phrase like in Christ, in which is the true complement of the verb (was). Is this not so? What you say is quite true that what God was doing when in Christ was—reconciling. That was the bearing or tendency of the Incarnation. But He was

also the Lamb of God, and as such the taker away of the sin of the world: but that both things were not done is obvious; for the world's sin is not taken away it is as full of it as ever—neither is it reconciled to God. The conclusive proof that the world was not reconciled to God by Christ's death lies in the same passage: for what sense would there be in sending out a fresh ministry of reconciliation if the world had been reconciled?

I refer to 2 Corinthians 5:19,20, “putting in us the word of the reconciliation.” Then verse 20 ends with “be ye reconciled to God” as the purport of their beseeching a very strange proceeding this if the world were reconciled. And it were surely an unworthy as well as unscholarly expedient to say that reconcile means one thing in 2 Corinthians 5:19 and another thing in verse 20th, that it means atonement in verse 19th and reconciliation in its literal and proper acceptation in verse 20th. It is quite obvious that verse 21st gives the divine basis in God's work for sinners in Christ, on which the reconciliation takes place. And so also all the other passages which refer to the death of Christ contemplate it as the new divine basis of reconciliation; the reconciliation through a living Christ having been definitively refused, there was no other way left but through a dead Christ, and redemption accomplished in His death. Hence we find in 2 Corinthians 5:14,15, the death and resurrection of Christ presented as the only means to ensure living to Him under the power of His constraining love. And verse 16th states that we know Christ now no longer as an Incarnate Messiah displaying God in goodness on the earth, but we know Him as risen and become the Beginning and Head of the new creation; and “if any man be in Christ, there is new creation”—and “all things therein are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself” [“by the death of His Son.” Romans 5:10.] “Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new.” The place where reconciliation takes place is that of “new creation:” for no man not “in Christ Jesus”— “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus”—will ever lay aside his enmity and alienation, and love God and recognize the happy, peaceful relation subsisting between God and His redeemed and emancipated people, and act upon it.

I note your words: “Therefore, the word must, as far as I can see, imply that God through the death of Christ took away the sin that drew on it the holy wrath of God, and so prepared the way for the sinner being in his heart reconciled to God.”

I have written enough to show these two things, 1, that no such meaning can be fixed on reconciling, and 2, that a something was accomplished through the death of Christ which, while it has not removed the holy wrath of God from the world, yet has so glorified God about sin and put the blood on the mercy-seat that it is now consistent with God's righteousness to justify the believer in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26). We are at one in the main, but not so in the way we reach our conclusions for instead of wrath removed by Christ's death I hold with Romans 1 that it is “revealed from heaven” against all unbelievers (see this more fully explained in Romans 2:5-16), “And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” There is no Scripture that seems to favor the view that the world's sin is taken away.

Do you mean that Adam's sin is taken away by Christ's death? If so, Christ is not said to have died to remove it: at least, I have not read this. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.” The Son of man, must be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have eternal life. God freely loved sinners and provided the sacrifice for sin in the Son of man lifted up, and He is now held forth as a propitiation (a propitiatory, Rom. 3:25) through faith in His blood to

any sinner in all the world (1 John 2:2), that he, believing in Him, might be justified from all his sins. But no sin is taken away by the death of Christ in the case of an unbeliever. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." I know of no such statement in the word of God as this: "that the guilt of original sin is taken away by the death of Christ." I think we may with certainty affirm that there is no such thought in God's word. God does, indeed, deal with our nature in Christ's death; but it is to condemn it to exterminating judgment like Sodom and Gomorrah (Rom. 8:3.) "Sin in the flesh" is the nature: sins, the works of it (see Gal. 5:19-21). Romans 1 to verse 11 treats of sins and God's provision for removing the guilt of them: Romans 5 to Romans 8 treats of sin or the nature, and God's provision for dealing with it. The sins are expiated by the blood, and there is forgiveness and justification from them: but we die with Christ to sin. "Our old man is crucified together with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is justified from sin" (Rom. 6:6,7). He who is alive is "justified by his blood" from his sins: but "he that is dead is justified from sin." Christ died for my sins, but I died with Him to sin (Rom. 6:10,11). I may get my sins forgiven; but there is no way of putting off a nature but by death as we read—"the putting off of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" i.e., His death. I think this is true that, although it was when Christ was made a sacrifice for our sins that God condemned "sin in the flesh," it was not atoned for so that we might have it forgiven; but, condemned, judged, annulled—that in view of Christ's death to sin once we should reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin. It is to me, as a believer, not the nature in which I live, but one which to faith I have put off in Christ's death, Christ being now my life: not Adam fallen, but Christ risen from the dead and glorified. I am in Christ, the new Head of believing and risen humanity: and the old man is gone in the death of Christ. "With Christ I have been crucified; live then no longer I but there liveth in me Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

I do not doubt that reconciliation has to do with the death of Christ: this is its holy basis (as has been repeatedly said), but every passage where it occurs spews that the persons are in presence who are to be sought to be reconciled, who are reconciled, or have been reconciled, and that only believers are so on being justified by God's grace and Christ's blood. And I think it most important and very material to hold this uniform teaching of Scripture on this subject; and that the translations of the New Testament Scriptures which teach another doctrine should be corrected. Luther's version has it "for God was in Christ and reconciled the world with himself," which is a statement that has no manner of warrant in the Greek, and it is contrary to the fact.<sup>1</sup> If I quote the passage "that was the true light that lighteneth everyman that cometh into the world," this is not the same as to affirm that He has done it: which would be contrary to the fact. The Apostle Paul's ministry after that was "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26) and he says to the saints "ye were once darkness but now are ye light in the Lord." "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." Now all but Christ's followers abode in the native darkness of the world, notwithstanding that He the Light was there, having it as His mission to be the world's light, and having in Himself all competency to give light to every soul in it. But the world was enveloped in densest darkness when Christ died, so great was the power of Satan in blinding men that it could only be symbolized by the darkness that fell upon the dread scene of the world's deepest guilt.

This will help to throw light on our passage: “God was in Christ” [this is the historical fact] “reconciling the world to Himself” [this was the mission – the object, purpose, intention] but the world gave sad proof that it was incapable of being reconciled by God in goodness in a living Christ, and the proof culminated in the rejection and killing of the Reconciler; and so, instead of being reconciled, as Luther’s German New Testament says, it entirely fell through. It would have been nearer the truth to have said God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and the world was so exasperated that they rose up against Him, and, as far as it was in their power, turned Him out by crucifying Christ. At first man sinned and God drove him out; but when God in Christ came into man’s world seeking, in goodness, to win back man’s confidence and affection, man rose up against Him and said, Away with Him—away with Him!

But God rose in love and grace above man’s enmity and wrought such a work of accomplished righteousness in the death of Christ that He could send forth the apostles to continue the embassy of reconciliation, founded on the death of Christ, which should not fail of its purpose: for “He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might become God’s righteousness in Him.”

That “the reconciliation” is of us—not of God—and that it is a present blessing God’s word uniformly affirms in such passages as Colossians 1:21,22, “yet now hath he reconciled” 2 Corinthians 5:18. “Who hath reconciled us to himself”: Romans 5:10 “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”: verse 11, “through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Grace of the Glory of God

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We find that the great aim, all through Scripture, is to connect the soul with God personally. After the fall, it was the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden that accosted Adam; and it was from the presence of the Lord God that Adam hid himself—and so on. The personal connection of the soul with God is given in how many instances I need not say, until we reach the culminating point of it in the gospel of glory committed to Paul; “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Here alone the soul is in true worship. There are other truths and other parts of the testimony for God; dispensational truth; principles, etc., all most important in their place, and valuable as far as they go; but this alone goes the whole way, as it were, and reaches the goal.

I may illustrate what I mean, as to these two lines of truth and testimony, by the prodigal in the father’s house. In order that he might not feel his unsuited condition to the house, the father summoned the servants and directed them to invest him with habiliments indicative and assuring of his high position. Very happy and interesting work for the servants this, and of an order which engages many amongst us now; but however interesting, it does not reach the end of the father’s purpose. If the prodigal were only dressed and decorated, and not then conducted into the house of the father, both son and father would have been deprived of the great end and fruition of their reconciliation.

In like manner, in Joshua 5, I have all the preparation for possessing the land; and a skillful servant might educate me earnestly and deeply in one and all of the details, from the circumcision to the corn of the land; but I should lose the real power and conscious title of entrance, if I had not seen the Captain of the Lord’s Host, and, as an unshod-worshipper, known that it is with Him that I take possession. In 2 Cor. 4:6, the Apostle has been showing how the reception of the Gospel connects us with Christ in glory, as it had thus connected himself at first, when he was taught this Gospel, and was enjoined to be a minister and a witness of the things that he had seen. Now it was a glorified Christ that he had seen; therefore, if any one sees not this light which is the ministration of righteousness, it is not salvation merely that he is rejecting,—but the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face [or person] of Jesus Christ.”

I have often felt, that, in preaching or teaching, the person and presence of the Lord was not made the great object set before the soul. By some (the evangelicals) the gospel is preached by calling on sinners to present Christ to God as an all-sufficient atonement for their sins; others, more enlightened, proclaim the love of God declared in His Son giving eternal life to every believer. But both these fall short of the presentation of God establishing righteousness in His own Son, and through Him, and in His life, leading the believing prodigal to His own house, and nearness to Himself forever, in full and unbroken joy to both. In the two former, though the gain of the sinner be largely insisted on, God’s satisfaction—His gain, we may say His joy—is not entered on at all. We little comprehend the gospel of the glory of Christ disclosed to Saul of Tarsus, who from thence became the witness of the things that he had seen. The glory of God became the starting point of

the sinner; as it was also the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Under the law, there were sacrifices, which, however, never saved the transgressors of the law from legal penalties. The gospel preached, even now-a-days, is more the presentation of the sacrifice, proclaimed, I admit, as all-sufficient and satisfactory, and the call on sinners is to approach it; but this is not presenting to faith God's salvation, because to Him the sacrifice is full and endlessly satisfactory, His satisfaction being the great subject-matter presented to faith. The reception of the prodigal, great as was his rescue, does not derive its chief excellence from the completeness of his safety and the greatness of his deliverance, but from his happy and welcomed nearness to the father.

We want a gospel which connects us with the presence of God in His joy and we want an education in His word which would connect us with our Lord personally as the living transcript of the mind of God.

## **“Sin Covered!”**

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The meaning of the Hebrew word in Psalms 32:1 is “covered.” There seems to be no doubt but that the word kaphar also is to cover, to cover over. But who can cover sin before God? This was a question raised in the sanctuary, and victims appointed for man to offer; sacrifices various, too, for sins as they varied; the whole, I doubt not, essentially connected also with the great day of offering once a year, as given to us in Leviticus 16

Then the blood of the bullock was to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat eastward, and before the mercy seat seven times and the blood of the goat had its place likewise. But the bodies of both were to be burned outside the camp. The year’s sins were put away.

But though the mercy-seat and the way up to it, and the holy sanctuary and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, and the priests, and the people were thus yearly marked with blood, and so sin was passed over, itself was neither really covered over, nor did it meet its doom.

It was quite right to obey God, most surely, and do these things; but what really did this day show (besides the insufficiency of the sacrifices) but that God was a God who knew all about sin and sins, was minded at that time in patience to bear with man a sinner, and once a year to pass by the sins committed against Him, without saying why and how He could do so consistently (save that it was by blood-shedding and death) either with His own claims over man, or with the law. It was all a constant bringing of sins to mind as before God, and as constant a reminding of man, that no man could cover sin or sins.

But God has now shown the counterpart of all this; for once in the end of the world, His Son has been down here as a Man and has taken up the question of man’s rebellion against God, of his sins and sin, and has brought full glory to God and blessing to the sinner that believes in connection with it. When He who knew no sin was made sin for us, God took occasion of sin to glorify Himself as to it: and He who was made sin knew how so to act as to glorify God whose servant He was.

The very brightest light now fills heaven, for the Lamb that was slain sits now upon the throne; that light shines down upon a dark and wicked race of men. Unto all the light comes and tells of what sin is as being against a God of mercy and compassion and love, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him might not perish but have everlasting life.

But that light enters to fill the soul that believes, and there it rests and abides, the blessing of eternal life. My sins are.... Where? Become the manifestation of the glory and excellency of the Saviour, of whom as faith sees Him in the holiest of all, on heaven’s high throne, one learns both the infinite enormity of sin, and its having lost, to us who believe, all its condemnatory power forever.

Oh, the blessedness of transgression forgiven! Sin covered! Oh, the blessedness of “the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile!”

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 7 - Our Stewardship

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### 1 Peter 4

The 1st verse of the fourth chapter of Peter is undoubtedly connected with the 18th verse of the previous chapter, which latter gives a most beautiful motive why a Christian never should suffer for sins, as, we have seen. In between, the apostle has given a parenthesis, brought in for the comfort of these Hebrew believers, who were taunted with the thought that because they were a little company therefore they were not right.

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," &c. As man, Christ actually died on the cross in this world. It is not exactly the same truth as Paul gives you—Paul gives us the doctrine; Peter gives you the practical side of it. He is showing US all through his epistle how a Christian must expect to suffer. If you do what Jesus did you must suffer. He did the will of God perfectly, and the result was He suffered in the flesh.

Satan came in the wilderness and offered Him everything, if He would bow down to him, and again in the garden the enemy sought to turn Him aside, but there was nothing in Christ to answer to his temptations; and therefore He suffered being tempted, but would rather die than not do the will of God.

He did the will of God, and it brought Him into death. Now, he says, you must arm yourselves with the same mind.

The expression "flesh" is not used as meaning the principle of evil, as Paul uses it; Paul means that standing in which I am found as a child of Adam,—the principle of evil which man has in him as a child of Adam fallen, having a corrupt nature, away from God. Peter means by "flesh," our life here in the body. Christ as a man suffered here, and if doing the will of God produces suffering, well, I get into glory by suffering.

Verse 1. First, he takes up what is within. You have a nature that likes its own way; but if you do God's will it is always at the expense of your own at the expense of suffering here.

Verse 2 and 3. That is the contrast between the lusts of men and the will of God. If I give way to the lusts of men, I do not suffer—not in the sense in which Christ suffered, doing God's will. How Christ might have saved Himself had He pleased Himself!

To do the will of God brought the blessed Lord into, the deepest suffering, brought Him into death, and the apostle says you must arm yourselves with the same mind, be prepared to suffer, and to die too.

Then if you arm yourself with the same mind, you do the will of God and do not sin. God has left us here for a little while, and what for? To do the will of God. Supposing you suffer by the will of God, go to God about it. It is often His will that we should suffer. The person who does not suffer, we may confidently say, is not walking with God. If you are in a pathway without suffering, you may

safely conclude you are not in God's pathway.

Verse 4. Here he is giving them comfort. The Gentiles say you are mad; never mind, the apostle says; supposing you did go with them, they would think it inconsistent of you, and now that you do not, they think it strange. But, says Peter, we are walking not to please them, but to please the Lord, and they have to remember this, that God is ready to judge the quick and the dead, and they have to give an account to Him. The judgment of the living was evidently that with which a Jew was familiar. The apostle is bringing out here that God is going to judge both the living and the dead—the living, according to Matthew 25, at the commencement of the kingdom, and the dead, as the final act of the kingdom, at the end of the millennium.

There are three things that Peter says are “ready.” In the first chapter he tells us that God is ready to take us out of the world; in the fourth chapter he tells us that He is ready to judge the world: and between these two moments, the Christian is always to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks him the reason of the hope that is in him.

Verse 6. This verse may have allusion to the end of the 3rd chapter, to those who lived in Noah's day but I do not think we can limit it to these, but rather that it takes in all who had died before the time of the coming of the Messiah, to whom promises had been made. God holds us responsible, not only for what we have received, but for what we have heard, that is, for our privileges. The testimony God has given, whether in that day or in this, is that men should live in view of God by the Spirit. They will be taken up and dealt with on the ground of the privileges they have had. If they turn their back on the testimony of the Lord, that testimony turns for a witness against them, and by it they will be judged.

Verse 7. We must not forget that the apostle was writing to a little Jewish company, and no doubt had before his mind that the moment drew near when the Lord's word would be fulfilled that everything should be upset, and not one stone remain upon another of the Temple. But the verse goes farther than this. Peter feels that a saint should be one who is always taking, as it were, his last step—feeling, I am on the threshold of all that God is going to bring me into, the world is just going to be judged, and therefore there should be temperateness, and watchfulness, and prayer. And if this were true in Peter's day, how much more true is it in ours! because one cannot but see that the elements which conduce to the bringing in of the Antichrist are at work now, and there never was a time when even Christians were in such danger of letting go the foundations, thus paving the way for believing a lie, for man was not born to be an infidel. The devil is seeking to clear out the truths of Christianity, in order to get the house clean swept and garnished, ready for the entrance of the seven devils, by-and-bye.

Men do not go on long believing in nothing, and if they turn away from the truth, the re-action will come in a little while; but what will that reaction be? Not the reception of the truth of Christ, but the reception of the lie of Antichrist.

Verse 8. The apostle now turns to what is very helpful for us who are within. Towards those who are outside, there is to be sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer; but now among yourselves, what is there to, be? Fervent charity. Why? Because that is the thing that God delights in, (Prov. 10:12,) “Love covereth all sins.” This was the reason why he presses that this fervent charity should work in them, because it not merely keeps people going on well with God, but happily with each other.

There are no people who have got such opportunities of irritating each other, as we who have come out side human systems, because we are so much together, and we have all the old barriers broken down, and are simply brought together on the ground of the Church of God. Unless grace thoroughly works, there is no place where people can so pain and wound each other, and therefore Peter says you need this fervent charity; and not only for going on together, and for the restraint of what is not lovely, but also for the activity of divine love in the saint of God, and finding the very opportunity for its activity in the naughtiness of someone else!

The worse a thing is in another the more lovely an opportunity it gives you for covering it up. "Love covers a multitude of sins." Not one or two, but a multitude—a thousand little things that the devil brings in to upset saints; some dead fly! What is the cure? says Peter. Oh, this divine love; you cover it up. Peter says, God has His eye on you, and if you are keeping up a thing you are keeping it up for God to see, and He cannot like that.

But supposing you cover with a mantle of love my naughtiness, what does God see? The reproduction in you of the same love and grace there was in Christ.

Peter says, I expect you to get on smoothly with the saints, no matter what other people are.

Verse 9. This is perfectly beautiful, though some people would grumble at you for doing it; not so says Peter. I find in Rom. 12 "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." First, look out that nobody is in want; and secondly, you are to keep an open house, a beautiful divine balance.

God often not only brings people together, but binds them together. Use your house to get your brethren in, and get to learn them and they you, and that not because you must—not grudgingly, but in love.

Verse 10. When the apostle talks of a gift, it is not only a man being able to preach, or teach. He says, "As every man hath received the gift." Then you have a gift, and you are responsible to use it, and the sphere in which you are to use this gift is the Church, first of all. Whatever you have it is not yours; you are only a steward. It all belongs to Christ; and you must be a good steward, because you will have to give an account of your stewardship by-and-bye.

Verse 11. If you speak, that is a gift for edification. If you minister—that is, carrying (may be) a little bacon of soup to some sick saint, or a few shillings to one who is in need of them—according to the measure of your ability, do it. It is the question of using the temporal things of this life for the glory of God.

How beautiful it makes the acts of everyday life! God is as well pleased with the right use of every day's things as with the spiritual gifts, either preaching, for the conversion of the world, or ministry, to the building up of the body of His dear Son.

I deny that either you or I have a right of ministry. No! We have no liberty to speak in the assembly, unless we speak "as oracles of God"; and that is not liberty merely, but bounden responsibility.

If you possess a gift you are bound to use it. Not that a man who has a gift need always be using it; he has always plenty to learn, and can hold his peace and listen to his brethren.

If I rise to speak in the God's Assembly, I must speak not according to the oracles of God as revealed in Scripture, but as being the direct mouthpiece of God to the saints at that very moment, giving forth to them exactly what God would have them hear at that moment.

First, we have in the 10th verse, God communicating something to those who speak, which they are bound to give forth—something of His mind. Then if you have anything to give away, well, do it, and all is to be done for God's glory.

vs. 12. Now, you notice he turns round to speak to them of their circumstances—of the trials of the pathway. The apostle brings in now for the first time the thought of being with the Lord in glory as the answer to suffering for Christ here. This is the highest kind of suffering that a Christian can go through. The suffering of the 13th verse is different from the suffering of the 14th verse. In the 13th verse we are partakers of Christ's sufferings; in the 14th verse we suffer for Christ.

We are partakers of Christ's sufferings—that is, of those sufferings which He passed through down here, excepting His suffering in the way of atonement. The suffering of the 13th verse every Christian has part in, but every Christian has not part in the suffering of the 14th verse. The 13th verse is suffering with Christ; the 14th verse is suffering for Christ. I ask you, have you never, in going through this scene of death and misery, heaved a groan because of it all? That is suffering with Christ, in sympathy with what He felt.

That groan is the groan which the Spirit of God produces in the saint, and is in character like the groan of Christ at the grave of Lazarus. Christ suffered going through this scene as a perfect man, and seeing the sin, and misery, and sorrow, and how God was dishonored. We suffer in our measure in seeing the same things, and that is suffering with Him.

But we do not all suffer for Christ. If we go on with this world, and seek to save ourselves, no doubt it can be done; but then there's the missing of all that Peter speaks of here. If we do as Moses would not do, we may escape it. You may be called everything that is bad, because of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, Peter says, happy are ye; instead of being downcast about it, take it as a privilege that you may be reproached for His blessed name. Oh, for a little more of the spirit of the apostles in the 5th of Acts: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

Verse 15. As soon as I touch the things that do not belong to me, I am sure to suffer. Do not be ashamed to suffer as a Christian; but be ashamed to suffer as a busybody; and if you suffer as a Christian do not forget this, that in all God is letting you pass through there is a blessed purpose.

Verse 17. It is a great thing to remember the government of God, and that it begins with us, and that He has His own blessed purpose to work out in our souls, and if He lets suffering and trial come in, though we do not like it, yet He sees the need.

Verse 18. Why with difficulty? Because the devil is against you, and the world is against you, and the devil sets pitfalls and snares for your feet, and God uses these very temptations and trials to bring you nearer to Himself. It is part of His plan in leading you to glory, to give you these sufferings and trials by the way, which He sees are needed.

Verse 19. You did your own will in days gone by, and it worked death: you are suffering now according to the will of God. You have to do now, Peter says, what Jesus did—commit yourself to

God. He casts you on Him who has almighty power, but who is your Father likewise. The Lord keep us seeking to do His will so always that it may turn to praise, and honor, and glory by Christ Jesus.

## The Hope of the Early Christians

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The Thessalonians had received this hope of the Lord's return as a fundamental truth—they were converted to it. They “turned from idols to wait for His Son from heaven.” It was not a new strange doctrine among them, not a truth held only by a few who had more knowledge than others, but their common hope, and so prominently so, that we see at the close of this chapter it was the talk of the country round that here were a set of people waiting for the return of Jesus from heaven.

We see in this epistle, and indeed throughout the New Testament, how the truth of the Lord's return is brought to bear on all subjects that concern us; whether for joy, comfort, warning, reproof, or encouragement, all is referred to His appearing.

The true power of living in this waiting for the Lord from heaven is in personal love to Him: nothing else will give it. Alas, that we should be so dull, cold, loveless with such a Saviour, such a head, hope, and home!

