

# CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 14

by Unknown

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*A collection of articles and writings from Christian Friend Volume 14, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

110 Chapters

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## Christian Friend Volume 14

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## A Letter

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My Dear Brother,—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 first the war begins,

Secures the crowning day.”

This calculation upon the end at the beginning is found in Moses’ song. (See Exodus 15:17-19) It is a fine exercise of the soul. Faith knows what the end must be from what the beginning has been. The whole journey, as we know, is finely pictured in Israel from Egypt to Canaan, or from Exodus 12, to Joshua 4. It begins with the settlement, the full and perfect settlement, of the greatest question of all—the question of our relationship with God. In Exodus 12, that is the matter. It was no time of conflict as between Israel and Egypt, but as between the judgment of God and Israel found in the place of judgment. It was like the question between God and our souls, and the blood on the door-post settled it, and settled it forever.

“The guilt of twice ten thousand sins

One moment takes away.”

The destroying angel is turned aside by the blood on the door of that house, where most surely, he would have entered, carrying death with him, but for the blood. That blood was God’s provision for settling matters between Himself and Israel in the doomed land of Egypt. It effectually blunted the sting or power of death, and it did it all alone, in great ease and simplicity. Nothing else could have done anything at such a moment; but that blood alone did everything that such a moment needed—a moment that was to decide whether Israel were to live or die, to be saved or to perish.

In such a character Israel starts for the journey. The greatest of all questions was settled—their relationship to God; and this being so, they begin, as it were, to live; so that the very month in which all this took place was to be to them the beginning of months. And well is it when the soul owns that this is the first great principal question—that others, be they what they may, are but, can be but, second to this “Have I found it between God and my soul?” Thus, at peace with God, Israel moves onward. 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 that it was only a choice of deaths—the slaughter or the flood. But He who was in Egypt with them yesterday is today with them on the road out of it. The pillar can do its business as effectually as the blood. It may be, and it is, a different business, but it is disposed of with equal ease. The blood is not in use now; but the pillar serves, because the blood had already served; the pillar defends, because the blood had already redeemed. Simple and precious, the blood, as I may say, pledges the pillar—pledges all that Israel may need; for,

“Grace, when once the war begins,  
Secures the crowning day.”

Accordingly, the pillar comes between the two camps. It is darkness to the one and light to the other, so that Egypt does not touch Israel; and the host of Israel go on and through the sea, when the host of Egypt, in all its strength and flower, perish in it.

Thus, is the journey begun. It was as blood-bought people who were taking it, and it is now seen that such a people shall be a defended and a conquering people. The blood pledged the pillar. The song declares this. There had been no song till now. Fitly so. The hour of redemption from the judgment of the Lord had been enjoyed in silence, this hour of deliverance from Egypt was celebrated in a song. The silence may have been of a deeper tone than even the song, but it was also a fitter expression of the joy of the moment. Israel enjoyed the thought of the blood that was redeeming them from the righteous judgment of God by feeding on the paschal lamb, and all in silence: they now enjoyed the sight of the vanquished enemy in the lifting up of their voice in a shout of praise. These distinctions are full of beauty. The silence of the paschal hour was of a deeper character, but it was fitting that it should not have been after the manner of the fervent triumphant hymn of the Red Sea.

Redeemed from judgment, and conquerors of the enemy that would have overwhelmed them, Israel proceeds on their way. And a checkered a scene they pass through! Necessities call for supplies, and infirmities and trespasses need forgiveness and healing.

The Lord is present; He proves His resources and His grace. He feeds, He disciplines, He rebukes, and yet pardons. And be the demands on Him what they may, or be they 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. As God over all, blessed forever, He is seated between the cherubim, in the sanctuary, the Lord or the glory of the very holy of holies; but the same glory abides as continually in the cloud outside. The God of the camp is the Guide and Companion of the camp; and though He may be grieved, and have to express His displeasure, He never leaves them. His arm is not shortened, nor is His ear heavy.

Say, is Israel a happy people still? Is Israel a less happy people than at the beginning, when in Egypt they dwelt under the covert of the blood? Circumstances have changed, but God has not. They are in the very heart of the wilderness. It is wilderness all around them, while in Egypt it was only the wilderness before them. But are they a less happy people now than then? Can any argument be drawn from the pillar to prove this? They have been made to know trial and need, and weariness and enemies, and, through the betraying of their foolishness again and again, the rod and the discipline. But are they less happy than they were? Have they any reason to be so? Are they more straitened in God now than then? Is the pillar the witness of another than the blood or the song had given them?

No, beloved, this is not so. They are not straitened in God. And if they loved Him, the movement of the pillar would be as welcome as the hour of the song. The very wilderness, in all its circumstances, is given to them to this end—to prove whether they would indeed obey the Lord, and thus to know what was in their heart towards Him. (Deuteronomy 8: 2) Was such an opportunity ungrateful or unwelcome to them? Would it be to us at this day, if indeed we loved a

person? Should we resent some call to serve, some occasion to give proof that we had him in our heart, that there was something there for him? We know we should not. We know that we should rather give place to such opportunities, if indeed we loved him. And the wilderness to Israel was all that, and life to the saints in this world is all that. As far, as we are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,” we shall be uneasy and fretted, and impatient and disappointed; but as far as we love, anxious to prove that our hearts are with Christ, these times of journeying, through abounding and through need, through good report and through evil report; through humblings and changes, through weariness or solitude, will not be resented. In themselves they are not joyous. Nothing can make them in themselves other than they are—grievous. But the pillar tells us of the presence of a glorious Friend, who condescends to be our Companion from first to last, though the way always witnesses our exile, and at times our shame and weakness. It is a happy people we are to be all along the road. The blood, the song, the pillar are only different tokens of the very same Jesus in whom we are never straitened. Just at the end of the way there was a confederacy on the heights of Peor against Israel, as just at the beginning there was a confederacy on the borders of the land at the Red Sea. The Lord has a great occasion to prove Himself the very same to Israel after forty years’ sore trial with them as He had been at the outset. And so He does. However, we may entertain such opportunities, we may say He welcomes them to prove what is in His heart towards us.

He meets Balaam and Balak, and all their attempts—their altars and their enchantments on the heights of Baal and of Peor—all alone. Israel is stretched out in the valleys beneath, their very rest there not being allowed to be disturbed by even a report of what was going on—a moment, as it was in one sense, full of imminent peril to them. The Lord meets the confederates all alone. As in the day of Pharaoh and the sea, Israel had not to raise a hand or strike a blow, and all the tokens of the liars are frustrated. There is no enchantment against Israel. The Lord lets the Moabite and the Ammonite know this, and Israel may stop 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 whether indeed He still had them in His heart, all the attempts and powers of darkness shall learn the secrets of that bosom. If we did but value what we have in Him, dear brother; if we but estimated our condition in relation to the Lord, and not in relation to circumstances, all would be joy in the spirit. It is there we fail. We love circumstances, and not the divine favor. We live in the power of circumstances, and not in the light of the Lord’s countenance. And we are dull and low, and half-hearted. That is the secret of our bosom though we know the secret of His. Were it not so with us, the journeys under the cloud, checkered as they are, would find us as happy as people as the hour of the song had witnessed. It is one Jesus throughout, whether it be the day of the blood, the song, or of the pillar—one and the same Jesus, who was here with us amid the circumstances of human life, died for us on the cursed tree, now lives in heaven for us, and will give us His unchanged Self in glory forever.

But further—for there is a stage beyond the heights of Peor in the journey of Israel, there is the passage of the Jordan—the moment when forever the wilderness is to be put behind the back of Israel, as there had been in Egypt the hour when the wilderness was all before them, and, after they crossed the sea, the times and the seasons when the wilderness was all around them. And now it is not the blood, or the song, or the pillar, but the ark, and the feet ‘of the priests. New occasions bring out new agencies. Other necessities display other resources, but the same Lord;

different administrations, but the same Jesus. The arm is not shortened, and the help of Israel for the Jordan is as perfect as was the help at the Red Sea. Not a wave of the swellings and overflowings of the river touch the sole of the foot of the feeblest or most distant of all the tribes. The waters are again a wall on the right hand and on the left. The ark stations itself in the very midst of the river, and there it stands till all had gone clean over. Its presence more than encourages them, when nature might have sunk and had a thousand misgivings. Would not these watery walls give way? Would not the river from above assert its rights, and claimants possession of a thousand years? Would not the source of that river force its title on the trespassers? The calm and assured aspect of the priests as they bore the ark, and stood with it there in the very place of the river's height of pride and strength, gave all such questionings their answer, and stilled every misgiving. The people all passed over dryshod; the ark gave them its presence till all was done. The waters would have been first overwhelming the ark, had they been able to touch even a sole of the foot of the feeblest of the tribes. And all this crowning mercy visits them without the Lord for a single moment calling to their remembrance a single evil they had committed all the journey thitherto. He gave them indeed liberally and upbraided not. He sees no iniquity. in Jacob, no perverseness in Israel. Everything that is done is done by an arm of conquering strength, and by a heart of perfect, upbraiding love; and Israel passes on to their inheritance under the very same God of 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 in spirit we had at first, is sung again under a fresh breath in the power of the truth of it—

“And grace, when once the war begins,

Secures the crowning day.”

Accept this, beloved in the Lord, as a little remembrance that we may again, though absent in body, sit and meditate in His truth and presence in spirit together. The Lord bless you.

Ever your affectionate brother,

J. G. Bellett.

(This letter is printed from the writer's own MS., and has not been, within the editor's knowledge, before published. Several more will be given (D.V) as opportunity offers)

## Man's Thoughts or God's Thoughts: Which am I Occupied with?

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Every one of the race of Adam is occupied with the one or the other. I would ask the reader to ponder Psalm 119: 113 in connection with Psalm 139: 17, noting that in the former psalm the word "vain" is an interpolation, and without any authority. Two things are contrasted here, it will be seen; viz., "thoughts" and "thy law;" that is, the word of God is the opposite to them, and is preferred by the writer to them. Sin having come in, the value of the thoughts of man (spoiled as to everything concerning God, and himself too) comes before us very early in the history of this world. We hear it in Genesis 6 from the mouth of God Himself. Let us notice it well. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil,' and that continually. Nor did man change, after the judgment of the flood, as the ages rolled away; for we read again God's mind unaltered as to him in Isaiah 55:8-11, recorded long after by that prophet. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Then He brings in (as in the Psalms) the word of God as corrective, and as that which replaces these thoughts of man. "For as the rain from heaven waters and refreshes the earth, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." The word of God is given instead of the thoughts of men.

When we come to Christianity, God's testimony as to the thoughts of men is still the same. From the lips of the blessed Lord, God manifest in the flesh, we are called to hear it. "For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." What a sweeping judgment of all the so-called good thoughts of man! And again, from the same authority, than whom none can be greater, we have, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." (Mark 7) Nothing good, mark, but' only that which is evil; as long before recorded in Genesis 6, "Only evil," and that continually. Such is man, my reader, and such is still the record of God concerning him for his attainments of intellect, wealth, power, science, or art, whatever they may be.

Well is it for us to have reached the same judgment of our thoughts as God has expressed, and in His word has so fully set before us; for then surely the less we encourage them the better. We shall then understand the meaning of the words as they stand, "I hate thoughts." (Psalms 119) But what have we instead of our thoughts? Psalms 139 gives the answer, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" We have God's thoughts to be occupied with, and it is the Word that gives them to us; for there only are they recorded. But God's thoughts now are not about us, but Christ. His thoughts of the first man we have already read in Genesis 6 and Isaiah 55, as well as in the New Testament. He has not, and cannot change His judgment concerning them. There stands the record unalterable, because it is His.

But there is another imperishable record. It is of One who was the object of the thoughts of God long before man was created on the earth, and before the earth was created that man should dwell there. "For Him" (Christ), as well as by Him, "were all things created." (Colossians 1) "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.... I was daily His delight."

(Proverbs 8) Here we have what occupied our God from eternity, and before the creation. God formed man on the earth (after He had fitted it in beauty for his dwelling-place), and, giving him his wife, set him as head over all things. It was but a picture of what He purposed for Him who was ever “His delight,” and to and for whom He purposed to give a universal and wider dominion than Adam ever held. Adam and his wife picture to us that the thought of God was “Christ and the Church,” when He formed this first creation. He will bring into subjection to this thought of His every opposing element and creature, whether in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth. (Philippians 2:10)

But if you have my, reader, as a poor sinner learned the emptiness of your own thoughts, you have come to God, who has, first in the gospel, revealed to you His. But those thoughts were all about His Christ— “The gospel of God concerning His Son.” (Romans 1:1-3) Receiving them by faith, you have passed “from death unto life.” What are the thoughts that you are now to be occupied with? They are the same; viz., God’s thoughts and purposes to be accomplished in and by and for His Christ. It is wonderful that God should choose to communicate His thoughts to us. Not to angels (servants), but to men, whom He takes as “friends” into His secrets. And thus we read this wonderful unfolding of His mind through the apostle as follows: “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” (Ephesians 1:9-11)

God has one purpose, and that purpose is to exalt Christ. Christ is His object. He is calling out from the earth by the Holy Ghost a bride for Him. He has already crowned Him with “glory and honor,” His answer to that work which He accomplished when He glorified God on the earth. God has said to Him, as the One rejected from the earth, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Nothing has been defeated of all God’s purposes, and we as the redeemed, the bride, are a necessary part for His glory of those purposes. In the book of Revelation Christ is the accomplisher of all God’s purposes in judgment respecting the earth, the only one found “worthy to open the book” containing them, or even “to look thereon.” All these purposes He makes known to the Church— “Write in a book and send it unto the seven churches,” “to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.”

Is then God’s purpose and object, my reader, your purpose and object while you walk the earth? Have you accepted God’s thoughts and given up all your own? The word of God (Hebrews 4) is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,” but even so it is as a sword; that is, it executes judgment upon them.

This is important, for if a matter is corrected in the thought—that is, in its spring and source—the fruits are not seen, and therefore have not to be dealt with, as otherwise will surely be the case with us, all. One may surely say, “Of what use is it to be occupied with anything else but God’s thoughts, since every other thought must come to naught?” Well, this is surely the case; but we must not only talk, we must act. You will find that the thoughts you have are not always God’s thoughts, that the thoughts, of your heart are a frequent cause of loss of communion, trial, and discomfort to you. Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? was the question of our risen Saviour to His disciples; and was followed by, “Then opened He their understanding, that they might

understand the scriptures.” And what did these give them? Surely GOD’S thoughts of that moment through which they were passing instead of their own! It brought Him, before them instead of themselves, and it showed them that God’s thoughts were about Him. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF.” If God does not occupy your thoughts, Satan will. It may be very subtle, but self is not Christ. “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24), showed that they were occupied with their own thoughts. Let— any Christian sit down, and, unless the Spirit furnishes him with God’s thoughts, he will soon find he has thoughts unworthy of a Christian; and these, being not according to the Word, are his continual trial, unless he bring the sword upon them, according to Hebrews 4.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4) The Lord give to us all to be mindful of this exhortation, and to be daily in the practice of saying, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of, them!” Connecting too this verse with Ephesians 9, 10, so shall we say, led into their depth as also was one of old, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

H. C. A.

## Fragment: My Place and Power

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What is my place and my power to walk? God has raised me up together with His Son, and given me the Spirit; and because of that I go on, and everything that is not of Him I have to judge. The walk of the Spirit is one of separation from all that is not of the Father. Believers ought to walk as being dead, buried, and risen with Christ; as those who are espoused to their heavenly Bridegroom, saying, "We cannot do what He would not like." Nature may say, I should like that, or wish this; but the answer is, "No; you belong to Christ: and if Christ's wish is contrary to yours, you are not to have yours." By His blood He has brought you into the place where He is now, and you can say, "I will give it up; I will count that dead for which He died. It has death upon it; I give it up."

G. V. W.

## John the Baptist: The Nation and the Remnants

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The title of this little book might mislead the reader; its subject is not so much John the Baptist as Christ. All-important and interesting as his personality may be, John can only be like the background of a picture intended to bring into relief One who was greater than he; and it is thus, as his words and his life prove, that the prophet himself would have written his history.

Luke 1 very strikingly portrays the circumstances in which Israel was found at the coming of the forerunner, and which preceded the manifestation of the Messiah. A great change had come over the circumstances of Israel since the days of Nehemiah. The people had been brought into subjection to the last universal Gentile empire, but morally their state differed little from that revealed by the prophet Malachi 450 years before Christ. Israel was no longer in open warfare with Jehovah; the false gods had disappeared out of the house which was swept and garnished, the fig-tree was covered with the leaves of an empty profession, but absolute barrenness lay hidden beneath this outside show. Indifference and insensibility, worse than hatred, were to be found in the heart of the people. One feature of the apostasy is, that God is no longer esteemed worth the trouble of thinking about, and men of our days are in process of casting Him aside as a thing of the past. That which will bow to the very dust the forehead of the repentant remnant of Israel, when at last their eyes are opened to Christ, will be the fact of having been able to pass by the Man of Sorrows with indifference, setting no value on Him. (Isaiah 53)

Such were the relations of Israel with God in the time of Malachi. When Jehovah said to them in the tenderest accents, "I have loved you," they replied, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" for they knew not the heart of God. When He said to the priests, "You have despised my name," they replied, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" so, blinded were they as to their own state and transgressions. They polluted the table of the Lord, and "offered the lame and the sick;" because, in spite of all their religious forms, God was not in their heart or their life, nor had they the least conscience as to the dishonor they brought upon Him. (Malachi 1) Such a religion must end sometime or other by seeming superfluous to those who practice it. What is the good? "Behold, what a weariness is it!" they say. (Malachi 1: 13) It is thus that the heart of a professor expresses itself; and if beneath religious weariness he does not become an idolater himself, he soon returns to the idolatrous world, connects himself with it, "marries," as says the prophet, "the daughter of a strange god," and becomes one flesh with her in the eyes of an avenging God, who will execute judgment on both. (Malachi 2:11-16)

This is a great danger even for the Christian in these days of ruin. Asaph expressed it thus: "Therefore His people return hither (towards the wicked): and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them," when times of affliction came upon him, contrasting with the growing prosperity of the world. (Psalms 73) But for the believer there is a second and more subtle danger than this, because a more plausible one; and that is to isolate himself in proportion as he sees the increase of the indifference and worldliness so general among the children of God. Now this tendency is diametrically opposed to God's thought for His own, and it is precisely in view of these times of

ruin that the prophet says to us, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." (Malachi 3:16) The apostasy does not isolate those who fear the Lord; it incites them to come together. As the psalmist says, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." (119:63) It is the same at every dark epoch in the history of the people of God; it was thus with the youthful witnesses during the Babylonish captivity. (Daniel 2:17) Such is now the case in the perilous times of the end (2 Timothy 2:22); so it was during the gloomy hours that followed the cross, when the still ignorant disciples communed one with another on the road to Emmaus; and in the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke we see a present and striking realization of His word.

"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another" is God's resource for days of ruin. Look at these few faithful saints, amidst the barren waste of a lifeless profession, seeking and finding one another, and holding converse together Mary and Elizabeth talk one to another, Zacharias and his neighbors commune of these things, the shepherds publish them, Simeon announces them, and Anna speaks of them "to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Remark, moreover, that there is but one subject of intercourse for all these faithful ones—it is the consolation of Israel; it is Christ, the Messiah; it is the person of the Saviour; and such conversation is pleasing to God, who lends an attentive ear thereto. He records these things in a book of remembrance—a special book. Nothing is so pleasing to God as hearts appreciating His beloved Son. Dear reader, He takes note of the value that you and I set on the name of Jesus. Those who appreciate Christ in days of affliction will have God's own approval at a future day of glory. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Malachi 3:17) Is not such a promise well fitted to encourage our souls?

"Spake often one to another." This occupation of the faithful allies itself with the most simple daily duties of this life. Zacharias accomplishes his priestly functions, and offers incense; Elizabeth is in the country; Mary journeys; the shepherds keep their flocks. It even connects itself with the apparent inactivity of a Simeon, who dwells at Jerusalem; of an Anna advanced in years, weakened by age, confined to the temple, but preserving unimpaired the most precious part of her activity, the hidden life of her soul with God, "night and day." But what an element of freshness and joy the person of Christ brings into the intercourse of these saints! Souls are running over, conversation changes into adoration, and those who speak one to another necessarily realize what worship is. (Luke 1:46, 68; 2:29)

Two messages had been brought by the angel, Gabriel, the one concerning John the Baptist, the other about Jesus; and both elicit praises from the mouths of those by whom they are received. Still, even before His birth, as ever after, John the Baptist disappears before Christ to make way for the universal song, which rises around this little child from the lips of all the faithful. Whom does Elizabeth celebrate? Not her son, but the Lord. And Zacharias, while announcing the glorious mission of his new-born infant, only does so to exalt the Lord, the God of Israel, the Horn of Deliverance, the Christ, the Most High. With true witnesses it is always so. Blessings from the hand of God are only used by them as occasions of praise to Him who is the origin and center of these blessings.

The circumstances which accompanied and preceded the Saviour's first coming seem to me, in many ways, applicable to the present time. As then (see Luke 3:1,2) organization is increasing in the world, which seeks a ground of safety in its own institutions; as then, under the auspices of the

world, a traditional and orthodox religion prevails, indifferent, self-righteous, and ripe for the apostasy; as then, sects flourish, such as the Rationalistic Sadducees, or the Herodians, who pronounced the then existing administration excellent; as then, the Lord's coming, or rather return, is at hand; but does this happy message produce now in the hearts of the saints the same fruit as then? Oh, that there might be found in our hearts that freshness of hope, those divine rays from the morning star appearing for faith in the splendor of its pristine dawn, that star resplendent with grace, herald of the glory, whose sight causes the heart to overflow with unspeakable adoration! Dear reader, if we are awaiting it, we shall be found speaking one to another until the day of glory, when we shall be the peculiar treasure of One who is coming.

H. R.

## Jesus Wept

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There are apparently three occasions on which the Lord Jesus wept—when, on His notable entry into Jerusalem, “He beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:41); in the garden of Gethsemane; and when accompanying Mary to the tomb of Lazarus. (John 11:35) That He wept on the second occasion referred to may be inferred from a comparison of the evangelists’ accounts of the scene in Gethsemane with the detailed record of His sorrows given in Hebrews 5. Here it is said, “He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard for His piety; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” In Gethsemane He said, “Not my will, but thine be done.” Though connecting the scriptures thus suggests the scene of the Lord’s sorrow as described in Hebrews 5, we have little doubt that some of the terms used here may be extended in a general way to the whole scope of the Lord’s earthly history. The reader may have noticed that the circumstances which drew forth the Lord’s tears as given above, and in the order there presented, are strikingly connected with three elements of His character prophetically set forth in Isaiah 53 “Despised and rejected of men,” primarily by Jerusalem “the city;” “A man of sorrows,” emphatically this in Gethsemane; “ And acquainted with grief,” as He proved to Mary’s deep consolation in the scene described in John 11.

Rationalism, knowing not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, may affect indignation at the thought of Godhead stooping to such a level; just as unbelieving Israel spurned His title to David’s throne, because His coming as the lowly Nazarene furnished nothing of the pomp which the carnal heart sought in one claiming recognition as Messiah. Nevertheless “God was manifest in the flesh;” David’s Son was David’s Lord; Jehovah’s “fellow,” now seated at His right hand, drank “of the brook in the way;” the Only-begotten “in the bosom of the Father” trod the path which led even to this: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The Heir of all things was cut off and had nothing here are contrasts indeed—paradoxes which faith alone can accept; but which, accepting them, it can delight in and feast upon with more than profit.

But—and is it not a solemn fact?—how many are there in Christendom, crediting all this, who are still utter strangers to the blessings purchased at the cost of all the Lord’s humiliation and suffering! They pass among their fellows as respectable Christian people, but have never heard the, voice of God in the recesses of their souls, revealing to them their absolute need of His interference in grace, through the mediation of His beloved Son, because of their guilty, lost condition. How well when His voice is thus heard, and that one is brought through a realization of need to the knowledge of Him as a Saviour-God!

It is almost needless to remark how feebly, the human heart can enter into the Lord’s sorrows in those scenes where they were so touchingly expressed. Even disciples, when asked to watch with Him, could sleep, while He agonized in Gethsemane. And for “the world” we have prophetically His own record of its callousness in the words of Psalms 69:10: “I wept, my soul was in fasting, and that was to my reproach.” Zeal for God had set Him in this path of shame and sorrow, and

actuated Him at every turn of the path—love to man too. Yet we read: “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?” And again, “Mine enemies reproach me all the day.... For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.”

“Love that made Thee a mourner,  
In this sad world of woe;  
Made man the wretched scorner  
Of the grace which brought Thee low.”

But the blessed God had His own estimate of the patient and enduring determination of His beloved One. All went up as a sweet savor to Him. And it is a joy to every true heart that Jesus was conscious of that estimate, as it also seems to bring Him nearer to us, to see Him reckon upon it and sustained by it. Thus we read: “Put thou my tears in thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” (Psalms 56:8; see also Isaiah 49:4,5; Matthew 11:20-26)

At three stages of our spiritual experience we are confronted by a special presentation of this gracious Saviour. When first awakened from indifference to our highest interest, we have seen Him, so to speak, shedding over us tears of pity. When conscience-stricken and bowed in a sense of our lost condition, we learned the perfections of Him who undertook to put our guilt away, and what this entailed upon Him from His pleadings in Gethsemane and the dire sequel at Calvary. Lastly, when learning what pilgrimage involves in this scene of sorrow, He shows us what a Friend we have in Him—One who can sympathize with us in our groans and tears.

To these circumstances the scriptures above referred to severally apply themselves. The scene in Luke 19 furnishes us with an impressive picture of how Christendom is situated morally in these closing hours of the day of grace. The Lord Jesus contemplates Jerusalem at the close of its “time of visitation.” Every needed display of mercy, love, and power had been wrought by Him. Exhortation, entreaty, and warning had been used to awaken men to a sense of their state, but all in vain. Opportunity had been afforded them of learning the things that belonged to their peace, but these were “now hid from their eyes.” The Lord, therefore, while still yearning over benighted Jerusalem anticipates His judicial character and pronounces its doom. And note, ignorance is the ground of its condemnation, which is a solemn warning to those who remain willingly ignorant now. Many such there are who will even plead ignorance as the ground of forgiveness, forgetful that to do so, when God is at pains to enlighten, is but evidence of the most glaring obduracy.

It is a wonderful moment for the soul when the thought really dawns upon it for the first time: “I am accountable to God as Judge for all I am, for all I have done, and am therefore ruined;” but with this also, the thought that God is indeed gracious—just the One a guilty sinner needs. Till then Christianity is an aimless system, a confused theory, perhaps a favorable battle-field for theologians; and one regards with indifference even the most solemn truths. What a rebuke the scene in Gethsemane offers to such indifference! There the Lord is bowed in agony. First shrinking from the cup of judgment, then accepting it from God His Father’s hand, because His doing so was an absolute necessity for the glory of God and the salvation of men. One sees the perfections of the blessed Lord in all— in shrinking from meeting God in judgment, Himself sinless, and therefore

altogether undeserving of death, as afterward in accepting the cup of wrath in obedience to the Father's will. But we see also, the deep reality of the foundation truth of Christianity—His taking our place in death and judgment at Calvary, when the cup was actually drunk. Risen in virtue of what God has found in the atonement He made—yea, and glorified—we find our place with Him in acceptance, through the grace which bruised Him in our stead. "As He is, so are we in this world."

In Him we have peace, but while here we may anticipate tribulation, according to His word in John 16 This is also what is found in Romans 5, "Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—"standing in grace"—"rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." But then tribulation with its blessed effects. Hebrews 4 gives us the provisions of grace in our behalf while enduring the sorrows and afflictions which form so considerable a part of the saints' earthly history; viz., mercy ministered to a dependent people, through a "great" yet sympathizing High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." It is refreshing to consider the circumstances in which our blessed Lord was qualified, so to speak, for His High-priestly functions; and in no scene are they more touchingly presented than in John 11, when He weeps with them that weep. Mary had learned "that good part" which she had chosen, and which would not be taken from her. Though absent she could still count upon and enjoy the same gracious sympathy, for He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever;" and it is thus we learn that sympathy. He ministered it in the days of His humiliation—of His own sorrow. How blessed is its fullness now, when He is no longer subject to so much that once harassed and distressed Him, no longer "straitened!" Oh, for hearts to reckon more fully, more constantly, on such tender outgoings of His loving heart towards "His own!"

J. K.

## The Goal

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Though with colors torn, 'tis a homeward march,  
Soon the golden gates will be entered;  
They await the palm, the triumphal arch,  
When each eye on the Victor is centered.  
The darkness deepens on every side,  
And the tempter their faith would weaken;  
But day by day through those portals wide,  
More brightly shineth their beacon.  
For the goal in glory before them gleams,  
Where the Saviour Himself is their treasure,  
And the onward path of suffering seems  
Unworthy with Him to measure.  
Lord, fill our hearts, if on earth we stay,  
With an eager and earnest yearning  
To press toward the mark, whilst we watch and pray,  
For the hour of Thy blest returning.  
Not pausing to rest in a scene like this,  
Nor to dwell on the wilderness sorrow,  
Lest the beaten pathway our feet should miss,  
With its light of a coming morrow.  
Ah! keep our eyes on the Victor's face,  
Where confidence ne'er can be shaken,  
That with fleeter step we may run the race,  
Till to heavenly bliss we are taken.

C.A.W.

## 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

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This is in many ways a remarkable scripture. Everything, as is the case in this epistle, is traced up to God. (Compare chapter 5:18) It is “He who establisheth us with you in Christ” (βεβαίωσεν ἐμᾶς, “attaches firmly to,” “connects firmly with”—see note in New Translation); and He who “hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” We have thus three characters of the Holy Spirit as dwelling in the believer. First, as the anointing. The sons of Aaron were anointed, after being sprinkled with the blood, in association with Aaron, who, as type of Christ, had been anointed, without blood, alone. So our blessed Lord was anointed at His baptism. (Matthew 3, compare Acts 10:38) Then, after His death, resurrection, and ascension, “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,” He “shed forth” the Spirit on His own on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:33) The precious ointment on the Head ran down to the skirts of His garments (Psalms 133:2); and thus, His followers were anointed of God. The effect of the anointing is to give intelligence (1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 John 2:20,27) and power. (Acts 10:38) The very name which God has permitted to be attached to believers—that of Christians—indicates this character of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of “Christ” is “the Anointed One,” and hence that of “Christians” is “anointed ones;” and it also points clearly to their association (not to say union) with Christ in the anointing, explaining doubtless the reason of our being reminded in this scripture that God has connected us with Christ.

We are also sealed by God. It should be borne in mind that, whether as anointing or sealing, it is the same Spirit, and takes place at the same time, though the character is different. When God seals the believer—and He seals every believer who has the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:43, 44; Ephesians 1:13, &c)—He marks them out as belonging to Christ (Romans 8: 9), and He secures them until the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30) The Spirit as the seal thus points to ownership and security, God in His grace impressing His stamp upon, us, and making it at the same time inviolable. The Holy Spirit as dwelling in us is likewise the earnest; that is, He is the pledge and guarantee that we shall be put into possession of all that God has promised, the bestowment of a part which ensures the whole. In Ephesians He is “the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14); in this epistle (2 Corinthians) He is the earnest rather of our resurrection bodies, of our being “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven... that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” (Chapter 5:1-5)

What a field of research then is opened up to us in such a scripture as this! And how few of us have comprehended, in any measure, our priceless possession in the gift of the Holy Ghost!

E. D.

## Joel 2:28-29

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These two verses are a short, independent prophecy, and so are the verses from thirty to the end of the chapter. Verses 28, 29 promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consequent on the repentance of the nation, which will be also accompanied by temporal blessings. The repentance is the point of departure for both. So, the partial fulfillment of Acts 2 was on those who repented, though the temporal blessings could not come on the nation. Thus, though there was that which was analogous in the destruction of Jerusalem already accomplished, signs and wonders will come before the great and notable day of Jehovah yet to come. The blood of the new covenant was shed, and all things ready; but the nation would not repent, and could not get the blessing. The remnant got the spiritual part of it with "all flesh;" the Jews will all have it when they say, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. The Holy Spirit, who foresaw all this, has ordered accordingly the structure of the prophecy.

J. N. D.

## Isaiah 14:10-24

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Let us retrace the objects of these judgments in their moral order. We have Babylon, the power of organized corruption, when the people of God are captive; the public open enemy of God and His people—the Assyrian; the inward enemy—the Philistine; then Moab, the pride of man. Damascus is that which has been the enemy of God’s people; but allied with the apostate part of that people against the faithful part. From all these the people are delivered. Afterward we find, under judgment, Egypt, or the world in its state of nature, the wisdom of which is lost in confusion; Babylon, now desert in the midst of the nations; Dumah, the liberty, the independence of man; Jerusalem, the professing people; Tire, the glory of the world; and, finally, all that is on the earth, and, to sum up all power, spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. J. N. D.

### A Letter

Beloved Brother, —I had a little scrap on Jeremiah lying by me. I do not know if it will suit the present current of your thoughts, but it may give a little communion for some half hour, and it is well to look at the growing character of those boastful and yet religious days in which we live. The Lord keep us, dear brother, and surely, He will; “for His mercy endureth forever.”

There is nothing like confidence in His love. Service and worship are precious, but to trust Him excels all. Better to walk before Him in childlike confidence than even in a spirit of prayer and watchfulness; but all suits the liberty and the holiness of His presence.

Believe me, Ever your affectionate,

J G. Bellett.

## Jeremiah

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All was reality with Jeremiah. The present corruption was a reality to him, for he rebuked it, and mourned over it; the approaching judgment was a reality to him, for he wept at the thoughts of it, and deprecated it; the final glory was a reality to him, for he laid out his money upon it.

He had occasional refreshings of spirit from the glory. His sleep, and the dream that accompanied it in chapter 31, was “sweet to him.” It was a kind of moment in “the holy mount” to him, a transfiguration in spirit; for a light from the kingdom visited his soul thus. He had revelations, too, of “the Lord our righteousness,” and could speak and write of Him. But not only as thus occasionally refreshed in spirit, and thus gifted to write and speak, but he was a suffering witness against “the present world,” and he laid out his money on “the world to come.” And it was this that completed his character, which would have been poor and wanting without it; for we may speak of Christ, and teach, about the kingdom; but to witness for Him against a rejecting world, and to be “rich towards God” in the hope of His kingdom, this is to fill out and realize our character as saints.

We may covet these elements of character. Some of us, if one may speak for others, are but half Jeremiahs. We can talk of Christ, but can we suffer for Him We may teach about the kingdom, but can we lay out our money upon it?

The parable of the potter in Jeremiah 18 was designed to let Israel know that they were, though brought into covenant, still within the range of the Lord’s judgments and visitations; and accordingly in chapter 19 the judgment is typically executed. In John Baptist’s time Israel is found in the same spirit of self-confidence. They said in that spirit, “We have Abraham to our father,” and so under the Lord’s ministry it is still the same—they still boast in the fatherhood of Abraham and of God (John 8) But these boasts were vain, as both John and the Lord tell them; that is, John and the Lord teach them again the lesson of Jeremiah 18—that they were not, though in covenant bands, beyond the reach of judgment.

Now the object of the enemy in Matthew 4 was to get the Lord Jesus into the same condition with Israel; i.e., to inspire Him with confidence in the spirit of disobedience. He partially quoted Psalms 91, citing the promised security, but omitting the required or conditional obedience. We know how fully the Lord triumphed over the enemy, citing Deuteronomy 6, where obedience is Israel’s declared ground of security. Thus the Lord in this feature of character, as in all beside, was the moral contradiction of man, or of Israel.

But all this has a lesson for us in this day. Christendom or Babylon has now taken this place of Israel of old. Babylon trusts in security, in spite of her moral condition. She says, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” (Revelation 18:7) But Revelation 18 is another action like that of the prophet in the potter’s house, or in the valley of the son of Hinnom, teaching the unfaithful steward that the doom of the shattered vessel awaits him.

God never sanctions disobedience. He does not go into the garden of Eden to accredit Adam’s sin, but to bring relief, in the way of grace, for it; so, in the mystery of the gospel, He utterly

condemns sin while delivering the sinner. That fine chapter, 1 Samuel 4, witnesses this—that God will never sanction disobedience, nor does He ever commit Himself to His stewards. He commits Himself to His own gifts and calling (see Romans 11), but never to His stewards. They are still answerable to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture. And Christ is the only Steward that ever kept covenant, that ever stood in the conditional place. Matthew 4 shows that He kept His blessings under Psalms 91, and His Israel's blessings under Deuteronomy 6; but all others, in their several turns, have failed, and Babylon's boast is a lie.

We live in a moment when Babylon is filling itself afresh with this boast, just previous to her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the potter's vessel or of the millstone. The boast of "the eternal city" judgment of God. It is a favorite thought with her, that, while other communions tremble for their safety, she is above all such fears.

This is specious; but when listened to in the teaching of the Word it only the more awfully declares what she is, and her greater ripeness for God's judgment. For this boast is defiance; it is not faith in God, but real disavowal of His claims. It is the denial of her subjection to Him, of her being in the place of the steward's wife, answerable to him, and to his judgment. It is the very characteristic that completes her identification with that Babylon which says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow;" and it leaves her ready for the judgment; as of the potter's vessel in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, so of the millstone in the hand of the angel.

## Fragment: the Glory of Christ

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The human mind cannot see the glory of Christ in having come off the throne of God to the cross; but the believer has received “the mind of Christ,” and can see something of it; and he finds that according to the measure in which he can enter into the humiliation of Christ, in that same measure he sees the beauty of it.

## Grace and Power

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In the gospel of John we have something more than what is usually presented as the gospel. We have the setting aside of the old man; it is gone. At the end of chapter 2 there were some who had seen the miracles Jesus did, and were struck by them, but did not see the power of God in them. There was just one man who saw something more than the outward performance of the miracles. He saw the hand of God. 'Rabbi, I know this,' he says in effect, 'it is not merely supernatural, but it is God; Rabbi, it is the power of God.' But at the end of his interview with the blessed Lord the poor man says, "How can these things be?" It is infinitely more difficult to understand the words thou sayest than to see the power of God in the miracles thou doest. The blessed Lord had been rejected in chapter 1: "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. So when we come to that wonderful scene, Nicodemus and the Lord, the Lord stands on the ground of the resources there are in God, and the resources in Himself to meet man in the condition in which Nicodemus was without knowing it.

It is no question now of the power of God outside you. What you want is the power of God in you. 'I do not understand what thou sayest. How can these things be? A man be born again!' No one is saved who is not born of God. But what is it to be born of God? It is to receive from God Himself a wholly and entirely different nature, a "new" nature, capable of apprehending, understanding, entering into, in the blessed understanding of them, the thoughts that are in the heart, of God Himself. We speak of growing and getting on, but this is the very foundation. If by the grace of God, we have apprehended that foundation, we have made a beginning. This is how He begins here. Thus, the Spirit here tells us how the truth came home to the soul. Now the first sign God gives us of the work of God in the apostle is, "Behold, he prayeth." It always comes fresh to one's heart. The persecutor on his way to Damascus was turned right round with the light from heaven, straight round from what he had set his heart on, all the energies of his nature. God takes His other servant, Ananias, aside, and says, "Go to the street which is called Straight," and he goes. The name of the street He gives him, and the name of the man, and one sign. He has begun to depend upon God; he prays—the persecutor prays. What a history that tells! Not only he is turned clean round from what he was before, but he has begun to depend upon God. Then nature comes out, and Ananias begins to say, Oh, but he is such a bad man! I have heard of all kinds of mischief he has done. The Lord tells Ananias, "Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." God retires, as it were, into His sovereignty, and it is God's sovereign power that has also acted towards us.

I think it is well to remind ourselves that all the goodness, all the love, all the majesty of God passing before us, would not have affected us in the least degree if it had not been for the work of grace in our souls. He will work out of us everything of ourselves that He may fill us with nothing but Himself for the glory of Christ. Only think what it is for our souls, that Christ is to be glorified in us, in our life and our walk down here, and that we are to be taken up to be with Himself forever. He is no stranger, and how do we know Him? We know Him as One who has loved us with a love

that is like no other. There is no other love like it. He could look upon us; He could see us in our distance and misery, nothing in us to attract, and that love in its sovereignty could expend itself upon us, could delight and satisfy itself in giving itself for us. It is wonderful for our souls to enter into it—the love of God, the love of the Father, and of the Son. I do not ask if your heart is satisfied. Do you know that the Father's heart is satisfied about you? Come and look at the epistle of John: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If you love the world, it is the proof you have not tasted for your own soul's satisfaction what the love of the Father is. We have not learned that His love is satisfied in us. It is that that blots out the world, that takes the world away from us. When He speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ He says, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." No people so rich as you if you have tasted of that love. You are masters of the world if you have tasted the Father's love. Only think of what the love of the Father is to us. We speak about going to be with Christ and like Him. What is the reason of it? Why, the Father's love to us, and the Father's love to the Son. He has first willed to have children before Himself that the fatherly affections of the heart of God Himself might be satisfied with such things as you and me. We cannot go on with the world if we have that in our hearts.

I referred to the gospel of John and the epistle of John because we find the Spirit of God bringing out the same blessed truth—that the only way God can have to do with us other than in judgment is on the ground of grace. It is a changeless ground, because there is nothing of man in it; it is a changeless ground, because it is all of God; it is the means to an end, and that end is the glory of Christ. That is the blessed end of everything.

Now, beloved brethren, if we can only, by the grace of God, understand this one thing—that God has not one single thought in His heart of which Christ Himself is not the object—it will make everything clear, it will make straight paths for our feet, clear up every difficulty, if we have simply, by the grace of God, His object before us. The apostle is an example of this in 2 Corinthians 12, for after having spoken, in chapter 11, of the wonderful history of service and of sufferings that he had gone through for God and Christ, he says, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Let us turn from the marred and blotted page of my history, and let us come to the new, and the bright, and the blessed page—the new history that stands before God. I do not speak now of Paul, I speak of the man in Christ that stands before God. No longer the history of Paul, the poor marred and blotted page of my history, though I have more to boast in and glory in than any of you. I now come, to the other—to that page that subsists before God, the brightness of that page. I stand now before God in Christ; I know myself there; I know myself in Him. It is no humbling thing to me to know myself there. It is the glory of my inmost soul, the joy of my inmost heart. I stand in all the perfection, in all the blessedness of Christ. Beloved friend, does that humble you? God help you if it does. I will tell you why. It shows you have in you what you are clinging to with a tenacity which proves you have not Him, and Him alone, before you. You are clinging to something you will not let go; some fancied and fanciful excellency which you think is not so bad after all.

Do you not know something of it, if you have been in the presence of God at all? I know myself,' he says, in that character; 'I know myself there standing before God in Christ.' "In Christ." I cannot explain to you what it is to be in Christ in a way that would satisfy your mind, because it is incomprehensible; but I could put it a little before you, as it is in this chapter. It will satisfy your heart, and it will search your conscience. Thank God, it is not something critical, it is not what your

mind is capable of apprehending. Thought cannot measure it, but it can reach your conscience, and it can impress your heart; it is the blessed revelation that shall reach the conscience and impress the heart—the uncontrollable heart of man—and magnify the grace that has made us His. And so, He loves to pour into our hearts, and it is just like God, just His way to pour into our poor little hearts something of His great love, until our poor little hearts overflow to Him in worship. And what is worship but just the outpouring of a heart so filled to overflowing with the worthiness of the object before it, that the heart cannot contain itself? It is a kind of thing that flows out spontaneously from occupation with a blessed object.

I know this man, he says, caught up to the third heavens. There is no boasting there for any of us. It is when he comes out of that place there is the danger. Now I heard and could tell you things it is not possible for man to utter. But lest I should be filled with pride thereby, He helped me. So we have the blessed principle of grace brought out here. The blessed Lord knew that. He knew that man for whom He died, that man that persecuted those who were members of Christ here on earth. He knew that man had need of His grace, that he needed to be helped to take that road. Like Nicodemus, we might say, “How can these things be?” And Paul is put in the way to take that road. Poor thing that you are! You cannot take the road; you have it not in you to have self, set aside. You cannot keep the flesh in order yourself; but I will make that contemptible from which my grace has delivered you.

Beloved brethren, we may speak about God being with us here in this world. I would only just suggest to you that this is not the question. God has tried, and He has tried in infinite goodness, to walk with man on man’s ground, and it ended in the shame, and spitting, and the cross. Now He has saved us, and He has called us with a holy calling; and He enables us to walk with Him on His ground. It changes the whole thing. It is not God walking with man in this world, but it is His calling us, and enabling us to walk with Himself. It is one thing to say God is with us here or there, blessing us in any service we may undertake, and undertaking for us; but that does not reach the soul, and give rest to the heart. The question is only, Am I with Him in what I am doing, in what He is doing? What grace it is! The sense of grace that comes fresh to the soul. I can only walk with Him by His grace. The apostle gives us the history of it. I think we can see there how thoroughly, by the grace of God, he had entered into that ground. Here is an out-and-out confession. ‘That thorn,’ he says, ‘was given to me in the flesh I resisted it.’ There is a real man before God—the man Paul. Here he is himself. He says, I prayed three times that it might go.’ God had given him a thorn in the flesh, a help from God to keep the flesh in order. I must have His grace to hold me, to sustain me. “Hold my going up in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” I must have a divine power over myself, to hold me, and to keep the flesh in order, that never, never changes.

For a moment go back to John 3, for there are two things that never change. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It never changes; it is the same to the very end. God never changes. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Those are the two that never change—the flesh, and the mighty God Himself. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “I besought the Lord thrice”— twice without an answer, and the third time He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Many will tell you it means that the grace of God would enable him to bear the thorn in the flesh. You, poor soul, could not do without that thorn in the flesh, and you thought you could; but I know better. I know your flesh, your feebleness, and I am for you. My grace will not remove it, for my grace gave it. So, he learned

what he had never learned before—to accept everything that comes. Do you think we have that consciousness now in all things that we go through in this world? Do we think what it is, not to be in the hand of One we cannot escape from, but to be in the hand of One who has chosen us, in His sovereign love? He is handling us according to His knowledge of what is in us, and we are in the hand of Him who is handling us, in order that He may express from us His grace.

Now he says—by the grace of God I know this “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Whenever I hear it said, “We are such poor, feeble things—so poor, so feeble,” I say, “Well, if we look at ourselves, that is true. But what about the power of Christ resting upon us?” I find this very same man here (Acts 16) in circumstances of distress and trial—beaten, oppressed, and his feet fast in the stocks, and he sings praises to God. Why? Because his eye and his heart are above. “Ah! He counts me worthy to suffer for Himself,” and his heart goes out in praises to Him. And the prison walls were round him, and all the suffering he had gone through before him; but he remembered Him who came into this world for him, and who counted him worthy to suffer for His sake; and there is the Object, and the power of the Object, that makes the heart glad, even in the most trying circumstances, and there is no prayer about it at all. He does not pray, as you and I often do, to get delivered. He has the sense of having to do with Christ, and the heart goes back to Him in praises and thanksgiving.

Go back for a moment to the end of the gospel of John. There is Mary at the sepulcher; she weeps and weeps, even to break her heart. There she stands, and looks into the, empty tomb. Her heart breaks with tears. It is gone, it is over. Alas! here is an empty grave, and I “know not where they have laid Him.” Paul, on the other hand, knew where He had gone, and that He, the blessed Son of God, counted him worthy to suffer for Him. And what is the result? He sings praises. God answers in power, and the jailor comes in trembling, and says, “What must I do to be saved?” God manifests His hand. The jailor himself is convicted. “What must I do to be saved?” He does not say, “What must I do to be pardoned?” but he finds himself a lost soul, yet in the day of grace, and he cries for mercy, and his very prisoner brings it, to him. How wonderful, how simple it is! There are Paul and Silas, their feet fast in the stocks, at midnight, praying and singing praises to God. It is a blessed thing when, by the grace of God, we can have our hearts touched with what the power of God really is. “I take pleasure in all these, sorrows by the way,” he says, as it were; “for they are just opportunities that the power of Christ may rest upon me, that I may learn afresh what it is to be in His, hand, and how He, in His infinite love and favor, can express Himself out of me? You cannot express Christ in this world; you cannot do it. It must be real dependence on Him, and He will express Himself out of you. Wait upon Him. Thus, we learn two things: The infinite capacity of the new nature, and the infinite power of the Holy Ghost.

Look for a moment at the way in which He speaks of grace. I want just to refer to that as manifested in connection with the judgment-seat of Christ. There it is that we see the very essence of grace. The judgment of sin was borne by this blessed One on the cross. He has given us to trust in Himself. He has made us His, and now He has set us in this world for. Himself; and when this scene is over, He brings us before His judgment-seat, and He goes over what we have done in this world—goes over what His own Holy Spirit has done through us in this world—and He counts it to us, and then, in the greatness of His grace, He says, I will reward you for it—for what His own Spirit has done through us. Was there ever grace like that? He begins with us on the ground of

grace, and He never changes His ground; and we find that throughout the eternal ages His grace is glorified in us. He thus gave Himself for us—the blessed answer of His own heart to lay His own resources open to man in his guilt, his misery. His grace never ceases until we are there before His own throne, and even there it will be “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Oh, it becomes us to walk softly indeed! People may say, “We do not enjoy these things.” Why is it? Because His Holy Spirit is grieved or hindered. We check the Holy Spirit, that alone can make these things real to us. Who could understand, save by the Spirit, what it is to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him? And His Holy Spirit delights to make these things good to us, and to fill our hearts to overflowing. But if His Holy Spirit is checked or hindered by anything in us, the present realization ceases. The things themselves do not cease, but our enjoyment often does, to our sorrow and loss. The infinite capacity of the new nature ever remains; but, alas! we have in our own souls so little realization of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One verse struck me as it was being read—“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7) “Another Comforter.” Did you ever think of who and what the first Comforter was, who came into this world to take upon Himself our sins and our sorrows, to walk alongside of us? Do you know the One who came into this world to walk along with us, no matter what might come upon Him—the shame and the spitting, the cursing and swearing? They did not know Him. Nothing rebuffed that love. Then, risen from the dead, and taken up to the right hand of the majesty in the heaven, He leads the heart to listen to what the Spirit of God reveals, and alone can reveal; all that Christ really has come down to tell us. And we are in Him “in Him.” We are standing in all the blessed acceptance in Him; we are accepted in the Beloved. It does not say we are accepted in Christ; it says we are accepted in all the blessed overflowing of the love of the Father’s heart to that Son. God gives us that place; it is the measure of my place before Himself. He tells it to us in order that our hearts may go up to Him in praise and thanksgiving—a heart that is too full of what the blessed. God is not to praise Him.

Beloved brethren, when God touches our hearts, when in simplicity and reality we are before God, when He really touches our hearts with what His love to us now is, there is no holding in, it is bound to go back to Him. The heart beats true to Him because the heart is His, He has won it, and He is interested in all that passes there. He puts us through these things to make good to us what His love and care really are. There is His love. It has been said that if He put us through difficulties and trials, it was better than leaving us alone. Why, He has bought us with a price. Can He leave us alone? He will never cast us off. He will never be the first to break the link; or if the link is broken by us, so far as we can do so, He will hold us and put us through thing after thing, trial after trial, difficulty after, difficulty; till we learn afresh His grace, and care, and love, and what it is to have to do with Him. You will find there is not a difficulty but the blessing, and the sense of His love and of His heart gets fuller and more real in every single sorrow and trial He puts us through, because the object of His heart is to draw us nearer to Himself. Not to cry for Him to come because we find the way weary, because we are tired and we are cast down. Let us remember this, that until He comes He has something for His people to do here. He has some manifestation of Himself of what He can do here, some grace that shall flow from Himself, that shall go back in answering glory and praise to Himself up to the last moment. We may say the way is dreary, and we want to be gone, and we want to be at rest. What does it show us? It shows restlessness. It is not a promise, it is a bright

and blessed hope; but until He comes, let us go on, content to be here until He comes, in view of the blessed prospect. May God in His mercy give us to understand it really by His grace, and to seek to be ever in spirit with Himself until that moment when He comes to fetch us to be there forever.

P. A. H.

## John the Baptist: His Birth

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The angel Gabriel was commissioned to announce two glad tidings—the one to Zacharias, the other to Mary of Nazareth; but the circumstances and the import of these two messages present more of contrast than of similitude. Zacharias and his wife “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Nevertheless, old age had crept over them, and Elizabeth was barren. May we not see in them a picture of godly Israelites under the law, and of the utter inability of the law to bring forth fruit even in a regenerated man? Moreover, it does not produce intimacy with God any more than fruit; for Zacharias, who was of exemplary piety, seeing the angel, “was troubled, and fear fell upon him.” Finally, it does not induce confidence, which grace alone calls forth. The priest under the law was unbelieving as to the message of grace brought by Gabriel, and so this representative of Israel remained dumb until the day when, the divine promise having in grace been fulfilled, he could, like the remnant by-and-by, praise the Author of his salvation. Mary was not only pious, but humble and simple—an object of grace, and not an exponent of the law. “Thou hast found favor with God,” said the angel. She was subject—“Behold, the handmaid of the Lord;” and her confidence was in the word of God, for she added, “Be it unto me according to thy word.” (Luke 1:30-38)

The contrast between these two messages is worthy of remark. John should be “great in the sight of the Lord.” Of Jesus the angel said, “He shall be great.” We will return to this subject in another chapter. All John the Baptist’s greatness depended on the Person whose herald he was, whilst Jesus was great in Himself and of Himself. From the place whence I write, can see, in the light of the rising sun, the shadow of a chestnut tree assuming gigantic proportions; yet this shadow is not a picture of the size of the tree, but a witness to the sun’s rising and splendor. Such was John—great because he had the signal honor of being the messenger of One of whom the angel said, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom their shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32,33)

But these words of Gabriel’s—“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord”—do not express all that should characterize the Baptist; for he adds, “And he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.” This is Nazariteship; at least, the first mark thereof. John could only be great in the sight of the Lord by being a Nazarite. From Numbers 6 we see that to be a Nazarite was “to separate one’s self unto the Lord.” There were three distinct signs. First, the Nazarite abstained from wine and strong drink; next, he allowed the hair of his head to grow; and finally, he “came at no dead body.” He deprived himself of wine—sign of joy to the heart of the natural man in the company of his equals. His long hair proclaimed that he abandoned the dignity and rights of man for subjection to the will of God, whose claims on him he acknowledged; and lastly, he avoided all that could bring him into contact with sin, whose wages is death. Such was the ordering and the secret of a Nazarite. Separation to God could only subsist at the expense of these three things, and they were carried out in the life of John the Baptist. But in this passage, he is presented to us as especially set apart from all that constitutes the joy of a social man. The world, no doubt, on seeing him,

would have said, "He is a sad and dismal misanthrope." What a mistake! This natural joy, the only one known to the world, was replaced in the prophet's heart by a joy which communion with the Saviour gives. These two joys are opposed to each other, and cannot subsist together; and it is only in proportion as we deny ourselves the former that we can enjoy the latter. Throughout his career divine joy was one of the characteristic features of this most austere man. As a miraculous babe in his mother's womb, his first movement is one of joy when the salutation of the mother of his Lord reaches Elizabeth's ears (Luke 1:44); and at the end of his course he says again, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John 3:29)

We must not forget that every Christian is called to be a Nazarite, and that with regard to this there is no longer any thought of a special class of persons among God's people; neither is it now a question for us as for the Nazarite Jew of an external separation or one consisting in forms. True Nazariteship—separation to God—is of the heart. The world sees the effects in life, joy, and power, without understanding them; but separation in itself is a secret between the soul and God. Proclaiming that I am separate, occupies others with me; saying that I am in dependence on God, is to be so no longer, since I ascribe something to myself. I surrender by so doing my secret to the world, and, like Samson, abandon my flowing locks to its scissors. When once Satan and the world have learned the secret of my strength, they will not rest till they have robbed me of it. But if there are Christians to be found who are so satisfied with themselves as to divulge the secret of their Nazariteship, there are others who are constantly talking about their failures; doubtless two extremes, but two formed of the same pride. The one does not see the spots on his coat, while the other displays them; but both neglect the only things needful—humiliation and purification. If in any particular we have broken our Nazarite vow, if we have defiled ourselves for the dead, restoration is possible. (Numbers 6:9-12) Let us examine ourselves. With humiliation we shall find purification. But, alas and it is a solemn thing, we lose through sin a joy such as the Baptist's, and a power such as the man of Zorah's. We must begin over again. It took time for Samson to recover, along with his hair, strength to break down the pillars in Dagon's temple.

To the words, "He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink," Gabriel adds, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Here it is as if the special power of the Holy Ghost were connected with Nazariteship. Many Christians imagine that to be filled with the Holy Ghost is a special favor, that only could belong to privileged ones among the people of God. No such thing. This condition is in point of fact the normal state of the Christian—he is qualified to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that is to say, in order that the Spirit may restrain and annul every manifestation of the flesh which the child of God has in him. Every believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost; but every believer is not filled by Him. And why? Is it a lack of power to do so on the part of the Holy Ghost? Certainly not, or it would not be the Holy Spirit of God. Is it perhaps that we are unable to do aught but grieve Him? In this case we do not, as believers, know deliverance. What then is lacking, even among Christians knowing deliverance, in order to be, filled with the Spirit? The reality of Nazariteship. As it is said in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Oh, beloved children of God, what power of enjoyment, testimony, conformity to Christ would be ours if, true Nazarites, we were filled with the Spirit! Have we never, were it but for a moment, tasted such a blessing?

Stephen enjoyed it to the full during his short career as a witness. "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," it is said after the first mention of him; "Stephen, full of grace and of power," the

Word adds, when this Nazirite, full of the Spirit, was in active service among the people; Stephen, “being full of the Holy Ghost,” it says again, when the sanhedrim were gnashing their teeth on him. (Acts 6:5,8;7. 56) And there, in presence of those who were stoning him—the ungrieved power of the Spirit fixing Stephen’s eyes on heaven—he sees “the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” His eyes and his heart, occupied by the Spirit with this heavenly vision, are arrested by an object—Jesus in glory. This man on earth sees the Son of man in heaven, and rejoices in the One who, having finished His work, has, in His own person, prepared that glorious place. Our inability to “see Jesus,” our want of personal acquaintance with this precious Saviour, is connected—note it well—with the measure in which we realize the apostle’s recommendation, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

But Stephen not only enjoys Christ; he is a witness, and says, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” That with which he is filled by the Spirit flows abundantly from his lips. He does not say to himself that he must bear testimony. The river overflowed its banks and watered the earth. Supplied from a heavenly source, it became in Stephen’s heart a fountain of springing water. Moreover, this blessed martyr does not only bear witness; he is himself changed, while beholding, with unveiled face, the glory of the Lord. He reflects on earth, and without dimming their luster, the character, ways, and words of the Saviour. All this, I repeat, is not a special gift, but the fruit of the Holy Spirit acting in our hearts without hindrance. Let us then exhort one another with these words, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

Alas! in many ways we all fail. Jesus only, the true Nazirite, never failed. Jesus, conceived of the Holy Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, full of the Spirit (Luke 1:35; 3:22), realized all these things in absolute perfection, without a shadow of failure. Man of sorrows on this earth, His joy was full; humble amongst the humble, He was possessed of a divine power which made Him victorious in conflict with Satan when led by the Spirit into the wilderness, which caused “His word to be with power” when “He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.” (Luke 4:1-14, 32) Pure and holy, He could say, Satan “hath nothing in me.” May He be the pattern of our Nazariteship— “He that was separated (a Nazirite) from his brethren.” (Genesis 49:26; Deuteronomy 33:16) Then in the power of the Holy Ghost we shall follow Him, at a distance of two thousand cubits, no doubt, as Israel followed the ark; but we shall follow Him nevertheless, and to follow Him is to grow in His likeness.

H. R.

## Between Elim and Sinai

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It was “between Elim and Sinai” that murmurings sprung up (Exodus 16:12), and the place was called the “wilderness of Sin.” Let us note it well, for herein is an excellent lesson for us. God had brought them out of Egypt, and delivered them forever from the cruelty of Pharaoh and the lash of his taskmasters. They had crossed the Red Sea, and seen all their enemies “dead on the sea shore.” They had sung with Moses, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea,” And now in the wilderness, alone with God, in a place where there are no supplies and no path, they find Him not only enough to sweeten all Marah’s bitter waters, but to lead them also to Elim, where He had ready for them “twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees,” and where He had arranged their first resting-place. He would have us stop in the wilderness journey, to feast upon the tender provision of His hand for us, and to drink of these wells. And who had dug these wells? Did you ever think? And thus far we too have gone; for we know what all these things meant which “happened unto them for types,” and “they are written for our admonition.” But what follows?

Nothing but finding fault with God, that He should ever have brought them into such a place—a murmuring for bread. And is it an unknown thing for Christians to find fault with God? Think, has it never been your own case and mine? Have we always said that our wilderness circumstances are entirely satisfactory to us? Health, business, the daily occupation which He has given us—all accepted from His hand without a single murmur? And what are our wilderness circumstances but, first and most blessed of all, God with us, and going before us, and the whole of the wilderness not ours, but His responsibility, who has in grace taken us up? And is this alone not sufficient to hush every murmur? But, remember, there is more. We can also trace His hand feeding and nourishing us every day, and learn that He brings to us the “butter out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock,” if He causes us to prove the rocks of the wilderness. The grand lesson taught us in the wilderness with God is “to be content.” Let us read the passages Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-9; Ephesians 5:20, and honestly admit either that they do, or that they do not, find their simple answer and illustration in our walk and ways. Are we content?

And why has the Spirit of God so carefully written down the name of the locality where the murmuring began? There is a lesson also in this. That it happened “between Elim and Sinai” has a solemn voice in it for us, and no word of God has been written in vain. Elim was God’s provision for them. It showed them what He could do, a specimen of what He would do for them, until He brought them unto Himself into “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And Sinai was the place where they undertook to do the best they could for themselves—where they gave up the grace that was treasured up in God for them all along (“My grace is sufficient for thee”) and put themselves under law.

May we ponder the lesson. May we learn that discontent and murmuring will presently land us in Sinai—take us out of the hands of God, and lead us to do the best we can for ourselves. How many a Christian is, in the experience of his soul, “between Elim and Sinai,” and (or there actually)

doing the best he can in this wilderness for himself, because God has not satisfied him! But it cuts him off from communion with God. Complaining to God about His doings is not intercourse with Him. Sinai is beset with “blackness, and darkness, and tempest,” and no voice of communion with God reaches the soul from thence. (Hebrews 12:18,19).

And now how does God answer the murmurers? And how does He answer us if in their path? Read the whole of Exodus 16 for the answer. For forty years (the whole time of their wanderings in the wilderness) He gave them “manna.” He puts CHRIST before us the whole time of our wilderness journey—the always humbled, dependent, obedient One—the only One who accepted every waving in the wilderness path as from God “My Father”, and without a single murmur; for the manna is Christ in humiliation, seen down here as a dependent Man. That is how God meets your murmuring and mine.

What cling we to, and what covet we in this world, — which Christ (God's perfect pattern for us) would have nothing to do with if He were here? How do you meet the exercises in your wilderness path? These are simple questions, but they search us out. Are we feeding daily on the manna—Christ, the only perfect One? He said (and are we saying it?) that His delight was in “the saints, the excellent of the earth;” and though a pilgrim He was no murmurer in the wilderness. “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (Psalm 16) When we arrive “between Elim and Sinai” we shall find the “Manna” there waiting for us.

H. C. A.

## Fragment: The Lord's Return

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If I am looking for the coming of Christ, I do not stop to look at my shadow behind, but up to the Lord's return. My only object then is to reach the goal, and, receiving a glorified body, to be with Him forever.

## Numbers 1-5

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The order of these chapters is exceedingly beautiful. In chapter 1 the people, save the tribe of Levi who were to be appointed over the tabernacle of testimony, are numbered, brought thus individually under the eye of God, and recognized after their families by the house of their fathers. In chapter 2 the encampments and order of march, together with their respective captains, are prescribed. All was divinely ordered, and ordered in relation to the tabernacle in which Jehovah dwelt. We read in Psalms 80:2, "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us"—a prayer clearly explained by Numbers 2:17-24. In chapter 3 we find that the Levites were taken by the Lord instead of the firstborn of Israel, whom He hallowed for Himself on the day He smote the first-born of Egypt (vs. 13); and they (the Levites) were to be presented before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him—typical of the church being given to Christ for service. (vss. 5-10) Each of the three families, into which the Levites were divided, had both their position and service assigned to them according to the sovereign grace of God. Not one could choose for himself where he should encamp or what he should undertake. There were "distinctions of service," but the same Lord. He commanded, and they obeyed. Chapter 4 gives the provision for the transport of the sacred vessels of the tabernacle through the wilderness. (Note that the laver is not mentioned, not being a manifestation of God in Christ) The various coverings are all typical, and prefigure the walk of Christ through the world, and hence, too, that of His people, inasmuch as He is our example. The account in detail of the burdens of the Levites follows. In chapter 5 God requires discipline to be administered according to His own nature. Holiness must be insisted upon if He dwells in their midst. Sins between brother and brother, and the sins of Israel against Jehovah (for He in His grace had married Israel), are then dealt with. Lastly, in chapter 6. we have the law of the Nazarite, concluding with the full divine blessing, administered by the priest, resting on the people. Thus, the whole camp had been numbered and arranged according to God. Corporately and individually all were in the positions to which they had been assigned.

Holiness was secured by godly discipline, and they were (typically) in a state of Nazarite separation; and the consequence was that God was able to bless His people according to the thoughts of His own heart. The lesson for ourselves is obvious.

## 1 Peter 2:2

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This scripture means, we apprehend, that just as new-born babes desire their suited nourishment, milk, believers should desire theirs, i.e. the word of God. The word translated “milk of the word” is admittedly difficult, but the sense is, doubtless, that which we have given. The addition is made in most versions, and rightly, “up to salvation”—whereby ye may grow up to salvation. The Word is thus pointed out as the means of our sustenance and growth while passing through the wilderness, and until the coming of the Lord; and it is a simple consequence that the more we feed upon it the more we grow. E. D.

## The Cleansing of the Leper

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In this passage we find the ceremony, according to the law, for the cleansing of the leper—a figure of the cleansing which Christ has accomplished for us, for leprosy is a type of sin. There is a distinction to be made between the purification of the leper and that of the priest.

There were but three sprinklings with blood in the Old Testament—the sprinkling of the leper, that of the people, and that of the priest; they each took place once and were not repeated. There was nothing to be done for the healing of the leper; it was the work of God. In order to prove that the disease was leprosy, the leper was kept by himself, set apart and watched and observed every seven days. When he was entirely white, or when the spot had become white, he was purified. (Compare Psalms 32:3-5) When sin is hidden, and the leprosy internal, the evil is greater. The manifestation and confession of sin lead to peace, and the heart is set at ease; this is the upright and honest heart. The symptoms of leprosy are described in

Leviticus 13. The healing came from God; the priest could only ascertain the disease, and perform the acts for purification. Leprosy excluded its victim from the camp; sin hinders communion with God and His people.

After his cleansing, the leper was reinstated in communion with the children of Israel; but the first effect of the knowledge of sin is to take from us the desire for communion with God, the intelligence of that communion, and the seeking after it. Cleansing gives us, indeed, the right of communion with the children of God, although souls often fail to understand from the first that they have this right. Healing often precedes the knowledge of this healing; the converted soul puts itself under law, instead of accepting joyfully the whole gospel.

As to the means used for the cleansing of lepers, they are: First, the birds, one dead—a type of the death of Christ. It was killed over a vessel of running water. The living bird is a type of Christ's resurrection. (Leviticus 14:4-7) Our sins brought Jesus to the tomb, but He rose out of it, and left them behind Him there; He had accomplished all. Second (vss. 8, 9), the leper was to be, washed with water. Jesus cleanses us by the Word which He has spoken to us; His Word does for our souls what the cleansing with water did for the body. (See Ephesians 5:25-27) This cleansing was done once for all. Sanctification is once for all, but the Christian must grow in it. All believers are justified in Christ. This is an accomplished reality; the Holy Ghost puts us in this position. There is the sanctification by God the Father (John 17:17), that of Jesus by His blood, and that of the Holy Ghost, who gives efficacy to the Father's will and the work of the Son. The Holy Ghost accomplishes it in individuals. He communicates life to us by the Word, and sanctifies us wholly. Third, after cleansing follows the knowledge of what has been done; the leper must understand it, and receive its efficacy in his heart, (vss. 10-20) The leper is presented to God, with a sacrifice for his offense. He was anointed with blood as a sign of sanctification.

The Christian is never to allow anything to enter his ear which would be inconsistent with the blood of the Lamb. The right hand is the symbol of action. The Christian should not do anything which

would be dishonoring to the blood of Christ; all that he does every day should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and he must not act in any way which would not accord with the measure of God's thoughts in the death of Jesus. All in our actions which is not holy as the blood of Christ is sin. Blood on the great toe is a figure of holiness in our walk. We are not negative beings; Christ's life should always act in us. Our thoughts, actions, walk, all are under the blood of Christ, and that blood is the measure of what our holiness should be. One must either be under the shelter of the blood of Christ, or outside it. The child of God has on him that blood which can neither be effaced, nor lose its value. There is never need of another sprinkling. Every day our souls are renewed inwardly by the, Holy Ghost, and we confess our sins before our Father. Fourthly; blood was not the only thing necessary; oil was also required. The oil, a type of the Holy Ghost, is given because the blood is there. It was not after the water, but after the blood, that the oil was applied.

The Holy Ghost comes to dwell in us because the blood of Christ is on us. If we are as pure in the sight of God as that blood, why should not the Spirit be in us? The blood of Christ has exhausted the wrath of God against sin. There is nothing but love for those who are sprinkled with that blood. The Holy Ghost is a Spirit of knowledge, joy, peace, and love; these are His first-fruits. He is also a Spirit of strength and power, able to overcome the obstacles which arise in our path.

The effect of all was to re-establish the leper in communion with God.