## How to Think and Feel Regarding a Saint Gone to the Lord

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With a conscience set free by faith in a risen and ascended Lord, and with the flow of joy which the un-grieved Spirit of God gives to a heavenly man who is a son of God, what is the fever of disease? What the clammy feel of the body, when its life is flickering in the socket, and the eternal life within centering the heart and mind upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Yes, but there is a coffin before us! There rests the body of an aged and devoted saint! happy in His love, and full of His love to His saints, and now gone! Aye, but gone whither? To the Lord Jesus. Is He not worthy to have His saints with Him, and has He forestalled God's counsel in calling this one home, home to Himself—Himself the home? Not so; the words, 'If ye loved me, ye would rejoice that I said I go to my Father, for my Father is greater than I' may be quoted here as true in this case also. Oh, have we no love for those that go? no love save for our own selves? no willingness to see them blessed, their blessing will cost us any privation? It is will wretched selfishness, which forgets God's joy and Christ's joy in welcoming to His presence a soul that leaves us, and which hinders, too, our thinking of it great gain. Well may you, who are thus full of you own selves, forgetting God and Christ, and the friend you profess to have loved—well may you be indignant with your own selfishness and your own narrow-hearted love of self! But there is a jealousy of love in God, He wills that your hearts should know the sufficiency of Christ to satisfy you amid all the wrestlings of the wilderness. He wills in that jealousy of love that you should think of Him to whom He has espoused you and to His joy over those who sleep in Him, and that you should learn how to think and feel according to that sphere in which Christ is center.

What can I tell you concerning the blessedness of the departed? I can only answer by another question. What do you know of the blessedness of being with the Lord? For if self and selfishness fill you, why then, they find their aliment in this world; and if you are full of yourself, your likes and dislikes, your gains and your losses, you will not profit much from the doctrine of the blessedness of those absent from the body and present with the Lord. It does not fill you, with your selfishness, and so you may not like it? What did the thief know of Paradise? Probably nothing at all. But he had made a new friend in One whose fellow was not to be found. Faith had revealed to him the blessedness of the Lord. Faith had opened his heart to holiness and to confession, and to trust in his Judge, and had drawn into it the sweetness of inseparableness from that Saviour. "Thou shalt be with me." With Him! that was enough. This throws us on the measure of our appreciation and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who know and make much of Him will find much in the thought of being with Him. To a saint there is nothing like presence with the Lord. If self rules, we must have circumstances and details, so as to be able to pick up what suits man, thinking of himself and his circumstances.

## Eph. 1:3: A Song of the Ransomed Sons of Men

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Prov. 8:22-26; John 1. 1-2; Eph. 1:4.

While as yet no world existed,  
Ere began the stream of time,  
While the depths and mountains were not,  
From the ages He was Thine.

Yet e'en then, Thy heart was thinking  
Of the unborn human race:  
Us in Christ Thou then wert choosing,  
To the glory of Thy grace.

Prov. 8:27-31, Heb. 1:2-3

When were formed earth's first foundations,  
He was there before Thee then;  
Always in Thy presence joying  
In Thy love to sons of men.

He the heir, and by Him all things,  
Mirror of Thy glory bright;

Sons of men were yet His pleasure,  
With them then was His delight.

Gen. 3:15, John 3:16, 1 John 4:10

And when sin had marred creation—  
Foul the blot that stained it then—  
In Thy love He still was sharer  
To the fallen sons of men.

Fallen—yet Thy love would reach them,  
Lost—and yet Thy love would save:

But the cost! oh, mighty question,

known alone to Him who gave.

Heb. 2:7, 10, 16

Down from off the throne eternal,  
Not for angels came He then;  
That were wondrous; but e'en lower  
Stooped He for the sons of men.  
Low the station, yet He took it,  
He Jehovah's fellow still;  
Scoffing, shame, reproach He bore it,  
For it was the Father's will.

Matt. 26:43, 27

From the place of sin He shrank not,  
He the holy, He the pure,  
When our sin Thou laidst upon Him,  
In that dread and awful hour.  
All alone, by God forsaken,  
Loud the cry from Calvary's hill,  
As He took the cup and drank it,  
For it was the Father's will.

Acts 2:31, 13:35; Col. 1:18

Death its sting did spend upon Him,  
In the grave His body lay;  
But its bands they could not hold Him,  
Nought Thy mighty power could stay.  
From the grave triumphant rising,  
First-born from among the dead,  
Now above all power exalted,  
Sits He as the Church's head.

Heb. 2:9-11.

On Thy throne we see Him seated,  
Crowns of glory on His brow;  
“All of one,” oh, wondrous story!  
“Brethren,” He does call us now.  
Yes, with all the glory on Him,  
Thinks He of us even then;  
For to glory He is bringing  
All the ransomed sons of men.

John 14:26-27, 12:33

For a little while He's left us,  
And the path is rough and drear;  
But His footsteps are upon it  
And the Comforter is here.  
Words of peace He spoke on leaving;  
On our way they ever cheer;  
Tribulation He did tell of,  
But in Him we do not fear.

John 10 4:1-3; Rev. 3:11, 22:7-12.

For us now He is preparing  
What was then His thought of love,  
When He spoke of many mansions  
In His Father's home above.  
And He's coming, as He told us,  
Quickly coming—that we know:  
Then will dawn the bright “forever,”  
Then will cease the walk below.

Eph. 1:3; Rev. 4:9.

Lord e'en now we sing Thy praises,  
As we strike the heavenly chord,

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

To the Father of our Lord!

But a louder song awaits Thee,

And we'll help to swell it then,

When in glory bursts the chorus

From the ransomed sons of men.

—A. M. M.

## God and His Wondrous Ways in Contrast With Man and His Ways

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“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 are ye saved).” -Eph. 2:4,5.

The first word, here, is “but”; a little word which shows that what follows it is disconnected from what goes before: in this case, it is in contrast with it.

Man had just been spoken of; but now in contrast to man, God is brought in. It was man, according to what God saw of his ways, when dead in trespasses and sins; thus (vs. 1), dead in trespasses and sins—this was his state; and the marks of this state, as found in man’s ways, are plainly described in verse 2, as “a walk according to the course of this world” (which is at enmity against God), and, therefore, a walk according to the god of this world, who is the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience;” and the habitual walk or way of such was in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, for they were children of wrath, even as others.

This was on one side; and an awful view it gave of man. “But,” on the other side, in contrast with all this, there was God, and God according to His nature and ways; “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.” Here is God and His wondrous ways in contrast with man and his ways. First, God in contrast with man—next His characteristic trait, who is rich in mercy—and then a particular proof of it in His love to us. Mark, here, that mercy, in its very nature, excludes every thought of worthiness, merit, or claim, being in the party to whom it comes; it supposes unworthiness, demerit, want, and misery, in the party benefited; and that all the benefit conferred flows forth, from the party that confers it, upon the sole ground that He can compassionate and feel pity for the party in need, although He distinctly recognizes, at the very time of doing so, that the said party is in a state other than He counts happy or desirable. We could not say, God was merciful to Christ. If any one used such an expression to us, we should be obliged in faithfulness to point out the impropriety; it would be a most injurious and wrong word to use in such a connection. For Christ Jesus could say, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also”; and the Father could say of Him, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Christ Jesus came to do God’s will, and did it perfectly in all things; and had worthiness and claims before God, which God delights to honor. He was not the object of mercy, nor could it be, because there was nothing in Him to move the compassion or pity of God, but everything calculated to give God delight—everything that pleased God. To use such an expression would be (however unconsciously it might be done) to speak disparagingly and injuriously of the Lord. For in Christ was life, and the life was the light of men. But when God looked on us, we were dead in trespasses and sins; and God’s bearing toward us was a bearing of mercy. Death in trespasses and sins He did not delight in; it might have turned Him away offended; but He pitied and compassionated us; He had mercy upon us, and He who condemned the sins desired to save the sinner.

Thus we have man, his condition, and ways; and God, His compassion and ways, set in contrast. I say His compassion and ways, because “who is rich in mercy” gives a trait or mark in His

character, and “for the great love wherewith He loved us,” gives an acting of that characteristic trait in the salvation which grace has set before us and made ours.

“For his great love wherewith he loved us.” What a word is this! To know, with certainty, that, notwithstanding all that we have done and were by nature, yet that there is one bosom in which there is love toward us; and that bosom the very one in which we should have supposed there would have been displeasure and wrath; for, if we look at ourselves merely as creatures standing before a Creator whom we have dishonored, what else but indignation and wrath had we to expect? Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, would have been our just reward for our evil deeds and fallen nature. But it is not so. Vile as we were, and vilely as we acted, God, acting as Redeemer, and not merely in the character of Creator, has loved us freely; He has given His Son for us; and we that believe can say He loved us and loves us with a “great love.”

Verse 5. “Even when we were dead in sins.” Here we have our state in nature again brought before us, and brought before us in the most concise way possible. The acorn has an oak tree folded up in it; many a little spring of water is the mother of a river; and a soul that has death in sins in it has all the big tree of sin and all its fruits folded up in it, and is the mother source of all the swollen river of man’s wickedness. Now, if I was such, what had I to expect as such from God? If God had acted according to my state and my deserts, what would have been my lot? Nothing but the second death. And what motive could God draw from anything which I, who was altogether dead, could give Him? I thought myself to be as God Himself; and had no notion that the Lord He is God alone, having altogether a wrong notion about Him too. No; He could find, He did find, nothing good in me. But where all was death in sins, there He was pleased to act from within Himself, to draw forth motives from within Himself; and He could find reasons why He should quicken us together with Christ. If I consider what I was, I can find no reason why God should bless me, and not rather curse; and if I consider that God was the blessing, for His own name’s sake, and what the way is in which He has blessed, I say, “It is clear that merit or deserving in the creature is quite shut out of the question.” God was the source, the spring of the blessing; why should He have done it? He is rich in mercy. Ay, He has a character of His own; and tis a blessed one too. Fallen man does not like Him alone to be God. But God He is still. Fallen man draws his picture of God according to his own fallen imagination and corrupt lusts and passions. But God has a character of His own. He has no thought of ceasing to be – or of ceasing to be God alone – or of changing His character because man has become a wreck and a ruin. He is God, and He is rich in mercy. He loved us when we were dead in sins. And the how and the why of the blessing, which He has bestowed upon us, both alike declare that it was not according to our thought, nor for our sakes, as the end of His acting, that He blessed us thus.

“Quickened us together with Christ,” is His first word when setting forth that way. What could Adam in the garden have understood about being quickened together with Christ? What does a sinner know about God’s quickening together with Christ? The way is God’s way; and as the heavens are high above the earth, so are God’s ways high above man’s ways; “His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts.”

God had an only begotten Son. Him He gave, that He might become Son of man, the anointed of God. Man!—did he bring in that Christ into the world? No. With wicked hands men crucified and slew Him. They did what they could to send Him out of the world, when He had come into it without

their leave, and had stayed in it a good bit longer than they liked. And, mark it, this matter whereof He speaks had no place in Eden, did not lie, was not found, in that field, which was given to man. Man ought not to have touched the forbidden tree, then would he not have died. But death was the end of all that man could see, so as to reap it by disobedience.

Having a new life, resurrection and glory were not fruits that grew in nature's barren soil. But God, to please Himself, introduces the Seed of the woman, this Christ of whom we speak, as the One by whom and for whom He could go on with the earth, after Adam and Eve had altogether failed in the garden of Eden; saying: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And that He, the Christ, might, as Son of man and the woman's Seed, not be alone in His glory, He had to die. For, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Well! death, the wages due to our sin, He freely took, in obedience to the thoughts of God. He was crucified, He died, and was buried, that God might be able to be just while justifying us poor sinners; baptized to Christ's death; and He has said, that He reckons us crucified, dead, and buried, as to our old man, together with Christ: and we are to reckon ourselves so likewise. But His taking of His life again, His rising from the grave, His going up into heaven, His being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, was part of what pertained to the second Adam, and had no place in the portion of the first. Now, no man can go beyond what is human in thought. And it was God, and not man, from whom that thought and that way came forth of believers being quickened together with Christ.

Christ was buried in the sepulcher in the garden. But He could see no corruption. And He who had power to lay down His life, had power also to take it again; for this commandment had He received of the Father? Well, on the first day of the week, He awoke, He was quickened in the Spirit (1 Peter 3); and, therefore, all that ado outside of earthquake, of sepulcher door-stone rolled away, etc. He was quickened; and, says our text, "We were quickened together with Him."

The act, and fact, and moment of the Lord Jesus Christ's taking His life again, is not sufficiently thought of by us. It ought to be looked at in and by itself. The Roman Catholic religion (religion of fallen human nature) pictures to us Christ a-crucifying, and gives us images of wood, stone, and ivory out of all number of a human figure on the cross. Of eternal moment to us is the fact, that the Christ of God was crucified, has been crucified, because He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, His death was naught, if He did not rise from the dead; and He left the grave empty, save of those grave-clothes which have since, (as has His cross on which He was hung, and our sins also) passed away, never more to be found. God honors the Christ who was crucified, the Christ who was buried, but is alive again.

Now, if I had to prove, as says Paul, 1 Corinthians 15, the forgiveness of sins, I point to the One that is risen: and might, in a figure, say, "Turn to the grave; it is empty. He left there naught but the grave-clothes." But this is not enough when the question comes as to God's way of blessing us—"quickened together with Christ." Then I have to turn neither to, the guarded imprisoning tomb where the body of the Lord lay; nor to the empty tomb, He being gone up on high; but I turn in thought to the tomb burst open now, for He is just alive from among the dead; and because He is thus risen, and because God gives testimony in the scene; the guards are fled, and the disciples are being drawn, by various means, thereunto. Oh, it is a blessed thought! that blessed One taking His life again; that One, who was all God's joy, and God's delight, quickening into life afresh, as

Son of man, in the tomb. Blessed in itself! and blessed to us, because it is written of us—“quickened together with Him.”

The life He took is that of which He has communicated to us, as He did to Paul and to these Ephesians: and, therefore, as that life which He took when He awoke from death, it can be said, and it is said of us “quickened together with Him.” Saul! Where was he when Christ awoke in the grave? These wicked Ephesians! Where were they at that time? Both were dead in sins. Well, when Christ had called them, and given them of that life which He took, they were no longer looked upon by God according to the old man, but according to the new man. By reason of the old man in us Christ has been crucified, dead and buried. But He took life anew, and has given to us of that life, of a life which the old man had not; and God looks upon us as vessels in which it dwells—a life inseparable from the source whence it flows; a life in us which enables Him to say to us, enables us to say of ourselves that believe, “quickened together with Christ.” The root, the germ, the incorruptible seed of all blessing is in this life. And I pray you, reader, to mark, that the moment the Spirit, through Paul, has said, “quickened together with Christ,” He makes a pause or marks a bar, a way quite above man, quite outside the field of human nature, fallen or unfallen.

Mark the why of His blessing: “That in the ages to come he might spew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ.” What could be plainer? “That he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.” Yes; God will not give His glory to another. If He (whose very existence and being fallen man hates, despises, and rebels against), does act in a way to make such happy, He does it for His own glory's sake as an end—does it on the ground of what He, God, is. In nature and character, He is rich in mercy. And this shuts out all thought of its being done because of any deserving in us.

But as the party blessing, His motives for blessing, and His end in blessing, each and all, bid us think of Him, and cease from thinking of ourselves; just so does also His way of blessing. What is His way of blessing? Is it a way that lies, so to speak, in the field of fallen human nature (as the putting forth of our power to stop sin, and to work good works in ourselves does); or is it a way such as fallen man never thought of, never knew anything about? Yes; it is so as to shut this off from all the consequences of it. For, however blessed and important these consequences of life possessed are, they are not the life itself, but consequences of it. Therefore, the moment He has said “quickened together with Christ,” He makes a pause,—introduces a parenthesis,—which seems to be a mark, to mark off what He has just said from that which follows after it; “quickened together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).” Ay! if quickened together with Christ, then we are saved in, and inseparably from, Him. And that is the best part of what God has to give us.

Truly, this salvation is of God the Father alone. And as man never dared to say to God, “I have sinned, and Thou must bear the penalty,” so he never hit upon such a thought as this, “If God quickened in the grave His Son whom we had crucified, we will share all that is His!” But what man never thought of, what, if he had said, it would have been awful blasphemy on his part, both in the one case and the other—that was God's thought and plan. Man had sinned; God manifest in the flesh should bear the penalty; and the reward and glory He should win for this service He would freely share with all His disciples: for they should be “quickened together with Him.”

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.

## Hope to the End

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Faith counts upon the end from the beginning. As our hymn has it—

“The guilt of twice ten thousand sins

One moment takes away;

And grace, when once the war, begins,

Secures the crowning day.”

This calculation upon the end at the beginning is a fine exercise of the soul. Faith knows what the end must be, from what the beginning has been.

The journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is a grand moral, as it has been, and is still commonly felt to be. It is not taken till the settlement of the greatest of all questions is fully and perfectly reached; the question, I mean, of relationship to God. In Exodus 12 that is the subject. The time of that chapter was no time of conflict, as between Israel and Egypt, but between Israel and the judgment of God. It was like the question between God and us, as sinners. And the blood on the door-posts settled

“The guilt of twice ten thousand sins

One moment takes away.”

It is the sword of the destroying angel that is turned aside by the sprinkled blood, and not the sword of any Egyptian. That angel would most surely have entered, carrying death or the judgment of God with him, but for the sprinkled lintel. That blood was God’s provision for settling the question of life or death, of salvation or judgment, between Himself and Israel, in the doomed land of Egypt. It effectually blunted the power of death. It was a moment when nothing but that blood would have done anything, but that blood did all which that moment demanded. It decided this, that Israel was to live and not to die.

In such a character, Israel starts for the journey. The greatest of all questions was settled—their relationship to God. And well is it, where the soul owns that this is the first, the great, the chief, and the principal question of all questions, “How stands it between God and my soul?” Others are but second to that—and, accordingly, that very month, in which this was accomplished and done, was, by divine ordinance, the beginning of months with Israel.

Thus at peace with God, as a redeemed, and purchased, and saved people, Israel begins the journey. Their character is settled and taken ere their history or action begins.

Soon they find themselves at their wits’ end. The strength of Pharaoh is behind them, and the Red Sea in front; and it seems as though it were only a choice of deaths for them—the sword or the flood. But He who was in the place of judgment with them yesterday, is with them in the midst of

enemies and hindrances today. The angel of God can do the business now, as effectually as the blood did it then. The pillar where the glory dwelt serves now, because the sprinkled lintel had already served. The angel defends, because the blood had redeemed. Simple and precious! The blood, I may say, pledges all which Israel's need demands. For

"Grace, when once the war begins,

Secures the crowning day."

Accordingly, the angel of God comes between Israel and their pursuers. The pillar is darkness to the camp of Egypt, and light to Israel. And the hosts of the Lord go on and through the sea, and the hosts of Pharaoh, in all their strength and flower, perish in it.

Thus is the journey commenced. It was a blood-bought people who were taking it, and it is at once seen that such a people shall be a defended people. The blood pledged the pillar. Redeemed from the judgment of God, they shall surely be more than conquerors over their enemies. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The song on the eastern shore of the sea declares this. There had been no song till now. The hour of redemption from the judgment of the Lord had been passed in silence this hour of deliverance from the sword of Pharaoh is celebrated in a song. Fitting and beautiful distinctions in the exercises of the soul Israel in Egypt had enjoyed the certainty of the blood protecting them from the destroying angel, by feeding on the lamb in silence: they now see their enemies vanquished, and sing the song of praise. The silence of the paschal hour may have been of a deeper character—but silence was a better expression of the joy of such an hour, than this fervent triumphant utterance would have been.

Redeemed from the righteous judgment of God, and defended from the attempts of the enemy who would have overwhelmed them, the Israel of the Lord proceeded on their way.

A checkered scene they pass through. Necessities call for supplies, infirmities and trespasses call for healings and forgiveness. But the Lord proves His resources and His grace. He feeds them. He rebukes and chastens, but He pardons them, and still accepts them. Let the demands on Him be what they may, or repeated as they may, He never leaves them. If Israel bring a pilgrimage of forty years upon themselves, the Lord will be in the wilderness with them for forty years. He may be grieved, and have to express His displeasure, but He never leaves them.

Is Israel then, I ask, still a happy people? Are they a less happy people than when at first in Egypt they fed together under the covert of the blood, or at the sea sang their song of victory? Circumstances are changed indeed; but is their God changed? They are, it is true, in the heart of the wilderness, but are they a less happy people? Can any reason be drawn from the cloudy pillar of the desert in proof of this? Are they more straitened in God now than they were at the outset? Is the pillar the witness of a different God from what the blood or the song had given them? No; they are not straitened in God—nor are we, be we on what stage of the journey we may. If we loved the Lord, the days of the pillar in the wilderness would be as welcome, in a great sense, as the earlier triumphant hour of the song on the sea. The wilderness, in all its circumstances, was given to Israel of old, and is given to us now, for this end, to prove what is in our hearts towards God. (Deut. 8.) Should such an occasion be ungrateful or unwelcome? Would it be so to us in our

human place and feelings, if we indeed loved another? Would we resent some call to serve him, some occasion to prove that there was something in our hearts for him? We know we should not. We know that we should give place to such opportunities, entertain them, and greet them. And, as far as we have occasion of showing a heart for the Lord, those wilderness journeys will not be resented. In themselves, they are not joyous. Nothing can make them, in themselves, other than what they are grievous—these trials and sorrows, these journeys through necessities, through humblings, through shifts and changes, it may be in painfulness and weariness. But the pillar tells us of the presence of the Lord. And this tells us that it is a happy people we are to be all along the road. The blood, the song, the companion-cloud, are only divers tokens of the same Jesus.

Just at the end of the road, in the high places of Baal or of Peor, a confederacy was formed against Israel, as at the outset there had been another on the Egyptian shore of the Red Sea. It is a moment which gives the Lord occasion to prove Himself the very same to Israel as He had been forty years before, in spite of all their provocations. For however we may entertain these opportunities of proving our heart to Him, we may easily know how He entertains them when they would prove His heart to us.

Israel is spread out in their encampment, in the valley beneath, when, in the high places of Baal and of Peor, the Lord meets the confederated Balsam and Balak, their altars, their victims, and their enchantments. The rest of Israel is not allowed to be disturbed by even the most distant report of what was happening, though in a great sense it was a moment of imminent peril to them. The Lord meets the king and his prophet all alone—and the tokens of the liars are frustrated. There is no enchantment against Israel. Israel may sleep on and take their rest, when the question is raised, “Can anything erase them from the palms of the hands of the Lord?” When the occasion is set for the proving of this, that the Lord has His Israel in His heart, as freshly and as warmly and as faithfully as ever, Israel may remain at home, and neither plead nor act, for the Lord will let the powers of darkness know the secrets of His bosom.

Thus is it with Him, in valuing and using opportunities for proving what is in His heart toward His saints. And if we, beloved, did but value what we have in Him, if we but took account of our condition in relation to the Lord, and not in relation to circumstances, we should always be happy beyond expression. Our joy would be full. But it is in that point we fail. We love circumstances. We live in the power of them too much, in the light of the Lord’s favor too little. And we are dull, and low, and half-hearted. Were it not so with us, the journeys in company with the cloud, checkered as they are, would find us and leave us still a happy, happy people. For it is one Jesus throughout, whether it be the day of the blood, of the song, or of the cloud, one and the same Jesus who was here with us in the circumstances of hum an life, in the dying love of the cross, in the life of intercession in heaven, and who will give us His unchanged self in glory forever.

But, further still, for there is a stage beyond the high places of Baal, in the journey of Israel—there is the passage of the Jordan—the moment when the wilderness is to be put behind them forever, as there had been in Egypt the moment when it was all before them, and then (when they had crossed the sea) the times and the seasons when it was all around them.

And now, so fruitful is the Lord of Israel in His resources, it is not the blood or the song or the pillar, but the ark and the feet of the priests, that are put in service for them. New occasions bring out new agencies. Fresh necessities display fresh resources. But it is the same Jesus. There are

different administrations, but it is the same Lord.

The arm is not shortened—and the help of Israel for the Jordan is as perfect as had been their help at the Red Sea. Not a wave of the swellings and overflowings of the river touched the foot of the feeblest or most distant Israelite. The waters were again a wall on their right hand and on their left. The ark stations itself in the midst of the bed of the river, till all the company had gone clean over. Its presence encourages them as well as secures them, just at a moment and under an exigency when nature would have sunk, and the heart would have had a thousand misgivings. “Would not those watery walls give way? Would not the river from above assert its right, and claim its possession of a thousand years? Would not the source of the river force its title against its trespassers?”—The calm and assured aspect of the priests, as they bore the ark, and stood with it there in the place of the river’s height of pride and strength, gave all such questionings their answer, and stilled every misgiving. The people were commanded to look at the ark, and then to pass on. And they did so. They passed over dry-shod, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth gave them its presence, till all was accomplished. The waters would have been first in overwhelming the ark and its bearers, had they been able to touch even the sole of the foot of the feeblest of the tribes. And this crowning mercy visits them without the Lord calling to their remembrance a single evil His Israel had committed all along the journey hitherto. Read Josh. 3:4, where the passage of the Jordan is accomplished, where God shuts out the wilderness forever, and leads His elect home, and you will find no remembrance of one single misdoing. He sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. The Lord giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Everything is done for them that is needed, and everything that is done, is done by an arm of conquering strength, and by a heart of perfect unupbraiding love—and Israel passed into their inheritance under the same God of all grace, by whom they had passed out from the place of death and judgment. The earliest pledge is redeemed at the latest moment—and the song, which at the first we sang in the spirit of faith, is sung again at the end, under a fresh breathing and impulse, in the power of the truth of it—

“And grace, when once the war begins,

Secures the crowning day.”

J. G. B.

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 8 - A Hortatory Conclusion

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### 1 Peter 5

The apostle returns in this chapter to exhortation. In the close of the fourth he had been unfolding certain truths with regard to the government of God, because it was His house. (10, 17, 18.) Now in chap. 5, he has exhortations both for the elders and for the younger ones. Elder carries its own meaning with it. He is not speaking to official persons, but to those of riper years. This is quite in keeping with the acts of the apostles, where we read of elders. With the Jews elder was a characteristic term meaning those older. Peter says he is an elder, in the sense I have spoken of it, but no one would think of speaking of Peter as an elder in the way Christendom speaks of it. An elder was not one who necessarily possessed much gift. It was a local charge. He was an elder in the place where he was fixed, and nowhere else.

You hear of teaching elders and ruling elders. Who were these elders? They were those who had got into this official position in some particular locality, by the special appointment of the apostles or someone delegated by the apostles.

There are two simple reasons why you cannot have the official position in this day. First you have not the competent ordaining power, unless you can bring evidence that you are an apostle or an apostolic delegate, and this is impossible. A man who says he is an apostle does not speak the truth, and the apostolic successors were grievous wolves who did not spare the flock.

Supposing you had the power, where would you begin to appoint elders? The first thing you would have to do would be to shake Christendom to its center, and bring all the church of God together, and have the church manifestly one. Where would Paul, if he were here today, begin to appoint elders? He could not begin anywhere, because we have not the church of God as one.

But you get the men who do the work of elders very blessedly and say nothing about it, and serve Christ and get the reward by-and-bye too. Anything else is only hollow assumption. You have not now either the church over which elders could be appointed, or the competent ordaining power.

The Lord saw the disorder that was coming into His house, and so He forebore in His wisdom to perpetuate a system that would only keep people apart.

The actual effect would be that. Ah! what wisdom is His! He saw what would happen, and therefore let the official part of the thing die with the apostles, and now we are cast upon God and the word of His grace to go on simply with the Lord.

Verse 1. Peter takes the two ends of Christ's history—I have seen His sufferings and I am going to see His glory, and in between these two he puts the saints in this world, and says we must go on as we can, hope filling up our hearts till we see the Lord.

Verse 2. How beautiful! "The flock of God which is among you." Shepherd them he says. I have no doubt he alludes to the beautiful word from the Lord in his own history "Feed my sheep: Shepherd

my sheep.” (John 21) When the Lord had brought him to this, that it was only the Lord Himself who searched the heart, who could know that he had any love for Christ at all, that was the moment when He put into his care His sheep and His lambs.

“Taking the oversight,” the apostle continues, “not by constraint, but willingly.” I believe the Spirit of God foresaw what is in Christendom today, that the so-called care of the sheep of Christ would become a profession! Here I get the Holy Ghost striking a death-blow at the whole thing. It is perfectly true the laborer is worthy of his hire. I find the Apostle Paul lays down the principle most distinctly that those who labor should be cared for, but in the very next verse he says, “But I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me.” The whole principle is a perfect walking in faith, trusting the Lord, and He cares for His servants.

“Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind,” a spontaneous blessed desire of serving Christ, and caring for His people: and what more blessed than to be let in any measure care for Christ’s people?

Verse 3. Our translators have spoiled the verse by putting in “God’s.” It is your if there is any word at all, “Lords over possessions” literally. The Spirit of God saw the whole view of Christendom this day, the ministry of the word of God become a trade, and the church of God broken up into Mr. So-and-So’s flock, and consequently the deepest jealousy because someone has lost some of his sheep. Scripture says, “Not as baying them as your possessions.” Shepherding the sheep is more than feeding, it is going after the sheep when they have got away under the hedge, when perhaps, they are torn with the brambles, comforting them, helping to care for as well as to feed, to nurse, to tend in every way.

Every gift needed by the church of God on earth He has given, but the pride and self-will of man has come in to hinder the full flow of the grace of God.

What a wonderful difference if you look at the saints as being God’s, His flock. Suppose they are cold, you try to warm them. Suppose they do not love you much. Well, you love them the more abundantly. Do your work quietly; be an example to the flock by the way; lead them; be a guide to them; and wait for the app caring of the chief Shepherd and then you will receive an amaranthine crown that cannot fade. Here you may be despised, and thought little of; never-mind! go on, and wait till the chief Shepherd comes for your reward.

In the 10th of John, the Lord is called the good Shepherd in death, where He loved us and gave Himself for us. In Hebrews, He is the great Shepherd in resurrection. His resurrection demonstrates His almighty power, “None can pluck them out of His hand.” But besides this, He has many under shepherds, and He is the “chief Shepherd.” He loves His flock and though He has gone out of the scene, He is the chief Shepherd still, and He puts into the hearts of some to care for His flock, and He says He will not forget their service, and that by-and-bye for them there is a crown of glory that fadeth not away. I do not believe that all get this crown. There is a crown of righteousness for all those who love His appearing. I believe that includes every soul born of God, for it is impossible to be born of God and not love His appearing. Of course you would like to see the Lord; every soul born of God loves the thought of seeing the blessed Lord. So I believe every child of God will get the crown of 2 Timothy 4.

In James, we hear of a crown of life. You will get that crown too, thank God, because you could not be born of God without loving Him. For loving His appearing you get a crown of righteousness, for loving Himself, and having something of trial, you get a crown of life.

The Lord says to Smyrna, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." You are tried for my name's sake, He says, perhaps are going, into death for me, and I have been through death for you. You are standing on one side of the river, and I on the other, and you have to come through the waters to get to me, but the moment your head comes above the waters on the other side, I will put a crown of life on it.

Perhaps it may not be unto death your trial goes. Then this crown of glory is for those who care for what He cares for, and who seek to spew their love for Him by looking after His sheep.

Verse 5. Unless I am clothed with humility I shall not be subject. "The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way." The humble one is always cared for by God. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." It is a blessed thing humility, and what a little thing would puff us up. I get Paul saying that the flesh is so utterly corrupt that it would boast because it had been in glory. Because he, Paul, had been in heaven, the Lord had to give him a thorn in the flesh in order to keep him from being puffed up. And we often may be puffed up, just because of His very mercy to us, because He has brought us into this place of light and liberty. The only security of the saint is to walk lowly, to walk humbly.

The Lord will blight, and wither, and scatter all that plumes itself on having got truth and light and a right position. It is one thing to have gained that position and another thing to maintain it, for the power of the enemy is all the more brought to bear on those who have taken this position in order that they may the more flagrantly dishonor the name that is put upon them. "God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace unto the humble." What a solemn thing for the saint of God to get into a position in which God has actually to resist him. What a dreadful thing to have the Lord set against us because of pride allowed in the heart! God is against a proud person, and where is the room for pride, we who are the vilest of the vile?

"Only by pride cometh contention." There never is a bit of trouble between saints, but pride is at the bottom of it! You stand up for your rights, and the Lord will shake you down. You may get what you want, but the Lord will have His hand against you. A Christian should be like a piece of India rubber, always giving way, never resisting, except it be the devil. verse 9.

Verse 6. What a much more blessed thing to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and for Him to exalt us than to exalt ourselves, and for Him to have to put us down! "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased." That is the first man. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," that is the second man. The first man sought to make himself God, and fell into companionship with Satan, the second man who was God, made himself nothing, and God has exalted Him to the very highest glory.

There are two ways in which God humbles us. By the discovery of what is in our hearts, and by the discovery of what is in His heart, and nothing so humbles us as to discover what is in His heart, but humble myself as I may, I do not believe I ever get down to my true level to the place in which God sees me. It is a continual process.

Verse 7. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Oh, what a comfort for the heart, what a rest for the soul in all the ups and downs and vicissitudes of this life, to know He careth for you! Then why should you trouble? Is it worthwhile for two to be caring for the same thing? If you are caring you take it out of His hands, if He is caring you can afford to be without care, to roll yourself into your Father's arms, and to rest there without fear or care. When you learn the perfectness of His care for you, then you are left free to care for His things, His interests, because He is taking care of yours. But because He is caring for you, you are not therefore to be unwatchful, no, no, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Here it is as a roaring lion Satan comes, because these Hebrew believers were going through persecution. In the 2nd. Epistle he comes as a snake in the grass.

"Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." That is, everyone thinks there never was a lot like mine, such a troubled pathway. Peter says, Nothing of the kind, everyone else has the same; you are not the only person who is suffering; but he commends you to the God of all grace. What can keep us going? Grace; only grace. We need grace all along the way.

He has called you to glory, and by Christ Jesus, and now after that ye have suffered a little while, He will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. It should be "a little while" here, not merely a while,—a while might seem of some duration—he shortens it. You have need of patience a little while, says Paul; you must suffer a little while, says Peter.

"Stablish, strengthen, settle." Oh, what a place has the saint got, in the call of God, and not only in the call of God., but in that invigorating power which He makes His people to know all along the way! Himself who has called you shall make you perfect.

What have we not in God? Have we not everything which encourages our hearts, strengthens them, comforts them, sustains them. God's purpose, God's call, God's sustaining grace all along the way, brings us at last into His glory.

How beautifully Peter speaks of grace in this Epistle, ending in this chapter with God giving grace to the bumble because He is the God of all grace, and, he says, "I testify and exhort this is the true grace of God wherein you stand." The Lord give us to understand more of His grace, as we study His own word, and to delight more in Him verse 13. "She at Babylon saluteth you, and Marcus my son."<sup>1</sup>

As you review this Epistle what beauty there is in it. The call to heaven of the first chapter, our Holy and our royal priesthood of the second, with the duties that flow from the position, the walk of subjection and suffering of the third chapter, the Spirit of God and of glory resting on you of the fourth, and now in the fifth God feeding, sustaining, strengthening you, and never leaving you till He has placed you in glory with His Son.

## The Love of Jesus

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In looking at Revelation 1:5,6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love thinks of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regulates itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself—a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare. Secondly, love visits its object. It could not be content with merely thinking: the same principle that leads love to think with pleasure, induces it to visit its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation and disinterestedness, in the visit as in the thought. It does not think upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of any one, neither does it visit in order to effect such ends; it has its own real substantial enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting its object. Thirdly, love suffers for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely thinking of or visiting its object—it must suffer. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its objects; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because it will express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No: it simply contemplates its object, in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

## **“For All Live to Him”**

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(Luke 20:38)

The meaning is this—To God’s eye, or as seen by Him, there are no dead saints; if they are not alive on earth in the body, they are alive with Christ, in Paradise, without the body; and when they receive their glorified bodies, they will not only “live unto Him,” or as seen by Him, but they will live to one another—for then we shall know even as we are known.

## Brief Thoughts on Malachi

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The captivity did not purify Israel. The returned captives deny the love and despise the judgment of the Lord. See Ch. 1:2; 2:17.

The unclean spirit went out; but the house was not the Lord's.

But there is a remnant, informal, spiritual, remembered now, to be distinguished hereafter.

They are exhorted to hold by the word. They are promised the judgment of the evil, and a new dispensation. They are not promised present recovery of David's throne or deliverance from the Gentiles.

So the Reformation in Christendom: the unclean spirit went out; but the house was not the Lord's.

Apostles contemplate an informal remnant, promise judgment and a new thing, but hold out no present recovery. See 2 Tim., 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation 2, 3.

Malachi's remnant were found by Jesus as Malachi left them. (See Luke 1;2) So will the coming of the Lord find the saints as left by the apostles in the epistles.

## In the Land

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Joshua 3;4;5

Safe in the Promised Land!

Past judgment and the grave;

We're one with Him, at God's right hand,

Who came the lost to save.

The wilderness is past,

The Jordan's depths are o'er,

Within the land our lot is cast,

To go abroad no more.

The Lord hath set us free,

Destroyed the power of hell.

Tis life and joy and peace to be

Where God Himself doth dwell.

The ark went on before;

Christ rose from out the dead,

And sin shall sunder nevermore

The members from the Head.

With "old corn of the land"

Doth God His people feed,

His wondrous grace we understand,

His Bread is food indeed.

Thou, Lord, hast set us free

From every claim of earth;

We eat and drink and live by Thee,

Thou Food of priceless worth!

The angels cannot share

The mystery divine;  
They have their bliss in being where  
We breathe and move as THINE.  
Thy life, O Son of God;  
Thy peace, Most Holy One;  
Thy Father's house, Thine own abode,  
Are all, through grace, our own.  
O vast eternal love!  
O grace beyond degree!  
The Church below, the Church above,  
Is one, O Christ, with Thee.

## **“Christ” And “The Things Which Are Above.”**

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A few inquiries may be necessary, in order to clear the mind for so great a subject as this is, between the apostle and the Colossians. These come in before the questions which are so often put to us, in this our own day, as to “What the things are, which are above ?” or, “How are they connected with Christ as sitting at the right hand of God?” and again, “Where are the spheres for those things we are to seek;” and upon which to set our affections, and mind? Important matters surely!

One inquiry, and perhaps the chief, naturally arises from the study of the epistle itself, as to the spiritual state, and condition of the Colossians, and the various seductions of the enemy, which required such guards, and admonitions. This state was discovered by Paul, to lie in the fact (and a very serious one too) that they had lost the sense of “Christ, as the beginning, the first-born from the dead,” and then the power “of the things above, where Christ is.” Center of a new system!

Moreover, they were in danger of letting go “Christ Jesus, the Lord,” and of not being rooted, and built up in Him, as they had been taught. Besides these they were “not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body ministered to, and united together by the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.” Another discovery necessarily followed, as the sad consequence of this moral and spiritual declension from “Christ, as their Lord, and Head,” viz., that they were exposed to the corruptions of philosophy, after the teaching of men, “according to the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Besides this rationalism of the Greeks, which was suited to captivate the natural mind, there lay around them “the handwriting of Jewish ordinances,” which, having once had the authority of Jehovah, and being religious in their character, were more suited to detain the heart and conscience in outward ordinances; and an endless observance of meats and drinks, or else of new moons and Sabbaths, “which were only a shadow of things to come.” It may be profitable for us to trace these snares, which were so early introduced into the church, yet further in their history, and for present application to Christians, who are entangled in them, as a solemn warning. They had got up the wrong man, in the wrong world, and what were they to do with him?

Each of these systems from its very nature, with all their attendant attractions, only carried back and left the mind, and heart, and conscience, in the ignorance, and darkness, and natural distance of the flesh, and of “man in the flesh,” as to the true revelation and knowledge of God; whether in the holiness of His nature, or the light in which He dwells. The comment, and summary of the Holy Ghost, touching the rationalism, or the ritualism of that day; and much more if applied to these times, is conclusive, and fatal, viz., “which things have indeed an appearance of wisdom, in voluntary worship, and humility, and harsh treatment of the body, not in any certain honor for the satisfaction of the flesh.” Judaism as an outward system, even when standing in the midst of its brightest and most attractive forms, under the authority and blessing of Jehovah; and culminating as it did, in such a head of wisdom and glory as Solomon, whether for worship in the temple, or for dominion and rule over the world, was then in its greatest danger. The hour of its ripening prosperity, and favor, was the moment of its decline and fall. Its height was its certain overthrow,

because the man who had reached this summit, and who was invested with this dignity, only sat upon the throne of Israel in delegated power, and reigned in the city of Jerusalem, as its responsible head to "the Great King." His incompetency was, alas, but too soon proved. It is however, a necessary and useful lesson, though melancholy and distressing in the extreme, to learn in history (and especially in the Chronicles which God has kept of His ways with individuals, and with mankind) that the cradle and birthplace of the most illustrious in this world, became in due time, their burying-place and sepulcher!

The earliest, and most flourishing enclosure of Eden, when first planted by the hand of the Creator, with an Adam in it, had alas, how soon, the cherubim "with the flaming sword at its gate, to bar the way back to the tree of life." If we quit the garden of the Lord, to view the nation of Israel in later times, it will only be to learn a second lesson, rife with the same facts; and may be, set for us on broader lines, and in deeper cuttings by Jerusalem that now is.

Called out, as this favored nation was, from the rest of the world, and established under a theocracy, by which they could boast that no people had God so near them as they had; yet, "they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit, so, that he was turned against them, and became their enemy." Enriched too with an economy, under the remarkable ministry of Moses, as their mediator with God, and Aaron for their high priest, to make atonement for sin; the world quailed (under its own astonishment) as its inhabitants witnessed the beauty, and glory, of this daily administration. What more could have been done?

The royal city came forth in its opening grandeur, and stood out resplendent as "the footstool of the Jehovah," of Israel, and "His presence filled the temple;" but even she has become a devastation and a ruin, yea, "not one stone left upon another, that has not been thrown down." Illustrious too as Jerusalem was, and famous for her long line of wise men, and prophets, and kings; yet, as Jesus said to her of Himself; "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem!"

Terrible as this denunciation of her Messiah was, yet how merited and true was it, "That upon you may come, all the righteous blood shed upon the earth; verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."

But the incompetency of Moses, and Aaron, and a Solomon, as individuals, and of the nation collectively, was not the only lesson taught us by this breakdown; there was yet another, for these and other records prove, that even a theocracy itself, which was the greatest and grandest system that Jehovah established upon this earth for its government and order was insufficient. Politically, by statutes and judgments between man and his fellow, or religiously, between the people and God, a theocracy was incapable of maintaining the nation of Israel in their original relations with Him, who had brought them to Himself. "Middle walls of partition there were, on the one side" and "handwriting of ordinances," on the other; with every encouragement that promise could supply to the obedient and godly ones. Yet the requirements, yea, the exactions due to Jehovah in the height of His holiness, were so unyielding (if the people failed in their responsibility, and were disobedient) by the claim He made on them for sacrifices, that at last it became "a yoke, which neither they, nor their fathers (as was afterward said by Peter) were able to bear." The entire economy broke down by the weight of its own magnificence, and in what it demanded, and deserved of the men, whom it designed to favor and establish in manifest blessing, upon the earth. The whole system collapsed under these righteous claims of God, and by the weakness and

incapability of the creature, who had “bound himself by covenant to do all that was enjoined.” A mighty gap was obvious, as the only product of these two extremes; but “the unprofitableness thereof” could give birth to, and did bring to light an immense reality, a great fact, a grand truth, viz., “by the law was the knowledge of sin,” and that “the commas went which was ordained to life, was found to be unto death.” These weighty discoveries between God and men, as to the insufficiency of the creature, threw the whole subject back again, upon the resources of God; and yet it was into this decayed system of Judaism, that these Colossians were being beguiled by the craft of the enemy. Would that it had stopped at Colosse, and with those early Christians! The curses of the law were the outcome.

We have thus seen how impossible it was either by a theocracy, or an economy composed of ordinances, to unite this chosen nation permanently with God, on account of what they were, as men “in the flesh,” or to maintain these relations, even by law and government, in which “as Jehovah,” he ostensibly stood with that people, in covenanted blessing. Why should the Colossians be attracted by it (much less any now) as a way of approach to God, when the twelve tribes had broken down under its demands, and had been driven out of Canaan, “yea made a hissing, and a bye-word, and a reproach amongst all the nations?”. Besides all this, we may remark that as regards Christianity, “The handwriting of ordinances” upon the observance of which all that economy stood, had been graciously “taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross.” How could Christ and these ordinances go on together? He had superseded them; and would they take them down again to put themselves “into bondage” under them? Would they in this form, re-enter upon a covenant of works, “as being alive in the flesh?” To do thus, would be a two-fold denial of Christ. The weakness, and unprofitableness of these ordinances and observances, as well as of the entire system, between God and men had been wrought out by Israel after the flesh, and manifested still further by the blind enmity of their priests and rulers, who condemned and crucified the very Messiah, to whom their types and shadows all pointed!

As regards the Sanhedrim, and the Jews, together with the philosophical Greeks and Romans, the cross was the one great standing proof, that “The world by wisdom knew not God” any more than by religious ordinances, or they would not have put “the Lord of glory” upon it in derision! What then had these Christians to gain, either from the philosophy of the ancients, and rudiments of the world, any more than by the traditions of the fathers? A new revelation respecting “the Son of God” was introduced, and preached to every creature under heaven.

Christ had come into the world—had glorified God upon the earth—had finished the work that was given Him to do, and had gone back to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Did these grand acts leave God and mankind where they were? Those who were Christ’s at Colosse, and elsewhere, were “to set their mind on things above, not upon things on the earth.” Henceforth, “as risen with Christ” they were not to look upon things seen and temporal, but on things not seen and eternal. “The Son of Man” in the glory of God!

As regards the world, men had united themselves together in guilt before God; for the second man “the Lord from heaven” had been crucified by those who did not believe on Him, whether Jews or Gentiles; but to all who had “faith” in this new manifestation of the love of God to the world, in the person of “the Word made flesh,” Christ was the—wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation. The cross is either made to be this “to faith,” by the grace of God; or else that same

cross becomes “the judgment of the world,” for this is what “the lifting up of the Son of Man” really is; and as Jesus spoke (when in the world) concerning His death, in John 7. The cross is now the one great issue, between heaven and earth, and hell—between God, and mankind, and the devil—between light, and darkness—between Christ, and Belial, and eternal life, or everlasting fire. It is of great importance to see in this epistle, and indeed through all of them, that the cross is brought forward as the wind-up of all that was previously put upon probation, in the government of God; whether by “the schoolmaster Moses,” or by “the tutors and appointed governors,” till the time determined of the Father. The Galatians needed to be instructed as to “the truth of the cross,” in its separating power, just as the Colossians required “to learn the cross,” as the turning point from what is old, and the door for faith and hope, into all that is new. The cross breaks our links with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and connects us with Christianity and Christ, and “The things which are above, where He is sitting.”

The worst thing that men high and low of degree could do, had been perpetrated at the cross, and man cannot repeat himself there, either by act, or deed. They had “denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead.” The rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God, is an awful fact in the history of man, and keeps the dark shade of the cross upon the world for condemnation, and leaves the sin of blood-guiltiness upon mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles—yea, shuts them up (if impenitent) unto the coming judgment, at the great day of God Almighty. On the other hand, the resurrection of Christ “by the glory of the Father,” reveals the ascended One “to faith,” in the light of a new and heavenly standing, in relation to God above, as the head and beginning of another creation.

It is by being “dead and risen with Christ,” that we pass out of one, into the other and these are some of the lessons which our epistle sets before these. Colossians, as necessary for “their continuance in the faith, grounded and settled,” and that they should not be moved away from “the hope which was laid up for them in heaven.” They were encouraged anew, to “seek the things which are above” by being risen with Christ, on the other side of the cross, and not to set their affection on things upon the earth, for they were dead; moreover their life was “hid with Christ in God.” What are these two sides “of the doctrine of Christ,” but the practical power of the cross for death below; and for life, and living affections, that find their objects above, and which carry us away after Christ? These realities of “our faith and hope” were of great moment then, as now, and hold a large place in this epistle. It was, and alas is, a common need amongst Christians of the nineteenth century, or so much would not have been said there, and in this paper, upon the cross, and the resurrection, and another creation.