J. N. D.

## Redemption

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The history of redemption is bound up with the whole truth of grace, reaching back to the counsels of God in eternity, including the incarnation, the life, the death, the finished work of Christ on the cross, as also His resurrection, and reaching onward to the accomplishment of God's purposes in the conformity of His people to the image of "My Son in glory. (Romans 8:29) The word itself is only used once (see Genesis 48:16) before its application to the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt; and though found in the English version in Revelation, it is really never employed after the rapture of the Church. This makes it clear that we have redemption in type and figure in the history of Israel, and in fact in the work of Christ and the salvation of believers. The former was a temporal, the latter an eternal redemption; and it is because of the relation of the one to the other, as shadow and substance, that the two are often contrasted in the Scriptures. (See Hebrews 9:11,12; 1 Peter 1:18; 20)

In pursuing our inquiry into the nature of redemption, there are three distinct things to be considered, and the first of these is the ground on which redemption is effected. We have already pointed out that the heart of God is its source, even as the apostle speaks, "All things are of God." And, indeed, grace can never be entered into or apprehended until it is perceived that redemption, with all its blessed fruits, is but the expression of the eternal love of God. (See Romans 8: 28-39; Ephesians 1; Titus 3:5-7, &c) But God Himself, being what He is, was powerless to act until He could be just as well as the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. But now He justifies us freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24) It was therefore the death of Christ, the atonement for sin which He thereby made, which laid the foundation of our redemption; or, to speak more accurately (for redemption signifies a buying back), the blood of Christ was our ransom price—the price paid for our redemption. Two scriptures will explain this. "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life" (and "the life is in the blood") "a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) Again, "Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18,19)

But what were we, it might well be asked, to need such a ransom? We were poor slaves of Satan, afflicted with hard bondage, even as the Israelites were bowed down under the cruel yoke of Pharaoh. And not only were we under the enemy's power, but we were there because of our sins; and thus, at the same time, under the just judgment of God. Until therefore the question of our sins, as also that of the sins of Israel, was settled, God was not free in righteousness to act for our deliverance. Thus, when He went through the land of Egypt in judgment, His own people were as guilty as their oppressors, and nothing but the blood of the passover lamb ransomed them from the destroyer's stroke. "When I see the blood," Jehovah said, "I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:13) For that blood, shadowing forth that of Christ, answered all His holy claims, and, covering up their guilt from His sight, as well as substituting for their guilt its own preciousness before His eye, effectually screened them, from His wrath as the holy Judge. So with ourselves. We were guilty sinners, and had all come short of the glory of God; and as such were exposed to the condemnation and doom

of sin. But God was gracious, and interposed, saying, as it were, “Deliver them from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” (See Job 33:24) And that ransom was the precious blood of Christ. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is an immense thing for the soul to perceive the simple truth, that God gave His only begotten Son; that it was He—He who knew what we were, and what the full extent of His claims upon us—who also provided our passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), and who declares that His blood is an all-sufficient ransom for all who receive His testimony to its value. (1 Timothy 2:6) For if He is satisfied who can be dissatisfied? It is He, and He alone, who can estimate its adequacy as our ransom; and hence the word to Israel was, “When I” (I, the Judge) “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

This, then, constituted the first part of redemption—the payment of the ransom. This was done in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the shedding of His blood, when His soul was made an offering for sin, whereby He made a full, perfect, and everlasting atonement to God. The next step is the connection of those to be redeemed (we follow the order of the redemption of Israel from Egypt) with the work of Christ, with the value of His blood. In the case of the Israelites, the manner in which this was effected is clearly seen. Had they even slain the passover lamb, and had they done nothing more, the death of the lamb alone would not have secured their immunity from judgment. The command was to take a bunch of hyssop, to dip it in the blood in the basin, and to sprinkle it upon the lintel and the two sideposts of the doors of their houses. It was the blood sprinkled therefore in the obedience of faith that procured their deliverance. The fact of the death of the lamb, and the collecting its blood in the basin, would have availed them nothing, save to increase their condemnation; but the moment they acted in faith, and put the blood upon their doors, they were infallibly safe. It is faith still that links us with the value of the blood of Christ. We thus read that God has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood; and again, that we are justified by His blood, this being the meritorious cause of our justification, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. (Romans 3:25; 5: 9) Redemption has been wrought out through the death and resurrection of Christ, and His presence at the right hand of God is the proof of it; but we could never know redemption for ourselves unless we have been brought, through faith, under the value of His precious blood. It is grace, and grace alone, that saves us; but it is grace through faith, even though this, as well as the grace, is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

The blood then had been shed, and in the obedience of faith it had been sprinkled; and now God stepped in to redeem. This was in accordance with His message through Moses, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you, out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.” (Exodus 6:6) God who, being holy, had necessarily been against His people because they were sinners in Egypt, could now, consistently with all that He was, be for them on account of the blood of the lamb. And the blood of the lamb, under which they were sheltered, was the sole ground of His subsequent acting on their behalf.

Let us then trace out what He did in their redemption. First, God brought them out of Egypt by His power. As another has said, applying the truth to ourselves, “Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered by His power that acts for us, from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment was the beginning. The power which has

made us alive in Christ, who has gone down into death for us, has made us free from the whole power of Satan which followed us, and from all his attacks and accusations." For the Red Sea, through which God brought His people, and which forever delivered them from Egypt, was, in type, the death and resurrection of Christ, wherein He met the whole force of death and judgment, as well as the power of the enemy on His people's behalf. Hence redemption is not spoken of until they are on the other side of the sea of death and judgment, on the shores of which they beheld also their enemies dead. Then they could sing, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed." (Exodus 15:13) In Egypt they were perfectly sheltered by the blood; but now through their passage across the Red Sea, and Jehovah's acting for them in it, they were redeemed from Egypt and its doom, and from death, judgment, and the power of Satan.

But there was still more. No sooner had the word redemption escaped their lips than, as taught of the Holy Spirit, they added, "Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." All their enemies would melt away, and He who had brought them out, would "bring them in, and plant them in the mountain" of His inheritance, "in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for them to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." (Exodus 15:13-17) And all this, we repeat, was the fruit of the sprinkled blood, and nothing less than this was full redemption. When across the Red Sea, and about to commence their pilgrim march through the wilderness, they were surely God's redeemed people, for in truth they had been delivered from their bondage, and set free to serve Jehovah; but not yet were they in the place prepared for them, not yet therefore in the enjoyment of what belonged to them in God's purposes of grace in their redemption. (See Exodus 3: 16, 17; 6: 6-8) The blood of the Passover Lamb, in fact, secured not only their passage across the Red Sea, but also their journey through the wilderness, the drying up of the waters of the Jordan, and their possession of the land of promise.

If now we refer to redemption, as found in the New Testament, we shall see how fully the reality, answers to the type. But it must be remembered that He, who was the Passover Lamb of God's own providing, took the sinner's place in His death, and that therefore when He arose from the dead, in virtue of His precious blood, redemption, eternal redemption, was accomplished. (See Hebrews 9:12; 13:20) The blood of atonement was the ransom-price of His people, and God has declared His infinite satisfaction with it, in that He hath raised Him up from the dead, and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:20,21) It is on this account that Peter can write, that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; for as soon as we have been brought, through faith, under the value of His sacrifice, we possess in title all the blessings that have been secured by the redemption which He has obtained. We say in title, for not yet are we in the enjoyment of all the results of the work of Christ. Already we are redeemed as to our souls; for God, on the foundation of the work of Christ, because of the value of the precious blood under which we are resting, has even now "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son, of His love." (Colossians 1:13) This is a present blessing; and in this aspect we can say that we are redeemed, that we have been brought out from the house of bondage, out of Egypt; that through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Compare Colossians 1:13-15) For in truth Satan's power has been forever broken; and we, with death and judgment behind us, have been brought to God.

But this is not all. The apostle Paul teaches that we are waiting “for the adoption, the redemption of our body,” and that this is already secured to us by the fact that we possess now the first-fruits of the Spirit. (Romans 8:23) This is in harmony with the truth of this epistle; for, as he shows in chapter 6, having been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Divine power therefore will act once again at the coming of the Lord, and will rescue even the bodies of His people from the corruption in which they lie, and will fashion them like unto the body of the glory of Christ, and thus complete the redemption of His people. In the epistle to the Ephesians there is another aspect of blessing, according to the truth there exhibited.

The Holy Spirit of promise is thus said to be the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession; and we are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Chapter 1:14; 4:30) These scriptures show unmistakably, especially if we remember that, according to chapter 1: 3, it is in Christ we have redemption through His blood, that the full fruition of the redemption work of Christ is not possessed until the whole church is presented to Him in the glory. Now we have the salvation of our souls, also our place in the heavenlies in Christ, we are fully secured against all difficulties, dangers, and enemies, our bodies will be raised thorn the dead, or changed, if the Lord comes before death, when death will be thus swallowed up in victory; and finally the whole church, every member of which will be conformed to His image, will be presented unto Christ a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, to be His companion both in the glories of the kingdom, as well as in those of eternity. All this, and whatever more of blessing there may be, is included in redemption, and will be the glorious result of the eternal value of the blood of Christ to God.

E. D.

## John the Baptist: John the Baptist in the Wilderness

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The two passages at the head of the chapter describe the life of John the Baptist from his birth “till the day of his showing unto Israel.” “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit,” it is said. To be a Nazarite is, as we have seen, the first condition necessary to the normal development of the man of faith. Then the Spirit can exercise His activity in order to make us grow, and to strengthen us with might in the inner man. Nothing will grieve Him, and He will not need to be occupied in rebuking and correcting us; we shall be like a tree planted in good soil, watered by streams of living water, and exposed to the sun’s vivifying rays. The tree develops under such a salutary influence: its buds become flowers, and its flowers fruit, according to the season. Such were the characteristics of the prophet when still a child, and yet he was but a feeble picture of the One whose coming he was about to announce.

Of Jesus, John the Baptist’s Lord, it is said, when a child that, He “grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.” And again, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:40,52) He would not have been truly a man, if He had not from His birth passed through the successive stages of a man’s life; He would not have been God, had He not done so in absolute perfection. John was in need of help to grow and wax strong in spirit; and the evangelist says, “The hand of the Lord was with him.” (Luke 1:66) Jesus grew and waxed strong of Himself, so to speak, although, as man, in absolute dependence. In Luke we find the perfection of this unfolding. The flower is in bud, not a blemish; it is in full bloom, not a defect; divine favor, the dew of heaven, fills its chalice; its perfume and grace are such as may delight God and men. It gives promise of fruit which appears in due season, the divine development of perfect maturity.

We have seen the moral state of the son of Zacharias. Let us briefly consider his external condition, such as it would, from his youth, have appeared to a human observer. The Word tells us that he “was in the deserts.” What a contrast with the world by which he was surrounded! The Roman “beast” was at the zenith of its prosperity, and stable as no empire which had preceded it. (Luke 3:1) Its administration, army, art, religion, even the Jewish religion (3:2), were organized to a remarkable degree. This certainly did not resemble the desert; and it was pleasant to live under such an economy. Between the desert and Judea under Herod a lot would not have hesitated. John the Baptist found nothing there to attract him; he was in the desert, separated from the world wholly and visibly. Hence when, sent by God, he crosses the threshold of the desert to prophesy amidst the world and its noisy activity, his heart is met by emptiness and silence— “the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” he says, for the world was a wilderness to him. —He asks nothing of it; he does not go to it seeking “soft raiment;” he brings into it the customs of the country of his choice. His raiment is of camel’s hair, the only coarse garment that the desert can offer him; he has a leathern girdle about his loins, as had in other times the prophet Elijah, when he presented himself to the officers of Ahaziah (2 Kings 8); his meat is locusts and wild honey, which he gathers in these desolate places. Like Elijah by the brook Cherith, he depends entirely for subsistence, on that which God had prepared for him in a barren land—dependence painful to the flesh, but doubly

blessed, for it is the power for all true ministry. John the Baptist was qualified by his wilderness life and experience to be the “voice” of Him who makes Himself heard there, and, like Elijah, fearlessly to fulfill his dangerous mission.

But there is One who has distanced John the Baptist in these experiences, He of whom it is said, in Psalms 110, “He shall drink of the brook in the way” —a short sentence expressing the Saviour’s earthly career. In this psalm David views Him as already at God’s right hand; but also he considers the way which will lead Him thither. How much is contained in these words: “He shall drink of the brook in the way.” It is a picture of a man on the march hastening to accomplish his mission. Our thoughts are straightway carried back to Gideon’s companions, who were raised up by the Lord for the deliverance of the people, and who drank of the brook in the way. (Judges 7) There were three hundred of them chosen for a temporal deliverance: Jesus was alone and took the responsibility of an eternal salvation. Nothing arrested Him even for a moment. Of provisions He has none, only water to quench His thirst; and He does not deviate from the path to seek any. The resources which God has put in His way suffice, for He has only one end in view, the accomplishment of the mission on which His heart is wholly set. He would not have gone down upon His knees beside the brook to drink at His ease.

Have you ever noticed in the Gospels how many times the Saviour drank of the brook in the way? The springs of refreshment which He meets with after long stages under a burning sun are quickly counted—springs produced by some beneficent rain wherewith heaven has for a moment watered His path, and whereat He has drunk without slackening His pace. When, at the well of Sychar, the conscience of a wretched woman of Samaria was reached by One who asked of her a drink, when she knew not even how to give Him a drop of water, the brook was flowing in the Saviour’s path. And with what joy does He quench His thirst thereat by the way— “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.... He that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together!” (John 4:32-36) When at the Pharisee’s table, a poor woman, a sinner already convicted of sin, brought her tears, her kisses, and her ointment to the feet of grace, to Him who alone can forgive, it was not of Simon’s repast which the Saviour partook, but of the table which God had prepared in the heart of this woman. While Martha, “careful and troubled,” and “cumbered about much serving,” prepared to receive Jesus into her house, He drank of the brook in the way with His eyes resting on Mary, who, seated in silence at His feet, listened to and found in Him the good part. And at the extreme limit of the last stage of His journey, where beneath the consuming fire He was about to cry, “I thirst,” He finds a second time, not at the table at Bethany, but in Mary’s house, the brook made ready for Him, when, anticipating the day of His burying, she expended all her perfume on the feet and head of the Saviour about to die.

Ah! these occasions were rare, but they were enough for a heart so perfect, so entirely subject to and dependent on the Father. Blessed Saviour! Thou hast drunk of the brook in the way, but Thou shalt lift up the head. Already Thou art in the highest place, seated on the Father’s throne at His right hand. Thou hast the joy of having finished Thy work to the glory of Thy Father, and Thy presence on high is the unalterable witness thereto. In virtue of this work Thou hast been saluted of God a High Priest forever for us, after the order of Melchizedek. But it yet remains for Thee to occupy Thy throne, to take Thy place there, and to make Thine enemies Thy footstool. Then Thou wilt have us with Thyself. Thou shalt see of the travail of Thy soul, and shalt be satisfied!

H.R.

## Fragment: Living the Life of Man Before God

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The whole question of our responsibility, as living in the life of man before God, is settled by Christ's judicially bearing the consequences before God, and by the death of the life in which we stood as sinners. But then Christ is now a new life; He is risen, and we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I am quickened together with Christ, and raised up together. God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses. They are buried in His grave, and without them.

## The Cross: The End of the Religious Man and the Secular Man

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Both are here before us, and both are ended in this epistle. Christ, the new Man, only avails before God. No one could have been more religious than Paul. His religion, that of a honest, natural man, only tended to raise Paul in his own estimation. In chapter 2:19 it is all at an end. What he was clinging to and providing himself with in (the law) has killed him. The bubble has burst; and then only, and not before, he gets life. Life is not by law, but from God; but there was an end for Paul of the religious man. Religion under law is bondage.

Many an honest heart is groaning under this yoke, trying hard to improve the natural man. It only lands you in wretchedness. You cannot improve him. Nothing avails for man but death. Not till then do you get life; but the life is Christ Himself, not Saul improved, or made religious, but Christ displayed in Paul in a human body. So the next verse says, "I am crucified with Christ." This was the end of the religious Saul of Tarsus. Then he says, "Nevertheless I live." This was Paul; but it was not an independent life. It was one dependent on Christ; so he adds, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If I live it is Christ that is displayed. True liberty is this. It is the joy of Paul's heart to have entered upon it—to be set in this world, a vessel to display the life of Christ. No law-keeping could come up to that. It is the perfect, blessed liberty of the Spirit, the liberty "wherewith Christ has made us free." It is not a religious man according to the law, the measure of what a man ought to be—not this being that is set before us, but a human being to be down here on the earth, a vessel for the display of the life of Christ in the power of the Spirit. Blessed, holy liberty! It is the end of me as a religious man.

But the end of the epistle (6:14) brings before me the end' of myself as a secular man. People talk of religious matters and secular matters, the latter being matters that God has nothing to do with, they say. These occupy them six days out of the seven. It is a solemn truth, but one which they readily own. Well, how is it here with Paul? Is it with him six days for the world and one day for God? Very different is the conclusion he comes to in the verse before us. Whatever may be my opinion of the demands of the world upon me, Paul carried his "life," and that life was the "life of Christ," into all the business he had to do in this world. During the six days therefore, as well as during the Lord's-day, he could say, "For me to live is CHRIST." But what more does he say here? He says, "The world is crucified unto me." There is the end of what many are going after; and as for himself he says, "And I" (am crucified) "unto the world." There is the end of the secular man. Paul had no world for the secular man, and was no secular man for the world. Both are gone. There is no attractive magnet in it, nothing for the heart. It is the affections that cause the feet to stray, and that render the path a wavering one. With him it was always straight on.

He (as all Christians likewise) was soon going to be like Christ. This Christ dwelt in Paul; He was Paul's life. While walking on earth it was his one desire to manifest Him; but the prize for the apostle was bright before him. He did not lose sight of it in the race he was running. "I press toward the mark," he says when writing to the Philippians. What he was going to be then, and what he could be daily now, filled his soul. People ask where they must draw the line between what is

“secular” and what is “religious.” One can affirm that Paul never needed to ask such a question. He never tested things in that way. Had he then any doubt of where the line must be drawn? No; the “life of Christ,” displayed in a man, tests everything in a divine way. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is the thing now, but “a new creature.” (6: 15) God’s new man to live (as Paul did) is to display the life of Christ in this body; all else is death. We are poor and failing, alas! oftentimes; but is anything else reality or life?

H. C. A.

## Fragment: Perfection

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The perfect ones spoken of in Philippians 3:15 are those who have laid hold on the truth of being risen and glorified with Christ on high; not only knowing that my sins are forgiven, but apprehending the higher truth of resurrection with Christ. And it is as such we are called to walk. This is the same perfection as is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2 — “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” The only perfection the apostle has before him is to be like Christ in glory.

## The Coming of Our Lord

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“If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch.” (Luke 12:38.)

Watch after watch has passed, and our Lord has not yet come. Still, however, His word, “I come quickly,” abides in all its eternal freshness and truth; and long ago the Spirit said, “The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” How soon then He may be here!

In the first watch of the night there were some saved ones on earth who waited for Him, and, as far as we can gather from the Spirit’s record of their state, were so deeply attached to the Lord Jesus as the hope of their hearts that they were ready to open to Him immediately. They “went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” This blessed hope, however, soon declined; it did not last long. Worldly associations and circumstances took hold of their hearts, and so far displaced Christ, that the appalling sentence could be truthfully written, “While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;” yes, “all slumbered and slept,” so that this bright and blessed hope for a long time was lost.

The time of the second watch arrived, and passed away, and the Bridegroom did not come; but “at midnight,” the closing moments of the second watch, instead of our Lord coming, He sent forth an awakening cry— “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom; go ye out to meet Him.” Then our Lord’s prophetic words were fulfilled, for there was a general awakening, and hearts in different parts of the earth were stirred toward Him. “Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps” This was “at midnight,” at the close of “the second watch,” and, we judge, began about sixty years ago. We are told it was at midnight when this cry went forth, and then it was that the third watch began. Although for many centuries the blessed hope of our Lord’s coming was, speaking generally, lost, yet there was occasionally an individual who had something of the Lord’s mind as to this. For example, a friend of the writer’s lately copied the following inscription from a monument: “Here lies, expecting the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the body of Henry Clifford, first earl of Cumberland, who died in Skipton Castle, April 22nd, 1542.”

The third watch, then, has not only begun but must now be far advanced. According to the Jewish mode of reckoning, it extended from midnight to three in the morning, when the fourth watch commenced. This was the “cockcrowing.” We are therefore now some way on in the third watch.

The fourth watch goes on to the beginning of the day. In the fourteenth of Matthew, where we see our Lord alone in the mountain praying, and, leaving that, walking on the sea to comfort His disciples, and to bring them safely to their earthly rest and blessing (typical, as we judge, of the Jewish remnant to be brought into blessing after we are translated), it was in the fourth watch of the night. It is well also to note that, while at first they were distressed, they were soon comforted and brought safely to land, and then blessing extended to others on the earth, which we know will be the case with and through the Jewish remnant when the Deliverer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob.

The Lord's coming for us cannot be far off. Though we look not for events, but for the Lord Himself, yet many events show that "the day," which sets in after we are gone, is "approaching." Speaking according to prophetic instruction, the day of the Lord begins at sunrise, or the Lord coming with His saints in manifested glory as "the Sun of Righteousness" to bring healing to His ancient people, to shine gloriously on them that fear His name, and to tread down the wicked, and make them as ashes under the soles of their feet. (Malachi 4:2,3) But "the Bright and Morning Star," for which we wait, must be before that. As such, He is the Hope of the Church of God. His last presentation of Himself to His Church on earth, to comfort and attract our hearts heavenward to Himself, was; "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star;" and He added, "Surely I come quickly." What should our warm and constant response to such grace be then but, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

How very solemn, then, as well as cheering, are the words of our Lord: "If He shall come in, the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so (that is, watching), blessed are those servants." May we hear His voice to us in these encouraging words, and not only wait for Him, but watch; for, said He, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13:37)

H. H. S.

## The Link Between Heaven and Earth

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The link between heaven and earth has been signified from the beginning in various ways. Visions, dreams, and audiences, introducing the spirit of man to unseen regions, did this in their way. Angelic visits did it still more palpably. But more strikingly still, the appearances of the Son of God at all times; in patriarchal days very specially, but also in the days of the nation of Israel.

The translation of Enoch told of this link between heaven and earth; and so did that of Elijah, leaving behind him, as he became the heavenly man, his mantle, with its mystic virtues, for the use and endowment of one who was to know his place only in the earth.

Moses too called up to the elevation of the Lord of Israel, and there, as with the eye of the Lord, surveying the tribes of Israel—the citizens of the earth—beneath him. All this tells the same; and all this tells the nearness of these different regions of the divine presence. They are but the several parts of the same temple, and, though separated, it is but a veil that lies between. And all this in figure teaches the mystery, even “the mystery of His will, which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him.”

But if the passage be short, the title to make it is simple. The link between heaven and earth is seen; the descending of the Prince of life, who is the Son of man, has made it so. But the link between the glory and the poor sinner is seen also, the blood of the same blessed One makes it so.

Isaiah is brought into the presence of the glory. The throne of the Lord is seen, and His train fills the temple, while the seraphim, with veiled faces, worship. Nature in the prophet is overwhelmed. He takes knowledge of the glory and of his own uncleanness, but of nothing else. This was nature, and it is nature still. Nature does not rise out of these thoughts, it comes short of the glory of God. It takes knowledge of the two things—the divine presence, and our ‘unfitness for it, like Adam, but that is all, and the distance is felt to be infinite.

But there was an altar in the scene to which the prophet was led as well as a throne, and the Lord’s train, and the seraphim, and the smoke that filled the place, and the angelic worship, but the prophet knew nothing about it; and yet its virtue was such that, in the twinkling of an eye, it links what had been felt to lie at infinite distances. The live coal touches his lips, and there is no longer any mention of his uncleanness, no longer any sense of distance, no dismay of soul, no amazement, but such full and entire liberty that the prophet forgets himself altogether, save as one who was now free to serve. “By faith he is free, by love he is subject.” “Here am I, send me,” says the delivered prophet, having boldness in the holiest; for “ by faith the Christian rises to God, by love he descends to man,” These fine conditions of soul Isaiah here represents, and we learn in him, as in a figure, that there are links between the glory and the sinner which can stand and answer the shock and the trial which conscience and the law and the accuser may occasion.

J. G. B.

## Jeremiah 23:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

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These scriptures bring before us in a most striking manner the contrast between the ministry of law and that of grace. Jeremiah was continually confronted, in his service, with false prophets, who contradicted his message, and denied that he was sent of the Lord. This was his perpetual difficulty, and one which he felt most of all, because of the state of heart which they thereby displayed. He accordingly says, "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets." Moreover, he says, "All my bones shake." And let the reader carefully note that it was because he thought of the coming judgment. He thus proceeds, "I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of His holiness. For the land is full of adulterers both prophet and priest are profane," &c. He mourned over their condition, and he saw no escape for them, because of Jehovah and the words of His holiness. In other words, under a ministry of law the message he had to proclaim for these sinners was necessarily one of unmitigated judgment. (See vv. 12-40) Turning now to the apostle Paul, we shall see that he also has the influence of the holiness of God upon his soul. "We must all appear," he says, "before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And what is the effect upon him of the prospect of standing face to face with God's holiness? (for that will be the standard of that judgment-seat). For himself, as for other believers, he knew that there would be there no question of sin or guilt; for by the one offering of Christ he and they alike had been perfected forever as to the conscience. But he also knew that there were those who were ignorant, through unbelief, of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. It is of them he thinks, as he remembers, even as Jeremiah did, how utterly unable they were to stand such a test. But instead of denouncing judgment, as the prophet did according to his dispensation, he writes as being in the day of grace— "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The prospect of the application of holiness in the judgment of sinners in the future becomes an urgent motive in his soul for the proclamation of grace, for busying himself with that blessed "ministry of reconciliation" with which he had been entrusted. He sought thus to persuade men, as he cried, now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray (men) in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." God is perfect in all His ways; but we can praise Him that our lot has fallen upon this accepted time, and this day of salvation.

## Luke 17:5-6

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The connection and meaning of this passage are very interesting. The Lord had just been teaching the solemnity of being a cause of stumbling to one of His “little ones,” and that, to avoid this, we must take heed to ourselves, so that we may never be weary of forgiving our brother if he trespasses against us. Rebuke him we may, and should; but if he repents, he is instantly to be forgiven; and if he trespass against us seven times a day, and says on each occasion, “I repent,” forgiveness is never to be wanting. This is grace. God never wearies in forgiving us when we confess our sins, and we, as exponents of His heart, are to exhibit the same readiness to forgive the sins of our brother. (Compare Matthew 18:21,22) The apostles evidently failed to comprehend the far-reaching character of this instruction, and yet as evidently felt their need of something more than they had hitherto received if they were to carry it out in practice. They thus interposed with the prayer, “Lord, increase our faith.” In answer to this, the Lord, while graciously recognizing the need that turned to Him, reminds them that it is not so much a question of the increase of their faith, as the exercise of what they already possessed.

“If,” He says, “ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” Now a mustard seed is the “least of all seeds” (Matthew 13:32); and consequently our Lord teaches that all the power of God is linked with the exercise of the smallest degree of faith; that faith, be it small or be it great, takes hold upon omnipotent power; and hence it is that “all things are possible to him that believeth.” The father, for example, who cried, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief,” received the answer in the healing of his child, equally with the centurion whose faith surpassed that of any in Israel. (Mark 9:24; Luke 7:7-9) E. D.

## The Lord's Departure

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All the circumstances of the, death of Jesus sum up for us these two great principles; the love of God, and the hatred of man. Here the Lord makes preparations for His departure, but, though absent now, He is ever present spiritually with His own, and His desire is that the children of God should all lean on Him. Our strength comes from our weakness, but we easily overlook the sense of our weakness when God's grace acts, because we attribute to ourselves something of its effects. It is then that we need to be sifted, for the flesh has come in, and evil with it.

The Church is a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, to show them and to make them know the power of God, the power of the Holy Ghost prevailing over the power of evil, and that even in the weakness of man. But if we abandon the support of the Spirit, the flesh re-appears, regains its strength, leads us into temptation, and does not shelter us from the effects of this last. This was what happened to Peter; the strength of the flesh suffices to lead him into temptation, but not to draw him out of it. Jesus in this way allowed Peter to be sifted, and to make experience of the weakness of the flesh, in order that he should, by this knowledge, be fitted to strengthen his brethren. The Lord says, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (vs. 28), and yet often they had neither understood Him nor followed Him faithfully.

By the Lord's departure, He leaves His disciples to themselves, as sheep in the midst of wolves; hence the instruction of Verse 36: He gives them also the example of His deep humility. From the moment that we think ourselves to be the benefactors of anyone (vss. 25, 26) we take God's place; man is glorified at God's expense in the presence of his fellows. We lose our character as children of God when we lose our place as servants. Jesus was the Servant of all (vs. 27); the more we are servants, the more we shall be like Him. Love makes us the servants of others, because of their miseries. A mother is servant to her (child, although she is above him. With regard to the Lord's Supper, the Lord wished give His disciples a testimony of His love. But —there also He was Servant. (vss. 14, 15) The Lord was going to take His place in heaven, to become the Nazarite there, separated from the joys of His disciples, and separated outwardly from sinners. Love cannot be happy without those that are loved sharing what it has. Jesus cannot be satisfied until the Church is gathered with Him in glory. But before He departs, He leaves us a token of love. He had much desired to eat that passover with them before He should suffer. He made Himself man and servant that our hearts might have an object for our love, at the same time human and divine. The link of love is perfect it, is the most intimate communion of Him with us, and, us with Him. Jesus is the first-born among many brethren, and takes that character as the object of our affections, He does not command love, but He produces it by the manifestation of His love for us. Jesus is not changed. He places us in the same position as Himself; He produces in us the desire for communion with Him. Taking a meal together is a sign of love and fellowship; the joy which accompanies it is not at its height, because now the Lord is separated from us, and does not eat with us in person any longer; He has left us together in love. The Christian is separated from the world by his love for the One who is far away from How can a Christian: stay away from the Lord's Supper? It is to excommunicate oneself. The Lord's Supper is a token of pardon; the

memorial of the love of Jesus. Christ is spiritually present with His own, but He is also absent, and we wait for Him. By partaking of one loaf, we show that we are one body, and I cannot cut myself off, excommunicate myself from the body of Christ. In the Lord's Supper Christ desired to express His love, to remind us of His love; it is a necessity of His heart. The token of the love of Christ—the Friend who has died for us—the absent Friend— must be precious to us. He deigns to be one of us, separated. from us for a little while, but finding His joy in making us happy.

J. N. D.

## Fragment: Divine Love

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Take the divine side of love; and the worse the object, the greater is the love; but if you take the human side, the greater the object, the greater is the love. We find both in Christ. If I take the creature side, the excellence of the object makes the greatness of the affection; if I take the divine side, the worthlessness; of the object makes the greatness of the affection.

## John the Baptist: John the Baptist As Prophet

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In Matthew 3 we have the public ministry of John the Baptist presented to us. A few words of the Saviour's, uttered in defense of John before the multitude, seem to me to characterize this ministry. "A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." (Matthew 11:9) John the Baptist was a prophet, but even as such his position and ministry went beyond those of the ancient prophets. These last prophesied at Jerusalem, in Israel, or in the midst of the captive or returned people. John the Baptist separates himself from the people; he dwells in the desert. The only prophet to whom he can be likened in other respects is Elijah; but his failure, and not Jehovah, led him into the wilderness. (1 Kings 19) A remnant of Judah had returned from captivity in Babylon, but in the eyes of the prophet it did not merit the name. Henceforth there was but a remnant of this remnant which could be recognized as Israel.

This is why John the Baptist does not appeal to the people as a whole, like the prophets who had preceded him. He says, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." Israel was a wilderness for God. The prophet's appeal is henceforth based on their irretrievable ruin, whilst that of the ancient prophets always supposed the possibility of a national return to Jehovah. Divine judgment was not then definitively pronounced on the human race, and the prophets were authorized by their mission to search and see if there were any good in man by which he might be brought back to God. Like them, doubtless, John the Baptist, had preached repentance, but a repentance founded on ruin without remedy. Therefore Isaiah, describing the ministry of John, adds, "The voice said, Cry. And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it surely the people is grass." What remains of man? Nothing. The wrath of the Lord has blown upon him. Henceforth repentance owned that there must be self-judgment in the presence of God; and they "went out" to the prophet, "confessing their sins," to be baptized of him in Jordan. The sinner did not confine himself to the confession of his sins, but owned that henceforth the only answer to his state was death, that there was no remedy.

Moreover, the period about to dawn in the world's history rendered such a ministry necessary. The Lord was appearing upon the scene. The history of the first man was virtually at a close (it was ended, in fact, at the cross), to make way for the history of the second Man, to whom henceforth it was a question of belonging. The way to belong to this living Messiah on the earth was to pass condemnation on oneself, and to accept grace. Thus Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesies of the little child, "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to, give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of, our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke 1:76-79)

And what kind of people are seen coming to the prophet's baptism? Publicans, men whose character was openly despicable; soldiers, accustomed to oppress the people. Corruption and violence, but owned and judged, find a meeting-place at the baptism of repentance. "John," said

the Lord, “came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him.” (Matthew 21:32) For such people there is no resource, and God can only recognize in them the fruit of His own work. “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” (3:9).

There is another character of prophetic ministry which cannot be lacking in John the Baptist, and which he presents more fully and strikingly, than his predecessors. It is judgment in contrast to grace. The Pharisees and Sadducees went with the crowd to his baptism. They did not come as guilty, but as self-righteous. The sight of the work of God in publicans and harlots produced, among these people neither remorse nor faith (21:32), and their final sentence is pronounced. A “generation of vipers” can only be destined to “the wrath to come;” such cannot be taught to flee from it. If they accepted this judgment, they would bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, was set aside. God would raise up children to Abraham by giving life to that which was dead and hard as stone. (3:9)

John adds, “And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees.” As in a forest the trees to be cut down are marked with a hatchet, so already the objects of judgment were designated; but it was no longer a question of cutting off branches or even the trunk; the root was bad. “Nothing will remain of you,” said the prophet, “in view of the judgment which is at hand.” And who will execute this, judgment? Christ. “He,” said he, “shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” (vs. 11) He possesses the two means of destroying sin—the Spirit, the gift of grace consequent on the Saviour’s work; and fire, consuming judgment. It seems as if the prophet said, “I cannot do a work in your favor. I baptize with water; but He brings to you complete deliverance, and to the world definitive judgment.” Then, describing what the Lord is about to do in Israel, he contemplates in the future the final result of His action, “whose fan is in His hand” —a judgment which separates the chaff, but which preserves the grain to be gathered into His garner. This is what will take place for Israel. Then the threshing-floor of Jehovah will be thoroughly purged, and there will be no more defilement, but unquenchable fire will destroy all the chaff. Such then is one of the features of the ministry of John the Baptist—the fullness of judgment and the greatness of deliverance, both made known in the person of the Messiah.

This brings us to the Lord’s second word, “Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.” John the Baptist is the only prophet heralded by the prophets themselves (Isaiah 40; Malachi 3:54), but that does not constitute the especial greatness which raises him above them. He does not announce in the midst of Israel future glories introduced by the coming Messiah, but he is the messenger of the Lord Himself, sent to prepare His way before Him. (Matthew 3:1; Luke 1:76) The Messiah whom he announces is a coming Messiah, already present among His people. The kingdom of heaven was there; not near at hand, but having come in the person of Christ. (3:2) The Lord was going, if received, to take in hand the government of the earth immediately. John did not fail in his mission. He prepares the way before the Lord. (Malachi 3:1) He appeals to faith, and finds an answer in the heart of a feeble remnant of Israel. He cries, “Prepare ye the way.” This way by which the Lord could enter was repentant hearts convicted of sin, confessing their guilt, finding the end of the flesh, in death and grace the only resource. John had hardly said the words, “He that cometh after me,” before Jesus came Himself. (Matthew 3:13) John opens the door, and in the person of Jesus—this Man, poor and abused—the Messiah of Israel appears upon the threshold.