It is time, however, to turn to the questions which were named at the outset, viz., “What, and where are the things above, which we are to seek, and upon which we are to let our mind be?” In reply, the heavens and the earth in their new relation to God., and to Christ, and in their yet future state of order and reconciliation, with all that they contain, be they “principalities or powers, thrones, or dominions,” become the spheres, and supply the suited and proper objects for our consideration and research. It is upon these, and with Christ as their center, we should have “our minds fixed,” because they are dear to the Father, and the Son, in the everlasting counsels. Accomplished redemption by the blood of the Lamb, is the ground-work for this “reconciliation of the heavens and the earth,” as well as for our own, “who were once enemies in mind, by wicked works,” and these take a prominent place in “the records by the Holy Ghost,” when putting all

things under “the preeminence” of Christ. That He should have the first place in all things, as well as supremacy over all, was a part of the grand purpose of God, and is dear to our Lord., as the Son of Man, for the manifestation of His glory, as “set over all the works of His hands, in the World to come,” and are precious to Christ as “the fruit of the travail of His soul.” He gives us in love, part with Himself, in these spheres of His joy.

If He finds His own satisfaction and delight in “the redemption of a fallen creation,” and in “the reconciliation of the heavens and the earth,” for the coming-day of His glory, “when He presents us holy, unblameable, and irreproachable before God;” shall not that day, and the manifestation of blessing, yea, and blessedness too, in those vast spheres, and all that dwell in them, be the proper objects on which to set our minds in communion with Him we love?

Let us turn back to the gospel of Matthew, and ask ourselves, Did He not once see the treasure hid in a field, and for joy thereof, go and sell all that He had, to buy that field? (See Exodus 19:4,5,6.)

Was He once (when speaking to us by parables) “seeking goodly pearls,” and did. He when He had found “one pearl of great price, sell all that He had: and buy it?” If by similitudes like these, we are let into the secrets and hidden thoughts of our Lord, and what was dear to Him before He came into this world of sin; how much deeper and sweeter must “this joy” be to Him, now that these mysteries have passed out of parables and similitudes, into realities? By His effectual work in death and resurrection, He has purchased the entire possession, and not only this, but like a true Boaz, “and kinsman-redeemer,” He will have Ruth too, and in the future day of His marriage, lead his bride through the length and breadth of all his dominions, as the partner of His glory!

“The treasure, and the pearl” may well be to us in the divine light of the Colossian epistle, “the reconciled heavens and the earth,” together with “the mystery” which had been hid from ages and generations; and these may well call out our thoughts very definitely and distinctly towards “the things above,” which are headed up for a while in Christ, and “where He sits at the right hand of God.” The Holy Ghost by one apostle and another, has written to the saints in the meantime, “what these things are,” having made known “what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.” He is in His own personal glories, before God the Father, and is the commanding object of our own hearts’ affections; besides this, He is there in names which endear Him to us, who know Him as our Redeemer, and the Possessor of all thing that the Father hath, and Reconciler of the heavens and the earth, which in His Godhead power He first created. It is in Christ that all things will be gathered “for the administration of the fullness of times,” (Eph. 1:10,) and He is thus to the horizon of our faith, the sun of a never-ending day. We are now in spirit and affection with Him, “where He sits above,” and He is with us where we are, yea, “in our hearts, the hope” of all we wait, and long for with Himself, in the day of His espousals, when His bride hath made herself ready. In the face of such hopes, and such associations with Christ, what had these Colossians to do any further with the original Adam, even at his best and brightest? If this had been possible it would have been derogatory. How much less, with any of His posterity, as fallen creatures, in their modern rationalistic speculations, or their ritualistic drudgery, by which they are vainly trying to recover a lost position, or else grope their way back to the God they had forsaken. This is to build what has been destroyed.

Moreover, Satan, “the prince of this world,” was the energetic center of this false movement, working against the new revelation of the Father, and the Son, by the Holy Ghost, and setting up

the by-gone economy of law and works, which recognized man, “as alive in the flesh,” and required his slavery, and bondage! Would they be fools in this delusion?

Instead of this old-covenant of works, “the great mystery of godliness” had come into the world, and been declared to flow through another channel. “God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,” opened out the ascending and descending steps, between the heavens and this earth, which secured another “life and godliness” between God and men. The law could not produce either. Moreover, the Son of Man had been refused, and cast out when presented in the rights and titles which attached to Him, and to which prophecy and promise had so plainly pointed henceforward to believe on Christ was salvation, but to draw back was perdition. The world lay in bankruptcy.

Thus the death of Christ on the one hand, and the resurrection of Christ on the other, are brought into the foreground in this epistle, not as primarily showing our pardon, or forgiveness, or our justification by the substitution of Christ for us; but to identify us as believers with Him, “where He is sitting on the right hand of God,” by the fact of our own death and resurrection with Him. Another thing is also brought out here, viz., that death and life, as they are known now, (no longer in Adam as responsible) but as they are fixed before God in Christ, are become the two centers of divine operation, in grace and calling, as well as of our faith’s reckoning. In consistency with this rule, our new and heavenly doctrine addresses us, as, “Ye are dead,” and, “If ye then be risen,” and these facts were the ground of the apostle’s mission and exhortation, and a Christian’s starting-point.

By His resurrection and departure into heaven as “the appointed Heir of all things,” our affections follow Him, and this circle of blessing opens “the inheritance” to our hearts, (Eph. 1:10), and as being “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” When He appears, we shall appear with Him in glory. In the meanwhile, “the rejection of Christ” by the world, becomes an immensely practical test for loyalty of heart to Christ, and for a walk corresponding to our new place above, as one with the heavenly Man.

How can any be “alive in the world,” which would not have Him, (or take part with it in its principles, objects, and hourly pursuits,) and valued Him at thirty pieces of silver? Mere loyalty to Christ, and our affections set upon Himself and His rights, would lead all who are His, to take part with God, who has received Him, and “exalted Him above all principalities, and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come”? Christ in life and glory, is the turning-point in heaven, for drawing our mind and heart above, “where He sits”—just as truly, as Christ on the cross in death, is the turning-point for separation from, the world below. Paul boldly stated this, as his rule of life and death to the Galatians,— “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.” There was nothing in common between them, and when Christ became the only standard and test for Christian consistency, Paul accepted this two-fold crucifixion at once, as his new order and style.

## Christ Our One Object

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Is it not seasonable, in these days of growing religiousness and worldliness, to warn one another, beloved, to keep our minds uncorrupt in the simplicity that is in Christ? In the preparation season, which the present age is, and which the Canticles contemplate, Eve was getting ready, under the forming hand of God., for Adam, and for Adam only. Adam slept for Eve, and Eve was made for Adam. So with Christ and the Church. He slept in death for us, and we are preparing, under the Holy Ghost, for Him. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." As he says also in another place, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you," Christ, and Christ only; Christ in His precious sufficiency for a sinner, in answer to the Hagar or Galatian thought of "days and months, and times, and years"—that other gospel which yet is not another.

But this is assailed. The gospel, in its claim on the sinner to give his undivided confidence to Christ, has been abroad on the lips of a thousand witnesses, to the gladdening of thousands of souls. The enemy has watched and hated this. Working in the scene, in which he goes "to and fro" and "up and down," (Job 1:7,) he is busy to seduce the heart from this gospel. And is not his success far beyond the measure of the fears of any of us? The religion of fleshly confidences or of ordinances is giving extended character to this hour among us. It admits of worldliness; and worldliness is, at this same hour, flourishing in company with it. There is the erection of temples for worship, and of palaces for the worshippers. Stricter care to observe, in its season, due attendance in the sanctuary, together with unparalleled skill and energy and enterprise in advancing the indulgence and elegance of human life, so as to make the world a desirable and yet a safe place to live in—a place where religion may now be seen to be observed and honored.

This is all seductive from the principle of faith—this is corruption of the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. The gospel addresses itself to man, not only as a guilty but as a religious creature. It finds him under the power of superstition or religiousness, as well as of sin. It is as natural for man to refuse to go into "the judgment-hall lest he should be defiled," as it is, in very enmity to God, to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him." And the gospel gets as stern a refusal from the religious man as from the lustful man. As the divine teacher tells us, the harlot goes into the kingdom before the Pharisee.

Religious vanities are deeply playing their part in this hour, and seeking to fascinate souls. What answer, beloved, do you and I give them? Is Jesus so precious that no allurements has power? Is the virgin purity of the mind still kept, and as chaste ones are we still betrothed to Christ only? Like the newly-formed Eve, are we in our place of earliest, freshest presentation to our Lord; or have we, apart from His side, opened our ear to the serpent?

The kingdom of heaven is as a supper, a royal joyous; feast got ready for sinners, that they might taste and see that the Lord is good, and that blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. It does not put God in the place of a receiver, for man to bring Him His due: but it puts Him in the place of a giver, and man is called to value His blessing. But the question is, Who listens, with desirous

heart, to the bidding? Who wears “the wedding garment?” Who prizes Christ? Who triumphs in His salvation? Who longs for the day of His espousals? John had this garment on him, knowing, as he did, the joy of being the Bridegroom’s friend. It was flowing at liberty on Mary’s shoulders, as she sat at her Lord’s feet and heard His words. Paul tucked it tight about him, when he said, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The eunuch had just put it on, as “he went his way rejoicing” under the faith of the name of Jesus. Every poor sinner adorns himself with it the moment his heart values Christ. And what joy is it, thus to know, that when we put on Christ, it is not “sackcloth” we put on, nor is it “the spirit of heaviness” we enter into, but “a wedding garment” has clothed us, and with “the garment of praise” we array our spirits!

Have we thus learned, “the kingdom of heaven?” Have we, in spirit, entered it as a banqueting-hall, where both magnificence and joy welcome us? Are we, consciously, guests at the marriage of a King’s Son? Have we learned the mysteries of the faith? Have we gazed at them? Has the musing over them kindled a fire in the heart, to burn up the chaff of worldly rudiments? Paul had this element in his soul as he traveled through Greece. And how did the glow of these mysteries address itself to “the princes of the world” there? It consumed them all. “Where is the scribe, where is the wise, where is the disputer of the world?” Precious ardor of the Spirit? What a pile was thus fired in the famed cities of the learned and the wise, and how were all the thoughts of men thrown, as rubbish, into it!

And how did he treat the rudiments of the religious world? He bore the same fervent sense of Christ with him into their regions, to test what chaff and dross was there. In Galatia he found much of it; but he spared none of it. Though an angel from heaven gather such rubbish; though Peter himself help in the work; though the Galatians, who once would have plucked out their eyes for him, be enticed, nothing should stand before the heat of the Spirit that bore him onward. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years; I am afraid of you.”

Could he do less? Could he carry Jesus in his heart, and calmly stand and measure his light with the lights of Greece, or God’s great ordinance with man’s traditions?

It is to make much of Christ we want, beloved—much of Himself and His glorious achievements for poor sinners. We want simplicity in that sense of the word—the breathings of a soul content with Him, and the peace of a conscience forever at rest in His unaided sufficiency. “What think ye of Christ?” is the test, as a dear hymn, well known among us, has it—

“Some call Him a Saviour, in word,  
But mix their own works with His plan,  
And hope He His help will afford,  
When they have done all that they can.  
If doings prove rather too light,  
(A little they own they may fail),  
They purpose to make up full weight

By casting His name in the scale.  
“Some style Him the pearl of great price,  
And say He’s the fountain of joys,  
Yet feed upon folly and vice,  
And cleave to the world and its toys:  
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,  
And, while they salute Him, betray!  
Ah! what will profession like this  
Avail in His terrible day!  
“If asked what of Jesus I think,  
Though all my best thoughts are but poor,  
I say He’s my meat and my drink,  
My life, and my strength, and my store;  
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,  
My Saviour from sin and from thrall,  
My hope from beginning to end,  
My portion, my Lord, and my all.”

## Christ Seen in Glory

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Paul saw Christ in glory, and that eclipsed everything to him. He says, I will have Christ instead of everything, not merely instead of his sins, but instead of everything that would accredit him.

The world was an empty show for Paul. He says, “I DO count it dung and dross.” That was the constant condition of his life, because Christ was before his soul.

God has given us in Christ a perfect object, and it is this that gives the true character to the Christian, and which marks everything in this world. He, the object, is out of the world, in the glory, and the man that sees Him becomes single-hearted. To give up the world is no sacrifice to him. It is all “dung and dross.”

But self, wretched self, must be broken down. Paul was smashed on the way to Damascus. Can you say Christ is your only object, and that in the secret of your soul you have no other? The thing is, that we do not see Christ, and then there is some secret chamber, of which we keep the key, even from our own heart and conscience, which is not for Christ, and which mars the whole.

When the soul is knit to Christ, other things are gone. It has an object that governs it completely. He is the object, and self is gone. Do you know Christ thus?

There are babes, young men, and fathers; but all that can be said of the fathers is, “Ye have known Him that is from the beginning.” Are you running after that? Are you sufficiently dead that your one object is to know Him; not merely to be found in Him, but to know Him? It is with Him you are going to be forever. Is He not perfect? It is no human knowledge to know Him, but divine teaching. The human mind produces heresies—the humble heart feeds on Him, and that is what will make you happy in heaven. It is what is hidden in the heart that tests.

Christ must be at the bottom, or you are not a Christian at all; and at the top may be a blameless walk; but a great deal may come in between the two—the news of the day, the tittle-tattle of life, showing that Christ has not His due place—the heart is the highway of the things of the world. What a difference between that, and my knowing Him and the power of His resurrection! That is what takes me clean out of the world. The prize of the high calling is the calling above.

My object is out of the world, and my life is characterized by the object I am following after. Every life is characterized by some object, and Christ should characterize our lives. We are called to glory and virtue. These two can never be separated. Glory is the thing to be attained.; virtue the courage to attain it.

I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. I am going to be like Christ in glory therefore the heart rims after Him.

How far in spirit have I seen the Second Man, the Lord from heaven? Just in so far as I have, is the first Adam condemned. The Second Adam is set up before God. I am before Him, like Him, to own Him here. This gives earnest energy to the heart. I have seen Christ, and my heart cannot

part with Him. I mind not earthly things, but “this one thing I do.” When we see Christ, we shall know that all else is vanity, but we ought to know it now.

Are your hearts with Christ? Are you identified with His interests? Do you work from Christ, and for Him? Is He your starting point? Is He the one who possesses you? Are you looking for Him as men who wait for their Lord? The Lord give us to know what it is to have a Christ in glory, and so to have our hearts in the glory!

## Christ as the Morning Star

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“The morning star” is the symbol of the Church’s hope. And there is beauty in this thought, derived as it is from Rev. 2:28, and 22:16.

The characteristics of the morning star are brilliancy and solitariness. It glitters lovely, off in its distant sphere, but it is all alone. It does not command the notice of the world, as the sun does. It is only the watchman that sees it. The season for its appearing is quite its own—it is neither night nor day. It fills a moment that is quite its own, and it is only the watchman, or the child of the morning, the one that is up before the sun, that has to do with it.

Is there not a voice in this, dear brother? Does it not tell your inmost soul of a coming that is to precede the sunrise?—of the appearing of One who does not belong to the world, whose business is not with the earth, or with the children of men, but with an elect people who wait for an unearthly Saviour?

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 9 - Partakers of the Divine Nature

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2 Peter 1:1-4.

The very care which the apostle takes to write a second time to these Hebrew believers, giving them instructions as to their own pathway, and warning them of the evils coming, is a striking proof that he did not look for a continuance of the apostolic order. The broad outline of the epistle and the details also forbid the thought. Indeed, in the second chapter he shows the terrible state that is coming in, and then that. God is going to judge the whole scene.

The difference between Jude and this epistle is, that by Peter the Spirit of God speaks a great deal about corruption, but it is in the world, whereas Jude gives you corruption in what bears the name of the Lord: ecclesiastical corruption. You get apostacy in both especially in Jude.

The careful way in which the apostle seeks to help and guide these believers, shows he did not look for any continuation of apostolic authority; he throws them on the Lord and His word.

He takes up the whole question of God dealing with the earth in manner and majesty that suits God's character. He addresses them as a servant and an apostle, and speaks to Jewish believers as in the first epistle. "To them that have obtained like precious faith." While it has a particular application to those to whom he wrote the first epistle, yet it has a little wider bearing than the first.

Peter is fond of the word. "precious." "Precious blood," "He is precious," and here, "precious faith." He speaks of faith on the one hand, the thing that is believed, and also the fact that you believe, but whichever it is, he says you get it on the ground of the righteousness of God, "Our God and Saviour." You have this faith through the faithfulness of Him who was the Jehovah of Israel, and who was likewise the Saviour who came down and walked in this world. God has been righteous and faithful, and as the result, spite of the sin of the nation, you have this faith in God's own blessed Son.

Verse 2. A very customary salutation. Grace, the present favor of God, and peace, the present standing place of the soul. He wishes it multiplied. There is where the soul stands, in perfect peace with God; and in the present acceptance of God, and favor with God, and Peter wishes their apprehension of it multiplied. It is not mercy here, and why? Because you only find mercy brought in where it is an individual who is addressed, because though I may have grace and peace as an individual, yet I need mercy for my soul day by day, as I go through a scene where everything is against me. When it is the Church that is addressed, mercy does not come in because the Church is always viewed as in relation to Christ, and as having received mercy because of her connection with Christ.

In the epistle to Philemon Paul writes to him and to the Church which is in his house, and that is why mercy is left out there.

How is this grace and peace to be multiplied? Through the knowledge of God. The intensification of that grace and peace can only come as we walk with God. You shew me a person who is

walking with God, and I will show you one who gets grace multiplied day by day. You walk closely by Christ, and you will get the peace that He came to give multiplied day by day.

There is nothing so difficult as to walk in grace, for on the one hand there is the tendency to looseness, and on the other the tendency to legality. Going as these believers were through a scene of difficulty, no wonder that the apostle wished that it might be multiplied.

Verse 3. See how beautifully you get divine power in vs. 3., and divine nature in vs. 4. In vs. 3 we are the subjects of divine power, a divine operation working in us, and giving us all things that pertains to life and godliness. Eternal life, a life that enjoys God, and is suited to God, and godliness, a character that is like God in all its ways down here, a moral likeness to Him. The first thing is a life that is from Himself, and is never occupied with anything but Himself, and godliness, God-likeness.

“Through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory, and virtue.” It is the deepening acquaintance with the blessed One who has given to our souls a distinct call, and if there be one thing we are apt to forget, it is our calling. We do not forget our gifts, our blessings, but the thing we are so apt to forget is our calling; and what is our calling? He has called us to glory. We are called to heaven in the first chapter of the first epistle, and here he says the God of glory has come out and called us.

The contrast is very striking between the Christian now, and Adam in innocence. Adam in innocence was responsible to obey God and stop where he was, but our responsibility is, not to stop where we were, for we were in the world and sin and lust was our nature, but God says, “I have called you out of that, called you by glory, and virtue.” Abraham was called to be a pilgrim; Moses to be a law-giver; Joshua to be a leader; our call is to glory. See, the apostle says, that you have your faces set thither. Glory is the end of the road, and what by the way? Virtue, or spiritual energy on the road of which glory is the end.

What we have to manifest, and express is what he calls virtue, spiritual energy. There is nothing more difficult, because it calls on us to refuse the flesh, to refuse the world; like Moses, “who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

The man who has this spiritual energy, knows how to say No, to the thousand things in him, and about him, that appeal to his flesh. We give way too often; lack this energy, and the result is, we often fall.

Moses refused earth and its delights, refused the highest place in this world, said No! to the allurements of the flesh and the world, and took his place outside with the few despised ones of God’s people. It needs this virtue, this courage, to do this! Moses refused what nature would have chosen, and chose what nature would have refused, namely, to be in company with a set of brick-making slaves!

How much we need this courage to refuse the world in all its shapes and forms, and to fling ourselves in with a little company of those who love the Lord, and are united to Him.

There is nothing more difficult than to break away from the old things that everybody goes on with, for the power that tradition has over us is wonderful, and it needs this courage to break away.

These Jewish believers had separated from their religion, their temple, their ordinances, their observances—from everything that their nation and their forefathers had gone on with.

If we do not keep alive in our souls this virtue, this courage and energy, we slip back into the things which once we gave up.

Verse 4. All the promises are connected either with this life, or the glory where we shall be by-and-bye, and as the promises coupled us with Christ, the effect should be that “Ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” We are partakers of the divine nature in conversion, by being born again, but he shows what is the sweet result of tasting what the Lord is, and walking with the Lord. He gives you to be a partaker morally of the divine nature, i.e., we are brought into the atmosphere that suits God, breathe the atmosphere He breathes, become spiritual. The soul gets enlarged in its sense of what God is. There comes the capacity for the enjoyment of God, and then the deepening enjoyment of God.

Just as much as we enter into the word, and the things of our Lord Jesus Christ, we become the partakers morally of this divine nature. If you live with the Lord, and walk with the Lord, this will be the result; and you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust: What is lust? Man’s will. The apostle is talking here of this state, and of the walk of a saint, who escapes it. You have every thought of the heart brought into captivity to Christ; you are delivered from your own will, you are not even carried off by the imaginings of your own heart, you breathe the holy, pure atmosphere of God’s presence, an atmosphere where the soul finds its delight in doing God’s will. You once were in the world doing your own will; now you have been delivered, and you do God’s will. What a sweet thought it is that when we get up there in the glory all taint of sin will be gone! “Oh, but,” says Peter, “you may know a great deal of that clown here. You have the new nature that delights in God, and this new nature having room to expand, your peace grows, and your grace, and you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Paul preaches the same thing, “If ye live in the Spirit walk in the Spirit.” And if a man lives in the Spirit, how will he walk? Like Christ! Every thought of Christ’s heart was Godward. What will it be by-and-bye when every thought, every turn of your hearts will be Godward! When we get up there we shall breathe the atmosphere our souls delight in, and we shall breathe it freely, without thought or fear lest any Philistine or Amalekite intrude. “Well,” says Peter, “you may know something of this down here.” Thus he gives them what would cheer and refresh their hearts.

## Our Resource

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IT is a remarkable fact that all the replies by which Lord overcame Satan are drawn from the book which is singled out by these men to be denied and refuted, that is Deuteronomy, with “for it is written” and “it is written again”; with the solemn expression “Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Satan must turn to Scripture too but not to make the Lord leave it. It was sufficient for the Lord as absolute authority, and for Satan to put him to silence and ever will be, though not for these modern doctors. It is sufficient for the faith of God’s people, and more than that, leads them into the depths of God’s own wisdom and grace. For human wisdom it is—fraud and poetry! We must remember that when the church and its doctors were in such a state that it is said by divine authority “from such turn away,” (2 Tim. 3) the Scriptures are given as our resource, able to make wise unto Salvation.

Zurich, June 8th, 1878.

## The Glory of His Grace

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I see a Man at God's right hand,  
Upon the throne of God,  
And there in seven-fold light I see  
The seven-fold sprinkled blood,  
I look upon that glorious Man,  
On that blood-sprinkled throne;  
I know that He sits there for me,  
That glory is my own.  
The heart of God flows forth in love,  
A deep eternal stream;  
Through that beloved Son it flows  
To me as unto Him.  
And looking on His face, I know—  
Weak, worthless though I be—  
How deep, how measureless, how sweet,  
That love of God to me.  
How deep, how full, the joy of Him  
Who sits upon the throne!  
The joy the gladness of His heart,  
In calling me His own.  
And He has sent me forth to tell  
Of all that joy above,  
The glories where in Him I dwell,  
The greatness of His love.  
Not of the joy His ransomed know  
Within that bright abode,

But, all His heart's desire fulfilled,  
The endless joy of God.  
The joy with which the righteous One  
Can call with hands outspread,  
And welcome to His heart of love,  
The lost, the vile, the dead.  
The Lord who sits upon the throne  
With them His joy will share,  
And there the sprinkled blood appears  
That He may set them there.  
From drear dark places of the earth,  
From depths of sin and shame,  
He takes the vessels for His grace,  
A people for His name.  
"Today with me in Paradise,"  
He needs that wondrous span  
To show the love that could not rest  
Short of His heaven for man.  
And when in glory of His own  
He shows the spotless Bride,  
Aloud the songs of heaven declare  
God's heart is satisfied.

## Our Living Association With Christ in Heaven

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“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 3:20.)

The Apostle Paul, in Phil. 3, exhorts to “rejoice in the Lord.” He is our unfailing resource above all untoward circumstances. He himself had proved this in the prison at Philippi, on his first entrance with Christ’s gospel into Europe, when he had preached Christ and was thrust into the inner prison for His sake; and now, when, near the close of his life, he had been four years in prison at Rome, he, still, says “rejoice in the Lord.”

The apostle was himself a man in Christ, and in a new creation where all things are of God; and he had given up all that accredited him on earth.

1. A new system, heavenly state or living association was his “by the faith of Christ.” (Phil. 3:20.) He had been divinely translated by seeing the glorified Jesus in the heavens, and consciously so, by the working of the Holy Ghost, from one divine system into another (Phil. 3): from the Jewish, or the earthly into the Christian, or the heavenly. Of course he knew it only by faith as it was in the Spirit, but what could be more real? For so thoroughly had the glorious Man, the Son of God, who is the Head and Center of this new order of things captivated him that he became dissatisfied with everything here and pushed his way through all to get at Him where He is. A great thing it surely is to be fellow-citizens with the saints, of the household of God, and children of God; blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. This changes all.

We are dead and risen with Christ; “the circumcision” of this day: that is the people so characterized because of Christ’s circumcision or death, in which we have put off the body of the flesh. (Col. 2:11.) A bad habit may be got rid of in life by energy and effort; an evil nature only by death, and says the apostle “I have been crucified with Christ, and no longer live I, but Christ liveth in me:” and, identified with Christ in his dying to sin, he had died to sin and was no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit; no longer a man in the world under law, but a man in Christ, under grace: the old man and his world, sin’s sphere, gone to the eye of faith—there is a new creation! If we look at the whole system for testing man by law while still in the flesh, it is gone too by our being outside of it if looked at as here in witness; for we stand in the place of God’s judgment of man outside the camp: but this is found in Hebrews, not exactly the subject here, yet there is some resemblance, in principle, for “Ye are come unto mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

Saul of Tarsus and the saints, being dead and buried with Christ and risen also with Him, they thus recognize themselves as now in living association with Him in the Spirit and by faith in the heavens. They are in living association with Him in the new constitution of God in Christ in heaven—that mystery which embraces Christ and Christianity and reaches on to the kingdom. Paul was never out of system, i.e., never left to his own will about his place before God and his religion (as, indeed, no saint is): he was no sooner out of the earthly system, than he was

translated into the new and heavenly one, the new order of God in Christ; and made meet to be a sharer of the inheritance there, by the Father through Christ's redemption, (Col. 1:12, 13)

There were two sets of people against which Paul warns in this chapter; the legalists (vs. 2), and the antinomians, or "enemies of the cross of Christ," (vss. 18,19). Wherever you find persons disporting themselves like young horses, and praising God that they are now free from all system, you may be very sure they are doing so with fleshly breath; ignorant of themselves and of the end that God makes of us in Christ crucified. The boast is a carnal one, and the persons who so ostentatiously make it, will be found ignorant of themselves, antinomian in spirit and enemies of the cross of Christ—for that cross has not become to them the end of self, or the means of delivering and of "separating them from this present evil age," nor of cutting them off by death to sin from all their estate as men born of the first Adam and living in the world. Their freedom from all system is the mere carnal enjoyment of now being able to do their own will free from all control and mind earthly things, ignoring the claims of the Risen Man in the center of a divine state in heaven which demands a walk and a worship in obedience here, suited to the administration of the mystery in Christ by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Slaves in Egypt, the children of Israel were delivered by the power of God out of it, by the opening of the Red Sea, and they were brought to Himself by that which had become destruction to their enemies; but, though they were God's ransomed people singing their song of deliverance as Jehovah's free men, they were placed ultimately under the theocratic government, all the laws and ordinances of which they were commanded to observe. They were placed by Jehovah Himself in His system of things for an earthly people, and the minutest directions were given them for work, walk, and worship, and all on the ground of redemption. This was the system of God in goodness and government in which they were tested whether they would be obedient or not; and they were disobedient and rebellious and were set aside by God; and another order of things was introduced and manifested here in the power of the Holy Ghost. This is Christianity.

And the Christians of this period are as really placed in God's new order in Christ for the heavens as the Hebrews were placed in His old system in Moses for the earth. God has a present order, and it is the privilege of His saints as it is their responsibility, practically to own it, by renouncing all merely human systems and being with the Lord who is its center and those who are divinely gathered in spiritual order around Himself, as led by the Holy Ghost. To be outside of that which is a practical owning of Christ and God's system in the heavens by rebelling against that which is a practical response to it in the presence and present action of the Holy Ghost on earth in gathering saints to the name of the Lord Jesus on the divine basis of the unity of the Spirit:— "One body and one Spirit" is a denial of Christianity or what the cross has done in severing saints from the world and shutting them in to God and Christ in heaven.

This then, is the order of things into which Paul found himself translated., as did all the saints of God's assembly; the heavenly system for the glory of God's Son, being in union and living association with Him above, by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and under the guidance, governance, and grace of the same Spirit, giving a practical expression of our oneness with a glorified Christ in the heavens by our walking, working, and worshipping with all such as own Christ, and stand by His interests outside the world and everything that is not of Him or of the new creation where all, things are of God. God be praised for the privilege of being consciously and

practically in this new and heavenly system of things, that is, in living association with the beloved Son of God, to show our love to Him practically by our obedience.

Instead, then, of indulging in fleshly glorying that we are “out of all system,” (God’s as well as man’s, for that is what men, in their carnal hardihood, now dare to do) let us be thankful if He has given us to feel something of the seriousness, solemnity, responsibility, and exceeding and eternal weight of glory, as well as blessedness, attaching to being in practical fellowship with God’s counsels and actings for the glory of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Christian being normally “enlawed to Christ,” or duly subject to Him (1 Cor. 9:21), “he that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4, see also Eph. 4:1-7).

Though it is only as yet precautionary, the apostle gives energetic warning against those who would lead them practically out of the heavenly state into the earthly— “See to dogs; see to evil workers; see to the concision.” Some think he meant the heathen with their low and degrading practices: Christian teachers not rightly dividing the word of truth: and Jews with their formal ceremonies. It is more likely they were the same men, Judaizing false teachers—so characterized, and a real danger to the Christian state. As distinguished from them the apostle says— “For we are the circumcision (1) who worship by the Spirit of God, (2) and boast in Christ Jesus and (3) do not trust in the flesh.” The Jewish system had its worship in sacrifices, services and ceremonies, and was conducted by an ordained priesthood, and the people were not directly and personally occupied with their worship. But we have the Holy Ghost, and according to the Lord’s word we worship God in Spirit and in truth; and “by the Spirit of God,” and not by others or by anything outward. And our boast is in Christ Jesus known in glory, where He now is: and we have no confidence in the flesh—that is, in whatever would make anything of us on the earth, such as being well-born, “exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers,” or accomplished legalists, “mighty in word and in deed.”

Then Paul describes what his trust in the flesh was, when he was in the old system with Saul as his center; and he enumerates the things that were gain to him. He, above all men, had, in this, a ground of trust. None could say of Paul that he was despising the things he did not possess: for, in the very form of the words he uses, he asserts his having all the privileges and advantages which made him superior to all these Judaizing men— “dogs, evil workers, the concision” if he cared to claim them. He was no mere proselyte, but in regard to circumcision an eighth-day one; of the tribe of Benjamin—not an Ephraimite; a descendant of Israel—not an Idumean: a Hebrew, born of Hebrew parents, not one of his ancestors having been other than a Hebrew: therefore of pure descent. Then follow what distinguished him in his personal position; (1) as regards the law of Moses—a Pharisee; (2) as concerning zeal persecuting the church; (3) as touching the righteousness which is grounded on the law having become blameless, having carried it so far (Gal. 2:13,14). But all these things and whatever was gain to him besides—privileges, attainments and prospects—these very things, the entire category, in the bloom of youth, he had counted. “loss for Christ.” It is not the sins of the flesh he here renounces but its righteousness—its cherished religiousness the last thing a pious and zealous legalist would have parted with.

But the secret of his so regarding and renouncing them is thus revealed; he had found—

2. A new object at his conversion, to which his language glances back; for he had seen the glorified Son of God in a blaze of light above the brightness of the noonday sun, and he had heard

Him challenge his persecution of His saints as if of Himself; and this new object never left his life-long gaze, and when He was revealed, not only to him, but in him, he had no hesitation in cleaving to Him, though this was done at the expense of renouncing all that went to make a man of him in the world, and give him the most superior ground for glorying in the flesh. Saul is no longer the center of his thoughts, or of his pursuit, but the glorified Son of God has become so. His faith in Christ supplanted all confidence in the flesh. This new object so charmed, enchained, and engrossed him, that all the good things to which he is referring were regarded by him as one tremendous loss, positive damage and disadvantage. A career, rich in all sorts of gain, was opened up to him, for which his university course at Tarsus, and his theological training at Jerusalem, under the famous Gamaliel, had eminently fitted him. But, said he, "These I have counted loss on account of Christ."

And in vs. 8th, by the use of various particles and forms of words, the apostle introduces a supplementary and extended statement, in which the present is substituted for the past, and "these things" become "all things;" and "the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ" is given as the reason for his present decision. What are all gains, attainments, possessions, or prospects in comparison with the surpassing worth of the knowledge of Christ? As in 2 Cor. 3 he contrasts "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of the Spirit," and says, "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth;" so here, the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ" eclipses, darkens, and annihilates "all things" as an object. "All things" in comparison of "Christ Jesus my Lord" are as nothing. For Him I have suffered the loss of all things at my conversion, that I might have Him as a possession, and I have them no more; but I would not have them if I might, for I now count them but rubbish and refuse. This is my present mind after a life of suffering in His service, that they are refuse and Christ is all. He counts all but refuse that he may gain Christ and enjoy Him as His prize at length in the glory in heaven, and have a spiritual foretaste of it in his daily experience by faith. True, Paul knew Christ and had Him when converted; but, just as his old advantages in the flesh would have led on to more and more gain of all sorts likely to fall to the lot of a strict, religious, capable, and energetic Pharisee, so this gaining Christ (though He will only be really had as his at the end,) was enjoyed in the Spirit as he acquired more and more of his object while he went on in the path of faith and experience, and his object became so precious that he spoke of the things he had "in the flesh" with positive scorn and disgust, in comparison of Christ and the joy he found Him even now to be to him. When the things which accredit us "in the flesh," are by faith and grace, counted as the refuse or leavings of a feast, or, as our version has it, "dung," it is not difficult to give them up. The Judaizing Christians who boasted of being "the circumcision," regarded the uncircumcised as dogs, as all ritualists, to this day, do those who boast in Christ and "worship by the Spirit of God." But the apostle shows, in his own case, that all those things in which they boasted were regarded by him as mere refuse. Forms, ceremonies, services and legal observances, are looked upon by those who get Christ as the nearest object to their hearts, as nothing better than mere refuse; and when this is so it is not difficult to give them up. But it was not Paul's experience that he gave up all the things that had himself as a center of importance, and then he got Christ; but he first saw the glorified Son of God, and He became so entirely his object that all the things which made something of him were given up as a natural necessity of his new life in Christ; and not only were they parted with on account of Christ, but cast from him with disgust and contempt as filth and refuse.

In "Galatians" he goes fully into the mischief which a mixing of law and gospel, ordinances and the Spirit, would produce; but, here, he contents himself with warning against the instruments of this confusion of "flesh" and "spirit"; and with spewing that, in his own case, and at the outset of his Christian course, he had been cleared of all this, as a ground of confidence, by having his confidence placed in Christ alone, and having him as an object before his mind and heart. He says, emphatically, "we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God; and who glory in Christ Jesus; and place no confidence in the flesh." The three go together, but our boast in Christ Jesus occupies the central place. "On account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," shows how exclusively he rejoiced in the Lord: but he was to him "Christ Jesus my Lord." And no man will rejoice in the Lord until he can say of Him as the object of his supreme affection "my Lord."

The attainment of this possession is the ground for determining the value of all other possessions in their relation to this "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" and the conviction and estimate with regard to them are that they are hindbersome, and hurtful, and, besides, entirely valueless. With Christ as gain, these are loss. As the rising of the sun in its glory, not only dispels the darkness but also blots out all the stars of heaven, so Christ surpasses all that Saul counted gain; and his life follows his convictions. Christ had become supremely precious to him, and this moral revolution having been produced within him, there has also been generated a divine energy and spiritual activity, which impel him onward in the Christian course towards more and more attainment of the knowledge of Christ; and this moral energy flows from its living source in Christ risen and glorified in the presence of God in heaven, and works continuously in the renewed mind and affections.

## The Heart Longing After the Person of Christ

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"I am inclined to think, that this feeling in reference to ministry, is intimately connected with a deep personal longing after more profound, rich, abiding communion with the PERSON OF CHRIST by the power of the Holy Ghost... Nothing is of any value that does not spring from personal love to, and communion with, Christ himself. We may have Scripture at our finger ends; we may be able to preach with remarkable fluency, a fluency which unpracticed spirits may easily enough mistake for power; but oh! if our hearts are not drinking deeply at the fountain head if they are not enlivened and invigorated by the realization of the love of Christ, it will all end in mere flash and smoke. I have learned to be increasingly dissatisfied with everything, whether in myself or others, short of abiding, real, deep divinely inwrought communion with, and conformity to, the blessed Master. Crotchets I despise; mere opinions I dread; controversy I shrink from; all isms I esteem as utterly worthless. But... I long to know more of His own precious person, His work, and His glory—. And then, oh! to live for Him: to labor, testify, preach, and pray, and all for Christ, and by the working of His grace in our hearts."

## Christ, and the Things Above

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We may, now, follow more strictly, the way in which the apostle was led, in this epistle, to recover and establish the Colossians upon the general, and weighty subject of “The mystery,” and of “Christ, and the things which are above”? He does this by shelving that Christ, and the headships into which He had “been raised by God the Father,” after the work of redemption by His precious blood at the cross had been accomplished, necessitated this new revelation of the counsels of God, and especially “The mystery, which had been hid from ages and generations.” This they were in danger of forgetting, “as the riches of the glory of this mystery,” once hidden in God, but which was now made manifest to His saints.

All these purposes were established in Christ before ever the world was, and were not connected with Adam, except by “the deep sleep, and the rib” in the garden, as the only fitting type of “this mystery” before the fall. In this sense, Christ and the Church, as His body and His bride, preceded, and took the lead of everything else. Adam as an individual creature, was lord of this creation, and the beginning of an earthly order of blessing in the world that now is, and has come to nothing; yea, far worse, “is groaning under the bondage of corruption,” waiting the day of its deliverance “into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” The new revelation concerning the person and glories of the second Adam, as “the beginning of the creation of God,” and “the riches of the glory of the mystery” itself, had now been made known by the Holy Ghost, after the Son of man had been exalted on high, and taken His own place as “Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Though this be quoted from the epistle to the Ephesians, yet is it properly Church truth, and the truth of the mystery, which Paul was bringing again in part before the saints at Colosse. He desired that they might understand the “things which are above,” and their being headed up in Christ, “where He sits at the right hand of God,” and from whence they must, begin in their day of manifestation. The Lord Himself, from that height of glory, had appeared to Paul, in “a light above the brightness of the sun,” to make him a minister and a witness, both of the things which he had seen, and of those things in which the Lord would appear unto him. There could be no mistake, and in effect, “what things were gain to him he counted loss for Christ.” The objects with which he had been familiar on earth, had been displaced by the appearance of the Son of man in heaven, and practically things had changed, as to their relative importance and value, since he had been apprehended by the voice which said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me”? “Yea, doubtless,” he writes to the Philippians, “and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” He is to all intents, as faithful to these Colossians, whether as “a witness,” or as “a minister,” and preaches, “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

This heavenly and eternal order of God, with the righteous man in glory as its center, (and according to which all things are to be reconciled to God,) could not possibly coalesce with that

which had rejected Him below, and preferred even Barabbas; yea, worse, which still progresses in its apostacy, and fills up its iniquity, till finally “the antichrist is manifested in the temple of God,” declaring that he is God, and the whole world seen to be worshipping the beast, and saying in the face of heaven, “who is like unto the beast?” The heaven and the earth which are now, may, and will stand in happy relation to each other by “the presence and rule of the Son of man,” after he has risen up from His Father’s throne where he now sits. He will come forth the second time, to make His enemies His footstool, and execute that terrible mission—with “the fan in His hand, by which He will thoroughly purge His floor, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Leaving, however, this final separation by judgment, between these two orders of the old and new creation, we may remark as to Christianity, that not even “the handwriting of ordinances” could be allowed to stand any longer as a shadow, when all to which they pointed had come into fulfillment, and ended in their final realities of “death and life in Christ.” They “were taken out of the way, and nailed to His cross;” besides this, the door was closed against another of the wiles of Satan, viz., a voluntary humility in the worshipping of angels, perhaps as a superior order of beings who had kept their first estate, and who had never sinned as we have; or may be, because “they excel in strength and do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” To be drawn away thus, would be false to Christianity, and to Christ Himself; yea, only convict them “as intruders into those things which man has not seen,” and condemn them for being “vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind.” Having thus closed every door against them, which a speculative philosophy had opened upward to angels and spirits in heaven; and which a traditional religion kept open outward, for a return to forms and ritualistic observances, “suited to man in the flesh,” he brings forward again the great delivering power of the cross, as the one grand truth “of their own death and life,” when learned in Christ. There are still some details upon this sliding scale of Colossian declension which have much to do in putting into contrast, what man is before God as under Judaism and the handwriting—or under grace—and also as viewed in connection with the old order of creation, or the new order of redemption; or in other words; as in Adam or in Christ.

For example, to take down from the cross “the handwriting of ordinances,” and work either for acceptance in holiness, or deliverance from sin, by their means; would be a denial of “the circumcision made without hands, for the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” once and forever “by the circumcision of Christ.” So also as touching “their baptism”—and what is this, do any ask? It is, “That we are dead and buried with Him” by this outward, but true expression of death, our own death, “wherein also we are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” What a new, yea, what a victorious end of the old man is this death, and what a glorious beginning of the new creature is this! What a triumphant opening out of death by baptism, into life with Christ is ours! A life hid “with Him, who is our Life,” in God! Such was the true doctrine, and efficacy of the cross of Christ, for the faith which rested upon “the operation of God” to the believer, by its means. On the other hand, man “alive in the flesh”; and its judgment by the cross of Christ which extinguishes it, can never agree. He cannot look it in the face without being convicted as a rebel. Jesus is there refused afresh by him, whether for present peace with God, or as the means of that eternal redemption which connects the soul with Christ, on the other side of condemnation by the cross, in everlasting life and righteousness and glory.

All the pretensions of man in the flesh, are forever contradicted, and are turned against him, by his part in the cross of Christ. If he boasts of power, it was the world’s power in the hands of Caesar,

that crucified the Lord; and if he speaks of wisdom, it is the place where God confounded the wise, by raising up Christ from the dead. Does he glory in progress so called, and advancement? They belong to the Son of man, at the right hand of God. If he makes his boast in righteousness, and benevolence, and philanthropy, the cross again convicts him, and condemns him, for having refused them all in Christ below; and once more, in not owning "the kindness and love of God" the Father, and the Son when proclaimed afresh in the gospel of His grace from above "to every creature under heaven." In truth man in the flesh is displaced as a matter of fact, not only by the judgment of God., at the cross, but also by the entrance of the Lord from heaven as the quickening Spirit, and, it is in this twofold way the one great text of this epistle comes into place, viz., that "Christ is all, and in all." We have to this point, mainly followed the apostle in the practical application of the cross for their rescue and deliverance; they could turn to nothing under heaven any longer, for the best things which had been authorized by Jehovah, proved abortive by reason of the weakness or willfulness of the flesh, to maintain even an outward relationship, and had been "taken out of the way." There was nothing now but Christianity, and no one but the Son of Man come in by incarnation, and now on the other side of the cross in resurrection, as "the last Adam," and "the beginning of the creation of God." Man is thus in a new place for faith!

Let us now turn to the positive teaching of the Holy Ghost in this epistle, by which he seeks to attract them to "the glory of the Person of the Son," that they may go after Him where He now is, and seek, yea, set their affections on Himself and "upon things above, not on things upon the earth." The foundation—for this, lies in the fact, that they are by grace and quickening power, united to Christ, as the exalted Man, in a new position in heaven. Their ability for "seeking the things which are above" consisted in the reality of their own death in this sphere below, and their being risen out of it, with Christ as their life, into a new one in glory, where all things are headed up in Him, "Where He sits on the right hand of God." This death of Christ is also to be kept judicially upon the flesh, in its activity and lust, so that the hindrances to the growth and development of the new man by the Spirit, may be refused, and set aside in the power of God. Likewise, "the inner man thus strengthened with might," will be able in a present communion with Christ and in real enjoyment of heart, to seek "the things which are above." There is thus a Person in the heavens who loves us, and whom we love, and with whom we are united; having "been quickened and raised together," by the operation of God. There are things likewise which are already His; and others, to be gathered together in Him as the appointed center, whether they be in heaven, or on the earth, according to the divine counsels in "the dispensation of the fullness of times." The instruction of the Lord to His disciples in John 16 may be rightly quoted here, concerning "the things above," and especially to show that the unfolding of them to us, is part of the present ministry of the Holy Ghost. "Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come." And in continuance, Jesus said, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you." But perhaps what follows, more directly bears upon our inquiry, as to "what the things above are," on which our affections are to be set, viz., "All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I that he shall take of mine and show it unto you." Surely this blessed ministry is what the Holy Ghost has long since entered upon, and has carried out in the revelations made to the apostles, and by their writings still communicated to the Church of the living God. Indeed the prayer of Eph. 1 not only recognizes this as a fact, but, as a consequence, Paul desired "the eyes of their understanding, or heart might be opened, that they might know

what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," &c. The Colossian epistle likewise contains (as might be supposed) instruction as to the "things above" which are connected with Christ as the new center, in the glory of His Person, who is not only Head "over all things," but who has "all things" put under His feet.