How admirable at this moment is the great prophet, John the Baptist! He stoops lower than the latchet of the sandals of Christ. (Matthew 3:11; John 1:27) He declares that he has need to be, baptized of Him. (Matthew 3:14) Thus humbling himself, he exalts, on the one hand, the personal dignity of his Lord; and owns, on the other, in the presence of such perfection, his own condition as a sinner. But how much more worthy of admiration still is the Saviour Himself! He, the most high—, humbles Himself still lower than John, who stooped to the sandals of His feet. “Suffer it to be so now,” He says; and taking His place in grace at the baptism of John with those who repent, He finds His delight in broken and contrite hearts, and associates Himself with the “excellent” of the earth. Then, not content with abasing Himself, He adds, “It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” raising John to a level with Himself, and making him a companion in the accomplishment of the will of God. “The heavens were opened” upon and occupied with such perfection, and our hearts too may well be opened to contemplate it.

H. R.

## Such Knowledge is too Wonderful for Me

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To dwell in the presence of the Lord is the unequalled joy of the renewed heart, to dwell in His house its happy anticipation. Ever of old it was the blessed hope of the upright, his deliverance from the wicked, the evil and violent man. (Psalms 140) How much more fully and excellently so is it today—the day of the Comforter’s abiding presence in and with the saints on earth, giving us to dwell in the light as He is in the light, and to have the home of our souls in the heavenly sanctuary where He, our High Priest, is at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and our Advocate with the Father there! Yet the soul oftentimes feels in how small a measure is our portion enjoyed compared with the way that many a saint in dispensations past has realized their lesser blessing. In spirit-taught aspirations their faith oftentimes soared, as it were, on eagle-pinion throughout the vast expanse of promise made to them, and descried bright glimpses, though afar off, of that excellent grace ministered to us. But we (is it too much to say?) fail oft and sadly too in rising to the home of the Father’s love, resplendent in holiness and celestial joy and beauty, where Jesus has taken our hearts because He is there. This failure on our part is sometimes caused by the superficial and perhaps defective way in which our souls receive, and that too from the moment of their birth into divine life, the revelation which our God and Father has been graciously pleased to give us of Himself in the person of His Son.

The intention of this present paper is not to pursue the subject further than the elements of that knowledge of God, true at all times and dispensations, the lack of which is the secret and unsuspected cause of spiritual dullness, depression, unsatisfied affections, and occasionally disastrous failure.

In the psalm previous to the one already quoted (Psalms 139), we find that the joyful and sustaining hope to the upright of dwelling in Jehovah’s presence is preceded by deep and solemn yet blessed experiences. The psalmist is under the eye of One who is intently occupied with him, before whose penetrating and exhaustive scrutiny he must needs be bowed. If responsibility is in question, such knowledge renders human effort or ability helpless to sustain it. Yet such is the One with whom we have to do, and such is the way in which we have to do with Him; for not only is there before Him “my down sitting and mine uprising,” “my thought afar off,” “my path and my lying down,” “all my ways,” every “word in my tongue,” and moreover all possibility of escape cut off; but besides all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is the word of God by which we are made to know His thoughts about us— “Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Oh, may we be found with David in this psalm sitting with heart bared to the eye of God without impatience or restlessness of spirit, and confiding in that inscrutable and all-embracing wisdom! What blessed power of the Spirit do we see in him Have our souls sounded, in feeble measure perhaps, the depths of this first and necessary experience, the patient and lowly recognition of the word of God in its divine authority and inexorable sway? The natural heart writhes beneath it, and

turns aside to follow its own thought's unrestrained; and the saint is oftentimes apt to say, as Jacob did, "Surely the Lord is in this place. How dreadful is this place!" But certain it is that, however we may turn aside from any word of God, come in power to our souls because it was needed, or because it involves some special trial—to that very word shall we be brought back in the order of God's ways with us to learn its power in His presence, what it is for Him undistorted by the corrupt will of man. Thus, perforce must Jacob arise and go up to Bethel, leaving the parcel of a field which he had bought at Shalem. The place he had chosen for himself to spread therein his tent and build an altar, El-elohe-Israel, must he leave, a grave for his worldly friends and strange gods. (Genesis 33:18; 35:4)

As we have seen, the first six verses of the psalm present what I am, and God's eye upon me—a thought, apart from grace, insupportable; and, where grace is but partially known, prompting the exclamation of verse 7, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" But the precious sovereign grace of God has placed us before Him, who is the Father, according to all the blessed perfections of the Son. (John 14:20) And this, remark, not only gives us, when we know it, to rejoice in being there, but it is for the Father's delight that we are there. Already in Him it is the Father's joy to behold us, as it was ever His delight to look down upon Him. Every minutest detail of that path of perfect moral beauty—a Man's, yet possible alone to God—was ineffable delight to the Father's heart. In Him, and because He is in us, we share in, the love evoked by this perfection. What unchanging peace, and sweet, restful confidence of soul, may then be ours, abiding under the Father's eye—a relationship which David never knew, and could not therefore sing of His repose of spirit, and subjection to the holy character of Him in whom he trusted, may well be our example, remembering this, that while the holy scrutiny of God concerns ourselves, our ways, it is not to occupy us with ourselves, but, on the contrary, self is lost in the sense of the wondrous grasp and range of the mind of God. (vs. 6)

The next six verses (7-12) present to us, not what man is, and God's eye upon him; but what God is, and man in His presence. And as it was surely the Father's delight for His eye to rest abidingly upon His Son, so was it the Son's joy to dwell in the presence, yea, in the bosom, of the Father. Moreover, how blessedly this opens up our place, who are brought, in the communion of the Son, into His own joys. It was His inexpressible joy to depart out of this world unto the Father; and "if ye loved me," He says to His disciples, "ye would rejoice because I go to the Father." Again, He places us in the Father's affections, according to the power of His own name—"At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." The Father's name, too, that very name which He had given the Son, should be our safeguard in that blest and holy relationship. Unutterable joy for him who knows the Father, that man's habitable scene is not the limit of His presence. Nay, that which is beyond creation—heaven and hell, and the unordered elements, and light which manifests, and darkness which annuls all creature-sight—proclaim with equal tongue the glory of His presence and His power.

It is a thought, perhaps but little realized by us, that we dwell in the light as He is in the light, continuously there where there is no darkness at all. Yet it is a joy indeed for us, full joy, who are called into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, to participate in the Father's delight in His beloved Son, and to receive the communications of a love that delights to tell what that Father is to Him. (John 17:26) A thought at all times solemnizing, however blessed, but agonizing (one might almost say) to the undelivered soul not yet at peace with God, the

conscience yet unpurged! A terrible thought to the unsheltered and unsaved! How precious, then, to the soul are the following six verses of the psalm! (vss. 13-18) “Marvelous are thy works.” (vs. 14) “How precious also are thy thoughts.” (vs. 17)

Here, doubtless, it is His work in the old creation primarily; but the Christian can speak of a far higher and more glorious work than creation, even that of redemption itself, in which the Son of man has been glorified, and God glorified in Him. Through that rent veil the eye of God looked forth upon His slaughtered Lamb, whose last breath proclaimed, in undiminished power, that all was done. “It is finished;” propitiation made; so that the holy name of God is vindicated, and His nature glorified in receiving sinners to Himself, according to the fullness and perfection of His own absolute self-originating love. Atonement, too, completed at the cross, and God has set Christ Jesus forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness so that He should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus. “Eternal redemption” obtained; death and, him that had the might of it annulled; law’s curse exacted and absolutely spent, so that the power of sin is gone; sin in the flesh condemned (and never again to be judicially in, question before God) in the cross, where Christ was made to be sin for us, and thus excluded forever from the ground on which the believer stands with Him; sins borne and blotted out there, no more to be remembered. Thus, by that precious sacrifice the heavenly sanctuary is opened—a sacrifice which purifies the heavenly things and puts sin away (though we await its accomplishment in power), consciences are purged, sins forgiven, communion given in the holiest itself, where Jesus appears before the face of God for us. Indeed, “marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” (vs. 14) “How precious also are thy thoughts, O God! how great is the sum of them.” (vs. 17) What thoughts of blessing, choosing us in Christ before the world’s foundation, that we should be before Him as He is, holy and blameless! The myriad grains of sand that girdle ocean’s billows, and restrain their fury, furnish an ineffectual comparison with the thoughts of God, as many as they are precious, for His people here below. But in the heavenlies every spiritual blessing is ours. Comparison is impossible here, for the object is not merely the blessing of His saints, but “the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;” and, moreover, the “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

David could say, “When I awake, I am still with thee.” (vs. 18) But we know the new creation power that wrought in the Christ in raising Him up from among the dead, where we were in our offenses and sins, and quickened us with Him, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, “and has raised us up together, and has made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” How blessed our portion, not only to be “still with” Him but to be seated there where He is in Christ Jesus, the objects and the occasion of the display of the surpassing riches of His grace throughout eternity!

The concluding six verses of the psalm (vss. 19-24) bring powerfully before us the result in practical holiness of being under God’s eye and in His presence, the blest object of His work and purposes of grace. He separates from evil and refuses all association with the wicked— “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.” He desires also that every secret spring of evil in himself might be detected and judged— “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.”

That approaching day of glory, which involves the judgment of the wicked, necessitates withdrawal from that and those on whom the judgment falls. This is the evil without; but not less imperative is it that the evil within should be absolutely refused. A far more difficult matter, and one proceeding on entirely different principles; i.e. not because of the judgment coming on it, but by reason of the confidence established on the ground of God's perfect knowledge of the soul and His work on our behalf. "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that has this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." In order to do this we need the distinct sense in our souls of the blessedness there is in Him, and of His relationship with the Father. Consequent thereon, the certainty of being like Him when He appears produces in us a purifying process corresponding thereto. In addition, the disciplining hand of God is often needed to arouse our hearts. "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest," was said of old, and is a necessary word today; but our psalm has a higher aspiration— "Lead me in the way everlasting." (vs. 24) May each beloved child of God be found sitting loose from the entanglements of this poor world, and "press toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus."

W. T. W.

## Decline

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The beginning of all decline is the heart getting away from its privilege to be for Christ, and its responsibility to take up everything in connection with Him. Among the early assemblies of Christians, while apostles were still living, decline had come in, both in Corinth, and also in the assemblies of Galatia, and the attention of Christians was directed to this; viz., Christ had not His place among them. This is what we have here, and it is insisted on in both these verses.

No doubt there was local recovery, both in Corinth and also in the assemblies of Galatia. Still, what marks the day in which we live is not local declension merely, but the wide- spread departure of professing Christians from what would mark us if Christ had His real place in our hearts. Every Christian must take his and her place here as one who has part in the ruin in which the assembly of God, the Church, is found. The way of recovery is the matter that concerns us now. It is for me to first learn this with God, and practice it as an individual, ere I can in any way minister as His' servant in the present condition of the assembly on earth.

In the book of Haggai we have a day of weakness before us. The encouragement then was, "I am with you, saith the Lord," and "my Spirit remaineth among you." Everything the remnant took up was to be taken up with direct reference to this encouraging revelation from God Himself to them. Nothing could be of greater cheer to their hearts than this revelation.

At the same time it corrected all selfishness in the hearts of those who took it up in faith. It was no longer for them a question as to the comfort of their own "cieled houses," or of their gains, but of God's house and of His interests, and of what was real gain God-ward. No one who has learned this but has rejoiced that it delivers from the "BAG WITH HOLES," into which the energies of all that does not set God and Christ first are now being dropped by professing Christians, those who answer now to the Jewish remnant in the days of Haggai.

"I have espoused you to one husband," thus writes the apostle, "that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ." Worldliness was stamped upon the Corinthian Christians whom he addresses. And what is worldliness? It has thousands of forms. It does not come to all of us in the same way, but each of us knows what it is in himself. It may be summed up in few words. It is unfaithfulness to Christ; it does not give Him the first place. That is all, and that is decline. "I have espoused you to one husband" is true of everyone who calls himself or herself a Christian. It is not for you or for me to look at other Christians, to see how they act up to, or fail to act up to, this relationship. Comparing ourselves thus among ourselves the same apostle says is not wise. It is trying to find an excuse for the path of decline upon which we have entered. The heart loves its own ease, and seeks this path for itself where it can hold the "profession" of Christianity, but give to, Christ a secondary place. It wants heaven, but refuses to give up—earth.

The remedy is at hand. May that "jealousy" of the Spirit (who is here for Christ) arouse us from the worldly lethargy into which we have fallen, whenever and wherever we are not putting the Lord first. Nothing else will deliver us from the worldliness of this present day. I must go forth with the

one distinct object before me, that I am here for Christ, for Him whom the world crucified. And this will deliver from it, and will also display itself in the manifestation of the life of Christ in me. No matter what others are doing, I shall “walk as He walked.”

If possible, the state of the Galatians was more critical than that of the Corinthians. He has to say, “I stand in doubt of you.” Were they really Christians? He says, “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” His confidence is in God; for he says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.” Ah! what is religion (and there was plenty of it in Galatia) without the display of the life of Christ? It is but the path of decline, whatever people may once have known, or however faithfully they once trod, the right path. They are not now in it. If Christ is formed in us, His life must express itself in our lives. Anything less than this, anything other than this, is decline. It is not in law keeping, not in circumcision, nor in obedience to ordinances that Christianity consists. It is in the display of the life of Christ, which can only be found where Christ is put first.

The beginning of the Church’s decline in Revelation 2 is, that she had got away from Christ. “Thou hast left thy first love.” And the way of recovery for individuals in Revelation 3 (at the lowest point of the Church’s history) is, “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;” that is, you must give Christ His place. May the Lord not only open our eyes to see that there is decline, but give us to take individually the way of recovery which He points out to us in these Scriptures.

H. C. A.

## Waiting and Watching

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“Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.... Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.” Luke 12:36,37.

Our Lord would have us “watch” as well as “wait” for His coming. Both imply spiritual activity. Waiting souls are certainly not sleeping; for waiting according to our Lord’s mind must be with girded loins, diligence in His service, and lights burning, thus bearing clear testimony to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit during the darkness of the night.

There seems, however, to be something more earnest and definite in watching than in waiting, though all who are watching are also waiting for Him. We can understand three persons having heard that a well-known friend is expected to land at a certain seaport. One of them seems much interested at the intelligence, but it does not produce any alteration in his walk and ways. He knows his friend is coming, and is satisfied with the knowledge of it. The second man is so affected by the sure tidings of his friend’s return that he goes to meet him. He soon finds his way to the seaport, and determines there to remain till his friend comes. He is waiting. Day after day passes, and the friend has not come. Still he waits. Though he is often seen occupying his time and means in self-pleasing, he waits on day by day thinking often of his friend, and his interests. But the third man not only goes to the seaport, and awaits the arrival of his coming friend, but he looks over the sea many times a day, makes every inquiry as to the expected vessel, and carefully inspects the passengers to see if his friend is among them. This one is watching. Our Lord would have the hope of His coming so real in us that it should stir our hearts to go out to meet Him—to be watching as well as waiting, and that not on special occasions merely, but as the posture of our souls continually; thus giving a color, unconsciously perhaps, yet nevertheless really, to all our ways. Nothing can be more practical or more eminently sanctifying— “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3) This is more than knowledge of doctrine, for it is divine truth received into the heart in faith, so that the heart goes out after the Lord Himself with longing desire and expectation of seeing Him; it is the “blessed hope” of our souls, and He would have us “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” “This hope,” then, when it is a reality in our hearts, “purifieth” even as He is pure. It purifies not according to the low standard of Christendom’s estimate of Christianity, but owns no standard of purity but Christ— “as He is pure.” It teaches us to separate ourselves from everything, whether men call it good or bad, that is unsuited to His mind who is the “holy” and the “true.” May He graciously strengthen this hope in us. What need have we to cry in these closing days, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe?”

Those who are able to go back fifty years or more in marking the ways of God, cannot have forgotten the striking effects of the preaching of the Lord’s coming at that time. Those who announced the midnight cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him,” carried conviction to the hearers by their walk and ways that they were themselves getting ready to meet Him. It was the coming of the Lord Himself they had before them. Then it was, not so much, a question of doctrine, but of meeting Him. One and another saw it plainly taught in the Word as the

blessed hope of the Church, and marveled that it had been lost so long. Many received the truth in faith, and therefore acted on it. Like the Thessalonian believers, they waited for God's Son from heaven, though their views were very defective as to details concerning it; nevertheless, the Lord Himself was their hope and expectation. So plainly and solemnly was He set forth as quickly coming, both in preaching and teaching, that sinners were aroused in conscience, and cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" and believers almost everywhere were, aroused from slumber. Wherever the testimony went forth there was almost always an awakening, though it was resisted by some of the wise of this world, and ridiculed by others. Many believers were so stirred in heart and conscience as to desire in all their ways to be "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." It was to them truly a purifying hope. At whatever cost to themselves, they felt the preceptive teaching of Scripture to "do all for the glory of God" must be carried out; so that a deep heart-searching inquiry was awakened in souls in many places as to whether they were ready, not merely as to title, but as to walk and service, to meet the Bridegroom? It was hot death they looked for, not judgment, but the Lord Himself, their loving Bridegroom, to take His loved ones to be forever with Himself.

The effects were such as might have been expected, many felt they were in positions and circumstances which were not for the glory of God, and gave them up. Godly ministers relinquished valuable livings, and those among them who had "gifts" used them as the Lord opened their path. Military and naval officers resigned their rank and pay. Those who resided in large and expensive houses were content with smaller, to enable them to minister more largely to the Lord's servants and the poor members of the body of Christ. Costly furniture was disposed of ladies who before had moved in fashion and elegance, sold their expensive dresses, jewelry, ornaments, and other superfluities, in order to minister with the proceeds to the distressed in the household of faith. Even in the humbler classes, and, those whose means were narrow, consciences were exercised that house and household might be so orderly as to have the Lord's approval; and many a household servant had thus the Lord before her in her daily work. No doubt there was also with this failure and mistake, but many of those here referred to were personally known to us; and their devotedness and testimony continued much the same during a long life.

Nor is it remarkable that the hope of our Lord's coming thus solemnly dawning on a heart fresh and fervent toward Him should produce such results; for how could it be otherwise? Again and again have we seen the same thing, when souls have rightly had the possibility of the Lord's coming at any time before them. It must be so as long as the imperishable truth of God declares, "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Thank God the reality of this has not wholly died out. His Spirit still works, and His word is as authoritative and unalterable as ever. But, alas! instead of some now, who accept the doctrine of our Lord's coming, taking up their cross to suffer with Christ and for Christ in this time of His rejection by the world, they appear to be on good terms with the world, are gratified at their own progress in it, and long to see their children advanced positionally beyond themselves in it, and yet talk not a little about the Lord's coming. It sometimes looks as if they were bringing back again those very things which many faithfully separated from fifty years ago. May God graciously arouse us all not only to truly hold the doctrine, but to be lovingly waiting and watching for Him who says, "Surely I come quickly!"

H. H. S.

## Isaiah 45:23

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The light thrown upon this scripture by its citation in the New Testament is remarkable. But before we proceed to this, a glance at the context will be both interesting and profitable. In verse 22, following upon the assertion that, in contrast with idols, Jehovah alone is God, that “there is no God beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me,” we have the universal invitation of grace, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Then comes the solemn asseveration, enforced by a divine oath, “That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear;” that is, Jehovah, the Creator-God, has thus decreed. Turning now to Philippians 2, we find that these words are applied to the One who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are, moreover, two notable explanations added—explanations which never could have been discovered, had they not thus been divinely given. The first is, that “every knee” applies to all in heaven, to all in earth, and to all under the earth; i.e. to all intelligences, whether in heaven, or in earth, or in hell; all demons, as well as all angels, saints, and men. Secondly, “every tongue shall swear” is seen to mean the confession to the glory of God the Father that Jesus is Lord, all alike owning the exaltation and the given name, which is above every name, of Jesus as Lord, in virtue of His death on the cross. What an unfolding, both of the glory of the person of our blessed Lord, as well’ as of. God’s appreciation of the life and death of Him who was known on earth as Jesus of Nazareth! In Romans 14:10 we find another application. Why, says the apostle, dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

For it is written, “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. (vss. 10-12) In this scripture bowing the knee is referred to our accountability to God in judgment; and we are exhorted, because all alike have before them the prospect of the judgment-seat, to desist from judging one another. (Compare 1 Corinthians 4:3-5) We know from another scripture that the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son; and this fact, taken in connection with the statement of the apostle, brings out again the essential and personal glories of Him who will be the Judge of all. These several scriptures, when combined, contain a remarkable revelation of the purpose of God as to the absolute supremacy of His beloved Son, and also of His will to have that supremacy universally owned. Jesus of Nazareth is already, and one day shall be confessed to be, Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.

## 2 Timothy 4:8

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It is often asked, in reference to this scripture, whether the crown of righteousness is a reward for a special class; whether, that is, the words they “that love His appearing” describe those only who are really looking for and loving the appearing of our Lord and Saviour. The truth is rather that we have here the Holy Spirit’s estimate of all believers. The question is therefore not so much whether all, Christians answer to this description, as the fact that this is the light, because their true and proper attitude, in which they are regarded by God. Take another similar passage, “Unto them: that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:28) Now it would be a great mistake to suppose, as some have contended, that those who look for Him designate a class—those only who are actually expecting Christ. If this were accepted, the false doctrine, rife in some quarters, would follow, that only those who are waiting for Christ will be blessed with full salvation on His return. Once again, it is the characteristic of all believers before God, showing that. Their only proper attitude is looking for the return of their Lord and Saviour. These scriptures thus gives us a standard by which we may ascertain whether we are in any measure answering to God’s thoughts of His people.

## Matthew 20:1-16

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It is essential to observe that this parable relates to service, for the laborers are sent into the vineyard. There is also no doubt that it sprang out of Peter's question: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" In reply the Lord graciously told His disciples that they should have a special place in the kingdom, should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and, moreover, that everyone who had forsaken anything for His Name's sake should be abundantly recompensed. He then added the significant warning, that many who were first should be last, and the last first; and this He proceeded to explain in the parable: "For," He says, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." We have, in the next place a description of the several laborers, with the different hours at which they were hired. But, in fact, there are but two classes, those who agreed upon the amount they were to receive, and those who left themselves in the hands of the Master to give what he deemed right; the former, we apprehend, being the "first," and the latter the "last" of chapter 19:30. The former too represent, we doubt not, the spirit of Peter, as expressed in his question, "What shall we have therefore?" The Lord thus brings before us the right and wrong spirit of service; the latter finding its motive in expected reward, whereas the former draws the spring of its activity from the will of the Master, and is content to leave every other question to the grace which has called. The one thinks of the value of the labor rendered, the other of the Master for whom the service is done. Those who agreed for their penny were, in a word, legal servants; whereas those who left themselves to the One who had called them were under the power of grace. To the first, the labor was a means of recompense; to the last, it was a privilege, and hence they prize it in and for itself, knowing something of the grace that had bestowed it. All this is brought out when the steward settles with the laborers. In obedience to his lord he begins with the last, and everyone received a penny. This 'excited the anger of the first; for if the last had a penny, surely they were entitled to more. The answer was that they had received what they bargained for, that the master had the right to do what he would with his own, and that their eye was not to be evil because he was good. The exhibition of grace, with all its sovereign rights, only excited the envy of the natural heart. Hence the enmity of the Jew when the gospel was proclaimed to the Gentile, and thus though the "first," he also became the "last." So with these laborers; those who went to labor last in the vineyard left the master's presence satisfied with his goodness, and so became "first; "while those who were first in their labors left his presence with murmurs in their hearts and on their lips, strangers still to grace. Hence the conclusion: So the last shall be first (referring to chapter 19: 30), and the first last; for many be called (as all these laborers had been), but few chosen.

E. D.

## The Word of God—Intercession—Ebenezer

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“And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 3:21) Thus grace acts when the established order in Israel was broken up through the wickedness of the priesthood, and Ichabod was written on the nation, “Samuel was established (a word which carries with it the thought of God’s faithfulness, see margin) to be a prophet of the Lord,” who thus renews His communications with His people. It was a time of testimony until another order, that of the kingdom already announced in Hannah’s prophetic song, should be set up. Then, “He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.” (Chapter 2:10) Till that time Samuel ministers the testimony of God to the people. The faithfulness —of God is thus seen in giving His word to sustain faith during a time of disorder, as well as to apt upon the conscience and conduct of those addressed by it. Never will be such a moment of distress as the time when the remnant of Israel will have to say, “We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.” (Psalms 74:9) Then even the faith of the elect will all but give way, according to our Lord’s own word, “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

Besides being the channel of divine communication, Samuel occupies another place equally important and blessed, connected also with the patient grace of God —that of intercession. This position of Samuel is very definite, and is developed in the chapter before us. We may also learn from Jeremiah 15:1 what a very blessed place of intercession both Moses and Samuel had occupied in the history of Israel, how they both took up the failure of the people, and had special access to the Lord with regard to it. No such place of nearness was accorded to Saul when the kingdom was set up in him. He was not a vessel unto honor. Hence, he is dependent on Samuel’s word to be shown what he must do—direct communication and approach to God he has not. It is in this point that his breakdown begins; having no apprehension of the divine mind himself, he cannot wait to receive it by the hand of Samuel. The mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, and this makes it so serious if the flesh takes a place in the things of God, it can neither trust Him nor wait for Him, nor does it enter into His thoughts about His people. The end is awful when he who outwardly had been the instrument of the power of the Spirit of Jehovah, because of his position, becomes subjected to an evil spirit from the Lord. Such was the result of the setting up of Saul’s kingdom, which was in itself the rejection of Jehovah’s authority; and of Samuel’s testimony and place of intercession.

But to return to that which is our immediate subject. First, let us note the circumstances in which the people of God are found at the moment we are considering. For twenty years Israel had been content that the ark of God, displaced from the tabernacle at Shiloh, should be in a private house in Kirjath-jearim. Not that they had any title to find another abode for it; sovereign grace alone could accomplish that, and afterward establish it in Sion. During the time of its being at Kirjath-jearim, Israel had been serving Baalim and Ashtaroth. “The time was long,” and vanities cannot satisfy. Hence desire of heart is awakened, so that “all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” The moment of felt need is the moment when the testimony of God has its effect upon

the conscience, and it becomes divine direction to the exercised soul. Moreover the state of the people, hitherto unnoticed, is discovered by the word of Samuel— “If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods.” How much is discovered by the action of the word of God when its testimony is received! That which had hindered the Lord being with them is now made manifest, and the heart is challenged as to the place which He holds there. He who has written, “My son, give me thine heart,” cannot be satisfied with less. He had not been unmindful of Israel’s departure from Himself, therefore the word of Samuel is, “Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” There is a great contrast between such an admonition and the blindness which had said, “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” (Chapter 4:3) This was but the form of godliness without the power. What God has given relied upon, instead of the God that gave it being feared and trusted. The word of Samuel produces a twofold effect—there is separation from evil, and separation to God. “Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served: the Lord only.” Philistines are not external foes, but those within, allowed by the Lord to remain within the inheritance “to prove Israel by them.” (Judges 3.1, 3) When the time of testing by them arose, we are instructed fully as to the power by which they could be met. The Nazarite (the separated one) is God’s way of deliverance. (Judges 13:5) Such was Samson to be, and such was Samuel (chapter 1:11), and such, beloved brethren, must we be if the Lord’s supremacy in the midst of His saints is to be maintained. Samuel’s word is indeed necessary: “Prepare your hearts unto the Lord.”

The question of supremacy is very definitely put by the giant of Gath in chapter 17:8, 9: “Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul?” (not servants of Jehovah, or, as David calls the hosts of Israel, the armies of the living God) “choose you a man for you. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.” It is he that has been anointed king who lays the champion low; but practical Nazariteship is that which brings in God’s deliverance in the time of testing, and sets the Lord’s people in the place of over-corners.

But return to the Lord is not the same thing as the early days of power and blessing, when the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from circumcised Israel, and they had the presence of the Captain of the host of the Lord under the walls of Jericho; therefore, in taking the place of intercession, Samuel does not gather all Israel to Gilgal (though he judged Israel there, and there Saul was directed to await him), but to Mizpeh (the watchtower). It is not the day of the man with the drawn sword, but of the intercessor for a failed people. Surrounded by the foe, where could Israel gather but to the watchtower? and there take the place of weakness and confession. “They fasted and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and said there, we have sinned against the Lord.” Such is the place that befits those who are conscious of the want of heart which first neglected to make the Lord and His interests supreme, and then was powerless to resist the inroads of the enemy from without, and the supremacy of the foe within. “And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.” It had been a time when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6;21. 25) Now there is the judging of ways and doings by him who ministers the word of God. There is not only the confession of weakness and sin, but they are subject to the judgments of the Lord, which are true and righteous altogether.

“The word of God is quick and powerful,” and “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” He it is also who says, “I know thy works.” Like the word of Samuel, which was to all Israel (chapter 4: 1), this addresses itself to the public body; but if any are led to bow under the word and eye of One altogether beyond Samuel, do we not know that He has laid the ground for intercession righteously, in that He is the propitiation for our sins, and that He has borne them in His own body on the tree? He is able thus to save for evermore all that come to God by Him. What holy affections are called forth as we realize, though we may cry, out of weakness and the sense of failure, that He has been, beforehand with us, and that the very cry produced in us results from the blessed fact that He has not been ashamed to confess in His own place of intercession our names before His God and Father, though He may have to judge us in Mizpeh. If He has to judge our ways, yet never will He cease to confess His deepest interests in us. “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” He counts upon there being an ear to hear, while His word is to “all Israel.”

But let us note further, in connection with the place of intercession which Samuel takes in the hour of the people’s need, that “he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord.” Here, in the sucking lamb, there would appear to be the same sense of weakness as in the pouring out of water previously; their own condition had been then confessed, while Samuel owns in his offering the feebleness of their apprehension of the only ground on which their relationship with Jehovah could be based—the ground on which Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; but whatever the feebleness of their apprehension, the sacrifice itself was wholly unto the Lord—that is, the worth of the burnt-offering. Hence the answer of the Lord to Samuel’s intercession is according to His estimate of the whole burnt-offering, though the low condition of the people was fully recognized in it. The power of the Lord is now manifested as He thundered upon the Philistines. (Compare chapter 2: 9, 10) The sufferings of Him who was crucified in weakness, but liveth by the power of God, are the key to every interposition of God on behalf of His people. We may have to draw the contrast between the picture given to us in Leviticus 11:22, when Aaron lifted up his hand and blessed the people from the altar of burnt-offering (compare Luke 24:50), and, now that Shiloh had been forsaken, the sucking lamb of Samuel; but the power of God towards a failed people is manifested.

“So the Philistines were subdued, and came no more into the coast of Israel.” They are free to enjoy the inheritance of the Lord, and cities, and coasts are delivered out of the hands of the enemy.

And now, whose is the victory? And what the record of deliverance? Gideon made an ephod and put in his city, and it became a snare, instead of a memorial of the Lord’s deliverance. The moment of victory becomes in such, case the moment of danger. “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” It records the Lord’s help, and not Israel’s strength or faithfulness. There is no such memorial here as was written in the book of Jasher in the day of Joshua (chapter 10: 13), for Ebenezer has to tell of the Lord’s intervention in other circumstances—of a stone of help for a sinful, and yet through grace, repentant people. And what is our Ebenezer? What name do we own as bringing in for us the help of the Lord? Lord Jesus, Thou art our Stone of help—our Ebenezer. If truths have been recovered, if coasts have been delivered out of the hand of the enemy, it is because Thou, who hast suffered for sins once when by the Eternal Spirit Thou didst

offer Thyself without spot to God, art in the place of intercession above. Our Stone of help, our Ebenezer, art Thou!

We do well to remember, as we meditate on the intercession of Christ, that it is founded on the fact of His having settled every question between us and God by having suffered for us on the cross. As the Holy Sufferer “who offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him out of death,” we have One whose heart has been the vessel of every human woe, and yet felt it all and confessed it all according to God. Hence help can flow to us in answer to the perfect expression of the desires of His heart about us, as He makes intercession for us on high. In the beautiful psalm (2 Samuel 22) which describes the Messiah entering the dark path of the sorrows of His beloved people to take them up on His own person—He who well knew their meaning—He who is able to save for evermore all that come to God by Him—calls His God “the horn of my salvation” (vs. 3); that is, the power of it. Further, He says, “Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation.” Salvation is there thrown round Him, and us in Him. (vs. 36) In verse 47 He exalts “the rock of my salvation,” and in verse 51 “He is the tower of salvation for His king.”

T. H. R.

## Fragment: Exactness and Liberty in Interpretation

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If in the meditative reading of every passage of Scripture the imaginative tendency of some minds is to be watched, so likewise is the literal or exact method of others. It was an error of too much exactness of interpretation to say, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" because Jesus had been speaking of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; and it was an error of too much liberty in interpretation to say, "That disciple should not die," because Jesus had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

J. G. B.

## Treasure in Earthen Vessels

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It is a great thing to remember—what Christians too easily forget—that we are called to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and we live by the revelation of them.

God has not introduced grace and His Son and Spirit to make us get along easily in this world—it was not needed but to bring us—to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and to live in them. What characterizes a man is what his mind is on, and then all his ways flow from that.

The apostle says that we “in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened;” that is, all we have of this world. The Lord uses it as an occasion of His dealings with us; but He does not take that up until salvation is settled. Redemption being settled, we find difficulties and exercises come in, and the apostle gives us here and in chapter 12 what the principle and power of his walk were. What we are called to is the manifestation of the life of Christ; your whole life is to be nothing but that. God is revealed, we have life, and the Holy Ghost is our power; we are set here as the epistles of Christ, for men to read, whilst waiting for Christ to manifest Himself in glory, we have to manifest Him in grace.

It is not pleasant to “do well, and suffer for it;” but is not that what Christ did? It is what we have to do in lowliness and meekness. He first gives us a place in heaven, Christ our life, and then sets us down here to do that. We have the revelation of God Himself in the person of His Son. He dwells in us, and we in Him; and we know it, for He has given us of His Spirit. Our place before God is settled; Christ is our life. We have the knowledge of God, and power to walk in this world; and, another thing, heavenly things are revealed—the things that belong to the place in which we are. “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.” There we are to live, and get the motive that characterizes us as Christians. If that were always so, we should be always really epistles of Christ—in, our houses, our dress, in our everyday life, in all the things that are the expression of a man’s heart. Is Christ the motive in everything we do? If not, we leave Him for some vanity or other. What every Christian has to do is to commend himself “to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (vs. 2), that if they judge him, it should be for consistency.

Verse 6. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,” &c. That is where every Christian is. The glory of God is revealed in my heart, and I am thus to manifest it in the world, that they should see it in my words and ways and in my gift, if I have one—that all I say and do should give out the light of the knowledge of God in a world of pitch darkness. It has been revealed in our hearts to make it shine out in the dark of this world. It is a blessed place, but a very distinct and definite one. If Christ is revealed, He has brought in the knowledge of God; all the glory of God, His holiness, His majesty, His love, has shined into our hearts, that we may give it out.

That is very simple if it were all; but it is not all. It is God’s way to put this in an earthen vessel. The apostle does not speak here of wickedness, but weakness. We have to get the flesh put down,

and we get chastening. We know that, but the apostle does not go on that ground here. It is not a question of sin or failure, but of the path of the Christian as such. The first element is, he has the whole glory of God revealed; but in this “earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God”—constant dependence.