It is not merely that by the coming in of Christ everything under heaven was put to the proof, and set aside finally, by His death on the cross, but also that by His ascension to the right hand of the Father, "He fills all things" out of the fullness which dwells in Him—for it is written, that "In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell." "The Spirit of truth" glorifies the Son to the eyes and hearts of the Colossians, as He rises before their faith and hope, in His personal and essential glories of Godhead and manhood, like the light of day, when he shines forth in his strength, to dispel the darkness, and to call forth into life and beauty all that is dependent upon His rays. How blessed for them and us to see the eternal Son come out as the "image of the invisible God, first-born of all creation; because by Him were created all things, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities; all things have been created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." In this precious scripture (the like to which does not occur anywhere else) we behold Him first, in His own Personal glories, and secondly as the source, and center, and sustainer of "all things." If we ask ourselves what must these things which are thus enumerated be to Him, and to His heart, having first created them, and afterward secured them by redemption for the glory of God, and His own glory, and ours, we shall begin to see "what the things are" which we are encouraged to seek! Moreover, "He is the firstborn from among the dead, the beginning, that in all things He might have the first place." Thus the "pre-eminence," and the "fullness," are alike His; and in Him "are hid, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The vast spheres for their exercise and display, in blessing are the heavens and the earth which are now, as well as the heavens and the earth which shall be after these, wherein dwelleth righteousness—For neither the one nor the other could suffice, to unfold the infinite and various glories of such an One as He "Who is the image of the invisible God." He alone could say "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Great in the glory of the Godhead as the eternal Son, He yet adds to it another glory in His own Person, by the mysterious Manhood which He assumed, and in which it is our blessedness to know and worship Him. "We are complete in Him, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The heavens and the earth were necessary to reveal the life and ways of Him, when He came forth from the eternity in which He dwelt with God, into time, that He might "tabernacle amongst men," and again pass out of time into the everlasting ages to prepare an abode, and lay open the Father's house to "our affections as the elect of God." He could say as to the earth and the heavens, in the manner and dignity which became Him, and in which they had been and would forever be His servants. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death." Is it nothing, we may ask each other for our affections to pass into regions and territories and dominions like these, with God and the Son of His love, to own Him in the almighty power by which He created all things, and by which at this day all things consist, and for whom, if not "for Him?" Are these things dear to His heart (and not to ours) who when "the right of redemption lay with Him," and Him alone, paid such a price to regain the heavens and the earth, and ourselves out of the depths of the enemy's power, as the shedding of His own blood? Do we allow the god of this world, and those whom he leads captive, as "The prince of the power of the

air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," to make their boast in the things of time and sense, and we know not what our things are? Do we consent that their things should be so definitely understood, and so elaborately portrayed to the lusts of the mind and the pride of life, as that they may be distinctly pursued to the ends of the world, or purchased at their Crystal Palaces and Emporiums? Do we see all this in everyday life, or else by Railways and Ocean Steamers, and yet a man in Christ, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, asks what the things are above, upon which he is to set his affection? Though he knows these things to be "Where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 10 - The Christian's Addition Table

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2 Peter 1:5-16.

The Apostle Peter turns here in vs. 5 to the practical state of the believers; having given them what would comfort and refresh their hearts, he says, This is not all, now I look at your own state practically. "Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." He knew how easy it was to get slothful, and so he exhorts them to give all diligence in thus adding. Virtue is that energy and courage of soul, that knows how to refuse, as well as to choose, like Moses, who "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," and so he says "Add to your faith virtue." You have the faith that connects you with God, and you believe in what as yet you do not see, but now you must add virtue, that courage, which knows how to say "No" to the thousand things that come up day by day, and to press unswervingly on the pathway that is set before us.

Then you may find a person who has this energy, but who is a little rough, and so he says, there is something else needed, lest this roughness turn to rashness, therefore add to virtue knowledge of God, of the mind and ways of God., and of what suits God, for mere knowledge puffs up, this is the knowledge that humbles.

A man that knows God well, cannot know Him without being in His company, and a person who is rear to God is tender in his ways, though there may be energy in him to follow on. We need grace from the Lord to add this.

"And to knowledge temperance." Not the mere external restraint, but the cultivation of the inward mystery of the soul day by day, governing ourselves, keeping ourselves in order: and depend upon it if we cannot keep ourselves in order, we cannot keep anyone else.

Temperance is that quiet gravity of spirit, that equable in every circumstance, like Christ, never upset by anything or anyone that came along.

"And to temperance patience." Temperance will keep me from saying or doing a thing that will wound you, and patience will keep me from being upset by anything that you may do to wound me. Temperance is active, patience is passive!

If you have not knowledge, you will not know how to meet the mind of God. If you have not temperance you will be sure to do something that will hurt someone else, and if you have not patience you will be upset by what someone else may be doing to you.

"And to patience Godliness"—God-likeness——walking through this scene, and possessing the divine nature, see that you illustrate it, exemplify it! new me a man's company, and I will skew you what sort of a man he is; and if you are keeping company with God you will be a godly person, for we all resemble the thing we are occupied with. It comes out in a thousand blessed details too every day.

Then in this the Christian's addition table, we have brotherly kindness, and charity, two things that may seem alike, but are different.

Brotherly kindness is a thing that might be merely human, and might degenerate and fade away, and brotherly kindness might only love the lovable sort of people, might be partial, but when I come to charity, it is impartial and unfailing, it is divine. "Charity never fails." In 1 Cor. 13 there are eight things it does not do, and eight things it does do, and it never breaks down. It is the very thing our souls need as we go through a scene where everything is against us.

Supposing a person repulsed me, and considered my love interference, brotherly kindness only might say, I will not go back; but charity is a divine thing and says, "I think of the blessing and good of the object, and of the glory of God in connection with that object."

Charity is not the love that makes light of evil, but the love that seeks the real good of its object.

We have a guide how we may learn if we really love the children of God (1 John 5:2.) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." If you love the Father you love His children.

If we love Himself we love His people likewise, and we seek each other's blessing, but always desiring to meet His mind.

You act as one who goes directly out from God, dependent on Him and obedient to Him, in grace to a, person no matter what his state may be. The Lord help us to profit by His word, and to seek to add these things to our faith, for there are many beautiful consequences of so doing.

If there be not this blessed adding, there is going back, for there is no such thing as standing still; if we are not progressing, we are retrograding. "Unto every one that hath, shall be given... but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

If there be not the desire to press on, to go on with the Lord, what is there? There is only a returning to the things from which the Lord called us out in days gone by. The Lord give us to have diligence o! heart in thus adding to our faith, and progressing in the knowledge of Himself.

From the frequency with which the Apostle alludes to the eight things mentioned in verses 5, 6, and 7,—would seem almost impossible to overrate their importance. He brings out the effect of having these things and the result of not having them.

The end of every dealing of God with our souls is to make us know Christ better. If a person goes on with these three verses, you find about that person the savor of Christ. Peter felt that everything was nothing that did not lead a person to a deeper knowledge of Christ. That which puts us nearer to Christ has this effect, we feel how unlike Christ we are, and also it allures us from the world, so that we are more fit morally to pass through the world.

Many a saint of God feels, I am fit for heaven, but not fit for earth, because I am not sufficiently with the Lord to be equal to the occasions that arise as I pass through this scene. We feel our impotence and folly feel how we have broken down as witnesses for Christ. It is only as Christ becomes better known that there is a fitness to pass through this scene.

Verse 9. You will say this is a backslider. Not at all! He is confident about his eternal salvation, "But," you say, "he is blind." Quite true; put the things that belong to the Lord before him, he does not see them, he has forgotten too that he was purged from his old sins. What has he forgotten? Has he forgotten that his old sins were purged away? Not a bit! He has forgotten that he was purged away from his old sins, and so he has turned back to them again, got back into the world, lost completely the sense of what Christianity is as being a heavenly thing, and the Christian as being a heavenly person. There has been a dropping down, and losing sight of the things the Lord has called us to, a dropping down to earth, and its ways, its principles, and its religion likewise, the whole thing has been let go. Bit by bit the standard has been lowered, till there has been a dropping down so far, that the Lord has had to awaken us in a startling way.

Verse 10. Here the apostle comes in again with the solemn exhortation "give diligence," and it is a thing we need, this holy diligence of soul to keep up, with purpose of heart to the thing the Lord has called us to. Peter alludes, doubtless, in this verse to the terrible fall he had had himself.

"But," you say, "how can we make our calling and election sure?" Who called us? Our Father. Who chose us? Our Father. But this does not do for other people. Who are you to make your calling and election sure with? with the One who called you? the One who chose you? Not a bit, but with everyone who watches you, everyone who could say "You a called person! You do not look a bit like it. You a chosen person! No one would think so." You are to make it manifest to the eyes of everyone else that you have been thus called of God.

Verse 11. That is more than the soul being sustained, kept of the Lord, though that in itself is a wonderful mercy, for there is many a fall in the history of a child of God, that God and his own heart alone knows of.

But is there not something very beautiful about the path of a Christian of whom you could say, from the first till the Lord took that one home, "He never took a backward step, there was not a trip, nothing manifest but a pathway of beautiful devotedness." There is no reference here to forgiveness or pardon, but Peter reverts to his great subject of the government of God, and he says, if you have these things and abound, not only will you be kept from falling, but there passes before his mind the thought of the place, and the portion, and the reward that the saint of God has in the coming kingdom of the Lord, for though the grace of God gives us a common place in heavenly glory, there is such a thing as the kingdom, or a place in the kingdom, and reward for service which has nothing to do with grace. Grace gives us a common place in heavenly glory, but the government of God gives us an unequal place in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to service.

It is a question of the reward that a saint gets from the Lord by-and-by, and there is the same difference in this, as there is between a vessel, that goes abroad, and encounters storms by the way, but has been badly rigged, badly manned, and badly commanded, and though it gets into port, yet it comes up the channel with masts torn away, and tugged by a steamer; and a vessel that comes into port with all sails set—everything in order, and cargo safe.

Peter says, If you do not go on adding, you will fall down by the road, and there will be a sense of loss at the end. There comes a moment when the soul deeply feels, Would to God I had been devoted to Christ, instead of being worldly, cold, trivial, half-hearted. Most beautifully Peter guards

the sheep, lest they should fall into the thing from which he would fain protect them.

Verses 12, 13. We may sometimes think it not worthwhile to be going over the same things again and again. Not so Peter. And if our hearts are only put in remembrance of these things God be thanked. It will be blessed fruit to our account in the days to come.

Do we not need stirring up? We do. Satan does his utmost to hinder our souls. The Lord lead us to be more watchful, more on our guard against the wiles of the enemy.

Verse 15. How persistent Peter is "To have these things always in remembrance." "These things," are five times spoken of. It is impossible therefore for our souls to over-estimate the value, and the worth of vss. 5,6,7, to which the apostle thus alludes five times after. The Lord grant we may have them always in remembrance, have them engraved upon the tablets of our hearts.

How Peter felt there was no apostolic succession, no one to do the work he was doing, after his death. I leave you, he says, in my Epistle that which may always be a blessing and a help to your souls.

In all ages the people of God have clung in a peculiar way to Peter's Epistles. Why, do you think? I believe it is because they come right down to where we are in the world, and meet us so beautifully with a presentation of Christ, which comes to us and suits us in our need in this world.

We have Satan presented as a roaring lion in the first epistle, and as a snake in the grass in the second epistle, and we have what meets him in both these characters, and preserves us from his devices.

#### Our Living Association With Christ in Heaven

The present position of Christ in heaven apprehended by faith determines our

(3) New standing and state in Him.— "That I may be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (vs. 9.) All his former supposed gains had been given up for Christ—to have Him as gain; and, instead of Saul figuring before the Jewish Sanhedrin and displaying himself as the leading legalist invested with his own righteousness which had its source in the law, his self-abnegating aim is,—sinking Saul,—to "be found in Him" whom he had seen as the risen Lord of glory; and if "found in Christ" then Saul was gone and only Christ appeared to faith instead of him; and he made Him appear before others, as the only One in whom he trusted and boasted as giving him a standing before God and being the cause of his investiture with the righteousness issuing from God and which is apprehended by faith in Christ, and solely on the ground of faith, and not on the principle of law, or on the ground of works of law. He is in a new place where "all old things" have passed away; and all things are become new, and all things there are "of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." Seeing Christ in glory—he recognized his standing and righteousness as complete in Him before God. His former state was what his own righteousness had made him; but he had seen Christ in the glory of God in God's righteousness, and he will have none of his "own righteousness which is of the law but that which through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith." If you seek for the great ritualist leader and legalist Saul of Tarsus he cannot be found within the entire domain of the law; for he has abandoned all as loss to have Christ as gain; and be "found in Him." He has been justified and

sanctified in Christ, and has had Christ Jesus made on the part of God, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that he may glory in the Lord: and now, here, he glories in Him as giving him a share in the new moral estate of man in Christ in heaven.

His uniform testimony is that, flowing from revelation and his own experience, salvation and a place before God in Christ are not from works of righteousness of law done by us (Titus 3:4-7), (2 Tim. 1:9), (Gal. 2:16-21). How he delights to contrast what he had in virtue of his faith in Christ with what he had before He revealed Himself to Him and was revealed by God in him. "Found in Him," not in self; "not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Whether it be objective and judicial as in Romans, or subjective and of the new creation, "having put on the new man which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth," as in Ephesians; or the whole new and future moral state of man in glory as here, it is most certainly "of God." The language is that which the apostle frequently employs when he is giving our standing and our state as in Romans and Galatians, and it is of the new and future position of man in Christ and of the fundamental things attaching to it he speaks here antedating, by faith and the Spirit, that day when we shall be revealed in glory and be so identified with Him, in bodies of glory, that we shall be "glorified together." But for faith and the Spirit he is "found in Him" now as in the very source and element of his spirit's life as well as divine righteousness. Let "in him" mean only what it does in "Romans;" yet that connects him with the dead and risen One— "the last Adam the second man" in whom as the Head of a new race we have life and righteousness "for as by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners; so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous" (Rom. 5): and closely bound up with this is our subjective state (Rom. 6) in which we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus; we yield ourselves unto God as alive from the dead and our members instruments of righteousness unto God. There is certainly also the molding of life corresponding to the gaining of Christ. God is working in us both to will and to do: the Christ, who humbled himself and became obedient even unto death, when here in grace and graciousness being our pattern: and that same One highly exalted at God's right hand and having a name above every name, in life and righteousness, our object; and the Holy Ghost giving us discovery of our place in Him where He is and working in us, in association with Him, we get "strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith"; and "strengthened also with all power according to the might of his glory unto all endurance and long suffering with joy."

There are three things the apostle said at the close of his life that he had done: (1) "I have fought a good fight; (2) I have finished the race; (3) I have kept the faith;" (2 Tim. 4:7). Here we find him occupied with all the three; but that which stands out most prominently is his energy in pressing on in the race. He saw the glorious Man in whom, as risen from the dead, (for he knew Him not otherwise), He wished to be found in God's sight, the righteousness of God in Him, and be with Him in glory where He is, cost what it may. But while on the road he has (4) A new occupation: "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed unto His death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead." (vs. 10). Paul is looking "to be found in Him" having not his own righteousness but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith, to know Him, &c.

Nothing keeps men so effectually from the knowledge of Christ and Christianity as a mixture of religious observances and legal righteousness. The Hebrew Christians were kept back by it:—became “unskillful in the word of righteousness” “needing milk and not strong meat.” (Heb. 5). The Galatians too, who were taught, by those ritualists who troubled them, to add circumcision to faith in Christ in order to help them in the Christian life, were warned by the apostle that it was “another gospel,” and “not the gospel of Christ:”

and he tells them that he stood in doubt of them, and travailed in birth for them that Christ might be formed in them. And in the epistle to the Colossians, he sets distinctly before the saints who were in danger of being made a spoil of, and “not holding the head” by means of philosophy and vain deceit and the ritualism that presented the ordinances of men—that “Christ is all; and in all”: “all,” as an object; “in all,” as their life; and they needed nothing else and none but Christ.

It is, therefore, of great importance to our knowing Christ that we have a divine assurance and settled consciousness of our place in Him in heaven where He is and of our being the righteousness of God in Him. Clear as to our standing in a risen and glorified Christ; and as to the righteousness of God in taking Him up from the dead to His own presence in glory, and in giving a place in Him there to all who through faith in Him and the Holy Ghost, become associated with Him as those who have “the righteousness which is of God by faith” and not on the principle of law or by works of law, we are in a state to “know Him.” A standing before God in all holy peacefulness in Him who is our peace, and has made peace by the blood of His cross is essential to our being in that calm state of spiritual restfulness, in which we may be so entirely free from ourselves and have Christ before us so really and continuously that we “may know Him, &c.” He is the one engrossing Object of the truly-delivered Christian who has seen an end both of his sins and of himself in the cross of Christ, and has had a sight by faith’s eye of the glorious One who appeared in such matchless grace to Saul on the road to Damascus, and who thenceforward stood out before Him all his life as the nearest and dearest object to His heart.

The whole of the new moral estate of man is looked at here as in the future, in heavenly glory with Christ; and, being in resurrection, the whole matter in hand is its attainment—for what else is there for a saint to do? The resurrection here is that which enters us into this new state in glory—“the Politeuma in the heavens”—identified with the last Adam, the risen, and accepted and glorified man. But although everything here is in the future, yet by faith, and the revealings of the Spirit of Christ, we enter now, in spirit, into all that it will be by and bye; and our present occupation is to know the very Christ for whose coming to fetch us thither we are waiting, and with whom we are expecting to be in that bright glory forever. We have eternal redemption with the perfect purging of our consciences through the blood of Christ; present reconciliation through the death of Christ; sonship, and the Holy Ghost giving us the consciousness of a new relationship in the Son of God risen from the dead, and the affections of children; and the most magnificent hope set before us “Glory with Christ above:” “Christ who is our hope,” being Himself our present object in the glory of heaven, our whole moral existence is formed by our having the knowledge of Him communicated to us in the living energy of the Holy Ghost who keeps us continuously in spiritual activity, pushing our way through every hindrance to reach Him, be like Him, and with Him in the glory of heaven forever. Said He, “I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there ye may be also.” And we wait for God’s Son from heaven.

“That I may know Him!” He would know Him as risen, and in the glory of heaven where first he saw Him. Among carnal saints who gloried in men and gifts, and were worldly in their spirits, he said he would know only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. But in the normal condition of the Christian he can be occupied with Christ Jesus his Lord, glorified. He can contemplate Him in all the honor, power, and glory of His heavenly state. This glorious One is the divine person in whom God’s nature and character were revealed on earth, One in whom all God’s glory had shone out in His life and death and resurrection. His nature and ways had been seen in Him when walking here in divine love and grace, and giving Himself for our sins: all that the Father is was glorified in raising Him from the dead and seating Him with Himself in heavenly glory. It was but holy consistency with Himself to raise and glorify the One who had perfectly revealed Him, and glorified Him on the earth, even when occupied about our sin: this Divine One—this now glorified man set on high and crowned with glory and honor for his suffering of death, is the One he ever sought to know—to know Himself “the person of the Christ, enfolding every grace.”

Then further, he adds “and the power of his resurrection:” not the power of his raising up in the flesh, nor yet the power by which He was raised and rose; but the power and efficacy which flow from His resurrection. Perfect love had been manifested in death and the basis of divine righteousness laid, perfect self-sacrifice displayed, and Christ had passed through death in the power of life, and its perfection was demonstrated in resurrection: and victory too attaches to it. The apostle as one who, in the Spirit, is united to Him who is the source of this perfect, victorious life, desires to know Him thus—and realize that the divine life in which one runs on his course to Christ in glory, (its source and vital energy,) is not life on probation, but life in victory, having already gone through death and risen out of it triumphant over all the power of the enemy. This is to “know Him and the power of His resurrection.” He was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead. This risen man, Paul had seen in glory,—he knew Him not otherwise than risen,—and he had such a longing to be with Him, and conformed to Him in glory, that whatever might be in the road he would encounter, should it be even death itself. Nothing but Christ’s resurrection power could sustain a man like Paul, who was dying daily.

Suffering was given the apostle by the Lord at his conversion as a special mark of distinction. “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.” And, knowing the power flowing from His resurrection in the Holy Spirit of God, he is desirous of knowing (and by this time he had had much of it) “the fellowship of his sufferings.” His first experience and present circumstances gave him a share in this coveted “fellowship;” and should he be “conformed to his death” by being crucified by the Romans, as the issue of his imprisonment, that would be joyfully accepted; for the glorious One is so entirely before him that he says “if by any means I might attain to the resurrection from among the dead.”<sup>1</sup> The Lord is seen in resurrection and if he should experience the fellowship of his sufferings by suffering even to death itself, it would be only to assimilate him the more to His Lord in death and resurrection.

By his arriving at “the resurrection from among the dead,” he would share in the last possible feature of conformity with his Lord, save participation in heavenly glory with Him in “a body of glory” like His own. Death, resurrection, and glory were still before him; and his spirit’s fervent aspiration was to know his Lord and Saviour practically in all the three.

That he might get to Him in heaven now, and wait with Him there, for his glorified body made him welcome sufferings, and even death itself – for then he would, by and bye, arrive at the resurrection that is from among the dead. “This is the first resurrection:” and it consists of two parts: “Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming,” (Cor. 15:23). His present condition is peculiar, as raised spiritually from among the “dead in trespasses and sin;” and he aspires to the completion of this privileged peculiarity when he shall share with his Lord in an eclectic resurrection like his own—for He rose “from out among the dead,” leaving the dead in myriads behind Him, and this also shall all his dead saints do.<sup>1</sup>

## Dead to Sin and Alive Unto God

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If I am to be dead to sin and alive to God, remember it is in Christ that I am alive unto God. It means this, that my heart and spirit in simple faith follow Jesus up into God's presence, and know Him as a living, glorified Man; and following Him thus, since God looks with infinite satisfaction upon His Son, it enables me to feel that I am there in Christ, accepted just as He is. It also gives me the thought that one day, side by side with Christ, I shall be presented in all the perfectness of the risen life, body, soul, and spirit, without stain. I thus realize what I am to God, and I get the power to live unto God. I "reckon," I judge, I come to the conclusion, in the judgment of my renewed mind, that God hath made me eternally alive to Himself as much as Christ is alive to Him; and that it were a sin and a shame of which no sinner could be guilty that I, thus raised up with Christ, and presented in all the beauty and blessedness and glory of Christ before God, and knowing that it is so, should come down to this earth and walk as a man of sin, instead of as a living, risen man. I know that the lusts of the flesh can only be crushed by the power of the cross of Christ.

My word is this: Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin in the crucified Christ; solemnly judge yourselves in the risen Christ to be alive unto God.; and no more think of yielding to sin and Satan than of perishing in hell; and no more withhold yourselves from God, to whom you are alive, than you would do any act of vice or crime against your neighbor, and yet expect to be accounted a righteous person. May the eternal Spirit of love lead us to pay an abiding visit into those regions of glory and brightness; and even then not lose sight of the fact that sin hath been "destroyed" in the judicial death of our Surety, that we may die with Him and live with Him. Thus we shall practically walk in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **“Unspotted From the World”**

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“What need there is in these last and perilous times, that we should find in a closer walk with Christ, the secret of unspottedness from the spirit of this age, in all its boasted progress. You will recall the parable of the house that was ‘swept and garnished,’ in Luke 11. The conviction as to the last state, which this scripture fastened on my mind, led me to throw down my broom many years ago, and to refuse even a jot of garnishing up to this present day, for I do not like the incoming tenant! And all the world wondered after the beast, saying, ‘Who is like unto the beast?’ The Lord give us, and thousands more, trueheartedness to Himself, that may keep us in the true confession of his rights and titles, and of His coming, to make them all good in sovereign power, against the prince of the power of the air, ‘the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.’ If the person of Christ were a reality to us, if in fact He were the only living and abiding reality to our souls, how we should make Him the governing and guiding object and motive of our daily life, ‘for me to live is Christ.’ Our ruling passion would then be ‘that Christ may be magnified in me, whether by life or by death,’ May the Lord lead to this devotedness and devotement, by drawing us to His own bosom, that our hearts may beat in true loyalty and attachment to Himself.”

## Christ, and the Things Above: [What Are the Things Above?]

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In reply, may it not be stated, as was said at the outset of this paper, that the sense and power of “the things above” had been lost at Colosse, and that as the saints there had let go the Head and Lord as “the beginning, and the first-born from the dead,” so Christians, since, and to an alarming extent in our day, have let go Christ as the Head of a new creation, and moreover have let go the Cross in its separating power between themselves and the world as it now is. “The world crucified to me, and I unto the world” is as necessarily a rule of life and death, for practical walk with Christ, as was the cross in its saving power necessary as a rule for our faith, when we believed in Jesus, “delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.” How can a Christian in whom the lusts of the mind and the pride of life dwell and act, so that he gathers around himself the most selected pleasures of the world for advancement or position in it, pass out of this region into the heavens, and set his affection on the things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of the majesty of God? He would not be happy or at home there with the Father and the Son, if he could even get inside in spirit—for the ruling objects and principles and motives of his daily and hourly being, when at their fullest activity and energy are not there, but upon the things on this earth, where he dwells, and where his interests are, and he has taken root. “Ye are dead together with Him in whom also ye are circumcised, with the circumcision of Christ” are as needful to be introduced now, as were the sharp-knives at Gilgal, when the Israelites were called to take possession of their inheritance in the promised land.

The coming in of such an One as Christ into this world in life, as “the image of the invisible God” displaced of necessity all the pretensions of these Greeks to wisdom and knowledge, for “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” were “hid in Him,” So likewise all the profession of these Jews, “who were Israelites, and to whom pertained originally the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,” &c., had not attained to righteousness or permanent blessing in the earth, under all the advantages of that economy. All that God could bestow had been given, and forfeited. Moreover, “They had stumbled at the stumbling-stone, which God had laid in Zion,” and wrath was come upon them to the uttermost. The world too, and “the rudiments of the world, were not after Christ.” They had been detected and exposed by Him, during His living ministry, when the Scribes and Pharisees and the Herodians, questioned Him, till they durst ask Him nothing more. They had further refused “the voice from heaven,” which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.” It was to the glory of this Person of the Son, that Paul sought to recover and establish “the faith” of these Colossians, and to attract their affections, by shewing them that His presence on the earth was the test “for faith, and of conscience before God.” It was also the power of displacement too, as regarded all the proud and lofty pretensions of men (they were but grass, or the flower of the field) be they who and what they might. There was nothing outside Christ “for faith, or for God,” except to act upon by testimony, or in saving grace. Nothing but the work of Christ upon the cross could bring a man to God, in present acceptance, much less in heavenly and eternal life and glory. Man was in sin, and sin dwelt in man—and he was a slave to its power, as to

his own consciousness of himself. Relatively, men were possessed by unclean spirits, and grievously tormented by the devil. As before God, man was in death while he lived, and under the second and eternal judgment in the resurrection at the last day. But these philosophic pretensions of men on the one side, or the religious professions of men on the other, were not the only or principal things in question before God. These were rebuked and set aside by the perfections of the Son of God in His life and doctrine—but besides this, Christ had closed up the history of “man in the flesh” by His own death as the sin-bearer and “ransom for all” under the righteous judgment of God. “He who knew no sin, was made sin,” and bore the curse in his Own body on the tree, and left it there. The flesh and “sin in the flesh,” having been brought to light by the law, and its enmity proved to be against God, and against Christ at the Cross, whether by the high priest who accused Jesus to Pilate, or by Pilate who condemned Him, or the soldier who pierced His side, was thus carried by Him into the place of judgment. There “God has condemned sin in the flesh” judicially, down to death, even the death of the cross. He has left it in the place of ashes forever, and risen out of it. So that the Colossians were taught their own death to the flesh and the world in the Christ who died, and their resurrection to a place and portion “in things above” as heirs and joint-heirs in the Christ, who rose from among the dead. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,” is their normal condition and description, as having been thus “delivered out of death, and the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love.” This is their new status and position as believers in Christ, and they were free from the law of sin and death, by the circumcision of Christ “in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” Moreover “Christ was in them the hope of glory,” and thus through faith, in the Spirit too, they could “follow Christ in their affections” where he had gone, “and set their mind on things which were above; and not upon things which are on the earth.” Christ had been raised, and was sitting at the right hand of God, as the first-born from the dead, and Head over all things to the church, as the object for their hearts, and would they falsify His own position and theirs, as one with Him in heaven, by a return to ordinances, and the rudiments of the world. Would they abandon, or continue in the faith?

The observance of days and new moons, or meats and drinks, were parts of a former economy, when God was dealing with man in the flesh, by what was merely ceremonial and external. What had these things to do with a new creation, or with Christ, “where He now sits,” or with them either as being one with Him unless they were false both to Him, and to themselves?

Our Lord is not gone up into uncertain or empty space, but into heaven itself, and there “to appear in the presence of God for us.” What He personally is “at the right hand of God” on high, as entering upon His own glories and dominions, may well fill our souls with adoration and praise, as well as call out our affections after Him, “to seek those things which are above,” and which the Father hath put into His own hands. Take for instance the things with which we are familiar by name, and which in this world make up the life struggle of emperors, and kings, and nations. What objects to the eye and heart of the greatest men, are majesty and wisdom, glory and power, honor and riches, and a name above every one that is named, especially if it could be said “not only in this world, but in that which is to come” if we think of His earthly rights as Son of man, all these, and more, are transferred to Him, who, when He comes a second time, and “sits upon the throne of His glory,” will exercise them all under the righteous scepter of His kingdom, according to the decrees of God the Father.

Shall we be content to see these things, in the manner in which they appear today “under the sun,” and are talked of, become the objects of ambition and lust, or else of diplomacy and war, amongst the nations, where all is wrong and in wrong hands; and yet that these things, when transferred in all their perfection to “the man of God’s right hand, whom he has made strong for Himself” should fail to be understood as realities, or have power to draw our hearts and our affections up to Him, because not knowing with distinctness what they are? And yet the witness to us, from these spheres and scenes of glory and blessing, into which Christ has entered, is the Holy Ghost, respecting whose presence and ministry, Jesus said, “He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.” We may here observe that as “the spirit of prophecy,” he tarried not for the sons of men, but tuned the hearts of the earthly people by the songs of Moses and Hannah, and lighted up the dark and gloomy records of their individual and collective declension, and apostacy from Jehovah, by the bright assurances of “the nail in a sure place, who should be for a glorious throne to His Father’s house, and upon whom they should hang all the glory, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.”

David, the son of Jesse, also sang when under the anointing of the God of Jacob: “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 like the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds,” &c. As “the sweet Psalmist” he again tuned his prophetic lyre, and sang, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou visitest him, for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet.” This was David’s creation psalm, or the song “of the world to come,” when he saw Christ’s glory as “the Son of man,” and spake of Him in connection with the earth and the heavens, saying, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” These outbursts from the Spirit of prophecy, as well as of the Spirit of the Lord, by “the man who was raised up on high” to One who is raised infinitely higher—or to the one who rules over men in the fear of God—or the Son of Man, for the excellency of Jehovah’s name upon the earth, and for the establishment of His glory in the heavens, hereafter, carried the faith and affections of that people upward! All these positions and glories of their Messiah and King above and below, connect themselves with this epistle, which reconciles things on earth to God, and fit in to some one or other of its many spheres of glory. “All things were created by Him, and for Him, and by Him all things consist” are the words of the same Spirit to ourselves if we would see or sing like the Psalmist, of the abundance of peace and blessing “from the cup to the flagon” —or look out upon the “morning without a cloud” to witness the King, on the throne of His kingdom—or the Son of man delivering creation from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. “The Spirit of truth” witnesses to us that Christ is to reconcile all things moreover, which are in heaven and in the earth; and is there any difficulty to the heart that is side by side with Christ in this mighty work, and in these happy deliverances, to “enter into His joy,” or to set its affection with His own, on a day so full of the love of God, and of the Son’s love, to every creature? A day, bright with the clear rising of the sun, when “the universal song shall be raised, of blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever.” a scene which is to display the rights and titles and inheritances of the Son of man.

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 11

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Verse 16. "For we have not followed cunningly, devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty." The Jews' idea of the kingdom was the Messiah coming in glory and majesty and power, and their foes all cast out, but the Lord. Jesus had not come in that way, and so they rejected Him, and, as far as they were concerned, He was dead and buried and gone up into glory. "But," says Peter, "we have actually seen that very kingdom of the Lord, been an eye witness of his majesty." Luke 9 gives us the scene to which Peter alludes. In that chapter the Lord had been unfolding to the disciples the truth of His rejection. "I am going to suffer and to be cast out," He says, "and he who follows me, must expect to share the same fate." But He is coming back again with three-fold glory. His glory as Son of God which He had from all eternity, His glory as the Messiah King of the Jews—and His glory as Son of Man, according to the 8th Psalm. Then after telling His disciples of His rejection He says, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God," and He shows to them on the mount of transfiguration a little miniature picture of the kingdom, and it is to this Peter alludes in this Epistle. He had seen this wonderful picture, the Messiah, Moses the lawgiver, and Elias the reformer on that mount, and his heart was full. "Oh," he said, "let us perpetuate this scene." That was the thought in his mind, but that was putting the Messiah the lawgiver, and the reformer on the same level, and God could not have that, and the voice comes as Peter says, "from the excellent glory." "This is my beloved Son, hear him, and they feared as they (Moses and Elias) entered into the cloud," because the cloud was the immediate symbol of the presence of God.

The picture was only a momentary thing, but it was a perfect picture of the coming glory.

There was the lesson to Peter of the personal glory of the Son, but likewise the introduction to his mind of the heavenly, as well as the earthly side of the kingdom. Moses and Elias are a figure of the heavenly side; Moses had died, and Elias had gone up without death, just as it will be when the Lord comes for His people; He will raise those who have died, and will take up without dying those who are alive. Peter, James and John are a picture of those in earth, who though they see His glory, yet are in the earth all the time.

Peter had seen this picture of the coming kingdom, and he sweetly confirms the faith of the Jewish believers by putting them in mind of what he had seen.

Verse 19. Prophecy always relates to the earth. It is the future dealing of God with the earth when He sweeps the scene of all that is ungodly and prepares it for the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Church is a heavenly thing, does not belong to earth at all, and Peter says you do well to take heed to prophecy, because if you look into prophecy it will tell you that the world through which you are passing is going to be judged, and therefore, he says, by the light of this, you will go through the world as through a judged scene without being mixed up with it at all.

What I find given in Scripture is, that the Lord reigns over the earth, but sets the earth right first, and therefore I find I cannot do without prophecy.

Prophecy is a very good thing because it tells me what God is going to do with the earth, sweep the whole scene with the besom of destruction and fit it for Christ; but to have prophecy before our hearts is the great mistake, because prophecy is not Christ and nothing does for the heart but Christ.

The Old Testament prophecies did not give what Peter gives now, "till the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts." I do not think the apostle means till Christ arise as "Sun of righteousness with healing in his wing" as Malachi puts it. That is the day of judgment, not the gospel, as many say. The day is not come yet, but let me ask you, Has the day dawned in your heart yet? Do you not belong to the day? Yes, of course you do; the day has dawned in your heart, the first light, and along with that, the morning star, Christ Himself: the object of the saint in heavenly glory. It is Peter bringing in for a moment the coming of the Lord. He says, as it were, Prophecy is all very well, but the Lord Himself is coming; that is the thing for your hearts. He is "the root and the offspring of David" for the Jew. He is the "bright morning star" for our hearts. As He says to the remnant in Thyatira, to the overcomer, "I will give him the morning star." That is, for the overcomer it is heavenly joy with Christ above, before the kingdom comes. This is what you and I are looking for now, the day having dawned in our hearts, we know that our portion is with Christ up there, and we know that before He comes to judge by-and-bye, He is to come for us to be with Him forever. We never expect a single event to take place before the Lord comes for us; we do not wait for anything but the morning star, the coming of the Lord. He is to come for His people, and this is to be the pole star of the saint's life.

Verse 20. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." We must not limit Scripture. The value of Scripture is this, it is all connected with Christ, and prophecy has not its full scope, till everything has been brought in that connects it with Christ in His coming kingdom and glory.

Those who are looking for the fulfillment of prophecy before the Lord comes for us, miss the joy of waiting for Christ. They see some close similarity between some prophecy and some event, but they do not know that it is to watch for the bright and morning star.

When the Lord has taken us out of the scene, what will it be? Every prophecy of Scripture will be fulfilled, and when He gets His right place, by-and-bye, you and I will be by His side reigning with Him over this earth where He died for us, where His precious blood was shed for us. What a blessed thing for us to know Him now, to be true to Him now, in this scene, knowing that the time is soon coming when He shall have His rightful place on this earth again; but before that day comes He will have come first for us and have taken us up to be with Himself in the Father's house, and this is what we look for, and therefore I say that our portion is the best, for though prophecy is good, Christ Himself is better, and Christ Himself is our portion.

The Lord give us to be waiting and watching for Him who is the bright and morning star. In the two following chapters of this Epistle, we have the apostle directing our attention,—the attention of all believers to two great points; first, unsound doctrine coupled with wicked practices, secondly, to the rapid growth of infidelity and scoffing, which we see all round about us in the present day.

If I had any doubt about the truth of Scripture, I should have that doubt removed by reading the second Epistle of Peter, because we have all round about us now, the very thing which the Spirit of God warns us here about.

“Denying the Lord that bought them,” that is, denying the claims of Christ, who is the Lord that bought them. This must not be confused with the thought of redemption, because redemption and purchase are very different. Every child of God is redeemed, every man is not redeemed, but every man is bought. Just as Matthew 13 says, that He bought the field, because of the treasure hid in it, and explains too that the field is the world. By His death Christ, as man, has obtained authority over every man.

Thus Christ is the master of all, the “Despot.” The figure is taken from a man going into the slave market and buying slaves. Thus too, Peter when speaking in Acts 10 says, “He is Lord of all,” and Paul in 1 Cor. 11 says, “The head of every man is Christ.” So here Peter says He is “the Lord that bought them.” If I go into the slave market and buy a slave, my purchase only makes the slave change masters. Redemption knocks the shackles off the slave, and leaves him free. Purchase perpetuates bondage, redemption brings in perfect freedom.

Verse 2. Alas, we know well that what Peter says will take place has been fully enacted in Christendom, a throwing off of the claims of Christ even by those who profess His name and the way of truth; evil spoken of by those outside, because of the evil ways of those who profess to know the Lord.

Verse 3. Here he lays bare to the core ecclesiastical pretensions. Babylon sells the souls of men. It is a solemn thing to be connected practically with such a state of things.

Then he cites the dealings of God in bye-gone years, and shows what the Lord will yet do. Here, verse 4, is a very remarkable statement about the angels. The connection is plain between this verse, and Jude 6, but the contrast is striking. Peter says, “the angels that sinned,” Jude says, they left “their first estate.” Peter speaks of self-will; Jude speaks of apostacy; for Jude is describing the terrible corruption in the church, out of which the saint of God is to pick his way.

It is important to see what apostacy is. It is leaving the place in which God has put you. That is what Adam did. He was an apostate, and there is the difference between Adam and Christ. What was apostacy in Adam, was perfect grace in Christ. Adam's was self-will and disobedience, and in Christ it was perfect obedience and doing the will of God His Father, He humbled Himself, and God exalted Him, and to you and me the apostle says by the Spirit of God, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

## The Story of Grace

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The heart, if I may so express it, enters heaven when it listens in faith to the story or tale of grace.

The work and fruit of grace is all our title to heaven itself by and by. The story or tale of grace, listened to by faith is all our way, and our only way, into heaven in spirit now.

The self-judgings of the holy principle, and the doings and obedience of the righteous principle, in us, are good and needful; but it is not the property of such things to lead us to, and seat us in heaven. It is the silent attitude of faith listening to the story of the grace of God, that constitutes the present heaven of the soul.

We have some illustrations of this silent listening of faith, while grace is rehearsing or exercising itself, given us in Scripture.

Look at Genesis 3 The Lord. God speaks to Adam, among the trees of the garden, of present penalties on him and his wife; but in His words to the serpent, he lets fall on Adam's ear the tale of grace, which told him that the charm of the serpent's promise should be broken; that instead of alliance between the deceiver and deceived, there should be enmity; and that in that enmity the one who stood for the deceived (God's gift also) should at all personal cost be fully and gloriously the conqueror.

To this tale of gospel grace Adam listens, listens in silence. There is nothing else for him. But through the Spirit, this so works on his soul, that he comes forth from his distance into God's presence; and his heart is so filled with the tale of grace, and with that only, that he seems altogether to forget the present penalty. He comes forth, calling his wife "the mother of all living," thus owning the mystery which had been revealed to him, and that only. This is full of blessing. This is a beautiful illustration of the virtue that lies in a believing, silent listening to the tale or story of grace. Adam was borne in spirit, not only away from that distance into which sin and guilt and conscience had driven him, but beyond the fear or thought of present sorrow, to which his history in the world was about to expose him. He was as at the gate of heaven in spirit. Look again at Zechariah 3.

Joshua is before the angel of the Lord, and Joshua's accuser or adversary is there also. Joshua appears in all defilement and degradation. The tattered garments of a prodigal but poorly hide his shame and nakedness—nay, they rather witness it and publish it; he has nothing to say for himself, and his only wisdom is not to attempt or affect anything; he is deeply and thoroughly silent. But there is One in the scene who can speak, and does speak, and Joshua listens. And what does the listening Joshua hear? What tale falls on the ear of this polluted one, whose very pollutions make him dumb? The same precious story of grace. For Joshua (in his filthy garments) hears the Lord himself—none other or less than He—rebuking his accuser. He hears the same Lord humbling him as a brand fitted for the burning, no better than a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; but he hears at the same time that he was chosen, and that all the provisions of the house of the Lord were to be used for him, and the servants of the house commanded to be active

and stir themselves for him.

This was the tale of grace, which the silent, listening sinner hears. And what a gate of heaven that moment was to him! To Joshua, in spirit, heaven had now opened itself, and he enters and sits there.

Look at the same heaven opened again in Luke 15.

The earth had shown itself a scene of thorough weariness and disappointment to the heart and mind of Christ, as we see in chapter 14.

It was not because it was the place of either violence and fraud, of either lion or serpent. The varied moral scenery of chapter 14 had been laid in the religion and in the social friendliness of the human family. Nothing coarse or repulsive had marked it—no blood had stained it, or guile of the serpent disfigured it. But the heart of Christ takes its journey through it all, grieved, wearied, and disappointed, and nothing gives Him rest or refreshment, till sinners and publicans come and hear him (15:1). Oh, the blessedness of such an attitude and moment both to Him and to us! There it is that we (and the Spirit of Jesus wearied with man) gain the bright heaven of God. Jesus left the Pharisees' feast and the company of an admiring, following multitude, and now found Himself listened to by sinners, not followed by a crowd that had miscalculated their strength to be on such a road, but listened to by poor harlots and publicans, who had nothing to give, nothing to promise, nothing to undertake or pledge for themselves, but who came only for what they could get from Christ's stores of boundless grace, and therefore heaven opens itself—and the parables which listening faith is invited to hear tell of heaven's joy over listening sinners.

As a simple soul, soon after the word of grace had quickened it with the life of Christ, breathed out—

“Tis not for what I give Him;

It is when I believe Him,

I feel this love, and hear Him

Bid me be happy near Him.”

When the Lord had read from the 61st of Isaiah, that wonderful Scripture which publishes the riches of goodness or grace, He closed the book (see Luke 4)

This action was full of meaning, and of comfort too. It tells us, that when Jesus had caused us to hear the tale or story of grace, He had discharged His ministry. And that story (if listened to and received by faith) would be everything to us; and, in a fine sense, we might close the book, as Jesus did; we might pause, and muse, and meditate, and again and again turn in our minds this one happy, powerful, elevating tale of grace.

It would work liberty, and joy, and confidence, and real gospel sanctification for us and in us (through the Spirit), as it has done in thousands of sinners like us. But as this tale of grace is listened to in silence, so it is to be listened to in solitude. We are not only to listen while God Himself rehearses it to us in the gospel, but we are to be there alone with Him, apart from our fellow-creatures. It is to be between God and our own souls; we are not to think of others at all. It

would disturb the soul in such a sacred moment. For the thought of others might ensnare us; we might remember their excellency and strength beyond our measure, and be led to fear and to unbelief. Therefore, as we are to be silent before God, thus speaking in grace, so are we to be alone with Him; that is, our fellow creatures, as well as ourselves, are to be set aside; for God is to be to us everything when the question of our peace is to be transacted.

J. G. B.

#### Our Living Association With Christ in Heaven

(5) A new race. Our connection is with a risen and glorified Christ. Even those in apostolic times who had known Christ after the flesh, knew Him no more so (2 Cor. 5:16): No longer were they around him on earth as branches in the vine, but livingly associated with him where he now is in heaven itself by the Holy Ghost come down from him for that end. On earth, such was His grace, it might have been said, "He liveth unto men;" but now, they having rejected Him, "He liveth unto God" (Prov. 8:31), (Rom. 6:10). He, having both glorified God in His life and vindicated God in His death, and having given Himself for us, has been raised by the glory of the Father and seated in heaven, and God is now working in the person of the Holy Ghost to glorify Him by taking of His and showing it unto His saints.

The most beautiful and perfect life was cut off in death; but on His part in love to us which led Him to give Himself for us; and on God's part as bearing the full judgment of God as a propitiation for our sins before God as our substitute to have them borne away and washed, cleansed, forgiven; and now God, working in righteousness for the One who has so loved His God and Father as to glorify Him even about sin, at all costs to Himself, even laying down His life, when He so loved us as to drink the dreadful "cup," which, had we drunk it, would have proved to us the cup of unmitigated and eternal wrath—has given us to Christ and in the new life in Him, in resurrection and the Spirit, associated us with Him in the glory of heaven itself in a new creation of which He is Head, as well as being a new race of men in Christ, of which He is the last Adam; a new state of which He is Lord; a new "House," over which He, as "Jesus the Son of God," who is passed, through the heavens into the presence of God, is set; a new body, the church to which He, as First-born from the dead, and set over all in heaven and earth, in this world and the world to come, has been given as Head.

The blessed Lord who died for us, being in heaven, has made all this world a blank and a wilderness to us who are here without Christ. Christ's absence, when felt in the Spirit, makes this world an empty and unsatisfying place; for, like Mary of Bethany, all that we reckoned fairest and best in this sad scene has gone with Him to the grave; and "He is not here, he is risen:" and as "risen with Christ," as to our spiritual place and state, we cannot but press on to reach Him where He is now seated, crowned and glorified. Not only have we a new object, but to gain this object we are set in the energy of the Spirit to run a new race.

If believers only saw their place in and part and portion with a glorified Christ, the surpassing excellence of the knowledge of Him would set them energetically on their course with the bright beams of the glory of Christ irradiating their souls in such a way that they should have their spirits so stirred by the power of Christ in the Spirit, with a sense of having Himself, that they should get outside of everything of earth and man and Satan's world, and press on to the glorified Jesus in

the heavens whom it is God's delight to honor.

The text illustrated by Philippians 3 is the precious word of Christ: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17;19). He has set Himself apart for His God and Father and us in that bright glory of heaven; also, just as we see His surpassing excellence and glory and holy love we will be sanctified to Him from everything in this world, both good and bad. What joy it gives in the Holy Ghost to have Him occupying the whole vision of the soul! Who that knows aim does not feel his heart stirred with bounding affections to reach Him in glory!

"From various cares my heart retires,  
Though deep and boundless its desires,  
I've now to please but One."

"But one thing": "I've now to please but One." Living Christ: pleasing Him; reaching on to know Him and have Him in glory; perfectly conformed to Him; this is the one person and the "one thing" for the free loving heart that can sing:

"Tis the treasure I've found in His love  
That has made me a pilgrim below,  
And tis there when I reach Him above,  
As I'm known, all His fullness I'll know."

[NOTE.-These lines, "I've now to please but One," and "Tis the treasure I've found in His love, that has made me a pilgrim below," we believe have been blessed as hardly any detached lines of hymns have been. Fully a dozen of years ago, when the former was sung at a conference in a certain city,—in the time of their morning freshness and childlike simplicity, when the saints attending it knew nothing else and when Christ in His risen and ascended glory, beauty, and attractiveness was just beginning to shine into their hearts, this line—

"I'VE NOW TO PLEASE BUT ONE,"

captivated the heart of one who was present with a marvelous spiritual power, and filled him with an experience of the Person and Presence of Christ Himself—so spirit-filling, ecstatic, and commanding, that when he addressed a meeting on his return, the entire audience seemed as if one by one and altogether to give an immediate response to it; and when afterward he put the line in his paper and wrote about it as one sitting at a heavenly feast, thousands felt the strange, unearthly influence of it, as light above the brightness of the sun; and some live to tell of the further blessed thing that that one line first placed them soul to soul, in the spirit, with the all-attractive "Person of the Christ" in the heavenly glory; and proved it had done so by separating them practically to Him in this world—the scene of His sorrows, rejection, and death.. And, O beloved, if

"I've now to please but One,"

were felt in power and in the Holy Ghost by every one of us, would it not rouse every sleeping virgin and send all "forth unto Him without the camp," their hearts bathed in the heavenly radiance

of His wondrous love, and at the cry “Behold the Bridegroom” springing forward to meet Him with lamps trimmed and burning, and “oil in their vessels with their lamps?”

“TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST.” “I’ve now to please BUT ONE.” Any word that tells of Him in His personal excellency, His finished work, and His surpassing glory as he now is in the Father’s presence, may form the “eye salve” to enable souls who have a desire after Him to see “how great is His beauty, and how great is His glory,” and to become a willing people in a day of heavenly power.

Such was once the effect of the reading of a little paper of wonderful energy on the words “Jesus only” in a prayer-meeting twenty-five years ago, that (we were told by one of them) about thirty men were linked at once with Christ in heaven, taken possession of and were delivered simultaneously from self and their fellow-men, and got on their feet to go forth with Christ’s Gospel as the Lord’s free men to tell of the glory of His Person and the perfection of His sinbearing work. Grand work this of the Holy Spirit making His Word a divine “eye salve” to let men see the glorious Person of the ascended Christ in the midst of His own circumstances, for then comes into view the all-satisfying sight—an accomplished work for the conscience and a perfect object for the heart.]

## Nothing but Christ

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Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,  
The Gift unpriced-God's living Bread;  
With staff in hand and feet well shod,  
Nothing but Christ-the Christ of God.  
Everything loss for Him below,  
Taking the cross where'er we go;  
Showing to all, where once He trod,  
Nothing but Christ-the Christ of God.  
Nothing save Him, in all our ways,  
Giving the theme for ceaseless praise;  
Our whole resource along the road,  
Nothing but Christ-the Christ of God.

## True Humility

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It is better to be thinking of what God is, than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom, is really pride—a want of the thorough consciousness that we are good for nothing. Till we see this, we never look quite away from self to God.

Sometimes, perhaps, the looking at our evil may be a partial instrument in teaching us it; but still even then, that is not all that is needed.

In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves.

True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all.

I am too bad to be worth thinking about; what I want is to forget myself, and to look to God, who is indeed worthy all my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves, we may be quite sure that will do it.

If we can say (as in Rom. 7), that “in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with “thoughts of good and not of evil,” long before we thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Christ, and the Things Above

OTHER glories which pertain to Him as the Son of Man, and the king of Israel may lie more in His earthly dominions, yet are they connected with “the kingdom of His dear Son” and wait for their manifestation, upon the Christ who is sitting at the right hand of God. In the meanwhile “Christ dwells in us the hope of glory” till He who is our life shall appear as the appointed heir of all things, when “we also shall appear with Him in glory.” “The hope which is laid up (for these Colossians and for all saints) in heaven,” was to call out and gladden their hearts, because it included all things that are created, be they “visible or invisible,” “whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers,” as comprehended in the glory of Christ, our Head. All the material universe which as Creator He had made, the Lord also holds as the last Adam upon the ground of redemption, and in the title of Redeemer. It yet remains for Him, as the Son of God in time, to reconcile all things “whether in the earth, or in heaven, unto God, which come within His own eternal purpose, and by means of redemption as the true Boaz, by the purchase of the inheritance through the blood of the Lamb slain.” Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good pleasure in man “open out yet further the three great subjects of the angels’ song, as comprehending in permanent peace and sure blessing the relations of God with men, and with this earth, in connection with” the Son born, and the Child given. We have thus in these Scriptures the breaking forth of the affections in Patriarchs, and men and angels, as they saw Christ’s glory and spake of His day.

Thus promise, prophecy, and the annunciation, alike pointed to the in-coming and Incarnate One, at the Man, of God's eternal counsel, the only begotten, and well-beloved Son, "the image of the invisible God and the first-born of every creature." Moreover, He is the Saviour of the world, its Redeemer and Deliverer and who is yet as the Reconciler and King of kings to subdue all things to Himself, and to yield up the kingdom to God even the Father, "that God may be all in all." These momentous realities between the Father and the Son, are not merely matters of fact, to be accomplished in glory, but have their foundation in the love of God, towards US) and the world, and all that it contains, and in which by grace we have our place and share, "for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Not only does the love of God thus manifest itself towards us, as His creatures that we may love Him and what He loves, but higher still, and upon a different scale than this, "the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." Nor is this all for "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." Love, the eternal love of the Father and the Son, found out objects of satisfaction and delight, in the creation of the heavens, and the earth and all that is in them by the word of His power; but a new motive even for this love, was found in the nature and efficacy of His death by which He redeemed them. "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." This is the circle into which our affections are carried, and in which we are "to seek the things above," because of the life taken again, and now "hid with Christ in God." When we are once at this center, in the delight and communion of the Father's counsels in Christ, we shall then be able to discover the objects and subjects on which the love of God, and the love of Christ, and the love of the Spirit are fixed, and round which they turn. By redemption through the blood of the Cross, they are all brought into their true relations to Christ, and finally shall all stand out before the presence of God, in complete and abiding reconciliation and order to Him. If angels sang their songs, with the multitude of the heavenly host, at the giving forth of the Son of the bosom, and if the very trees of the field shall clap their hands, when they are conscious that the finishing touch of that Master's hand has rescued them from decay, how can it be that a child of the Father's love, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, should be rebuked and eclipsed by them? Peter reaches this side of the Colossian epistle, when he reminds the pilgrims and strangers on earth, "that they are begotten unto a living hope" by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and carries off their affections to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, "reserved in heaven for you." So practically, we shall find one of two things, viz., either the grapes of Eschol, and the ripe corn of the land on the other side of Jordan, together with the secret of Shiloh, and God's delight to have His people where He dwells, will set our affections for us on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; or else "our members which are upon the earth" will play the fool with us, and we shall make it clear to others that our hearts were never really at home and fixed therewith Christ. But again, "all things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, He shall take of mine and shew it unto you: and surely those things which satisfy the heart of God to give unto His Son, as the reward of" "the travail of His soul," and which satisfy the heart of our Blessed Lord to receive, may well gladden ours and call them away from things on the earth, as they now are, in the absence of Christ, and whilst under the dominion of sin, and the flesh, and Satan. Precious it is thus to look into the earth and the heavens and "seek the things which are above" in their happy relation one to another, when the old serpent, the dragon is cast out of them into the bottomless pit. Blessed is it for our affections to run on with Christ their strength and joy, as we delight ourselves prospectively in their new order of

redemption under Him, and of reconciliation to God. It is in this interim these things are called “the things above” as headed up in Christ at the right hand of God. Moreover they must all begin from above at His second coming, and for this they wait.

We may now turn from these, to consider the yet higher unfoldings of glory by the Spirit in His character of the “Spirit of truth, which (Jesus said) proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” Beyond the redemption and reconciliation of all things to God, which though peculiar to us, is common to all within the circle of His grace, there is another presentation of the person of the Son in this epistle, different to His connection with the heavens and the earth, as the firstborn of every creature, and even as Creator and Head over all. It is indeed the counterpart of what was in Him as divine and almighty and infinite: and goes to complete the counsels of God, as to the mystery of the Christ; or “God manifest in the flesh,” for of Him in manhood, it is said, “in Him dwelleth all the fullness, of the Godhead bodily.” Moreover, “ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” The unfolding and presentation of His glory, as God the Son, in chapter 1, is divinely connected with His Manhood glory, and “bodily,” as in chapter 2, that the unveiled mystery of His own Person, might command our faith and worship, and attract, yea, fix our hearts’ affections upon Himself “who loved us and gave Himself for us.” In this two-fold mystery of God and man, as united in the Person of the Son, was the Lord presented to them by Paul, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Moreover He had great conflict for them to the end that their hearts might be established, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Observe in this scripture that Paul’s conflict was; “that their hearts’ affections might be encouraged,” as he opened these mysteries of the Christ of God to them in chapter 1 and 2, to pass out of the region of speculative philosophy by the certainty of a divine revelation, and outside the range of traditional religion, into the heavens, with their risen and glorified Lord. They had begun a new history with the Second. Man above, through “faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,”—who had won their hearts for Himself, by what He was, and by the work He had wrought out in “the body of His flesh through death,” in virtue of which they had been reconciled to God, and would be “presented holy, and unblameable, and unreprouched in His presence.” Precious assurance! A full realization for their best affections now, and their brightest hopes hereafter in glory, as by the Spirit they were led forth into their new position with their Lord “above” who had redeemed them for “this inheritance of the saints in light,” and for which the Father’s love had “made them meet.” Moreover, so real and vital was this relation to them and Him that they were “to give thanks to the Father” who had put His own seal to it! How could they take this new place of thanksgiving to the Father, if their hearts were not conversant with “the things above” and in the conscious enjoyment of the blessedness for which they gave thanks? They were presented by Christ on high, according to the new position and place which he had taken before God as the heavenly Man. The world that was once under probation was over, and Christ was the beginning of a new creation. They were likewise “new creatures in Christ,” and with them “old things were passed away, and all things had become new,” for all things were of God. Was there any uncertainty as, to their title by grace that they should be enticed by the rudiments of the world? or their meetness for such a position with Christ in the presence of God, so that their affections should slip from the things above? It would be in them a wicked denial of this new mystery of God and of Christ, “in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” and in whom they were complete “and perfect.” This was to engross and satisfy their hearts, as it did Christ’s. Farther still,

they who were by grace in this position, “having received Christ Jesus the Lord,” were in living relationship with the Father, and personally enjoyed “the love in the Spirit,” which produced in them those affections which could only find their objects in Christ. They were “to seek those things which are above” in that vast circle of which in the foreknowledge of God, He was the appointed and unchangeable center, as Lord and Head. In this liberty of union with Christ, moreover, as head of the body—and, as the Bride “the Lamb’s wife,” could not these relations as His members, draw their hearts to things above, where His own found its delight and satisfaction? In the measure by which the conflict of Paul for them availed, and in which they reached “the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God,” they would for themselves be filled with “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” One step further, as regards the competency of believers in Christ to enjoy these “riches of the full assurance” in the heart and understanding—we should always have before our souls the fact of the present, and active ministry by the Spirit, to “take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us.” This was the last proof of the Lord’s care over “His own which were in the world.” when He departed out of it—and also the heavenly pledge of the Father’s love to us, in sending down “the Comforter, the Spirit of truth,” to guide us into all truth.

In brief, we have thus in Christianity, a new revelation of the counsels of the Father, for His own glory, and the glory of His Son—accompanied by a declaration of the present mind and ways of God in grace towards every creature under heaven by the preaching of the gospel. In addition to this, and to fill up, or complete the word of God, was “the mystery,” which had been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints, &c. We have secondly, the unfolding of the Person of the Son in Godhead and Manhood fullness and glory, whether displayed in the original circle of creation, or in the present sphere of redemption, or in the future one of reconciliation before God, of all things in the heavens or in the earth. Thirdly, we have His eminence, and pre-eminence declared by Headship of all things “visible and invisible,” as well as Headship “of the body the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead”—and “the Head of all principality and power.” We then have, fourthly, the secret communicated to us, that in the everlasting counsels “it pleased all the fullness to dwell in Him”—and further, as to this world, and in time, “the eyes of our hearts have looked upon Him” “in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Lastly, as to Himself, surely “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him,” for another day as to their manifestation and exercise, when as “the greater than Solomon” in the days of the Queen of Sheba, He shall sit on the throne of His glory, as “Wisdom” to be justified of all her children—and is not all this the food and delight of our affections, while Christ is sitting above?

Such is the Person who requires the heavens and the earth, as the necessary spheres in which to manifest Himself for the Father’s glory, and for the blessing of every creature therein, and who was presented throughout the length and breadth of His dominions to the faith and love of these saints at Colosse, by the prophecies which went before, and the counsels which followed. He had opened His own heart to them by a love which made them co-heirs with Himself in the things above, and which when tested by the sufferings of death, proved itself to be stronger than death, that He might make them His own. And though the primary application of this glory and fullness of Christ was to shame them from being enticed away, by anything angelic or human around—yet the positive revelation of the Person by the Holy Ghost to the Church of God, is that our affections

may be set upon Him, and the things connected with Him and, dear to His own heart, where He is sitting at the right hand of God. He is in the glory of God—and a man in Christ, is the Christian who has gone after Him, in the Spirit and affections and purpose of His entire being. The object of His life then, will be Christ, “for me to live is Christ,”—the beginning and end of his faith will be Christ, “that I may know Him,” &c.—the hope of his heart will be Christ, “looking for that blessed hope, and the glory of His appearing,” – the rule of his walk will be “to walk as He walked”—the pattern and standard will be also Christ, “I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

## Ministering Christ

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If I allow my work to get between my heart and the Master, it will be little worth. We can only effectually serve Christ as we are enjoying Him. It is while the heart dwells upon His powerful attractions that the hands perform the most acceptable service to Him.

True, one may preach a sermon, deliver a lecture, utter prayers, write a book, and go through the entire routine of outward service, and yet not minister Christ. The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ for himself. It is when we begin, continue, and end our work at the Master's feet, that our service will be of the right kind.

## A Witness for God

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A witness for God is the most uncompromising man on the face of the earth. He never lowers the flag. He never adapts his testimony to altered circumstances. General unfaithfulness only nerves him—braces him up to a more complete surrender to his Master's interests. No surrender of the truth is ever thought of. He may die, death alone being the check to the course and testimony of the witness, but he will never sacrifice one iota of his testimony. He is a man who counts not his life dear to him if he may but finish his course with joy. A witness is essentially a martyr, the word for both being the same in the Greek. God and His glory is his watchword.

A witness for God is a man who has put his life and character into the Lord's keeping. Would you be a faithful witness for God—another Antipas “one against all!” Then you may have to seal your testimony with your blood, as Stephen in the midst of religious Israel, or Antipas amongst the professing people of God (Acts 7 and Rev. 2:13). A true servant of God never defends his character—that the Lord takes care of—and woe be to the man who wantonly takes liberties with the character and ways of God's witness. He enters into a controversy with God, as Numbers 12 solemnly intimates. A witness for God is a man who meekly bears reproach, suffering and distress, but is consumed, yea, burns, when the glory of his Master is in question (Ex. 32). May the Lord lead to increased and unswerving faithfulness to the Master and His mission!

## Food for Christ's Lambs: Chapter 12 - Our Present Path and Future Glory

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(2 Pet. 2, 3)

Peter is perfectly clear as to what the judgment of God must be on these wicked men. Faith quietly waits on God, and has its resource in Him, assured the day will come when He must vindicate His own character, let scoffers say what they will; and, in the meantime, He looks for His people to be godly in the midst of the evil.

The Lord looks that you shall be like Lot in this respect: your righteous soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, In contrast with everything that you will see around you, the Lord looks that you shall be godly; and "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Verse 10. That which is given us in this verse is the very thing that is coming up now in our own day, the principle of self-will. Here they have flung off, first, the authority of Christ, and then every other kind of authority likewise, and that we see around us at this present time. We live in a radical day, and religious radicalism I believe to be the most offensive of all things to God.

God has ordained government in the world, and now He says, I will show you what the world comes to, it comes to this, that all authority is despised.

There is not to be any place for flesh or man in the presence of God, and there is a certain order of God's government which we cannot traverse without doing very great and serious damage.

On every hand this despising of authority is rising up: it is the question that is ruining the family, the nation, and the Church, and which will be headed up in that "man of sin" who will come, by and bye, under the swift destruction of Christ.

Verse 12, &c. It is a solemn thing which the Spirit of God shows us here. These verses describe the person who gets into this line of things, and show what the end is. The description is most dreadful. It contemplates the character of things even among the teachers. They prophesy for gain merely, like Balaam, and the effect is "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error," because, you must remember, for every form of temptation there is some distinct response in our nature, there is something in us to answer to what Satan presents. We could not have believed this could come in among professing Christians unless God Himself had said so. But He has warned us that we may have our eyes open to it, and be on our watch to guard against it day by day.

Verse 20. These have been for the moment practically delivered from the pollution of the world, not by conversion, not by having been born again, but through the outward knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Those who refuse and despise Christianity forget to tell you how much man owes to Christianity. The world has benefitted morally, civilly, and socially from the light God has given in His Word and by the effects of Christianity, but now-a-days all this is forgotten, and it is the fashion to pooh-pooh the whole thing as an old-world fable.

The effect of Christianity has been to deliver people from the pollutions of the world. The truth has been mentally received, and thus has delivered them, but it has not been received by the conscience, else it would have remained and worked by divine grace in the heart.

When people have given up the truth they once have known, if even intellectually only, they become always the bitterest enemies of the truth of Christ, therefore let us beware of giving up one bit of the truth God has given us. Here it runs the length of open apostasy from God. It is a far worse thing to have known the truth and given it up, through flesh being allowed and the world pandered to, than never to have known it.

Verse 21. In the early part of the chapter it was the godly and ungodly spoken of. Here it is the holy commandment, in contrast with what these evil teachers tried to bring in, and did bring in.

Verse 22. Who vomited? The dog. And who went back to the vomit? The dog. It was the dog all the time, not a clean beast ever. And though the sow was washed, it was still a sow, only washed, and never made a clean beast, never anything but a sow, not a sheep.

It is not a person born of God, or renewed, but merely externally affected by the truth of Christianity. It is man as man, and as soon as the restraint is taken off, back he goes to the thing he likes. If a Christian gets away from Christ, and gets mixed up with the pollutions of the world, he is miserable. Take a sow to the mire, what will it do? Wallow in it again, it has no shrinking from the mire. But take a sheep to the mire, does it desire to get into it again? No, it is only too thankful to be taken out.

In chapter 3 Peter says men will assail all the truth of revelation, on the ground that creation has been always what it now appears.

Verse 3. It is always when people want to follow their own lusts that they begin to scoff. It may not be outward and gross lusts, but man wants to be independent, to gratify himself, and therefore he thinks: he must get rid of God, get rid of His authority; and he would be glad to get God out of the scene altogether if he could.

These scoffers say, the only thing that is durable and abiding is creation. It began far away in remote space, how it came we do not know exactly, but it came, and it goes on, and as for the promise of the coming of the Son of God, it is absurd.

But if they scoff at the Lord's coming, they are obliged to let in creation, and if creation comes in there must be the Creator, and who is the Creator? There they are silenced.

Verses 5,6. There are some of the wise men of this world who tell you you must not believe in the flood. They will tell you it is impossible, and that there ever was such a thing as the flood is a great mistake. Ah! says Peter, you like to believe that there was no flood, and why? Because if you admit the flood you admit the judgment of God upon wickedness, and if you admit the judgment of God upon wickedness once, then it is more than probable He will judge a second time. So men will

not have it: their will is in question again.

Verse 7. It was God's own word that called these heavens and this earth into existence as they now are.

Verse 8. We understand God's gracious slowness. There is but one thing God is always so slow about; and that is judgment. He never judges till He has warned and given space for repentance. How swift He is to save! How quick to bring peace to the troubled conscience! He is only slow to judge. He has not come because He wants souls to be saved!

He wills that every soul that trusts the blood of His Son should be saved, but He is not willing that any should perish, but He desires that all should come (or go forward) to repentance.

Verse 10. This is coincident with the great white throne, and the heaven and the earth fleeing away spoken of in the 20th chapter of the Revelation.

You have the effect of this mighty conflagration given you in Revelation, whereas you have what produces that effect given you by the Apostle Peter here. Man's great thought is, everything is so stable it can never be moved. Man says mere materialism is the right thing. Stop, says Peter, the thing that you are resting upon—the eternal continuance of all things, is a delusion, it is all going to be dissolved.

The very fact of the mistake of the scoffer, and that everything is going to be dissolved, leads the child of God into soberness and a godly walk, seeing what is coming upon the world.

Faith sees these words written over everything that man delights in here on earth "reserved unto fire."

Verses 12,13. The day of the Lord lasts a long time, and this conflagration is at the end of the day of the Lord, but we look for new heavens and a new earth—wherein dwelleth righteousness.

There are but three passages that allude to the eternal state. 2 Peter 3, Revelation 21, and 1 Cor. 15. Christ rules as Son of God and Son of Man all through the Millennium, but when the Millennium has closed "then cometh the end," when death itself is destroyed. How does He destroy death? By bringing all the wicked dead to life again, and casting them into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14.) He then has put every enemy under His feet and gives up the kingdom to God. Every other king has had his kingdom taken from him by death or by violence; Christ alone gives up His kingdom after reigning a thousand years. There are three spheres of righteousness, now righteousness suffers; in the Millennium righteousness reigns; in the eternal state righteousness dwells. It has found repose, it dwells where God is for evermore.

Now says Peter, you who are looking for all that in eternity, you be without spot and blame till He comes.

Verse 15,16. A beautiful touch this about Paul's writings. He calls Paul's writings Scripture, which shows the other writings are Scripture likewise. A beautiful touch of grace this, for I do not think Peter forgot how Paul had withstood him to the face at Antioch, and put him to shame before all. This is what grace can do. Grace is a fine thing, and this is a fine touch of it, as the curtain drops on the Apostle Peter.

Verse 17. May God write these words on our hearts because we are surrounded by these elements, by doubt and skepticism and infidelity, and God says to us, "You beware." Have you doubts? Look to your company. You are in company with the wicked. Beware, God says, lest ye fall.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Oh let Christ be the One that is kept before your heart and mind, growing in the practical knowledge of what this favor is. We live in an evil day, and because we may have been gathered out from the corruptions of Christendom, therefore Satan's efforts are more persistent to get us drawn aside from the truth of God, because He has taught us more of His truth, but for this very reason remember it would dishonor Him more if you allow Satan to succeed in his endeavors. What can keep the heart? Christ, and nothing but Christ. Grow in the knowledge of Christ, he says.

The Lord fix in our hearts His own truth, and give us to be watchful and prayerful, lest we fall from that steadfastness which He looks for in His people, but let us grow in grace and in the knowledge of that Lord and Christ till the day of His return. "To him be glory, both now and forever, Amen."

## Fortified With Truth

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We need individually to be fortified with TRUTH. If we have not the TRUTH we may be made the sport of Satan tomorrow. I will give you an instance of it. The Galatians were an earnest, excited people (and I do not quarrel with revival excitement); they would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle. But the day came when he had to begin afresh with them from the very beginning: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you." There was excitement without a foundation of truth, and when unbelief came in the poor Galatians were next door to shipwreck; and the Epistle to the Hebrews is a witness to the same thing. The Hebrew saints were unskillful in the WORD. But we must be fortified by TRUTH. A state of quickening wants the strengthening of the WORD OF GOD. J. G. B.

## Communion

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Beloved reader, nothing can make up for the loss of communion, bear in mind. It can only be had when we are in the path of obedience, of separation from the world. If we are walking carelessly, gratifying the desires of the flesh instead of mortifying them—if we are mingled up with the world, not taking our place “outside the camp,” we may gain exemption from opposition and scorn in our various circles, but we will lose communion. How bitter an exchange!

In our folly we may think, by compromising a little, by accommodating ourselves to the ways of the unconverted around us, by being a little more like other people (as the expression is), we will secure for ourselves a smoother path; but ah! we do not: so in reality.

Ah, no! rougher far is the unrough path “towards Sodom,” without conscious companionship with Christ, without the sweetness of His smile of approval! Smoother far the unsmooth path of faithfulness to an absent Lord, of testimony against the world which has rejected and crucified Him, and which “lieth in wickedness,” with the capacity to enter, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, into His thoughts.

Oh the unutterable joy of this fellowship! May we know it all along our dreary desert journey, and then, it finished, we will go where there will be no possibility of aught ever marring it. What communion, what fellowship will then be ours in unhindered fullness! Oh, come the time!

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