Great, excellent, and wonderful as the treasure is, He has put it in a place which, to man's eye and mind and thought, is unfit for it—as to power, I mean. Therefore, in your life, even when you are going on right, you get these two elements—all the glory of God revealed in your heart; but put purposely in an earthen vessel, because there is a great deal for us to learn as regards what poor, weak, wretched creatures we are. Peter says, “I will go to prison and to death for Thee.” “Will you?” the Lord says. “I will see.” We all know what it was. You may say he had not, the Holy Ghost. No, but the flesh is as treacherous now as it was before the Holy Ghost was given; of course, there is more power to keep it down. We may learn slowly what it is, but learn it we must. It comes out even when we are seeking to serve Christ honestly, as Peter was. It is the thought of God to put the treasure in this vessel that it may learn itself what it is, and we must learn it. We may earnestly and honestly go and preach Christ, and heartily; but if we have not learned ourselves there is some confidence in self, and we make mistakes. It is lovely to see Moses going down and associating himself with the poor brickmakers; but he had not learned himself, and he killed an Egyptian, and then ran away.

I must keep watching the flesh, for I know what it is; then I lean on a strength that is not mine, and wait for God's direction and guidance; for I know myself in such a way as to have confidence in Another, not in myself. By the discovery of my weakness I know I have no power but in God. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He had been put down when he was converted, but he had to be kept down that he might know it was not the capacity of Paul, but that the power of Christ might rest upon him. God says, “It is I working in you. Cannot I work through your boggling?” “Oh, then,” says Paul, “I will keep it! Most gladly will I glory in mine infirmities.” Here he says, “We are troubled, on every side, but not distressed;” for we have God to look to. “Perplexed, but not in despair.” I cannot see a way out for myself, but I have God, and He is a sure way. “Persecuted, but not forsaken;” for God is with me. “Cast down, but not destroyed.” He lived in the consciousness that the Lord was always there, and that he wanted Him. Even in truth and sincerity of heart we are apt to go on as if we did not want the Lord. If for one instant I have not Him with me I am nothing. Where we are seeking to serve Christ, we have to learn our own lesson; but where there is not that dependence there will be failure. In small things or in great things we cannot do anything without Him, and we are not to do good in the strength of our own thoughts; we are slow to learn it.

There are two remedies for this. First, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus.” (vs. 10) The apostle applies it to himself, and that goes very far, though it is not all; but if you applied the cross to every thought that arises in your heart, you would find how many thoughts the cross would crucify. The flesh would never put up a thought at all. What thought could a dead man put up? Of course, we have to be gentle and courteous as Christians; but the old man has been put to death, and I have to reckon myself dead. Here he is carrying it out every day.

I might fear there are many here who do not so apply it to every thought and feeling and purpose; who do not so distrust the flesh, and everything in mere human nature. If I let my body live, there is flesh. But he says, I bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be

manifest in my body. In order to manifest Christ always, I hold the flesh dead. That is his part in faith. Then comes the second thing—God's part. "We which live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." However faithful he was, God had to help him. He could not trust him, and He cannot trust you. He puts you through circumstances where the flesh comes out, and then says, There now. Paul could say all this trial and exercise was for Christ's sake. With us very often it is for flesh's sake.

The fullness of the glory is ours. The glory has shone into our hearts; but He puts it in an earthen vessel, because our hearts have to learn what we are. No will can be allowed; no self-stirring, no flesh, no thought from the vanity of this world can be allowed—nothing that does not suit this treasure. But do not thoughts come into your mind, and allowed there, that do not suit the treasure of heaven? Things that do not take the form of gross evil, but a quantity of things that are not Christ? Take the day's conversation. Has there been no vanity, no idleness? Is your speech "always with grace, seasoned with salt?"

If you take up a newspaper and read of the vanities of the world, do you then turn to read of Christ and His glory, and not find your heart dull? If you do not find it out, you may be sure it will get duller and duller. It hinders the preciousness of Christ to you. You have lost power. You do not go and read your Bible and pray with the same freshness. When I apply the cross of Christ, it stops the moving of my heart. The Lord puts me through circumstances that put me to the test. If death came and found me a dead man, what effect would it have? What is killing a dead man? With the apostle the flesh was kept down, and he was looking to God. He says, "We were pressed out of measure, beyond strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life;" but we trusted in God, who raised the dead. Would their killing him prevent God's raising him? It would bring it nearer. We can bless God for it. He puts down the flesh that wants putting down. "Death worketh in us, and life in you." Death was working in Paul, and nothing but life worked as regards others. Oh, that it were so with us!

The practical effect of it is, "All things are for your sakes." When self is down, I begin to think the thoughts of God, and everything is for us. I see, "all things are yours—life, death, things present, things to come—and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Do you believe that "all things are for your sakes?" that all that happens in the world, no matter what the motives that govern men in it, everything is for your sakes? He makes everything work together for your good, every circumstance in your life. They may not be pleasant, but we have not to be occupied with them as the world is. God overrules all. He lets man go on, but "makes the wrath of man to praise Him." Peter says, in Acts 2—You, by wicked hands, crucified and slew Him—but it was by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." We want only to have confidence that He has a purpose, and that purpose is to glorify His Son. Whatever is needed for that He will do. If my eyes are straightforward to glorify Him, everything goes right. If I go against His path, He will knock me over. If I am in His path, He helps me on; but I must be there with His strength. Paul says, "We faint not." I do not go on in my own strength. I may be weary or weak, but it is God. I may be faint in my mind; but "when I am weak, then am I strong." "The inward man is renewed day by day." Dependence is renewed. You never get in the grace of today strength for tomorrow. If I have learned in it more of Christ, it is profit for eternity, of course; but if the manna was kept a day it stank—it became self-righteousness. You must be dependent every instant. (vs. 17) Every trouble gives the apprehension of what is to come. "Never mind," he says, "it is a 'light affliction.'" The

inward man is not touched, it is “renewed day by day;” and we get blessing by these very things.

I would ask you, Are you ready to take this place, willing to be under God’s hand, cleaving to Him with purpose of heart, saying, “I want to get Christ, to win Him, and here I have one thing to do—to manifest Christ?” Are you willing to have your flesh put down? It is singleness of eye. What Satan is at is to get us to have, if it were ever so little, confidence in the flesh. Do you say, “Let the vessel be dealt with as He will, in whatever He sees needed, so that Christ may be manifested, whether by life or by death?” Is that the desire of your hearts?

J. N. D. (1872)

## A Contrast

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I.

The glory of the kingdom spread  
Over the Tabor's lofty head,  
Lighting the mountain steeps;  
And Jesus' robes were glistening white,  
His face —the Sun in all its might,  
And —Peter sleeps!

II.

'Tis night, and in Gethsemane  
A prostrate Form in agony,  
With bitter crying, weeps;  
The darkness deepens at His groan  
(The darkest night this world hath known),  
And—Peter sleeps!

III.

He lies upon the dungeon floor,  
A guard, quadrupled round the door,  
Its midnight vigil keeps;  
Two chains of iron bind him fast;  
Tomorrow's morn shall be his last:  
And—Peter sleeps!

E. L. B.

## John the Baptist: John the Baptist as a Man and a Witness

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We have been considering John the Baptist's greatness as a prophet, according to the Lord's words in Matthew 11:9. A second word in this same chapter presents to us rather his greatness as a man— "Verily," said the Lord, "among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." (vs. 11) In the first chapter of John's gospel he is great in three ways—personally, as a witness, and morally.

Let us first consider his PERSON. From the opening of the gospel, after having brought before us, to borrow another's words, "that which the Lord is divinely in Himself" (vss. 1-5), the Holy Spirit solemnly introduces a man upon the scene who was distinguished by his mission from all other men— "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." (vs. 6) Then (vs. 8) he characterizes him by a negative sign— "He was not that Light." What must have been the personal worth of this man, for the Holy Spirit to declare that he was not that which God Himself is in His essence The Lord proclaims in chapter 5 what he actually was "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." (vs. 35) As a lamp, his brightness was so great, that when he appeared he brought with him nearly as much joy as the daystar brings. When the Jews send priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask who he is, John replies, "I am not the Christ" nor "that prophet" (announced in Deuteronomy 18: 15-18). Such was his worth in the eyes of men, that he must needs announce that he is not the most noted person in Israel. Except Christ, never was there in this world a greater than he. Let us now examine his TESTIMONY. It was well-nigh unbounded as connected with Christ's divine character in this gospel. It was manifold, even though referring to an only and unique object.

First, "he came to bear witness of the light"—a mission unprecedented in the history of man. Morally the world was a desolate place, buried in perpetual night. John the Baptist comes upon the scene, announcing the appearance of a Luminary which would dissipate the darkness, and bring health and joy and life to the miserable. Such is the earliest testimony of this man. Alas! its results ought to have been in proportion to its importance, for John came "that all men through him might believe" (vs. 7); but the predicted Light was neither comprehended by the darkness, known by the world, nor received by His own (Israel). These last were very willing to rejoice for a season in the light, but they would not come to the Son to have life. (John 5:35,40)

Secondly, John the Baptist bears witness to the Word made flesh (vs. 15), to God become man, come down to change our state and to reveal to us the Faller. What a testimony was that in contrast with what God had revealed in past ages! The law was given by Moses, but that which in grace could meet man's state while also revealing it had till now been—unknown. Israel had been able to know God as Jehovah. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, has brought us into relationship with the Father. Moreover, the testimony of John admits of this revelation.

A third testimony is found in verse 19; a negative testimony you may say, for John tells us here what he is not. It is this to which the Lord apparently alludes when He says, "Ye have sent unto

John" (comp. 1: 19), "and he bare witness unto the truth." (Chapter 5:33) Now this record sets John the Baptist aside entirely. The truth was that he was nothing, and that the Christ—the Prophet whom he had not yet seen—was everything. This testimony is of exceeding beauty. John the Baptist sets himself aside for the triumph of the truth. Later on, the Christ announced by John, after having made nothing of himself, appears before Pilate, witnesses to the fact that He is a King, and sets no value on His life in order to maintain the truth. John the Baptist had said, "I am not;" Jesus said, "I am." On this occasion the Lord might have kept silence; but when it is a question of the truth He speaks, and His reply is like the signature to His condemnation.

We now come to a fourth, testimony (vs. 29) of particular importance in the career of this man of God. Until now John did not know the Lord personally. "He seeth Jesus coming unto him," and he utters a cry of joy. He does not say, "Behold the Light," or the Word made flesh, or the Christ; but, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The value of the work and person of Christ are made known to him at one and the same time. In Jesus he recognizes the perfect victim and the Saviour. He beholds the work of the "Lamb of God" right on to the confines of eternity. He contemplates it in its results until the new heavens and the new earth are established, where righteousness dwells, where sin shall be forever banished. He is still occupied with its results. When bearing record, he says, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him.... The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (vss. 32, 33) By this baptism the believer is henceforth assured of the efficacy of this work in his favor. He is filled with the hope of soon being with Christ, and conformed to Him in heaven.

Dear reader, what was the case with John ought to be the case with all of us. We only really appreciate the value of the work of Christ when we know Him as a Person. If John the Baptist had a profound knowledge of these things, it was because Jesus filled every place in his heart. The personal knowledge of Christ increases in our souls the knowledge of everything, at the same time that it brings us to nothing in our own esteem and in that of the world, or rather in the way in which we seek its esteem. The apostle Paul, while looking at the unsearchable riches of Christ, said, "I, who am less than the least of all saints." But Christ is known only by faith. This is what men discover when with the intellect they seek to find out God—they think that John the Baptist is the Christ, and they say that Christ is John the Baptist. (Matthew 16:14)

This testimony, be it remarked, is not strictly prophetic. John, instructed beforehand, understood these things, as we may understand them, in making the acquaintance of the Lamb of God. Also we find, in verse 34, a fifth testimony: "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." He can say, "Now I have seen, and borne witness to that which I have seen: This Man, to whom God Himself bears witness by the descent of the Holy Ghost, is the Son of God."

Such a witness as John the Baptist might have, without doubt, had a high opinion of himself. But what renders him MORALLY great (we have already touched on this point) is that he is less than nothing in his own eyes, not because he seeks to put himself out of sight, but because for him Christ fills heaven, earth, eternity, and his own heart, and that He is for him all that is contained in these precious names: Lord, Christ, Prophet, Lamb of God, Delight of Heaven, Son of God, Bridegroom. His whole heart is taken possession of by this Man, who comes after him, but who is before him. So when the emissaries of the Jews ask him, "What sayest thou of thyself?" he replies, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." "I say nothing of myself; I am a voice." He might

have said, "I am the mouthpiece of God;" but no, an instrument might even think itself something. "I am the voice of one crying" —that, so to speak, robs him of his personality; "crying in the wilderness" —a voice which awakens an echo, valueless in the hearing of men. "Why baptizest thou then?" they ask. "I baptize with water," he replies: "what is my baptism beside His?" Then, on the morrow, in company with his disciples, he stands there and looks; he looks upon the Son of God as He walks. His heart goes out to Him, "Behold the Lamb of God," he says. An eminent teacher likes to gather together disciples who listen to his instructions. Is this teacher sent from God? His satisfaction will be enhanced by the thought that he is communicating to them a divine teaching. Well, John incites his disciples to go to Jesus, and remains alone—not alone in the wilderness, he was accustomed to that, but alone amidst that which was about to become the family of God.

In chapter 3:26 his disciples have not the same self-abnegation. They come to him and say, "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him." They make John the important man, and Christ the secondary person. "See," they say to John, "how He treats you." John reminds his disciples of his own testimony with regard to Christ. Then he adds, "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom." (vs. 29) The bride is not John; he knows that. But the great prophet is content to have a secondary place; for he has Christ, He is the "friend of the Bridegroom." He listens to outpourings which are not addressed to him; but what matter? He hears the Bridegroom's voice, and his joy is fulfilled. Others will find their joy in more intimate relationships; but John the Baptist's joy is perfect in an inferior relationship; the Lord has given it to him. It is not the highest, but it is of Him, and that is enough for this man of God. His joy is fulfilled in Him who is the Bridegroom of another. Touching humility in the greatest among them that are born of women!

May it not be truly said that John the Baptist's joy in this inferior position was much greater than ours is generally who have the privilege of being the Bride of Christ? And are we not humbled at the thought of this? John appreciated our relationship, kept his own, and did not covet another. There was no more jealousy in him than among the angels, when at the birth of Christ they celebrated good-will toward man, and magnified a work of which they were not the objects, but which contemplated guilty and lost sinners. John stood by with his eyes fixed on the Bridegroom's face, and his ears strained to hear Him. He found his pleasure in self-forgetfulness, like Mary at the feet of Jesus, and allowed his heart, like an empty vessel, to be filled by the countless perfections of a Bridegroom who was not for him. "He must increase," he adds, "but I must decrease." Christ has increased; John has decreased into nothingness. This great witness, after having recorded his testimony, gathered his disciples around Jesus, and saw his testimony entirely replaced by Christ's. His glory consists in having brought into prominence the glory of the One who alone is worthy of glory. May it be so with us. We are not called to assume John the Baptist's prophetic and personal glory, but may it be ours, in self-forgetfulness, to be clothed with something of his moral greatness, and to have Christ filling our souls!

H. R.

## Confession

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God has been perfectly satisfied, as to all the believer's sins, in the cross of Christ. On that cross a full atonement was presented for every jot and tittle of sin, in the believer's nature, and on his conscience. Hence, therefore, God does not need any further propitiation. He does not need aught to draw his heart toward the believer. We do not require to supplicate Him to be "faithful and just," when His faithfulness and justice have been so gloriously displayed, vindicated, and answered in the death of Christ. Our sins can never come into God's presence, inasmuch as Christ, who bore them all, and put them away, is there instead. But if we sin, conscience will feel it, must feel it; yea, the Holy Ghost will make us feel it. He cannot allow so much as a single light thought to pass unjudged. What then? Has our sin made its way into the presence of God? Has it found its place in the unsullied light of the inner sanctuary? God forbid! The "Advocate" is there— "Jesus Christ the righteous" —to maintain, in unbroken integrity, the relationship in which we stand. But though sin cannot affect God's thoughts in reference to us, it can and does affect our thoughts in reference to Him. Though it cannot make its way into God's presence, it can make its way into ours, in a most distressing and humiliating manner. Though it cannot hide the Advocate from God's view, it can hide Him from ours. It gathers like a thick, dark cloud on our spiritual horizon, so that our souls cannot bask in the blessed beams of our Father's countenance. It cannot affect our relationship with God; but it can very seriously affect our enjoyment thereof. What therefore are we to do? The word answers, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." By confession we get our conscience cleared, the sweet sense of our relationship restored, the dark cloud dispersed, the chilling, withering influence removed; our thoughts of God set straight. Such is the divine method, and we may truly say, that the heart that knows what it is to have ever been in the place of confession, will feel the divine power of the apostle's words, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." (1 John 2:1)

C. H. M.

## Luke 9:50; 11:23

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An examination of these scriptures will show at once that not only is there no contradiction between them, but also that they are in perfect harmony. In the first case John had told the Lord that when they saw a man casting out devils in His name, they had forbidden him, because, as he said, "he followeth not with us." The answer was, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." That is, in the Lord's conflict with Satan every one, though not taking the ground of being His disciple, who was working with the same end in view (for the man in question was casting out demons in the Lord's name) was really on the Lord's side. He might be, defective as to confession and walk, but as long as he was not against the Lord in His warfare with the power of the enemy, he was really for Him. An illustration may be drawn from the attitude of Paul, when in prison, towards those who, from different motives, were preaching the gospel. (Philippians 1) In every way, the apostle said, Christ was preached, and hence he rejoiced. In like manner John and the disciples should have rejoiced when they saw this man casting out demons in the name of Christ, for though in a wrong place, he was really doing Christ's work, and was thus, whatever his own state, "for Christ." The second case is very different. Here the enemies of Christ charge Him with casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. The Lord convicted His adversaries of their wickedness, and warned them of the consequences of their attitude; and then it was that He said, "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." When it was a question—and this was the question raised—between Christ and Satan, no neutrality could be permitted. To stand aloof then was to side with the enemy; and not to gather, not to gather positively to Him, was to scatter. So now, whenever Satan appears on the scene in opposition to Christ, whatever the way in which he may show himself, if there be not an open confession of Christ, if any even remain silent, the work of the enemy is done, and such are against Christ, because they are not with Him. Take one example from Scripture. When Moses confronted the golden calf in 'the camp of Israel, and cried, "Who is on the Lord's side?" all who did not respond to his challenge, even though they had not fallen into idolatry, were against Jehovah. (Compare Judges 5:23)

E. D.

## Hebrews 9:11-12

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Attention to the context, as all confess, is necessary in order to determine the exact force and significance of many scriptures. This is especially the case with the one before us; and we cannot but think, in view of recent discussions, that had this been remembered much confusion and error of statement would have been avoided. In many quarters, in former as well as in later controversies, it has been assumed that this scripture states that Christ “entered” by His own blood into the heavenly sanctuary; and thereon the question has been raised, Did He make propitiation in heaven? or did He present His blood there before God? It is needful therefore to ascertain whether this assumption is correct. Let the reader carefully note the language employed: “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place,” &c. The point is whether the words. “by His own blood” are connected with “being come” in verse 11, or with “entered,” in verse 12. A careful examination shows, in our judgment, that “being come,” and not “entered,” governs the words “by His own blood.” Another, referring to the phrase, says, *cita* (that is, “by”) here is, I doubt not at all, characteristic of His coming. He came in that way, His coming being in the power of and characterized by these things; not the place through or the means by which, that is, the greater and more perfect tabernacle is not the place through which, nor His blood the means by which, He came, but His coming, according to the quotation made, was characterized by these things. This interpretation is entirely supported by another scripture: “This is He that came by water and blood.” (1 John 5:6) And the addition the apostle makes goes far to explain it; for he proceeds, “Not by water only, but by water and blood” —the “by” in this case being another preposition signifying oftentimes “in the power of.” The truth then is, and this is the important point, that Christ came as having to do with the heavenly sanctuary and with His own blood; and keeping this in mind, it will be at once perceived that the passage cannot be used in any way to support the theory of propitiation after death.

On the other hand, the teaching of the whole epistle is entirely opposed to any such thought. Again, and again everything is made to depend upon the offering up of Himself (7:27), the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once (10:10), one offering (10:14), &c., expressions which relate, and are confined to, what was done on the cross, and which teach unmistakably that it was there the work of atonement was forever completed. In every age Satan has assailed the cross of Christ, not only by open antagonism, but also by the subtle pretext of, explaining more fully the work of Christ. It behooves us therefore to be watchful, and to maintain the simple teaching of the word of God, that it was on the cross alone the work of atonement was wrought out; for it was there that God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, and it was there that Christ suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, as well as there that His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. It is only a consequence of these remarks to add, that the translation, “He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption,” must be insisted upon and maintained.

## Fragment: Overcoming the World

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Nothing but knowing the place Christ had in the world will enable me to overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on with God, unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ. Christ must be everything.

## Fragment: Christ Is Everything

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Until I have learned that Christ is everything, and that I am nothing, I never know my true place, whether in the world or in the assembly.

## The Sin of Miriam and Aaron

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The instruction found in this chapter is most striking and solemn—instruction never more needed than at the present moment. “Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married.” In the previous chapter the people had fallen into sin, complaining of the hardships and deprivations of their pilgrim life; and Moses, chafed in spirit at the conduct of the people, and weary of his service, also failed; and now Miriam and Aaron rise up in rebellion against Moses as the leader of the people. Miriam was a prophetess, and Aaron was the priest, while Moses was “king in Jeshurun.” It is the rebellion of the people therefore (for Miriam and Aaron are representatives of Israel) against the rights and authority of Christ; or, to speak more accurately, it is the people using their privileges as being the messenger of Jehovah, entrusted with the communications of His mind, and hence His witnesses, and as enjoying access to Him through the priest, to cast off the authority conferred on Moses as the faithful servant and administrator of Jehovah’s house. It is a solemn thing when the people of God employ the position which grace has bestowed upon them, to claim the rights which belong alone to Christ; as if the dignities which have flowed from grace could ever be independent of their source.

Miriam would seem to have been the instigator of the rebellion, for she is first named, and on her falls the weight of the chastisement. The occasion, or the ostensible occasion, was the fact that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. This he had certainly done, but it was long before he was appointed to be a ruler and deliverer of his people —when indeed he had been rejected of Israel in Egypt, and driven into exile by the wrath of the king. In this position therefore, the very marriage of which they complained was the exhibition in type of the sovereign grace of God, who, on the rejection by Israel of His beloved Son, would give Him a bride from among the Gentiles, to be His companion forever in glory. Miriam and Aaron were thus not only blind to the actings of the sovereign grace of Jehovah, but they also were forgetful that they themselves were debtors to that same grace; for He who had called Moses to be the mediator, had also assigned to them their respective places.

In truth, however, jealousy was the fount of these bitter waters, as verse 2 reveals. The marriage of Moses was only used as a blind to conceal what was working in their hearts. What they desired was equality with Moses; for they said, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not also spoken by us?” All this was very specious and deceptive. It might seem to unwary souls as if Miriam and Aaron were only guarding the rights of the Lord’s people, merely asserting that while Jehovah was their common Lord they were all alike brethren. Such a thing is not unheard of today—saints claiming (as if there could be claims where all is o grace) to be on a common equality, as to gift as well as to position, to the forgetfulness of the fact that the Lord as Head has given gifts to His Church according to His own will. The same sovereign will that put Moses into his place, determines the places of His servants in the assembly—a sphere where the Lord alone has His rights, and where He will surely vindicate His authority when His people call it in question, or fail to uphold it. What might have seemed zeal on the part of Miriam and Aaron was in fact therefore rebellion against the authority of Jehovah.

The next record is, that “the Lord heard it.” We may well lay it to heart, as reminding us how near the Lord is to us even in our failures. It is not surprising that He should hearken and hear the conversation of those that feared Him, and spake often one to another, as recorded in Malachi; but the history of Thomas, as well as the present incident, teaches us, what we otherwise might forget, that He equally listens (but with what a different attitude!) to our sinful and doubting words. Mark, too, that before the action of the Lord is described, consequent upon His hearing the words of Miriam and Aaron, the Holy Spirit turns aside to bear testimony to His servant Moses. This is exceedingly beautiful, and the testimony is not less so. It says, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” (vs. 3) This, we say, is a wondrous testimony, and one that points to the fact that in personal character—character produced assuredly by the Holy Spirit—as well as in office, Moses was a distinct foreshadowing of Christ. (See Matthew 11:29) There is a special reason for the introduction of this testimony in this place. A meek spirit never resents an insult, but bows its head unresistingly in the presence of evil, accepting all without complaint. Moses therefore would not have vindicated himself; and on this very account it is that the Lord Himself stepped in to clear His servant from the aspersions cast upon him. (Compare Romans 12:19) The testimony to his meekness gives thus the ground also for Jehovah’s action in summoning Moses and his accusers to meet Him at the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Lord spake suddenly, it will be observed. He was prompt to vindicate His sovereign rights, and He spake “unto” each; for He had to deal with each individually. They obeyed, perforce obeyed, the divine summons, “and they three came out. And the Lord’ came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.” (vss. 4, 5) It is to be noticed that, while all three were commanded to come out to the tabernacle, only Aaron and Miriam are spoken to when the Lord came down to meet them. His object was to deal with the sin of the two rebels, and to maintain the position of His servant; and in His tenderness, He permits Moses to be present to hear his own vindication. And what a vindication it was! To, a prophet the Lord would make Himself known in a vision, and would speak unto him in a dream; but a far closer intimacy He had reserved for His servant Moses, who was faithful in all His house. (See Hebrews 3:5,6) To him “will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.”

The Lord thus testifies, in this remarkable manner, both to the fidelity of His servant and also to the special place of nearness which He, in His grace, had vouchsafed unto him. Miriam and Aaron had said, “Hath not the Lord also spoken by us?” “None but Moses,” is the Lord’s answer, “has the privilege of being spoken to mouth to mouth, and of beholding the similitude of the Lord.” There is an especial significance in this statement. It points back to the apostasy of Israel, in which Aaron and Miriam had had their share, when Moses alone was faithful, and when, in communion with Jehovah’s mind, he had taken the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation; for then it was that the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle (as in the scene before us), “and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” (Exodus 33:7-11) Where were Aaron and Miriam at that time? And yet they had dared to deny his place of intimacy with’ the Lord, and to claim equality with him! What wonder that the Lord says, after recalling this to their minds, “Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (vs. 8) This was to sin

indeed, and to sin both against holiness and grace; and hence “the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed.” (vs. 9) But when the cloud had departed from off the tabernacle, it was seen that His hand had smitten Miriam; for she was leprous, white as snow. And Aaron, who had joined her in rebellion, is made to perceive the awful consequences of their sin. Time was when Miriam, the prophetess, had led the song of the women of Israel on the banks of the Red Sea; and now she was a defiled leper. How often is it that the character of sin is not seen until its fruits are reaped! The eyes of Aaron are opened the moment he beheld the chastisement inflicted on his sister, and, humbled, he turns at once to Moses (to Moses, whose mediator-ship he had denied), and cries, “Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother’s womb.” (vss. 11, 12) It is evident that Jehovah had wrought mightily in Aaron’s soul through the dealing of His hand; for nothing could be more complete than his confession and intercession. First, by turning to Moses he humbles himself, and acknowledges the special place which Moses occupies before God; next, he fully identifies himself with Miriam’s sin (“Wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned”). He then owns their common desert; and finally, he takes the place of intercessor on behalf of Miriam.

Moses instantly responds to the appeal of Aaron. Nothing could be more beautiful than the self-forgetfulness of this meek and faithful servant in all this scene. He had left himself in the hands of the Lord, and he had been amply vindicated; and with unruffled calm he responds to the intercession of Aaron, and takes his place of mediator, showing that there was not a trace of feeling upon his lowly spirit, as he thus immediately cried unto the Lord, saying, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.” (vs. 13) Jehovah heard His servant’s prayer. But the sin of Miriam had not only been against God, it was also against Moses; and hence Jehovah will have her to suffer certain consequences of her. A far less thing—even if her father had but spit in her face—would have entailed seven days shame. How much more when she had been polluted with the leprosy in chastisement of her sin! She was healed in answer to the prayer of Moses; but she must be shut out from the camp seven days before she could be restored to the enjoyment of her lost privileges.

These facts are very instructive. Whenever sin is committed by the people of God, it is forgiven on confession. (See 1 John 1:9) This is undoubted; but at the same time the forgiven saint has often to suffer, after he is forgiven, certain governmental consequences of his sin. Thus, if a sin, for example, has been committed by a believer against the people of God, the one who has committed it may often be outside of the privileges of the assembly long after he is assured of forgiveness. Moreover, it should be remarked, that while forgiveness is immediate on confession, restoration to communion is a work of time. Seven days must elapse, as in the case of Miriam—a period during which self-judgment will have its perfect work, bringing the soul to view its sin in communion with God, and thus taking His part against it. When this point is reached, restoration is complete, and the soul can be received back again into the assembly as the expression of their confidence in its restoration. It is well when the people of God have apprehended this divine method with souls.

Another thing is to be observed. “The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.” The sin of one delayed the progress of all the people. In truth, when the assembly is occupied with discipline, and there are seasons when the Lord’s honor requires that it should be so occupied, it has no leisure for edification or progress. When Achan sinned, the victories of Israel came to an

end; and they were compelled to purge themselves from evil before they could resume their conflicts with the foe. And so here, the camp could not take one further step towards Canaan until Miriam is brought back. This shows out, in a very solemn manner, the nature and consequences of sin in the midst of God's people.

May we learn from the example of Miriam more of the evil of sin before God, and more also of our mutual responsibilities.

E. D.

## Notes of a Reading on Colossians 1

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The word “Lord” is often used by people in a vague way; but here (vs. 3) we find those names of God and of Christ which represent relations. If we say “Father,” we speak as children; if we say “Lord,” we speak as servants of the Lord Jesus. The title Lord applies to Christ as Man in the glory. “What is man?” (Psalms 8) Here we see Him as having entered into the divine glory, but not having taken His own throne as yet. (See Hebrews 2:5) He is now gathering the co-heirs to take them up to Himself; and when they are gathered He will take His throne, and we shall reign with Him.

Three points are to be noticed as to the rights of Christ to take possession of all things. First, He has created all things; second, He is the Son—established Heir of all things, after Hebrews 1; third, according to God’s counsels; fourth, there is yet another point, He shall take possession of all things on the ground of redemption. Satan shall be bound, and evil put away; then the Lord shall take possession of all things, and reign.

We find, then, here, these three relations: God, the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important not to confound them, but to understand what the responsibilities are which flow from them.

We shall have all that Christ has. He will bring us into all that He Himself enjoys, only He has ever His own place, ever the preeminence in all things. Thus, on the holy mount, we see Moses and Elijah in the same heavenly glory with Him; but then, when Moses and Elijah disappear, the Father’s voice is heard— “This is my beloved Son.” That is the place that is His.

Q. What does the earnest of the inheritance mean in the Epistle to the Ephesians?

A. It is not difficult to understand that, for in our everyday language we often speak of earnest-money (i.e., a part of the payment before the whole be paid). It is the Holy Ghost in us. That we already have; but we are not in possession of the inheritance. As to power, and our enjoyment of Christ by the Spirit, it is evident that when we shall be in the glory our state, will be very different. Take, as an example, the case of condensed steam in an engine. All that immense power is spent in dragging thousands of pounds. It is slow and difficult work; but if the steam were free, what elasticity. It is so with us, as being the vessels of the Spirit. The, greater part of its power is’ absorbed in dragging the weight of that which is earthly, but in heaven there will be nothing to drag.

Verse 3. There are, then, these two characters of Christ which are not to be confounded: first, as Man before God; second, as Son before the Father. In Hebrews 1 we find yet a third: He is Son of God born in this world. Compare Psalms 2 “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

Verse 5. “On account of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens.” Notice carefully that we are not looked at in Colossians as being seated in Christ in heaven. We have died, and have been raised up; but we are still in this world, and in it with the hope (of glory) laid up for us in the

heavens. Compare this with the position of the Lord Jesus during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. He was a Man that had died, and had been raised up, but who had not gone up on high. God grant that we may fully apprehend the force of this word “raised up.” There is a great difference between quickened and raised. In John 5 the Son quickens the dead—He imparts life to dead souls. That is what follows when His Word is received. (John 5:24) But how many quickened souls there are who do not understand aught of resurrection. When I speak of having died and being raised up the question is an entirely new position before God. Associated with Christ in His work, and united with Him by the Spirit, we pass into an entirely new state of things. Such is the Christian in the Epistle to the Colossians.

Q. Had the Old Testament saint's life?

A. Of course they had; they were quickened, but they had not “died with Christ,” nor had they been, raised up with Him, which was impossible, because Christ had not yet died, nor was He risen. Then, again, He has brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings. This is the new thing.

Verse 8. Notice that this is the only instance where the Spirit is mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians.

Verses 9 and 10. Here we have a very important thing—the walk in this world of a dead and risen Christian, according to the spiritual understanding which belongs to him. “Filled with the full knowledge of His will.” This supposes that the eye is single. Mark the expressions in these verses. What an intelligent walk—with the full knowledge (■π■λωσις) of His will. It is not a question here of merely being a good neighbor, a good father, or of being diligent in one's duties, etc. (any respectable Jew would do quite as much), but of walking worthily of the Lord unto all well pleasing.

Thus, we find (Philippians 1:10) things that are excellent, and the point is to be able to distinguish them. There are things which are good, and things which are excellent; the latter still more pleasing to the Lord. There are three expressions in connection with the Christian walk: Walking worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12), who calls us to His own kingdom and glory.

Walking worthy of Christ (here in Colossians 1:10) unto all well pleasing.

Walking worthy of the Spirit worthy of the calling. (Ephesians 4:1)

Verse 11. Here is another point: “Strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy.” We see here the character of the epistle—the full knowledge of a glorious Christ, and thus are we strengthened with all power. To what purpose? For some heroic deed? No; but that we may endure. It is unto all endurance and longsuffering. This is true power. When speaking of proofs of power, Paul always puts endurance and longsuffering in the foreground. It is no such easy matter to endure everything with joy for this we need the might of His glory.

Verse 12. Here we see the present position of New Testament saints: “Fit to share the portion of the saints in light.” That is our present position. Not only are we saved, but we are already made fit to share the portion of the saints. Compare with the golden altar in the holy place of the tabernacle. The brazen altar prefigures rather the forgiveness of sins and the sinner's reception; the golden altar was within—in the sanctuary.

Verse 13. Mark two points here. There are two characters of God revealed in His Word—God is light, and God is love—and both are spoken of here. He has delivered us from the power of darkness (into light), and He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (love).

Q. What is here the meaning of “the kingdom of the Son,” etc.?

A. It is where Christ has His true sway—the real thing, true believers; a kingdom, because His authority there is fully owned.

Verse 14. Here redemption is mentioned last of all these things.

Verses 15, 17, and 18. There are two headships of Christ here: 1st (vs. 15). He is image of the invisible God, He who has created all things. It is a question of the rights and glories of His person. He has not taken His rights yet, as laid down in this verse. All things, have been created by Him and for Him.

2nd. This is the second headship (vs. 18). He is the Head of the body, the Firstborn from among the dead. He is about to take possession of all things on the ground of redemption. As risen Man, He will take that He has created as God; and the assembly, the body, shall then be the fullness of His glory. The two reconciliations (vss. 20, 21), and the two lines of Paul’s ministry (vss. 23-25, etc), flow from these two headships of Christ. (1) All things shall be reconciled; (2) you hath He reconciled. Again, (1) Proclaimed in the whole creation; (2) the dispensation of God towards the body of Christ, which is the assembly.

Mark now the word “if” (vs. 23). Why should the apostle speak of being kept if there were no danger? The “ifs” apply to the wilderness. We are saved and reconciled, but not yet in glory, and we need to be kept guarded. We should not shun these expressions; for we have need of dependence all along the road, else we shall be negligent. God is faithful to keep us, but it is necessary that we should be kept. Thus, in John 10, the Lord says, “No one shall pluck them out of my hand.” But it is evident that the enemy will endeavor to do that. See further 1 Corinthians 1:8, 9: “Who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom” —we have God’s fidelity to keep us. May we avail ourselves of it.

J. N. D. (1879)

## John the Baptist: Failure of John the Baptist

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We have hitherto considered John the Baptist in the different phases of his progress as a man of faith. We are coming to the only point in his history where weakness and failure are exhibited. The great prophet John, like Elijah, was for a moment disheartened. He was in prison, and his Master had not delivered him; his hopes were disappointed, and apparently there were no fruits to his ministry. The people, "offended in" Christ, had not "gathered under His wings;" the disowned Messiah had not where to lay His head; and this glorious Lord, who had been announced as coming "suddenly to His temple," on the very heels of His messenger, with His fan in His hand to purge His floor, was rejected and despised. Alas! under such circumstances, for the prophet to be discouraged was natural, but it was not faith, for it led John to doubt Christ, to ask himself if He was indeed the promised Messiah, He who was coming according to Malachi 3:1. John did not in his uncertainty ask himself if he were really the messenger; our failures more readily lead us to suspect God than ourselves. Anyway, this scene is somewhat consoling; if John be led to question the Messianic character of the Saviour, he is in no doubt about Him in other respects. The word of Jesus is his only and sufficient resource. "Art thou He that should come? or do we look for another?" It is decline in a career of faith; but, thank God, it is still, faith, however small its measure, and it finds, as it always will, a perfect response. John, however, the great witness, failed in his testimony. It is ever so with man; something is lacking, and even be he a John the Baptist, he will not compare with Christ. We lose nothing by it. The Lord alone remains unchangeable. It is beautiful to see in John 1 the man of faith humbling himself before the Lord; the Lord Himself is still more admirable when, man being necessarily lost to sight, He alone remains in view.

Let us consider in greater detail the Saviour's part in this scene. Whilst John is in doubt about Christ, the Lord meets his failure by putting before him His grace. "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see" (His words and His works): "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (vss. 4, 5) All these miracles, accomplished in presence of John's messengers, were the sign of the presence of Messiah in Israel (Isaiah 61: 1, 2), not Messiah in grace. Was grace then a less thing than the glory expected by the Baptist? To his question Jesus replies, "Grace remains in power, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." It is a precious thought, that in the present time—a time of weakness and of the cessation of miracles—a soul may recognize: Jesus in the preaching of the gospel to the poor, and say, "I myself have heard the Lord." Jesus adds: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (vs. 6) In spite of the forsaking of the people, there is a blest remnant convicted of sin, who, instead of awaiting Messiah's glory, have found favor in a rejected Saviour come for sinful man. The knowledge of grace in the person of Jesus constitutes the happiness of such. This was a gentle and delicate reproof to John the Baptist. Ought not the one who had saluted Jesus as Lamb of God to have remembered this grace? "Are you any longer of this blest company?" the Saviour's voice seems to say. But for the glory of Christ, the great prophet John the Baptist must be an object of grace even as others.

Whilst the imprisoned forerunner is for a moment discouraged, and abandons his testimony, the Lord Himself bears witness to John before the multitude. What grace! What divine delicacy in the choice of such a time for re-instating John, whose doubts had lowered him in his capacity of prophet, in the eyes of all! "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" A man who in trial was weak and uncertain? Ah! if he shows himself such at the time when Jesus was speaking, he had not been so at the outset of his career, and it was then that they had been called to make acquaintance with him. Or had they gone to see a rich man clothed like the great ones of this world? Nothing of the kind. But John the Baptist was still the great messenger of whom Malachi 3, speaks, although the Lord had not come to His temple. A little further on, alluding to Malachi 4:5 (not to Malachi Jesus adds, "And if ye will receive it" (that which I say), "this is Elias, which was for to come." If they received the Lord Jesus, the kingdom might be established, the curse still hanging over the people set aside, and relationships according to God re-established in Israel; in such a case, the future mission of Elias would not be necessary, and John the Baptist, come in the spirit and power of Elias, would occupy the place, so to, speak, of the future prophet.

In what follows (vss. 16-19) Jesus does not content Himself with declaring the greatness of His messenger; in grace, He raises him in presence of the multitudes to the level of his Master, or rather associates Himself with him in testimony. Their testimonies are not alike. John was likened to those who "mourned," when he called the people to repentance; the Lord resembled those who "piped;" He brought the sweet strains of grace to all. The first presented himself with the severity of a prophet, separated from the people on whom judgment was pronounced; the second made Himself accessible to men, in order, if it were possible, to win for God the confidence of sinners. These two testimonies had found no echo; these two witnesses had been rejected; man did worse than that, he accused John of having a devil, and Christ of being a participator in the sins of those He came to save. By refusing grace, by refusing it thus, what a weight of suffering has not man accumulated on the heart of the Saviour!

Whilst John, unstable beneath accumulated rejection and opprobrium, is like a reed shaken by the wind, Christ alone abides unmoved amidst the ruins. The prophet and the man of faith, the wise and prudent of this world, Israel with her cities, nothing of this remains. He abides forever. He abides, not only in a divine repose, which meets everything, but in an unruffled and ineffable joy, even whilst His human heart is broken and bleeding under undeserved reproach. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit," the Gospel of Luke tells us. (10:21) The hopes of Israel were interrupted by the fact of the rejection of Christ; but even that opened to view other vast and infinite prospects. Jehovah hid His face (see Isaiah 8:17); the Father was revealed. Heaven was opened when earth shut the door on Christ. Babes, being of but little value, were raised to the enjoyment of supreme blessings, while the wise and prudent were blinded. The least in the kingdom of heaven was henceforth greater than the greatest of prophets (vs. 11), through the enjoyment of privileges unknown to the most eminent among the representatives of the law. Henceforth a little child would be nearer to Christ, in position, in knowledge, and in glory, than the greatest witness to the coming of His kingdom, I repeat it, the Lord sees in His rejection the foundation of present and future kingdom—blessing for the people of God. The people according to the flesh had miserably failed, and there was an end to all' right to the kingdom as to fleshly descent; henceforth it would be taken by force, and could not be entered by right of inheritance; to have part in it, there must be a necessary act of faith, the giving up of pre-existing relations, the breaking of natural links.

The mass of the people had turned away, but a remnant remained according to the election of grace, established in virtue of the work accomplished after the Saviour's rejection. Those who formed part of it were not offended because of Him; to these "violent" the kingdom henceforth belonged. As wisdom's children, begotten by her, they justified her by accepting grace. The Lord found all His delight among these few, and even if His work of grace had only brought Him one poor woman of Samaria, it would have been enough to enable Him to say, "The fields are white already to harvest."

The rejected Jesus remains alone amidst the rubbish, unmoved, full of assurance and joy, praising the Father, even though there was nothing more to be expected from man. He is not more perfect—that He could not be—but His perfection shines forth more absolutely in circumstances, which, putting the faith of a man to the test, acknowledged the incompetency and feebleness of man. Abiding alone, a high tower, a sure refuge, He says, "Come unto Me." Neither John nor any other could be resorted to. The weary and heavy-laden of this world could only find rest with Christ. The grace which revealed the Father's heart to poor sinners could only be known in His person; and practical peace of heart in the abandonment of self-will could only be realized after having been learned of Him, the perfect man, subject to the yoke, the Father's will.

John the Baptist has vanished. The One whose herald he had been remains alone, the only One capable of meeting in grace the failure of His servant, of bearing all the weight of the work of grace which lays the foundation of the new creation, the only Center of attraction for every poor sinner who thirsts for grace, and the only perfect Model for any who seek to be like Him. The law and the prophets come to an end. In Christ grace abides, set up for eternity, established forever.

H. R.

## The Shadow of Thy Wings

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To find its shelter in God is one of the earliest and most necessary experiences taught by the Spirit to the —renewed soul. Not shelter from God, however necessary this may be when He is considered as a judge, but shelter with Him, the question of our sins being settled by the blood. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” and the heart now reposes with confidence in His righteousness, while in contrast the works of—men are found in the paths of the destroyer. (Psalms 17:1,2,5) The word of His lips preserves therefrom, and points out His paths; His eyes behold the things that are equal. This produces entire confidence in God in the midst of deadly and deceitful foes. “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.” (vs. 8) The world and the men of it are—rejected, prospering apparently now as they do; and to behold the face of God in righteousness, and to bear His likeness at that glorious awakening, is the—desire and satisfaction of the soul. (vss. 13-15)

But there is not only future satisfaction. Having access into this grace wherein we stand gives present enjoyment of the favor of God. The wicked centers all his thoughts upon himself; he sees nothing but self, not God. (Psalms 36:1,2) But for them that know Him (vs. 10) the universe is filled with what they have learned of Him. In the heavens is His mercy; unto the clouds His faithfulness; like the great mountains is His righteousness, and a vast ocean His judgments.

Every living thing He preserves. It is on account of the lovingkindness of God that the children of men put their trust under the shadow of His wings. There they are abundantly satisfied with His rich provision, and drink of the exhaustless pleasures which His favor affords—a favor which is the source of life and the bright anticipation of glory. (vss. 5-10) We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only therefore does the shadow of His wings afford abiding security and peace, but “bread enough and to spare;” there is “the fatness of thy house,” and there “the river of thy pleasures.”

Shelter and food are good indeed, and we are enabled to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; but power is needed for the wilderness path in order to rejoice in tribulations also. Again, “the shadow of thy wings” becomes “my refuge until these calamities be over-past.” (Psalms 57:1) “The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us” is the key to all the exercises by the way. Divine power is there. “God performeth all things for me” (vs. 2), and that even when we were yet without strength; for then it was Christ died for the ungodly. A heavenly deliverance too is ours: “He shall send from heaven and save.” (vs. 3) We shall be saved from wrath through Him. Doubtless in the wilderness we are cast out, as David was “when he fled from Saul in the cave” (see title to psalm), his “soul among lions;” but God is exalted above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth. (vss. 5, 11) Therefore we can praise.

And not only so, but we also make our boast in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ; for though in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is (Psalms 63:1), through Him now we have received the reconciliation. His lovingkindness is better than life, therefore there is praise, blessing, and adoration. (vss. 3-5) But more. There is rejoicing in the “shadow of thy wings.” (vs. 7)

We joy in God, known in this intimacy and nearness. Not alone have we peace and protection, and withal abundant satisfaction, under the cover of His wings, but power is received from thence by which the love of God is known and deliverance assured while we are still in an evil world. And, above all things precious, it is in the shadow of His wings that God Himself becomes the full, sufficient, and sole portion of our hearts. (vs. 6)

W. T. W.

## Fragment: The Love of God

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If God has commended His love towards us, it is when we were sinners, but I learn it all in joy in God. He loved me when there was nothing in me to love; and the grand testimony of absolutely divine love is that God loved sinners. So, the grace of Christ to me is not my highest place; but it is the highest place of Christ. It makes me little and Christ great. To be put into Christ makes me great; to find Christ going the same path as myself, that He may understand every feeling I have, makes His grace great. And this is most precious.

## **Fragment: The Death of Christ**

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It is the knowledge of the death of Christ for me that clears me of my sins; it is the knowledge of my death with Christ that delivers me from sin, the law, and the world.

## Micah 7:6; Matthew 10:35-36

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The connection of these two scriptures is very interesting. The prophet Micah, in depicting the moral corruption that prevailed in his day (vss. 2-4), declares that all confidence between friends, and even between husband and wife, had utterly vanished, and that in this state of things the most sacred ties of relationship were openly violated, so that a man's enemies were the men of his own house. It is a dark though true picture of the dominance of the power of evil in the prophet's day. In the gospel of Matthew, the same state of things is seen, but as a consequence of the presentation of Christ. "Think not," says our blessed Lord, "that I am come to lend peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." When Christ is presented to men, He is either received or rejected, and He thus brings, not peace, but a sword; for it draws forth from those who refuse Him all the enmity, all the latent corruption, of the human heart, both against Christ and against His followers. He thus warned His disciples that the time would come when those who killed them would think they were doing God service. In such circumstances sons have betrayed their fathers, daughters their mothers, and parents their children, and in this way the Lord's words have often been fulfilled in the history of the Church—that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The solemn thing is, that Satan triumphs just as much in the animosity of the heart against Christ and against His people as in the godlessness of moral licentiousness. Truly the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and none can know it.

## 2 Timothy 4:7-8

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Having referred to this scripture a few months back, it becomes necessary, through a misconception, to add a few words. Our former remarks were confined to the expression— “all them also that love His appearing,” which we regarded, and still regard, as characteristic of all believers. Together with this, it is undoubtedly true that the passage treats of reward for labor, for fidelity in service. This is evident from the context, and hence it is not to be inferred that all who love the Lord’s appearing will receive the same crown of righteousness. Such a thought is forbidden by the words, “The righteous Judge.” He will discriminate between one and another, and will decide upon the service of each with unerring accuracy, and will, in His grace, assign to each a crown of righteousness according to His righteous estimate of the work of each—work produced by grace, and then by grace rewarded. As another has written, “The work of the Spirit through us is rewarded by the crown of righteousness, and everyone will have a reward according to his labor. Christ brings us all, according to the grace of God, into the enjoyment of His own glory, to be with Him and like Him. This is our common portion according to the eternal counsels of God; but a place is prepared by the Father, and given by the Son, according to the work wrought by the power of the Spirit in each believer in his particular position. It is not Paul only who will receive this crown from the righteous Judge; all who love the Lord’s appearing will appear with Him in the glory that is personally destined to each, and that is adjudged to him when the Lord appears.” It will thus be seen that to maintain that “all who love His appearing” applies to all believers is in no way inconsistent with the teaching of the doctrine of rewards in this scripture.

## 2 John 10-11

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The application of this scripture is primarily to teachers, to all such who did not bring “the doctrine of Christ;” i.e., the truth concerning His person, if not also concerning His work. It was the former rather than the latter that was in question in the apostles’ days. (See 5: 7; 1 John 4:3, &c) It is, however, sometimes asked whether those who hold erroneous doctrines on this subject should in like manner be refused. Other scriptures deal with this point, but here the apostle is evidently concerned with those who move about from place to place in order to teach. But then, “if there come any to you,” and take the place of teachers in seeking to propagate their errors, they are to be treated as the apostle enjoins. As faithful to Christ, it is the responsibility of every head of a household to maintain the truth, and thus to exclude from his house that which would really undermine the foundations of Christianity. Christ must be first; and it would be impossible to maintain fellowship with Him and at the same time to be a “partaker of the evil deeds” of those who denied the full truth of His person and work.

## **Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-50; John 12:1-8**

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That there are certain correspondences in the above narratives lies on the surface; but the differences between that in Matthew, Mark, and John, from the incident recorded by Luke, are of such a character as to forbid the identification of the woman “who was a sinner” with the Mary the sister of Lazarus. The object the woman in Luke had in view in approaching the Lord is essentially different from that of Mary. Attracted by the grace of Christ, she found in His heart, and in His heart alone, that which met the deep need of her soul in all her sense of guiltiness before God. Her action therefore, in washing and anointing the feet of Jesus, was the expression of her gratitude to, and love for, the One whose heart had become her resting-place amid all the weariness of her sins; for though she was ignorant of it, she had really found the heart of the God of all grace in the heart of Jesus. Hence it was that the Lord sheltered and justified her, as well as spoke peace to her soul. The object of Mary was wholly different. She alone, as it would seem, had entered into the truth of the death of Christ, and thus came beforehand, as the Lord said, to anoint His body for the burying. She was thus in communion with the mind of her Lord; and (may we not add?) that, as a consequence, she is not found at the sepulcher on the morning of the resurrection. She did not seek the living One among the dead. Her action therefore in anointing the Lord (she did not wash His feet with her tears, remark) was the expression of the homage, the worship of her heart. It was adoration. As we read in the Song of Solomon, “While the King sitteth at His table, my (Mary’s) spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.” (Chapter 1:12) There are differences; moreover, between the narratives in Matthew and Mark and that of John. In the two former the head of Christ is anointed, in the latter it is His feet. This will be seen to be in accordance with the character of the presentation of Christ in the several gospels. In Matthew, exhibited as the Messiah, He is anointed as such on the head, and, so in Mark as the Servant-Prophet, but in John, where He is presented as the Eternal Son, the feet are anointed—the only suitable place for the worshipper. It is the feet also in Luke, because there it is the action of a penitent sinner. As a final remark it may be said, that the mind of the Spirit of God in the gospels is to be discovered rather in noting characteristic distinctions than in seeking to harmonize their differences. E. D.

## **Fragment: Occupied with Christ**

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If the God of heaven be occupied with us, how many thoughts ought not we to have of that God! It is only as occupied with God and with Christ that we can be unworldly.

## Doing

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There can be no question of doing till there is life in Christ. But, when converted, not only is the believer “ordained to good works,” but to particular works. The Jew was to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; but in the epistles there is ‘that which is far higher. I am not only to love God with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself, but to be willing to lay down my life for the brethren. If God in His grace is pleased to work in me to make me like Christ, I am to be the display of what Christ Himself was, and all my works are to spring from the root laid down in Christ. So far from bringing into bondage, works are the greatest privilege. Is a soul converted? It is the life of Christ given to that soul, and there is not a single occasion in which that life is not to be shown forth, even in the giving of a tumbler of cold water. In your house, in every little thing that occurs, the Lord looks for fruit. Everything may be used to express the life of Christ in you; and instead of its being bondage, it enhances our joy in everything down here, because of enjoying all in connection with Christ and with God. A believer is not justified in saying, what can I do? Knowing that God in His greatness comes into every particular of his life. If it be the question of Christ being everything to a saint, Christ cannot let him off from manifesting it in all the outgoings of his life down here. What will you trade on? What will you put on the loom to weave—if it, be not Christ?

G. V. W.

## Spiritual Sloth and the Means of Restoration

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The key to the interpretation of this beautiful scripture is found in the words, “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” The heart of the bride was true to her Beloved; but, together with this; there was a lack of energy; an inclination to ease and comfort, which had betrayed her into a want of watchfulness, and produced a state of sloth. This is seen from the contrast drawn between her position and that of the Beloved. While His head was filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of night, she is seen reclining at her ease upon her bed. The Scriptures abound in such contrasts, as, for example, in the case of Peter, who sat, with the enemies of Christ, warming himself at the fire, while his Master was exposed to the taunts and insults of His persecutors. (Luke 22:55-64)

The state of soul thus indicated is always the result of succumbing to the influences of this world, and it is a state of soul which the Lord never views with indifference. Nay, He loves His people too well to permit them to continue in it, and He thus immediately seeks to arouse them from their slumber. It is so in this scripture; for the bride is at once made conscious that her Beloved is seeking an entrance. “It is,” she says, “the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.” (vs. 2) The very terms He uses—the terms, of endearment—were surely calculated to awaken the affections of her heart; for they express to her own preciousness to Him, while they acknowledge that she had not forgotten Him. But the ground of His appeal lies in the contrast already shown: He was without, waking and watching, while she was within, in ease and comfort.

How could she refuse such an entreaty? Her answer betrays the secret: “I have put off my coat: how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet: how shall I defile them?” She was occupied rather with her own ease than His claims, and hence to respond to’ His appeal involved sacrifice and required energy. How many of us lose the visits of Christ in this way! He stands by us, seeking to manifest Himself to us in a fuller way, and we are not unconscious of His presence; but we are preoccupied, or have set our hearts for the time upon some other object, and we thus lose the enjoyment and communion which He was offering. Like the bride, we had put off our coat, and could not put it on again. We had forgotten that our loins were ever to be girded; and we had washed our feet, and we were unwilling to defile them, even though it was the Lord Himself who was calling upon us to open the door.

But He never presses Himself upon unwilling hearts; and thus, when He found that the door was closed against Him, He withdrew. The bride was conscious of His efforts to obtain admission. She had heard His voice, and she had heard His hand upon the door; and at length her heart responds, her “bowels were moved for him.” Her sloth is removed, and, arising, she opened to her Beloved; but He “had withdrawn himself.” (vs. 6) She had, alas! lost her opportunity. When her Beloved pressed Himself upon her, she could not make the effort to receive Him; now that she had opened the door, it was to find that He was gone. The soul has to learn that it must wait on the Lord’s pleasure, that communion and the enjoyment of intimacy are only possible to a responsive

heart; that, in a word, it can only repose on the Lord's bosom when He draws us into that blessed place. The Beloved had drawn near to the bride, and had presented Himself in all the attractions of His love for a season of ineffable blessedness; but she lost it because she was seeking rest in a scene where as yet He had found none.

The seeking had hitherto been on His part; now it was her turn to search and be disappointed. She arose to open to her Beloved, and she at once discovered how much she had lost; for the fragrant traces of His presence were left behind. Her hands, put where His had been, on the handles of the lock, dropped with myrrh. Then she says, "I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." (vs. 6) Had her Beloved, then, renounced His love? Far from it. He was but teaching her a needed lesson, and seeking the restoration of her soul, by thus calling forth the energies and desires of her heart. In this way He was exposing her true state to her own eyes, and making her learn also that restoration is only possible through discipline. The enjoyment of the presence of Christ may be lost in a moment; it may, and often does, take days to recover it. Forgiveness, on confession of sin, is, immediate; but the restoration of communion can only be gradual, and a work of time.

This is illustrated by the experiences of the bride. Let us trace them. First, "the watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me." (vs. 7) What had she to do, wandering about the city at night, without her Beloved? The very fact that she could not find Him revealed her state to these faithful watchmen, and they did not spare her. They were charged with the discipline of the city, and they failed not to administer it. And well is it for the assembly when there are faithful men who watch for souls as they that must give account (Hebrews 13:17); who do not hesitate to search souls, even if they smite and wound them, in the power of the Word. The Church cries aloud for those who can discern the state and meet the need of souls; for pastors who are skilled to feed the flock of God, and to restore the wandering and backslidden in heart.

In the next place, the bride encountered the "keepers of the walls," and they took away her veil from her, exposed her condition, her nakedness, bereft as she was for the moment, through her negligence and self-seeking, of her Beloved. If the watchmen answer to pastors, the keepers of the wall will find their correspondence in those who seek to maintain holiness in the house of God. The walls guard those within from the enemy without exclude evil, and preserve those inside in peace and security. The keepers of the walls therefore maintain separation from evil and separation to God, jealously shutting out all who have no right of entrance, and admitting only such as can exhibit their title. When thus they found the bride seeking after her Beloved during the night, they take away her veil; for it was incumbent upon them to ascertain whether she was what she professed to be, what a contrast between the bride in verse 1 and in verse 7! She had said, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." (Chapter 4: 16) And He had instantly responded, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk," &c. But there followed, as is so often the case in the experience of souls, a reaction upon this supreme season of enjoyment; and hence the next words are, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." And now she, who had been so happy in the presence of her Beloved, feeding in His garden, is smitten and wounded by the watchmen, and unveiled by the keepers of the walls, but this very condition into which she has fallen is the way of recovery, and the action both of the watchmen and the keepers of the walls has this in view. They are the servants of the Beloved, they have His mind, and He it is who has guided them in their

work; and hence the gracious effect of their ministry immediately appears in her intensified desire after her Beloved.

This is seen in her appeal to her companions; the daughters of Jerusalem: "I charge you," she says, "O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." Her yearning after restoration, as thus expressed, is most touching. Still, it is sad to see one who had been in the enjoyment of the intimacy of His affections compelled to inquire, from those who had never, been in her special place, where her Beloved might be found. They had never been, like her, the objects of His endearments; and, strangers to the sorrow that now filled her soul, they could not understand the fervor of her emotions. Like Mary, when, as she thought, others had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid Him, she had lost everything. The world was but a vast wilderness; nay, a sepulcher, if He were lost. Happy the soul that knows something of this blessed experience!

The daughters of Jerusalem, whose eyes had not yet been opened to perceive the beauties of the Beloved, and surprised at the absorbing character of the bride's affection, reply, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" (vs. 9) It is this question that brings out the truth of her heart, whatever had been her temporary indifference; and, fired by her zealous love at such a question, as well as astonished that any could be blind to the excellences of her Beloved, she pours forth a glowing description of His beauties, dwelling with delight upon the details of every feature, thus betraying her intimate acquaintance with the One of whom she spake, and summing all up in the familiar words, He is altogether lovely. Then, turning to her companions, she cries, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

It is a wonderful testimony, and the secret of it, as well of its power, was a full heart. Her heart was boiling over with a good matter, and she could therefore speak of the things which she had made touching the King. And this is the secret of all ability to testify of Christ. First, acquaintance with Him; and secondly the heart filled with Himself—with the sense of His love, His grace, and His perfection. This is the best wine "that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."

Three things remain to be noticed, First, the effect of the bride's testimony. The daughters of Jerusalem are aroused to desire to seek the Beloved with the bride. Just as when the Baptist, with a full heart of admiration, looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God," his disciples were drawn away after the One to whom their master had testified, so the companions of the bride were irresistibly attracted to the Beloved by the testimony of the bride. Nothing affects souls like the witness of an overflowing heart in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In the next place, the bride's restoration of soul is completed. Drawn out by the question of the daughters of Jerusalem, while she lingers with joy over the beauties of her Beloved, her soul is wrought upon, her affections are revived, and she discerns at once where the object of her search is to be found, and is thus able to tell her companions. "My beloved," she says, "is gone into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." All doubts have been dissipated, and she adds, with ineffable joy, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." Let the reader carefully note this divine way of restoration. Whenever souls have fallen into a cold, lifeless condition, whenever they complain of a want of spiritual

energy, let them occupy themselves with the varied perfections and graces of Christ as revealed in the Word; and, while pondering upon what He is to themselves, let them withal declare His beauties and attractions to others, and they will find that their hearts will soon glow with the returning fire of affection, and that they will be happy again in the sense of His presence and love.

The last thing is, that the moment the restoration is effected, the Beloved expresses to the bride her preciousness in His sight, and His appreciation of her love. In one word, communion of affection follows upon her restoration. May both writer and reader be satisfied with nothing short of abiding communion in the love of Christ!

E. D.

## The First Man Ever Under Judgment in God's Account

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We learn what the cross of the Lord Jesus has effected when we learn that it has eternally settled for God the question of sin and sins. It has settled these two things, and it is most important to see how they have both been settled. We have the forgiveness of our sins in the work of the cross; but the nature which committed them, sin, is never forgiven. It has been eternally placed by God under judgment. As to the forgiveness of our sins, the following passages declare it is effected: 1 John 2:12; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 2:13; Acts 5:31, &c. As to the nature that committed them, it is not forgiven, but the judgment of death is permanently recorded against it. The following —passages bring this before us: Joshua 4:9; John 12:31; Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:3, &c. In Joshua 4:9, death, not forgiveness, is before us. As to the twelve stones placed in the bed of the river, they were a figure of the twelve tribes, over them roll the waters of judgment continually —those waters through which Israel passed dry-shod. But as to their permanence in the bed of Jordan, the word adds, “And they are there unto this day.”

Now in order to make this simple to our understanding, the word of God, in the writings of the apostles, considers the Christian as if he were two men. He is solemnly warned and exhorted never to act like the one, while over and over again he is encouraged to act as the other. When the apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ,” he is contemplating the judgment of God recorded in the cross as to the first man, and speaking of himself as that man. When he says, “Nevertheless I live,” it is the new man, or the power of the life of Christ daily displayed in him, which he is contemplating. The difference is immense. There are two men in question. As to the first, who is controlled always by the evil nature, which Scripture calls “sin” (Romans 7:18-21), that man, is under the judgment of God, and never is anywhere else in God's account. As to the new man, “created in righteousness and true holiness,” and “created unto good works” (Ephesians, 4: 24; 2: 10), to him death and judgment have nothing to say; against him they have no claim. Romans 8:1, as well as our Lord's own words, in John 5:24, both declare this to us.

For some it is unnecessary to adduce passages to prove that the Christian is addressed as if he were two persons; for others a passage or two may help. (Why he is so addressed is because he has still the old nature within him, as well as the new, and every action of his life comes from either the one or the other of these) If then we refer to 1 Corinthians 3, we read, “Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” To walk “as men” is a reproach, because it is walking according to the old nature. So we read, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.” (Ephesians 4:17) On the other hand, when we are addressed as having the new nature, we read, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16) “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought Himself also so to walk even as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

Timothy is exhorted to “preach the Word,” because the time would come when men would not endure “sound doctrine” (the Word). We hear from the WORD that our sins are forgiven; but that the old nature, the man that committed them, is not forgiven, but is placed under judgment. Is this “sound doctrine?” Is it to be practiced, or only theorized about? Is it Christianity? And is the setting

up (or trying to do so) again on the earth of the man under judgment a denial of Christianity or not? To own in our daily life that the cross of Christ has put away sins, and has also definitely placed the old man under judgment, I hold to be fundamental doctrine, without which there cannot be any true progress in the divine life. It is the second part of this truth which cuts at the root of all that is not of Christ, but, thank God, which separates me definitely from the world, to walk like Christ in it. We much more readily accept that in the cross we have the forgiveness of sins, than that in the cross we have also the judgment of sin—the nature of the first man. Both are true, and both together constitute what one called “a Christian” professes to believe, however short he or she may come as to the manifestation of the judgment of the first man practically. A word or two on this head.

Who is the man that God has definitely recorded His judgment against? It is the man who is what is called “trying to get on” in the world, trying to make his rest here, where sin, defiles all around. It matters not to him who goes down; his only effort is to get up, trample upon whom he may. It is Genesis 11:4 reproduced every day among us. Now God has determined never to set that man up again. Strive as he may—and (if walking with this object) we may come nearer home, and say, “Strive as I may I have God against me, as to setting up that man again on earth. In doing it, am I, or am I not, fighting against God?” Honors, dignities, riches, popularity, we naturally cling to them. We desire them to make something of us. But, my reader, do you in life and ways accept the judgment of God as to the man that covets them? Can you “endure sound doctrine?” Or are you one of those, by no means uncommon, who say, “What do you want more than forgiveness of sins?” The desires (“their own lusts”) of the natural heart still unbridled; for that is the condition of those who have “itching ears.”

What is the sum of the matter, but that “having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” I may not have what people call a “home;” I may have “food and raiment” “No certain dwelling-place.” This the apostle could speak of; and if it is ours, it is but a portion of His path who had “not where to lay His head” when, in faithfulness to God, He trod this earth. Let me remember it, let it control me, that His path is my path if I walk like Him.

As to the second man, God will set him up here in power and glory over everything. (Ephesians 1:9,10) He may go to the wall today, and take cheerfully the spoiling of his goods “without resisting; for such is God’s will for him who takes Christ’s path.” “The offscouring of all things” may register the world’s opinion of him who is willing to be even accounted a fool for Christ’s sake (1 Corinthians 3:18); yet “the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” (Proverbs 19:21) We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus (who for the suffering of death was made a little lower than the angels) crowned with glory and honor, a proof of what God will yet accomplish for Him. And as to the world “the world passeth away, and the lust (desire) thereof.” May the Spirit instruct us yet more and more in the great defect of the Christianity around us; and in the fact that the old nature, the first man, is, in the cross definitely placed under the judgment of God, and never delivered from it.

H. C. A.

## The Closing Days

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“Behold, I come quickly: hold that FAST which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”—Revelation 3: 11.

It is often said we are in the closing days of the history of the Assembly of God on earth, and that the coming of our Lord must be now very near; but the question is, have we any instruction that we can gather from Scripture as to this?

It need scarcely be said here, because it is so generally accepted, that what is written as to “the last times” and “the last days,” in the inspired letters to Timothy, has been manifested for a long time; and John speaks of the day in which he lived as “the last time,” because there were “many antichrists.” In one sense the whole of the Church’s history on earth since the time of the apostles, and even the coming of the Saviour into the world, is comprehended in the expression “last days.” Hence we read, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” But by the often—used expression “closing days” we understand something more definite than “the last times,” or “the last days;” it seems to speak of the time just before the Lord comes with His assembling shout for those that are His at His coming.

If we turn to the second and third chapters of Revelation we there find details given, not only of the actual state of seven assemblies then existing in Asia and the ways of our Lord with them, but we are also told there is some “mystery” as to the instruction communicated by them. Besides their obvious application to the then existing assemblies, there was a line of teaching which was a “mystery,” or not revealed. We read, therefore, of the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks. (1:20)

It is now clear enough that what was then a prophetic sketch of the course of the Assembly on earth, as God’s corporate witness, is now an historic sketch; so that in these seven epistles we can easily trace seven phases of the Church’s history on earth. We have declension (Ephesus); persecution (Smyrna); alliance with the world in Constantine’s time (Pergamos); Popery (Thyatira); Protestantism (Sardis); saints gathered to Him who is the holy and the true (Philadelphia); self-satisfaction and lukewarmness, or indifference to Christ (Laodicea). Everyone who knows anything of Church history must be able to trace these seven striking epochs of its course.

It is also obvious that, these seven epistles are presented to us as divided into three and four. In the first three epistles the overcomer is mentioned last, or after “He that hath an ear,” because their state seemed capable of restoration; but when, in Thyatira, the flesh and the world were openly accredited and associated with the name of the Lord and His truth by His professed witness on earth, the Lord exposes their sad state, and refers to His coming; and the overcomer is mentioned before “He that hath an ear,” &c., because the faithful have to overcome allowed evil in the house. The last four assemblies are thus marked off from the previous three, and in these four only the coming of the Lord is announced, which shows they go on to the end; and to each of them

the Lord presents Himself and His coming in an aspect suited to their state. These four phases of the Church's history on earth, we judge, then, will continue till the coming of the Lord, and their principles may be traced at this moment in almost every city, town, and village. All these four assemblies being associated in some way or other, in the Lord's ministry to them, with His coming, seems to intimate that it would be so. Hence, we have in Christendom, Popery, and Protestantism, some who are true to the Lord, who is holy and true; and, lastly, lukewarmness to Christ, with self-satisfied profession, which He must reject as His corporate witness on earth when He comes and takes His own unto Himself. "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

If, then, these four assemblies set forth the fourfold character of the professing Church, or Christendom, till the Lord come, of which, we judge, there cannot be a doubt, is it not clear that the fourfold way in which Christ presents Himself to these assemblies must plainly show what His special lines of ministry will be in the closing days of the Church's sojourn on earth? If, therefore, we find that these presentations of Christ do and have for some time past characterized the ministry given to His saints, the inference is undeniable, that we are in the closing days of the Church's history on earth. But let us look further at this point.

As we have before noticed, the coming of the Lord is presented in an aspect suited to the state of these assemblies; and to the brightest and most devoted of them He says, "Behold, I come quickly." Besides this, we may observe that to the first of the last four (Thyatira) He presents Himself as the "Son of God;" to the second (Sardis) as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;" to the third (Philadelphia) as "He that is holy, and He that is true;" and to the fourth (Laodicea) as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, and the beginning of the creation of God."

It is well known what uncertainty and darkness even true believers were in for many centuries; and even in, the early part of this century superstition, priestcraft, unitarianism, and all kinds of false doctrine, were common enough. Few even of the saints were clear of these things, till God raised up faithful servants to set forth, according to Scripture, the person of the Son of God.

There were also serious mistakes as to the Holy Spirit; so that His personality, Godhead, and operations were little known, and by some openly denied. But, as regards this, we know how faithfully some contended for the truth as to the person and deity of the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt when souls lost the truth of the personal glory of the Son of God, they necessarily lost also the hope of His coming; and when they lost the truth of—the Holy Spirit being a divine Person on earth during our Lord's absence, they turned to education, university degrees, and formal ordination as qualifications for ministry, instead of gift. And even at the Reformation, when, by God's mercy, some truth was recovered, when Sardis, or Protestantism, came in, those carnal ways as to ministry were not given up; so that it is worthy of remark, that there the Lord presents Himself as the One who, as Son of man glorified, had received the Holy Spirit, and as having the seven stars, or holding all ministry for the Church in His own hand, and communicating it through gift from Himself. Even to this day some believers are praying for the Holy Ghost to come, instead of thanking God for the abiding presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the professing Church, and in every believer. Still, at this time, through God's mercy, the reality of spiritual "gifts" from Christ, apart from man's arrangement altogether, has been largely recognized; and its importance can scarcely be overrated, because "the body is edified from the Head) by that which every joint

supplieth,” and those who practice it know well the truth of it.

Of late years, while almost everyone in Christendom has been saying that they meet in Christ's name, God has remarkably wrought in many souls to show the amazing difference between the adoption of it as a part of a creed, and the reality of the Lord Jesus being “in the midst” of those who are really gathered to His name. No doubt the Holy Spirit is the Gatherer, and He only gathers to His name who has been made in ascension both Lord and Christ. But what has so greatly added to the priceless value of this foundation—truth is the recovery of the knowledge of the blessed fact that He who is in the midst of such so gathered is “holy” and “true;” so that He looks that His word should be kept, and His name not denied; and also, that those so gathered, should be in all their ways suited to Him. How could it be otherwise, if we think of it for a moment? And how could we associate any other name with His, lest we grieve and dishonor Him? This has been a remarkable blessing from God in these closing days.

Moreover, at this time, when everything is being questioned, and an immense machinery is at work to exalt man in the flesh, and to undermine divine revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ is being made known to souls as “the Amen,” whose word is decisive, will never pass away, and is forever settled in heaven. That we may well trust Him, and rely upon His faithfulness to His own word, for He is “the faithful and true witness;” and be assured that the first man is not recognized by Him since the death of the cross, for He is “the beginning of the creation of God;” so that, “if any man be in Christ,” there is a “new creation.” This truth has exercised many souls during the last half century, and is, we believe, the teaching God is pressing on His saints today; and the believer's comfort and blessing, and his service and pursuits, will be characterized, according as in heart and conscience he is either going on trying to mend and improve man in the flesh, or has accepted God's verdict and ways in the cross of setting aside man in the flesh altogether; and at the same time making us a new creation in Christ, and has seated us in Him in heavenly places—the only proper Christian position.

The great point of controversy today in Christendom is whether the Christian is merely an improved or changed man in the flesh, or whether he is a new creation? Those who hold the former are still of the world, more or less legal, and self-occupied, with self-satisfaction and indifference to the claims and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ, Those who accept the latter know they are in Christ, and He in them; that all their blessings, strength, and completeness before God are in Him, risen and ascended, and that their old man is crucified with Christ, so that they have died, and their life, is hid with Christ in God.

Now the question is, what has characterized the Lord's ministry to His saints during the last fifty or sixty years with the testimony to the Lord's coming, which has been going on all this time? Can there be a doubt that the infinite glory and perfection of the person of the Son of God have been largely set forth? Christ too, as having received in ascension the Holy Spirit, and Himself there the source and sustainer of spiritual “gifts” for the edification of His assembly on earth? Who can question also the clear and solemn way in which “there am I in the midst,” the “holy,” and the “true,” has been pressed on the conscience, and lovingly owned by many hearts for amazing comfort, blessing, and some increase of separation and devotedness? Nor need we go far to discern the Laodicean element coming in like a flood, with lukewarmness to Christ and indifference to His word, His claims, and His coming. If these things are so, surely the closing days

of the Church on earth are really here. If this fourfold character of the ministry of Christ to His saints on earth till He comes is still going on—of which there cannot be a doubt, and we are here instructed that it will be so till He comes—then it is unquestionable that we are not only in the closing days, but that there is nothing more to be looked for till we see His face. Saints may be unfaithful to the testimony, and be laid aside, and others be raised up for it; but it is clear there is nothing different to come till we hear the assembling shout.

What then are the practical lessons we are to gather from all this? Is it not that we, as already called into the fellowship of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, should stand for His personal perfections and glory, and honor Him? That we should be subject to the Holy Spirit He has received and sent down to form and energize His assembly, while thankfully acknowledging “gifts” for building up as from Himself, and caring for His household? That, as gathered to His name, we may faithfully own Him in our midst, and His claims, as the holy and the true? And knowing that the first man has been set aside, and has no place in His service, have no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in the blessed fact that we are a new creation in Christ Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and waiting and watching for Him who says, “Behold, I come quickly?”

H. H. S.

## John the Baptist: The Death of John the Baptist

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We cannot conclude these meditations without a few words concerning the close of John the Baptist's career. Come in the "way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32), he persevered in it to the end; separated to God from his mother's womb, he maintained this precious characteristic to the last. Herod knew him to be "a just man and an holy," (Mark 6:20) His practical righteousness and holiness are shown when he says to the king, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." But the testimony of the faithful, instead of improving the world, condemns it, and this is what it cannot bear. A frightful unfolding of the character of Herod fighting against the truth is to be found in this narrative. The lust of the flesh was at work in the heart of this man; and in order to satisfy it he is led into wickedness and pollution. The sinner cannot give up sinning even though under restraint; he goes on in his sin by getting rid of the witness who condemns him. Herod causes John to be taken, bound, and put in prison. (Mark 6:17) Corruption is necessarily followed by violence, which, kept within bounds at first, opens the door to murderous thoughts (Matthew 14:5), —and his conscience is hardened more and more. It is not the fear of God which makes him object to the crime, but that of public opinion, and a selfish desire not to lose his influence and prestige. It is also a certain respect for a superior man, who cannot, be got rid of without further formality, besides the loss of the profit of his counsels for self-exaltation. (Mark 6:20) Herod is led by Herodias, a passionate woman, governed by her hatred, and esteeming the prophet's reproof an unpardonable affront; she also "would have killed him" (Mark 6:19), but had found Herod's feeling of respect for John a hindrance. (Mark 6:20). The passions of these two converge to one point; Herod's are accompanied by some scruples and cunning (Luke 13: 32), while Herodias is more energetic in her accomplishment of evil and triumph over obstacles.

"A convenient day" arrives; the hand of Satan is there urging on his instruments to the final act. Men are blinded, and think to accomplish their own will; they do not see that they are the sport of the devil, and that he is leading them on in warfare against God. It only remains to touch one or two more secret springs in man's heart, and the crime will be perpetrated. The day is well chosen; it is Herod's birthday, whereon his power and sumptuousness are displayed in such a way as to satisfy the pride of life. His lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee surround the king on this occasion. (Mark 6:21) The daughter of Herodias comes in, dances, and pleases Herod and those at table with him. The lust of the eyes enters with the damsel, and takes possession of the king, and he promises with an oath, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." (6: 23) Incited thereto by her mother, this thoughtless girl, with no conscience, accustomed to see her caprices obeyed, eagerly asks (6: 25) "straightway" the head of John the Baptist.

Herod is exceeding sorry, but what matter? He is taken in the meshes of Satan. To his heart's secret desire is now added his so-called honor, and the fear of breaking his word before his courtiers. The devil leaves him no time for reflection; he has taken complete possession of his victim, and succeeds in stifling the testimony of God which was opposed to him. The end is attained; the instrument is left to himself and his misery. Of what advantage is his crime to him?

Henceforth it will always be his companion. He hears Jesus and His miracles spoken of. "It is John," says he, "whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead." (6: 16) Striking fact, this hardened man, like the Pharisees, believes in the resurrection; but believing a doctrine gives neither satisfaction nor rest of conscience; on the contrary, it is a means of increasing the torment. "He was perplexed." (Luke 9:7) The desire of getting rid of this vague terror, which had laid hold of him at the thought of finding again the one whom he had put to death, makes him seek to see Jesus (Luke 9:9), perhaps to kill Him also. (Luke 13:31) Anything is better than uncertainty. But the uncertainty remains in spite of all; when at last Herod sees the Saviour, he can neither see His miracles nor hear Him. He meets on earth a silent Christ, whose voice he will not hear until by-and-by when he will see Him as Judge (Luke 23:8-10)

Freed from John the Baptist, Satan succeeds later on in getting rid of Christ by means of other springs in the heart of man. But, blessed be God, Satan, himself deceived, is only an instrument through which God will accomplish His own designs: However, all this wickedness draws forth divine vengeance. The Lord will execute judgment on men, and the God of peace will bruise Satan shortly under our feet. Then also afflicted saints will be at rest, and Christ will be glorified and admired in them, without restriction, in a John the Baptist, and in all those who have believed!

H. R.

## Mary and Martha

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The little scene which closes this chapter is peculiar to Luke, serving his general purpose of instructing us in great principles of truth. The two sisters here introduced were differently minded; and, being brought to the trial of the mind of Christ, we get the judgment of God on matter of much value to us.

The house which we now enter was Martha's. The Spirit of God tells us this, as being characteristic of Martha; and into her house, with all readiness of heart, she receives the Lord, and prepares for Him the very best provision it had. His labors and fatigue called for this. Martha well knew that His ways abroad were the ways of the good Samaritan, who would go on foot that others might ride, and she loves Him too well not to observe and provide for His weariness. But Mary had' no house for Him. She was, in spirit, a stranger like Himself; but she opens a sanctuary for Him, and seats Him there, the Lord of her humble temple. She takes her place at His feet, and hears His words. She knows, as well as Martha, that He was wearied; but she knows also that there was a fullness in Him that could afford to be more wearied still. Her ear and her heart, therefore, still use Him, instead of her hand or her foot ministering to Him. And in these things lay the difference between the sisters. Martha's eye saw His, weariness, and would give to Him; Mary's faith apprehended His fullness underneath His weariness, and would draw from Him.

This brings out the mind of the Son of God. The Lord accepts the care of Martha as long as it is simple care and diligence about His present need; but the moment she brings her mind into competition with Mary's she learns His judgment, and is taught to know that Mary, by her faith, was refreshing Him with a far sweeter feast than all her care and the provision of her house could possibly have supplied. Mary's faith gave Jesus a sense of His own divine glory. It told Him, that though He was the wearied One, He could still feed and refresh her. She was at His feet, hearing His words. There was no temple there, or light of the sun; but the Son of God was there, and He was everything to her. This was the honor He prized, and blessedly indeed was she in His secret, When He was thirsty and tired at Jacob's well, He forgot it all in giving out other waters, which no pitcher could have held, or well beside. His own supplied; and here Mary brings her soul to the, same well, knowing. that, in spite of all His weariness, it was as full as ever for her use.

And oh, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us Our God is asserting for Himself, the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fullness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render Him Entitled, as He) is, to more than all creation could give Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love, and draw from His treasures. The honor which our confidence puts upon Him is His highest honor; for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from unexhausted fullness. Under the law He had to receive from us, but in the gospel, He is giving to us; and the words of the Lord Jesus are these: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And this place He will fill forever; for, "without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from everything that hath breath; but forth from Himself, and from the

seat of His glory, shall go the constant flow of blessing, the light to cheer, the waters to refresh, and the leaves of the tree to heal; and our God shall taste His own joy, and display His own glory, in being a Giver forever.

J. G. B.

## John 2:17

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This scripture, as the reader will perceive, is cited from Psalms 69, where we read, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." (vss. 8, 9) Tracing out its meaning, both in the psalm, and also in the gospel, we learn, first, that our blessed Lord was so devoted to the glory of God, in the interests of His house, that it lifted Him above every natural claim that might have been alleged against Him. Hence it was that, when Mary, finding Him in the temple, said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," He replied, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:48,49) The claim of the Father, whose will He had come to do, was absolute in His soul, excluding every other claim, and in the constant acknowledgment of this He found His incessant delight. It was His daily food. (Psalms 40:8; John 4:34) This led, secondly, to His complete identification with God and His interests on the earth, so that He felt everything according to God, and for God. He thus said, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." He received everything, not as it related to Himself, but as it affected God and His glory. A reproach uttered against God wounded His heart, because He was here not for Himself, but for God. What might be said against Him could be borne, but a reproach against God was to Him an intolerable sorrow. How little do we know, as being here for Christ, what it is to be more wounded by any dishonor done to the name of Christ than by a wrong done to ourselves! This indeed could only be when we have lost sight of ourselves in His interests; when the aim and object of all we are and do, as well as the motive, is Christ. (Compare Philippians 1:12-26) Coming now to John's gospel, we find that, under the constraint of His consuming zeal, our Lord was intolerant of any corruption in His Father's house. Thus, it was that He purged the temple when He went up to Jerusalem at this feast of the Passover. And what were the evils that evoked this display of His zeal? He found in the temple those that sold oxen; and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. All this had commenced for the convenience of the people. It was easier to buy an animal for sacrifice on the spot than to bring one up to Jerusalem, and it saved much trouble to be able to purchase the sacred shekel when it was wanted; and in this way a regular traffic had sprung up within the holy precincts of the temple buildings. In other words, man's convenience had shut out all thought of what was due to God, and in this way, man had usurped the place of God. Is there no warning voice in all this for the present day? Do not the convenience of the saints and other things often set aside the Lord's authority as Son over the house of God? The antidote to all corruption in the assembly is this self-same consuming zeal which animated our blessed Lord—a zeal which will be always directed to the maintenance of His rights and the holiness of the house of God. (Compare Psalms 101)

## John 17:20-24

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Three distinct periods are embraced in these few verses. The first (Irv. 20, 21) is that of the Church—from Pentecost until the Lord's return; and the prayer of our Lord is, that all His people might be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;" and He desires this exhibition of oneness as a testimony to the world; nay, as a means of convincing the world that the Father had sent Him.

The second period is that of the display of the saints in glory with Christ, sharing with Him, by His grace, the glory which the Father had given Him, "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 thus to certify to the world, as they behold this wondrous display, that the Father had sent the Son, and that He had loved the saints, whom the world had despised, in the same way as He had loved the Son when He was upon the earth. We know this now; and the world will know it when the Lord Jesus comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. (2 Thessalonians 1) The twenty-fourth verse embraces eternity; and what a precious unfolding of grace and truth it contains! The saints have, been given to Christ by the Father; the Lord wills that they shall be with Him where He is, that they may behold His glory—the glory given to Him of the Father (see v. 5), because He had been the object of the Father's heart from all eternity. What blessed fields of meditation! And what an anticipation of eternity is permitted us as we traverse them with reverent adoration! And what abounding grace that has admitted us to listen to these intimate communing's of the Son with the Father!

E. D.

## Fragment: The Soul's Fears

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Position without power, principles beyond practice, jealousy about orthodoxy and truth and mysteries, with little personal communion with the Lord—all these the soul stands in constant fear of, and in equal judgment and refusal.

## We Shall See Him as He is

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This especial favor is reserved for a unique company. Christians only are to have this sight of their Lord; therefore, the great importance of the last word. It is not what He was on earth, nor is it here what He will be. What He was the apostle (who had seen Him as a perfect Man on earth) speaks of in chapter 1. On earth he had seen Him “the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;” and what He will be John tells us in the book of Revelation. (Chapter 1:7; 19:11-16) But in this passage the apostle says it is what He is now that we shall see.

And what is He now? He has entered into that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, as the ever-obedient Son, obedient even unto death; and in John 17 the Lord prays respecting us, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me” —that glory which He has now, the glory which He had before the world was. That wondrous relationship too of the Son with the Father, into which He has entered, He has entered as Man, as the One who glorified God on the earth, and who could claim the glory as earned which was always His. We are to witness what that glory and that relationship area Infinite grace that brings us in on the ground of His own work, that work for God’s glory and for our eternal blessing! Blessed Lord, we shall see Thee in Thine own glory, and in Thine own enjoyment of all the affections of Thy Father’s heart! Into that full joy the Lord entered after His work on the cross. His hour of sorrow (John 12:27) all ended with that work, and the hour of His glory began, as He said, “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” If we seek the answer to the question, what is He now? the Holy Ghost, descended from Him when glorified, gives the answer through the apostle Peter. “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus.” It is the answer to His prayer in John 17. “With the glory which I had with thee before the world was;” and we are to be there to see Him in it.

How does this affect us? We wander on the earth absent from Him (2 Corinthians 5:6), and our faith but feebly lays hold of what He is now, consequent on the work which He has accomplished. Thence may be traced the miserable apprehension we have of our own relationship, that in which we stand with the Father; and that, alas! is no uncommon thing with real Christians. How can I know what I am with God until I see Him by faith or “as He is?” Well, in that day I shall know it. He is now seated in the enjoyment of all the affections of the Father’s bosom, and all the love of the Father’s heart. Nothing more shall ever disturb that blessed relationship and rest into which He has entered, based on the completion of all My earthly toil. But that work also puts every Christian before God “as He is,” in the blessed relationship of children with God as their Father; and that is the way it affects us. (John 17:23; 20:17) “As He is, so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:17) We are in the same relationship, His Father ours, His God ours. (John 20:17)

But not only are we in the same relationship, but we are to be in the same place, in order to behold His, glory; we are to be with Him in it. It is this unique favor that John, I believe, speaks of in the verse quoted at the head of this paper, because only in the same place as He Himself is in can I

behold what His glory is in the place. When I see Christ in it, and see what it is as displayed towards Him, I shall have the true sense of what is my place and relationship with the Father as belonging to Christ, both, alas! so feebly entered into by me now. But this necessitates my being with Him in it, in order to see it displayed towards Him; that is, in the glory that he speaks of in John 17:24 "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where. I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." It is a glory that flows from love, the Father's personal love to the Son, but which of necessity includes in that all that are His.

John looked forward with joy, to that time when he, in the company of all the members of the body, shall "see Him as He is." We and he are still awaiting it. We shall be admitted into the "Father's house" to see what that sphere has been, glory and affection displayed towards Him, before we are brought out to share with Him in all the glory of the kingdom. The heart of the Father has been for eighteen centuries delighting in Him, in Him who was ever His delight, even before the foundation of the world, as Proverbs 8 says. But what saint has fully entered into what that delight, that joy of the Father, in Him has been? Well, we shall see it in that day; for "we shall see Him as He is," as He is now, and not as He will be when displayed in the day of His appearing.

We are going into the Father's house, as John 11:1-3 says; but the first thought is that we shall "see Him as He is" there; We are to have, so to speak, this private time with Him in His own abode, before the whole universe, heaven and earth participate in the joy of themselves giving to Him His chief place over them all. But the precious thing is the intimacy of the house. Who will picture the joy of that hour, the joy of the Father's house? It is more than the joy of Luke 15; for this His eternal Son never went astray. It is this beloved Son that we shall see as He is. We shall be like Him when He appears, but we shall first have seen Him as He is. "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him AS HE IS."

H. C. A.

## Fragment: the Christian in the Epistles

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There are two ways the Christian is seen in the epistles. First, as in Christ—here is no progress, no question; he is accepted in Him: a complete, perfect, present state. But he is also a pilgrim upon earth, having to attain the goal. This gives occasion to every kind of exhortation, warning, and “ifs.” Thus, he learns obedience and dependence, the two characteristics of the new man. But with this he is led to the sure, infallible faithfulness of God to bring him through to the end, and bound to reckon on it (1 Corinthians 1)

## Thoughts on the Second and Third Epistles of John

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The second and third epistles of John give us some examples of children of God walking in the truth upon earth, and one example of self-exaltation and self-will, the contrast to all that was seen in Jesus. It might be said that the first epistle is so full of abstractions that you cannot expect it to be carried out in practice; but here we see real living persons walking in such a manner that the divine life in them shines out clearly in their conduct, in the incidents of their lives here upon earth. One may presume that the elect lady's children were not brought up without trouble, and that Gaius met with all the ordinary difficulties of life.

"Whom I love in the truth" is not a light expression. The truth can never be popular in this world, for the world's very existence depends upon a denial of the truth. How often did they pick up stones to throw at Jesus, Himself the Truth! How little was Paul (who spoke the truth) a popular preacher! Then we must reject that so-called and spurious "love" that will not allow an appeal to the Word. How much we hear of this "love" in a day when everything is spoiled and adulterated! "Love in the truth" is a very different thing, and we may well ask ourselves how far we understand this. It is easy to talk of loving the brethren; but suppose we had lived at the time of Paul's imprisonment, should we have gone to see him? Many were more prudent in Paul's day, and kept away from the gallows where the apostle lay. Should we really, if it came to the point, be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren? Then how do we know that we love the brethren? "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments;" that is, in the blessed liberty of the children of God upon earth, obedient to Him. How searching this word as to what bears the name of "love!" I recollect seeing a touchstone upon which an amalgam of gold and other metals was tried. The metal was rubbed against the dark stone, producing a bright streak; nitric acid then being applied, the brilliant streak diminished, leaving only the gold upon the touchstone. How much then of the "love" current in Christendom is the true genuine love? "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." Each child of God may well ask, "Do I allow anything that is not according to Him?" The truth has never been popular since the serpent deceived Eve, and to announce the truth would break up many a company formed professedly on the ground of "love."

We must watch. The apostle says, "Take heed unto yourselves" (vs. 8); for he wished to enjoy the full amount of his work. Many seducers are gone out into the world (and many false prophets in 1 John 4:1), and their teaching tends to exalt man and deny Christianity. "To confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh" is not merely to be orthodox, but to have received and to confess the great blessed truth of Christianity, that the Son of God became man, and died for us; and we confess His glorious Person, both divine and human, and at the same time the utter ruin of man, of all the sons of Adam. The teaching of the seducers would deny this, and indeed it is hard to admit that the heart of man is in a desperate case, that there is nothing good in us. The perfectibility of man is the doctrine of the antichrist, and this has wonderfully developed in this enlightened century. The wise, the advanced thinkers of our time, deny Jesus Christ come in flesh (the least thing that you take either from His divinity or from His perfect humanity denies the Christian truth), and tell us that the time is near when man shall be fully developed. I recollect, after a disastrous European war,

having seen advertised in a city, "We want a man for the age!" And I thought, "Alas! he is not far off." Take heed to yourselves. What a word for us, dear brethren! "Whoever leads you forward" (this is the true meaning of verse 9), "and abides not in the doctrine, has not God." "Leading forward" means leading on beyond what God has fully revealed; and always in an evil sense; for we have the full manifestation of the divine life in Jesus. From the very beginning the enemy tried to "lead forward," and, alas I succeeded with Eve. "Yea, hath God said?" and deceived the mistrusting soul. The old prophet in 1 Kings 13, led astray the too credulous man of God, pretending to have a divine communication beyond the revelation explicitly given to the latter. I saw in a book yesterday, professing to be "scientific," the following words: "Religious thought has taken great steps in advance lately." Yes, and where will this "religious thought" lead you? Have you ever followed an ignis fauns in marshy ground? Where did it lead you? So, with religious thought in the nineteenth century.

How blessed the contrast— "He that leads you forward, and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ, has not God. He that abideth in the doctrine has the Father and the Son." May we know what it is to "abide" in true dependence, and taste this full joy of communion with the Father and the Son.

The elect lady is responsible to keep her doors shut against false teachers. The world says, "Oh, how exclusive and narrow!" Many professing Christians say the same. But we may ask, "Is the new Jerusalem too exclusive?" No dog, no magician, no liar shall ever pass her doors. "Without are dogs." Oh, how exclusive!

It has been pointed out that the third epistle presents to us the same blessed love in the truth in Gaius, who kept his doors open to Christ in the persons of the poor wandering preachers, who went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. The witness borne to Gaius' truth, and his walk in the truth, must be noticed; and how blessed and wonderful the association with poor wandering, despised preachers! They had gone out for the Name (an aged servant of Christ once said that, of all employments, to go across a country with the love of God in the heart, and a Bible in the pocket, was the most blessed), not merely "gone out to preach," but gone out for the Name—that Name that carries everything with it, and which we can bless with adoration, notwithstanding that so many seducers have "gone out" too. And Gaius had received them, thus cooperating with the truth. It would be often said, "You must not encourage this kind of people," and "that the thing will become abused." It may be abused, like every good thing, but that is only a further proof that there is such a thing as being employed (the highest of employments) as a wandering preacher of the truth of God. Gains manifests the divine life in, recognizing and receiving such; the Lord had sent them forth.

Demetrius too (vs. 12) has the testimony of the truth itself; for if we examine a man's work, and find that wherever he has taught the truth is maintained, and that there is a desire to walk in it, the truth itself bears witness to him.

But one word more, and that is, the terrible contrast with the expression of the divine life seen in Diotrephes. "He likes to be the first." This is the principle that governs the hearts of the sons of Adam. "I would rather be the first in that little village," said the great Julius, "than second in Rome." The blessed Jesus loved to be last, and explained that this should be our portion. In each of us there is the germ of a little antichrist, who would exalt himself, from Julius Cesar down to the

smallest. What a contrast with our blessed Lord and then? “He receives us not.” To receive one another, as the blessed Lord has received us, is the very spirit of Christianity. Jesus receives everyone who comes to Him. Then, “evil words” and “hindering others to receive,” Jesus never spoke a wrong nor harsh word, and would not allow others to hinder those they brought to Him. Here then is the dark background to this wonderful picture; the selfishness of man then exalts himself, and has nothing but injustice and harsh treatment for others. Whilst the divine life shines in the elect lady, Gaius, and Demetrius, the sad “darkness” of the human heart is seen in Diotrephes.

Beloved, imitate not the evil, but the good. “He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.” May we be able to follow this blessed exhortation.

E. L. B.

## The Peace Offering

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The offerings are divided into four leading classes, if we count the sin and trespass offerings together as one. They are as follows: The burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the peace-offering, and the sin and trespass-offering. It will, I think, be found that each is a complete picture of Christ or His work; so that there are points which several, or it may be, all, of them have in common; but that each offering emphasizes, or brings into prominence, some special aspect of the person or work of the Lord. That appears the object for which they are distinguished. It is not until the giving of the law that their differences are fully brought out.

In illustration of what is meant I would point out that the blood is mentioned in the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the peace-offering, but it is dealt with more specially in, and so may be said to characterize, the sin-offering. Again, burning as producing a sweet savor to God, is common to all the offerings, but in the smallest degree to the sin-offering, so that the other three have been rightly classed together as sweet savor offerings in distinction from the sin-offering; but still the fat of the sin-offering was burnt upon the altar for a sweet savor to Jehovah, (Leviticus 4:31) But of all the offerings that which was most characteristically a sweet savor, and all the Lord's, was the burnt-offering. "He shall burn all upon the altar a burnt sacrifice of a sweet savor unto Jehovah." It set forth Christ in death wholly devoted to God and glorifying Him about sin in His death. Yet the blood was there, and the burnt-offering made atonement for the offerer. In this respect it may be said to overlap the sin-offering. Now the peace-offering has an element in common with the burnt-offering, for the fat is burnt as a sweet savor to Jehovah, and it was burnt upon the altar, upon the burnt-offering. That is to say, that which was characteristic of the burnt-offering was found in the peace-offering, although it is not the most prominent feature of it. The same is true of the relationship of the peace-offering to the sin-offering. The blood, which is characteristic of the sin-offering, is found in the peace-offering. But the peace-offering, while it has points in common with the other offerings, has its own special peculiarities, which I wish to point out. If one word might give a key to its leading feature, it would be, I think, communion. It is communion over the work of the Lord in death, and hence inseparable from worship. This, I think, the study of details will bring out.

The name peace-offering is apt perhaps to mislead. But attention to the sacrifice will readily show that the thought is not to present Christ as meeting the guilt of the sinner, and so making peace with God, which is the sin-offering, but it is enjoyed in peace. There are two varieties of peace-offerings. The one for thanksgiving, and the other a vow, or voluntary offering. These show us the character of the offering. A man prospering in his herds brings a beast as a thanksgiving to Jehovah. So some have called it a prosperity-offering. Or again, a man like Jonah makes a vow in the day of his trouble, and when he is delivered he pays his vows, and this sacrifice would probably be a peace-offering. Jephthah's vow was, I suppose, of this character. It is an offering sacrificed in peace-not to make peace.

Communion characterized it, and this is expressed in eating. Eating is the expression of communion or fellowship. This is understood in religion and in nature all the world over. No one asks any but a friend to eat with him, though he may feed his enemy. So in religion the Jews, the heathens, and the Christians, all have their altars, or tables, at which eating and drinking take place, and are expressive of fellowship with the religious system which each table represents. This 1 Corinthians 10 insists upon. You cannot be a partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. These things show us the symbolical force of eating. Now eating is not peculiar to the peace-offering, but it characterizes it as it does no other. We find the ordinary meat-offering was eaten by Aaron and his sons, that is, by all the priests. (Leviticus 6:14-18) And the ordinary sin-offering was eaten by the priest that, offered it. Eating is absent in the burnt-offering, which was peculiarly Jehovah's—God glorified in the cross. But in the peace-offering the eating was more general than in any other, for every Israelite might eat of it.

If we refer to Leviticus, here we find that the blood of the victim was sprinkled round the altar. Then the inward fat, with the kidneys and their fat, and the caul, etc., were all taken away and burnt upon the burnt-offering (vs. 5), to be a sweet savor. This use of the fat characterizes the peace-offering; so that when the same thing is done in the sin-offering, it is said, "As it was taken off from the sacrifice of the peace-offerings." (4: 10) Now the burning of the fat is noted in Abel's offering, where the blood is not mentioned. Still, that offering was not a peace-offering. Indeed, the only distinctive offering noted, as far as I know, before the law is the burnt-offering, which both Noah's and Abraham's were. (Genesis 8: 22) And, we might add, the drink-offering. (Genesis 35:14)

Another thing to be noticed is, that there is, in one sense, more liberty in selecting a victim for a peace-offering than in any other. For example, a burnt-offering must be a male, a peace-offering male or female. Again, in the sin-offering the character of the victim was more exactly defined than in any other. The peace-offering probably gives, in common in some measure with the burnt-offering, rather our appreciation of Christ than God's demand.

Returning to the thought of the peace-offering as food, we find that Leviticus 3, in two places, calls the fat which was burned on the altar "the food of the offering made by fire unto Jehovah" in verse 11, and "for a sweet savor" in verse 16. And in keeping with this, the law of the offering (chapter 7) shows us that the whole body of the animal was used as food. In this point this offering is unique. The Lord first has His portion in the fat; a figure surely of God's delight in the sacrifice of Christ. All the excellency and beauty of Christ, in His inward perfection, devoted to God in that death which made expiation for sin. Then the breast, which had first been waved before Jehovah, is for the whole priestly family—for Aaron and his sons. (7: 31) This, I believe, represents Christ in association with the Church; for we are, Peter teaches, a royal priesthood. And we know that the Church has, through grace, a special place in the affections of the Father and of Christ. We are loved as Christ was by the Father. (John 17) And the Church is loved and cherished as the bride by Christ. (Ephesians 5) This, I think, is pictured in the breast belonging to Aaron and his house.

Next, we come to the priest who offers the sacrifice; for no man could offer his own. He has the right shoulder. How clearly, we have the Lord Himself; for it was He who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. (Hebrews 9:14) Christ is both victim and priest. He shares in the fruit of His sacrifice, as it is said, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

(Isaiah 53:11) But further than this, we find that every one might eat of this sacrifice, provided he was ceremonially clean. This represents Israel, and perhaps the Gentiles, or, generally speaking, all who will enter into the joy and blessing that flows from the sacrifice of Christ, in fellowship with God and with Christ. It is one communion. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Eating pictures communion, and the sweet savor sets forth worship; for it is impossible to have communion with God about the death of Christ and not to worship. The thought of His death without worship is more the aspect of the relief brought to the burdened conscience by the sin-offering. But sharp lines of demarcation do not seem encouraged in Scripture. One thought passes rapidly into the other. It is probable that ordinary meat in the wilderness was a peace-offering.

In presenting Christ to us as food, we have Him as that which sustains life, and satisfies desire. First of all, there is the satisfaction of the heart of God in His Son. He found in that perfect divine Man, dead in His obedience, that which the universe could nowhere else supply. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." He needs the blood that He may be the Saviour-God, but His own personal delight is in Christ. So with us. The blood relieves the conscience. It removes the fear of death and judgment, but Christ becomes the satisfaction of the heart. This is a most important principle. Christ is not merely a shelter, but a present portion for His people. He is the food spiritually of the saved. New affections are formed, developed, and satisfied in connection with the Saviour. It is a simple principle: "We love Him because He first loved us." Every renewed heart understands it, however feebly. The believer is a new creature. Christ is all then; He is life and food. This principle is brought out in the Song of Solomon. There it is the heart. The conscience is at rest; and this even when the heart is failing. The joy of God is the joy of the saint. The fat was burnt, the flesh eaten. In heaven this will be complete; but it is true now. We are not saved to enjoy the world, but to have our happiness in a new circle. May the Lord bring us more into it. This thought figured in eating is touched upon in the Lord's table; also, it is in the Passover. Again, we have it in the manna, and this is taken up in connection with Christ's death in John 6 and elsewhere. As saints God would have us peaceful, happy, and satisfied through and in Christ.

Now we have noticed that defilement disqualified an Israelite from partaking of the sacrifice. So, it is with the believer. Our fellowship is the Father and the Son: yet sin committed, even in thought, destroys communion at once. "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," And the same thing is, true of the table, where we have the outward picture of communion. The table is the place of every child of God. But sin, if indulged, disqualifies him from coming to or remaining at it. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." This also applies to worship. We cannot burn the fat to God as priests unless we are ourselves clean. It is impossible to be spiritual unless we are righteous. Cornelius was a just man, and a devout man. Then supposing one was an Israelite, and clean, one peace-offering would be eaten on the first day, another on the first and second, but to eat on the third day was abomination. Thus, if we are in relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus, and our hearts do not condemn us, i.e., we are like clean Israelites; yet the energy of spirituality may vary in different people, or at different times. The power for sustained worship or communion varies. Whatever be the cause, whether bodily infirmity, as the disciples sleeping when the Lord was praying in the garden, the fact all must allow, and the Lord's grace towards us in it too we see.

The vow appears to set forth a greater degree of piety and energy, than simply the thanksgiving for mercies received. It is well for us to bring to God what we have, and the chapter seems to teach us not to prolong anything beyond the spiritual energy that we possess. This would apply to prayer drawn out beyond what the Spirit leads to, and to long and frequent hymns, if not the expression of real worship in the Spirit. But again, we see the acceptability of that which is small if it be real. So, a prayer of five words may be most acceptable to God, as the publican's was, and most edifying to the assembly, though our pride makes it hard to contribute so small a thing. We need to keep in the sense of having to do with God and the cross in all. The eating of three days removed was no religious act, but as it assumed to be such, became iniquity. This would apply to bringing ostensibly to God that which is really for the satisfaction of the flesh, such as attempted eloquence in prayer, cultivated music, the architecture of Christendom, and so on. It is not that an eloquent man like Apollos might not pray with eloquence, forgetting himself he naturally would, so a good singer would sing well; but it is the affecting to have God before us when it is really the flesh. It was good to eat and enjoy the peace-offering, but not on the third day. We all know that it is only by watching and praying we can avoid falling into these things, as self and man are so constantly before us. Only the Spirit's power can put us above it. Still, the only worship God accepts is that which is in the Spirit and in truth. Worship in the flesh is abomination now; that is, now that the Spirit has come. This is the teaching of Christianity.

The connection of worship with the peace-offering is referred to, I believe, in Hos. 14:2: "Take away all iniquity (sin-offering), and receive us graciously; so will we offer the calves of our lips" (peace-offering). And it appears to be this same thought that we have in Hebrews 13:15: "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."

May the Lord lead us to find in Christ not only that which purges the conscience, but that which satisfies the desires of the heart. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." C. D. M.

## The Priestly Garments

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This chapter speaks to us of the garments with which Aaron was to be clothed to present himself before the Lord. He was the representative of the people, of those twelve tribes of Israel whose names he bore—a type of what Christ is doing for us in heaven. The Lord is not Priest after the order of Aaron, but He exercises priesthood now according to the type presented by Aaron. Now Christ is hid in God as the High Priest when he entered the holiest on the day of atonement.

A priest supposes temptations, distress, or, as in the epistle to the Hebrews, infirmities. He is the mediator to intercede on behalf of the people, and to represent them before God. I am weak, but all my weaknesses become, not a ground for judgment, but an occasion for God to display all His tenderness and all His compassion towards me, by means of our Priest down here Jesus washes our feet, but before God He represents us in His perfection. He displays to us down here the riches of God's grace towards us, and He presents us to God in His own perfection. Exodus 28 shows us how the Priest presents us before God. The ephod was the garment characteristic of the High Priest; the two parts of it were joined by two shoulder-pieces, which bore on two onyx stones the names of the twelve tribes. The girdle is typical of service "Let your loins be girded." The breast-plate was fastened to the ephod, and also bore on twelve stones the names of the twelve tribes. The garments were of fine twined linen; they were, as it were, ornamented with all possible graces, the groundwork representing purity itself.

Aaron was to bear the children of Israel before God. He carried them on his shoulders; all the burden of His people and the government are on the shoulders of Christ. If the stones had not been on Aaron's shoulders the ephod would have fallen; it was fastened by the names of the children of Israel. If Christ is Priest we are on His shoulders, borne as a memorial before God. He bears the burden and the government; He does all. Efficacy depends entirely upon Him, even in what we do for the Church. Aaron also bore the names of his people on his heart, in the breast-plate of judgment. There is not a ray of God's glory and love shining upon Christ which does not also shine on us, who are borne upon His heart. The heart of Christ presents us to God. It is not only to obtain special favors, but it is we ourselves that He presents according to the love there is between Him and God. The Urim and the Thummim are lights and perfections. Aaron bore on his heart before God the judgment of the children of Israel according to the perfections of God's presence. Our sins cannot pass by. Christ, and interpose themselves between God and Him. He maintains us in righteousness continually before God according to the lights and perfections of that presence. God never hides His face. He may chastise us. By our failures we may lose communion with Him; but if God hid His face from us He would hide it from Christ. It is hidden now from Israel, who is under the law. It is our shortcomings which raise a cloud between us and God; it is a consequence of our infirmity; but God's sovereign grace is by no means changed by it. The "holiness to the Lord" (which was graven upon the gold plate, and put on a blue lace on the miter) is always before God. Our prayers ascend in holiness to the Lord, because Christ is there. The iniquity in our holy things being borne by Him, our offerings (for there is iniquity, as all our service is imperfect) are presented before God according to divine holiness in Christ. This chapter in

enabling us to understand better the extent of the love and favor, of which we are the objects, fills us with thanksgiving, and causes us to find in Christ ever new resources; for our knowledge of Him can always grow, and increase our joy.

J. N. D.

(Translated from notes of the early series of addresses given in Switzerland. —ED.)

## The Birth of Jesus

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Look at one or two features with, me in Luke 2; that exquisitely beautiful scripture has more in it, I well know. “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (or good pleasure, or delight, in men). At the creation, God was providing for His own glory—for the blessing of the earth—for His peculiar joy and satisfaction in man. Now each of these great purposes is again answered in the new creation, which was laid in the Child of Bethlehem—answered too more abundantly and blessedly than in the old creation.

God’s “eternal power and Godhead” were to be seen in His works of old, He was glorified in them, as He sought to be, as Genesis 1 shows us. But all His glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Nothing that can glorify Him in the full display of Himself is left unrevealed there. The display of God in creation was necessarily partial, but in the mystery of Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, it is perfect and complete.

So, blessing was the earth’s portion at the creation. The creatures of God’s hand enjoyed themselves in the good things He had provided for them. (Genesis 2) But it was a blessing that might be forfeited, a peace that might be broken; but now the blessing and the peace, and the life which Jesus imparts, are infallible and forever. The wolf and the lamb of the garden of Eden fall out, but the wolf and the lamb of the kingdom of Christ shall feed together. So, the divine good pleasure in man at the creation was very blessed; the Lord God pondered with peculiar delight over His last, and chiefest, and crowning work, that image and likeness of Himself. But all this delight was changed; God repented that He had made man on the earth. (Genesis 6:6) But man recovered and set up in the Child of Bethlehem is man delighted in without possibility of such repentance, and delighted in so as no other object in all His creation (by its very nature) could awaken the same.

But still further on in this scripture, the shepherds are filled with fear in the presence of the glory, but the angel says to them, “Fear not” A multitude of the heavenly host then appear in the sight of the shepherds, but they do not fear, but rather go into the city with joy, repeat the tidings, and return with praise. So, in the book of Revelation, John fears, but the voice of Christ restores him, and then through a series of most awful and terrific visions he never fears again. (See chapter 1: 17, 18) This is very happy—very happy for us—very happy to know that the presence of the glory need not alarm us. Nature, fears, but the soul is emboldened by the voice that speaks from heaven; and thus are we taught that joy and praise; and not fear, become the presence of the glory, and the company of the heavenly multitudes, even if that glory and those hosts were to enshrine and surround us, as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, with as full a surprise as they did that very night the Bethlehem shepherds.

J. G. B.

## Luke 24:29; John 1:38-39

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In the address to Laodicea the Lord, standing at the door and knocking, says, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) In the incidents recorded in the above scriptures we have an illustration of the fulfillment of this promise. The two disciples on the journey to Emmaus, though they had not recognized their Companion, had been drawn towards Him, for their hearts had burned within them while He talked with them by the way, and while He had opened to them the Scriptures. When, therefore, arriving at their destination, He made as though He would have gone further, they constrained Him to abide with them; for, they said, "it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." They had, in fact, heard His voice, and opened the door, and He joyfully entered and supped with them. And while He in His tender grace was seated at table with them, their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. It was the first time they had ever truly seen and known Him (compare 1 John 1:1-3), for it is only in such intimate communings that the Lord really discloses Himself to His people. How much then they would have lost, had they not constrained Him to enter! It is different with the two disciples of John. It is, in fact, the other side of the promise; for they "supped" with Christ. They had heard the heart-utterance of their master when, filled with the beauty of the One on whom he gazed, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." This unconscious testimony (for he was rather expressing the admiration of his own heart than bearing witness) went home to their souls in such power, that they left their master, and followed Jesus. The attractions of "the Lamb of God" overmastered them, and drew them away from their beloved master in the intense desire, thus begotten, to know more of the One who had been pointed out to them. The feelings of John had been transferred to their hearts (and this is always the characteristic of a testimony in the power of the Spirit), and now they only desired to "behold the beauty of the Lord, and to dwell in His temple." Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, "What seek ye?" He knew their hearts. He had watched the effect of the words of His servant; and now, by this question, He was but seeking to elicit their desire, that He might satisfy them beyond all their expectations. They thus replied, "Master, where dwellest thou?" for already they had been taught that Christ could only be fully known in His own home. Like the Queen of Sheba, they were not satisfied with the report that had reached their ears, but they would see His beauty, and hear His wisdom for themselves, in the only place where He could fully display what He was, where He dwelt. They could not have given greater delight to the heart of Christ than by this question; and hence He instantly responded, "Come and see." And "they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour." They went, and entered at his invitation, and they "supped" with Him; for they feasted on Him, and on His things. That they were abundantly satisfied we know, for they went forth from that secret place of communion, entranced with the beauty they had witnessed, to testify of the One they had seen and heard. And sure we are that they would have also said with the Queen of Sheba, "It was a true report which I heard of thine acts and thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard." If then we lose much when we do not constrain the Lord, to enter and abide with us, we

lose much more if we do not press on to the place where He dwells, where alone we can fully know Him, and where alone we can behold His glory. Nothing less than this will satisfy His heart; and if we desire to be in communion with Him, nothing less will satisfy ours.

## 1 Chronicles 21:13; Hebrews 10:31

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The difference between these two scriptures is immense. David had fallen into sin in yielding to the temptation of Satan to number Israel; and, governed by will and pride, he had forgotten the ordinance that every man was to give a ransom for his soul when they were numbered, “that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.” (Exodus 30:12) God, therefore, was displeased, but He loved His servant David, and He sent Gad, after the king had confessed his iniquity, to offer him one of three methods of chastisement—three years’ famine, three months to be destroyed before his foes, or three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land. God could accept the confession of His servant’s sin, and restore his soul, but governmentally He must deal with this flagrant transgression. It was to the offer, Gad was commissioned to make, that David replied, “I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hands of man.” It is evident from these words that, if the Lord knew David, David also knew the Lord, apprehended the nature of the stroke about to fall upon him, and could count on “His mercies” in using the rod. In other words, he accepted the chastisement, and preferred to receive it directly from the Lord’s hand; and he thus could say, “Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord.” But when we come to the epistle to the Hebrews, it is not a saint falling into temptation, but apostates, that were before the mind of the writer, those who had once been with the people of God, professors of Christianity, who had “sinned willfully” after having received the knowledge of the truth—for whom there remained no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which should devour the adversaries. (vss. 26, 27) It is such the writer warns that vengeance belongs to the Lord, that He will judge His people—all who profess to be such—and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for to fall into the hands of God in this way would involve irremediable destruction. It is one thing, therefore, to fall into the hands of the Lord, like David, for chastening, for governmental dealing, and another thing to fall into the hands of the living God for unmitigated judgment as His adversaries—and this is the difference between these two scriptures. E. D.

## Zechariah 3:7-9

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Verse 7 puts Joshua, as the representative of the people, under responsibility for the time being. If faithful, he should have a place in the presence of Jehovah of hosts. Verse 8 treats him as a type of Christ, having the nation of priests associated with himself in the blessing that shall be accomplished in the last days. The foundation-stone that was laid before the eyes of Joshua was but a feeble image of that true stone, the immovable foundation of all the blessing of Israel, of all the government of God in the earth. Jehovah Himself stamps it with its true character. It should represent the thoughts of Jehovah Himself in His government. It should have, or rather it should be, the signet of God; and the iniquity of the earth should be definitely taken away by the absolute, efficacious, and positive act of God. In this stone shall be seen also the perfect intelligency of God. The seven eyes shall be there. I would add a few words on this expression. In 2 Chronicles 16 we find the eyes of Jehovah represented as running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. This is the faithfulness of God in taking cognizance of all things in His ways of government. In Zechariah the eyes are found upon the stone that is laid in Zion. It is there that the seat of that government is placed, which sees everything and everywhere. In verse 10 of the next chapter these eyes, which behold all things, which run through the whole earth, are said to rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel; that is to say, the house of Jehovah's habitation entirely finished. In this case, they are not presented as established in the seat of government upon earth but in their character of universal and active oversight; and in this providential activity never resting until Jehovah's counsels of grace towards Jerusalem are accomplished, and then they shall rejoice. The active intelligence of Providence finds its full delight there in the accomplishment of the unchangeable purpose of the will of God. Finally, these eyes are again seen, in Revelation 5, in the Lamb exalted to the right hand of God, who is about to take possession of His inheritance of the earth.

Here it is the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; for the government is in the hands of the Lamb, although He has not yet exercised it in the earth, of which He is about to be put in possession.

J. N. D.

## Hebrews 13:22

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The primary application of these words is, of course, to the Hebrew believers to whom the epistle was sent. But the word of God is also addressed to all; and constantly needing, as we all do, the teaching of this chapter, as, indeed, of the whole epistle, this admonition is suited to us all. We never, indeed, read such scriptures with profit unless we read them in their application to ourselves. To read them for others is to lose all edification and blessing. This understood, the tenderness of the writer of these words may well be noted. He fully identifies himself with his readers, as is seen in his saying, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. 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." (vss. 13-15) Then after certain other instructions, counting upon their fellowship and prayers, and what may be termed the doxology (vss. 20, 21), avoiding the assumption of any place of authority, he adds, by way of entreaty, "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." Surely the grace of the Spirit, in seeking the welfare of the saints, is inimitable!

E. D.

## Sell That Thou Hast

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The believer's position as standing in new creation, and as associated with Christ risen and glorified, is widely known today amongst believers; but it is of the deepest importance to judge in the light of the Lord's own presence and word how far our ways practically comport with being "risen with Christ." Nor is it our ways only, but that from which the walk is produced; namely, the whole energy of our moral being.

Unspeakably blessed it is when the Spirit is unhinderedly leading forth our hearts and minds to our Lord in glory, giving the heart to be at home where He is sitting. This is indeed rest, for the heart is then outside of this scene where trial and conflict are. Trial and conflict there will be to the end of our course; but are our affections (mind) on things above? (Colossians 3:2)

First there is, "Seek those things which are above." The babe in Christ can do this. How is it we see in some believers, with little or no intelligence of their place in Christ as heavenly, that ardent hope and joy in prospect of heaven when they shall have passed from this world and its trouble and sorrow? It is the Spirit leading them forth to what concerns Christ in glory. They feel they cannot rest in this scene, and, unintelligent as they are, their hearts aspire to a scene where they can rest—where Christ is. Blessed it is indeed if souls, in the freshness and joy of first knowing Christ, thus give place to the Spirit leading their hearts into communion with Christ, at the right hand of God. Seeking the things above, they will find them, we have nothing dissociated from Christ. He is the blessed object of our hearts, so that in seeking what is above we are brought into immediate contact with Himself, He has ascended that He might fill all things. (Ephesians 4) We await that bright day of glory when His filling all things will be manifested to this poor world, now groaning under the bondage of corruption. Are our hearts and minds meanwhile engaged with Him, and practically in fellowship with Him, in that place and glory where His God and Father has set Him, and where He yet waits until His enemies are made the footstool of His feet? This is of the utmost moment now to the glory and praise of His precious name amongst His own, in this the scene of His rejection, and where truly He is yet the despised and rejected of men. But how often is it sorrowfully evident that the mind is on earth instead of above, where He is? How little the hearts of His own value the sweetness and power of the Spirit in them, witnessing not of Himself, but our beloved Lord, the absent, earth-rejected One; receiving of Him, and showing it unto us, and thus glorifying Him. (John 16:13,14)

Matthew 19 will show us further what we have in this present scene. A young man comes to Jesus desiring to know how he might obtain eternal life. Jesus indicated perfect righteousness, according to the standard of the One who is "good," as the means through which life eternal had to be gained. This failing to reach the young man's conscience, Jesus brought in what is characteristic of God Himself. "If thou wilt be perfect." (4:21) "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" the only time this word perfect is used in Matthew. But to produce perfection in this scene, there must be separation from it. The heart must be dissociated from it. Hence there is the "selling," then communion with God in the character He now displays towards

the world— “grace.” “Give to the poor.” But what is this selling? It is not abandoning what we have, or throwing it away, but parting with it to receive more than its equivalent. If we turn to Philippians 3 we shall have a lovely example of this selling. There Paul is seen suffering the loss of all things, counting them but dung. But did he do so, like a monk, in his self-mortification, to work out a fitness for eternal life? No; this would have been a throwing away what he had, without aught being received. But he did it “to gain Christ,” This was in truth infinitely more than he gave up. Nor was there anything of self in thus giving all up to gain Christ. All was of Christ Himself. “Apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Then, in communion with His Lord’s purpose, and absorbed with His excellency, he could joyfully “sell what he had” and “give to the poor” in consequence also. “As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (2 Corinthians 6:10) Lovely character and path truly in this scene of selfishness and misery. Somewhat conformed unto Him, who for our sakes became poor, though surely the path of Him who abode in His Father’s love, and finished the work given Him to do, infinitely transcends all.

There is another side to this selling. God hath called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.

Blessed be His name for that. But He is faithful. (1 Corinthians 1:9) In faithfulness then He must judge in the saint what hinders the enjoyment of this fellowship. It concerns His own glory to do so. How often then what we have stands between us and the enjoyment and expression of what is in Christ? With that God must deal, and, if need be, remove it. How sad, and grieving too, surely to His heart of grace and love as our Father, to have to destroy “what we have,” instead of our “selling” it in communion with His own mind. This latter is joy unutterable to our souls; but how often years of a believer’s life are withered and blasted with suffering from God’s faithfulness to him as His child The Lord give His own fully to “be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5) “All that is in the world... is not of the Father.” (1 John 2:16) As then there is severance from this scene, the treasure in heaven is known and enjoyed. To us this treasure is Christ—He whom God hath highly exalted, and given a name above every name. (Philippians 2:9) We are “complete in Him.” What greater treasure could God have given us than His beloved Son? Meanwhile that treasure is in heaven. “Seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” “Blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3, and 2: 6)

To follow Him is placed last of all, and necessarily so. Until the soul is “rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught” (Colossians 2:7), there always will be some danger of the believer being spoiled with something after the traditions of men. What havoc it works, for souls to take the path of following Christ in service before they have learned where their treasure is, before their hearts, built up in Him, can, abiding in Him, repose in communion with Him above at His Father’s right hand. The Lord grant, to the glory of His own name, that flowing from Himself, “your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (Colossians 2:5), may be more and more displayed by His own, waiting to be forever with Him in glory, bearing then the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15: 49) Now in Him “we have redemption through His blood.” (Ephesians 1:7) “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Galatians 6:14) Let us then, for His beloved name’s sake, sell what we have, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Then shall we know, in all its blessed fullness, our treasure in heaven, where He who gave Himself for us is glorified, and where God

has now associated us with Him. Oh, let us in these evil days have our minds where He is sitting! Then there will be power to bring forth that for which He has chosen us, and for which He hath set us. (John 15:16) Do not our hearts covet to meet His own mind and desire in this day of rejection and trial?

J. A. N.

## **Fragment: Christ's Grace, Goodness, and Work**

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There are two things that present themselves to us in Christ—the attractions to our hearts of His grace and goodness, and His work which brings our souls into the presence of God.

## **Fragment: Three Aspects of the Result of the Work of Christ**

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Here then (Hebrews 9) are the three aspects of the result of the work of Christ: immediate access to God, a purged conscience, an eternal redemption.

## Expository 2 Timothy 1:1-5

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There is a great and felt difference between the first and second epistles to Timothy. The former contemplates the assembly in its pristine order, with everything regulated by the divine word; the latter deals with the path of the faithful in a time of confusion and departure from the truth. There are two verses which express this difference. In the first the apostle writes of the “house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15); whereas in the second he has to speak of some “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure,” etc. (2 Timothy 2:18,19) This was now the consolation that, if confusion reigned in the house of God, if vessels to dishonor had become mingled with the vessels to honor, the foundation, laid of God Himself, was immovable. Still it must have been an unspeakable sorrow to the apostle to behold the outward decay and corruption of Christianity, the almost open departure of the church from the holy ground on which he, by the grace of God, had been enabled to plant it. In truth it was an exhibition of what has been seen in every age, and in every dispensation; viz., the failure of that which had been entrusted to the responsible hands of men. For if Christ, on the one hand, builds the church, and builds that, as He surely does, which is imperishable and indestructible, He, on the other hand, permits His servants to build also, and many of these as surely build up upon the foundation wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3), and thereby the outward form and presentation of the house of God are corrupted. This, as we have said, had already taken place in the days of the apostle; and in this epistle he not only expresses the feelings of his own heart with respect to this sorrowful state of things, but he also is led to give such directions as avail for the guidance and conduct of exercised souls in the midst of the prevalent disorders.

The first two verses contain the address and the greeting. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” In other epistles he presented himself as a “servant” (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1); but here he views himself in his apostolic character, as one sent and commissioned by the Lord Himself, and, as such, having authority, an authority which no unfaithfulness on the part of others could nullify. He might be, as indeed he was, forsaken, if not refused, by many; but the authority entrusted to him survived. It is the same now as to gift. Wherever this is found, the privilege and responsibility to use it abide, even though it may not be acknowledged by the saints. The Head of the church who bestows it counts upon, and holds the person on whom it is bestowed responsible for, its faithful employment. (Compare Matthew 25:14-30)

He was, moreover, apostle by the will of God. This, and nothing less than this, was the ground and source of his office. Called by the Lord Himself, he was called by the will of God, and this certainty in his soul was the secret of his courage and devotedness in the Lord’s service. (Compare Joshua 1:9,) And if by the will of God, it was “according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.” The truth may be departed from, and the testimony be consequently surrendered, but the life which is in Christ Jesus—eternal life—is indestructible, as it is also outside of and above all question of failure or corruption. The apostle therefore takes this ground in this inspired communication to

Timothy; for grievous as it must have been to him to see the light of the golden candlestick (Revelation 1) dimmed if not extinguished, the thought of the immutable character of life, secured in Christ Jesus by the unchangeable promise of God, could not fail to minister powerful consolation to his soul. It is well to keep these two things distinct. As to life and salvation every believer will be kept through faith by the power of God (see 1 Peter 1:3-5); but the place of testimony, whether corporately or individually, may be, and often is, forfeited through unfaithfulness, or through succumbing to the influences of this present evil age.

“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son,” etc., more exactly, “(my) beloved child.” In the first epistle Paul names him, “My true child in the faith;” thus pointing him out as one that walked in his own footsteps in regard to the truth; here it is the expression of his own heart for the one who, as a son with his father, had served hence, also, the gospel of John, which treats of nature and life, is outside of all dispensations—save chapter 21 at the end with Paul in the gospel. In truth the heart of the apostle clung to Timothy at such a moment of sorrow; and his pouring out his heart in this way became the basis of the appeals and exhortations he was about to address to his beloved child. This is divine in its method; for it is ever God's way to reveal the depth of His affections for the saints before giving to them words of guidance or admonition. (See 1 Corinthians 1, and Colossians 3: 12-17)

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” It has often been noticed that, when writing to churches, the apostle, in his salutation, says, Grace and peace, but in the epistles to individuals he adds mercy.

The reason is that as individuals we need mercy, because of our weakness and infirmities every step of the road (see Hebrews 4:14-16); whereas the church is regarded as on the perfect ground of redemption before God, without any consideration of weakness or even failure. It is, as another has written, “the perfect grace of God by Christ, the perfect peace of man, and that with God; it was this which he (the apostle) brought in the gospel and in his heart. These are the true conditions of God's relationship with man, and that of man with God, by the gospel—the ground on which Christianity places man.” The grace, as well as the truth, came by, and was perfectly expressed in, Jesus Christ, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”—this is pure and sovereign grace. And the first announcement the Lord made to His assembled disciples, on the evening of the first day of the week, was, “Peace be unto you.” In this salutation therefore, we find the revelation of the heart of God, and the effect of the finished work of Christ, together with the provision of mercy, secured by the present ministration of Christ on high, for the pathway through this scene while awaiting His return.

Verses 3-5. First, in thanking God, the apostle makes the remarkable statement, “Whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience.” He had said the same thing in effect when standing before the sanhedrim (Acts 23:1; see also 24: 16); and it is necessary to seize the true import of these words. That his forefathers had been godly persons is manifest, as also that they had been distinguished by a conscientious observance of the law, walking according to the light they had received, being governed by the Word as far as they comprehended it. And this, as we understand, is what Paul here affirms of himself, that while he was in Judaism he maintained a good conscience, did not permit himself any known violations of the law, being even then, as “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” But this has nothing to say as to the

state of his heart when a Jew, only he insists that he preserved, until of course the light flashed into his soul when on his way to Damascus, an upright conscientious course; and also that this characterized his service after his conversion as an apostle. He ever pressed this point as of the utmost importance (see 1 Timothy 1:5,19;3: 9; 4: 2; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 13:18); and we would do well to remember it; for nothing more exposes the Lord's servant, and Christians indeed generally, to the darts of Satan than a bad conscience. It is to lack the breastplate of righteousness, without which our most vital parts are laid bare to his weapons.

The subject of the apostle's thanksgiving is, "that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." It is a striking way to put it, one that would not ordinarily be adopted by saints, because perhaps we are less mindful than he was, that we are entirely indebted to the grace of God for power to remember any one incessantly in prayer. Paul therefore gives thanks that he had been able to bear up Timothy before the Lord; a sure sign, too, it may be added, inasmuch as he penned these words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that Timothy needed his prayers, and thus that Paul was in communion as to him with the mind of God. Then follow expressions which reveal the apostle's fervent affection for his beloved child in the faith, "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." (vs. 4) Recalling Timothy's affection inflames his own, and while expressing it, consolation is doubtless ministered to his own heart. The occasion of Timothy's tears is not revealed; but it was probably at the time of some separation, bidding him farewell, it may be, when leaving him in captivity, as he departed to his own service. Whenever it might have been, it plainly shows that the affection of Paul was fully reciprocated, and that it was no common tie that knit together the hearts of these two servants of the Lord. It was the recollection of this parting, combined with his own ardent love, that led him to desire to see Timothy that he might be filled with joy; for to him the apostle could unburden his heart, and be refreshed in the enjoyment of Timothy's love and fellowship. Many a servant, in times of declension, has thus learned the sweetness and encouragement of real heart-fellowship concerning the work of the Lord.

Then, putting Timothy, in this respect, in a similar position to his own in relation to his ancestors, he adds, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." (vs. 5) The position is similar, but it is not, as in Paul's case, a good conscience, but "unfeigned faith," for Timothy had no Jewish ancestry, for his father was a Greek, and hence, though his mother was a Jewess, he was unclean according to the Jewish law. He is thus traced back only to the commencement of the Christian faith in his family, which dated from his grandmother. It is a beautiful picture, drawn for our instruction; for we learn from this same epistle that Timothy from a child had known (and who can doubt, through the teaching of these pious women, or at least his mother?) the Holy Scriptures. Both the grandmother and mother, as well as Timothy, had embraced the Christian faith; and the apostle seems to regard this fact as proving the greater reality of "the faith" in Timothy's soul, and as laying him, as will afterward be seen, under all the more solemn obligation of faithfulness to the Lord in this loose and corrupt epoch of the church. The reflection cannot but be evoked from the mind of every reader, that it is a priceless blessing to have godly parents, and such godly parents as seek to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The judgment-seat of Christ alone will reveal how much Timothy was indebted, in the grace of God, to the instructions of his mother Eunice. May such parents ever

abound in the church of God!

E. D.

## Conflicts

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There are three kinds of conflict in the word of God; they describe the whole state and condition of man in this world, converted and unconverted, saved and lost. The first is in Ephesians 2 and Colossians 1:21; the second is in Romans 7; and the third is in Ephesians 6. If you can find your place in one of these, you will find your true state in this world as to God, and discover from Himself just where you are in your own soul.

First, God gives us, the fact that man is an enemy to God by wicked works—"enemies in (your) mind by wicked works" —and in active conflict with God, on account of being a guilty creature, hating God, hating the very presence of God, because it discloses to him what God really is, what his own actions are, and what he himself is. He hates God, he is an enemy to God, and he entirely distrusts God. God tells us that man by nature is just in this state of alienation; i.e., an enemy to God by wicked works. The Lord comes into the midst of this world in grace and goodness and love. He does a work that glorifies God, and makes it possible for the most bitter enemy of God to be at peace, to be at rest in the very presence of God. No matter how great the bitterness, the enmity, the work the Lord Jesus has done has laid the foundation on which God is known, and enemies to Himself are reconciled. It is a most important thing for all of us to recognize, that this is the ground we are upon. If you have known what the grace of God is to yourself, you delight to know this ground, and that you are upon it, never to know again for one little moment what enmity against God is, because He has beaten down your opposition in His divine grace and love, and set you down reconciled to Himself. Is there not a wonderful difference between a pardoned sinner and an enemy reconciled?

By the blessed finished work upon the cross I am through grace reconciled to God. This brings the soul into a conflict, but there has been a transition from one state to another, with the same result as to conflict; but it is the second conflict now—that described in Romans 7—and let me say that the subject of Romans 7 begins at chapter 5:12. What the word of God here speaks of is a root of evil in us, and now the man having laid down his arms finds a fresh conflict in himself. He knows and loves God; he loves Him and delights in His law after the inward man; he strives his utmost to keep in check a will that in himself he really desires to control. Thus, the law says, "Thou shalt not steal." So he says, "I will not put out my hand to take what is not mine." So with the other commandments, not to bear false witness, and the like, he says, "I will not do it; I will keep myself in check." He may get the upper hand to a certain extent—"I will hinder this lust, overcome this propensity; I will have myself in control as to it." But how can I check having lusts? I may hinder the gratification of a desire, but here is the word of God like a flame, all fire before my heart and conscience. The law says, "Thou shalt not covet," not merely, "Thou shalt not give way to the desires," but, "Thou shalt not have them." Thus, God comes in and shows me what I am—a poor, feeble, powerless creature, knowing good and doing evil. Every effort that such a one makes only makes it the more hopeless. "Thou shalt not have the lusts"—that goes to the root. I must have power from outside myself; for I find none in me, no help at all. So, in the despair of his soul he cries to God to be delivered from himself, not for power to control this or that lust, but to be

delivered from himself. "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The way into Romans 7 is by conversion, and the way out is by the individual cry for deliverance. There seldom is the arriving immediately at the end of this conflict, or getting into the severity of the conflict against self at the moment the soul is awakened. Every converted soul is conscious he has this conflict in himself; he cries to God Himself for deliverance, and then, and then only, does he pass into Romans 8. You can settle for yourselves which conflict you are in. If you are not converted, you are an "enemy to God by wicked works," and thus really in the first conflict; but if converted you are in the second conflict, though as to your own experience you may not be there in the activity of it, not there really in spirit. It is not doctrine, it is practice. The soul knows what the conflict is that goes on, and it cries to God for deliverance. If you only take the order God gives us in His word you will find it so. There is the cry of the saved soul for deliverance from itself; and with the deliverance comes this third conflict which we enter through His grace.

Let us trace this conflict a little; it begins with: "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." You cannot do without the whole of this armor, if you are to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. You are here in this world where Jesus was crucified, where the devil reigns. You are here in this world, not to fight for yourself, nor against yourself, but to fight for God and His Christ. Oh, what a place it is! This is the true Christian place; you may speak of the other as a converted, undelivered place, but here is the place where a man can lose sight of himself, and be here wholly and simply for God. "Put on the whole armor of God," not that you may be able to do great things, but, that you may be, able to stand for God in the world that denied Him, that crucified His Son; in the world that is making its very joy and delight in this, that He is not here. We are to stand for Him; not to do great things. Beloved, it is not to be in this world, to be here for ourselves or for Christians, but for God and for Christ. This, if you apprehend it, will make you a true Christian; nothing else will, for you have your eye off the mark if that blessed place where He has set you in this world is not practically yours. The very object on the part of God in our being in this world, is Christ and Christ only. The object of our being here is that we may be able to stand for Him. The greatest generals and historians have told us, over and over again, that the best soldier is the one who can stand still the longest in simple endurance; that is the one who is most tested, who is of most service, who can really be of use when the moment comes that he is required.

"Put on the whole panoply of God." He tells us what the conflict is, not against ourselves, nor against God, but against everything that is against God. You are changed now from the place of an enemy, from the place of a poor soul struggling against itself, and you are changed to God's side. Do you think we have apprehended what that means, that you and I, with all our littleness, all our foolishness, are set on God's side in a world like this? This is what He has done for us, to be here in this world for God, to be of Him and for Him. Full of pride by nature, you will not know what pride is if you have that in your heart, except as a thing deep down to be kept there as dead. Pride! Was ever a man proud in the presence of God? Men are proud out of His presence, but they are never proud in His presence. There the soul is humble, there the soul learns what dependence is, and what the cross is. God tells us that this conflict is the place of privilege and honor in which He sets us. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God." He speaks in verse 10 of being "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Just the very thing we have here; it takes all the

power of the might of God Himself (that is what you need) to endure; being in this world for Him, that you may just go on and endure.

Then what does He give us first? I only draw attention to one or two of the points; it is all inward armor before it is outward. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness." It is of the greatest importance for us to understand that this armor is given us on the part of God, given to the Christian by God to be for God in the very place where the wiles of the devil are exercised. Not one bit of the armor is against God, not one bit of it is between the soul and Him. God puts Himself, as it were, behind the armor, as if He said, "I am here behind the armor with you." It is given from Himself to be used for Himself.

The breastplate of righteousness is not divine righteousness, but uprightness of heart before Himself, a clear conscience in simple uprightness in what we are doing, as a man that lives in the light where is no shadow. It is not righteousness toward God, but uprightness before Himself, every single thing in uprightness. You go into this world, let Satan cast a dart if he can. I do this in God's name, for His sake, to His glory; I do it openly with Himself, find fault with it if you can. Beloved brethren, where is rest without it? There is no good conscience without it, and if you have not a good conscience, Satan knows very quickly that you have a bad one, and will touch you on that point; he will just play upon it, for he is a master of wiles. They are the wiles of the devil.

"Having the loins girt about with truth" —the inner man, the center, is to be "girt about with truth."

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Some insist upon it that this means going out to preach the gospel; it is nothing of the kind. It is the soul walking up and down habitually, practically, in that blessed avenue "the gospel of peace." You can go out and preach the gospel, and announce it without being there yourself. God may even bless it; but when He speaks of the armor, He does not speak of mere ability to go out and announce it, but yourself in the full, blessed, daily, hourly enjoyment of the gospel of peace. That is what He means. Not having and knowing the truth merely, but having the truth under our feet, in the blessed peace and enjoyment of it. "Every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." He shows you the land, all before you. It is the soul standing there, the blessed gospel of peace under its feet, the soul really there walking up and down in the peace of its possession.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Now we come to outside armor. One does not like to leave the inside armor; it is so important and blessed, but the shield of faith covered it all. And what is this faith? It is simple, unwavering, childlike confidence in Himself. Have you got it? Simple, unfailing childlike confidence in Him outside; inside all the preparation of the gospel of peace. The outside covering is the shield of faith "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Whatever fiery dart he may bring, there is the childlike confidence in God Himself. This will turn aside every attack, but you cannot hold up the shield of faith if you have not the inside armor. It is no use talking about childlike confidence in God if you have not the inside armor on, the loins girt about with truth, the gospel of peace under the feet, in blessed present enjoyment. Then you have power to hold up the shield of faith.

Now look at the next thing, "the helmet of salvation," the soul really able to look up to God in the midst of all that surrounds it in this world, apart from it all, separate from it all. One may say, "Here

I am in this world in the truth of salvation, saved by His grace, looking up to Him in the conscious knowledge of salvation, the head lifted up in its reality and certainty, not bowed down in doubts and fears and uncertainty.”

Then there is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” He Himself gives it to us. If you look at that sword, there is one practical characteristic of it; it has two sharp edges, but it has no handle. It is not a thing put into your foolish, inexperienced hand to go and slash with; it is sharp, keen, powerful, and two-edged; it comes home to me. Thus, it acts rightly, on another through me, because it has first affected the one who uses it. It searches the heart, and does its work in the soldier of Christ before it does its work elsewhere. There is the edge that goes in, “piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Not merely it discovers whether the action done is done aright or not, but it goes in and discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart no you know this use of the word of God? Do you know the word of God in that character? That is God’s way of making His word effectual; all the secret motives, the little pettiness, the little prides, the little self-seekings, He lays bare. There is nothing more terrible than this sword of the Spirit; it always does its work within your own soul first, and then the other edge of the sword begins to do its work for God and for Christ.

There is another very important thing, perhaps most important of all. Over all this beautiful armor of God He casts the blessed, beautiful mantle of prayer. Over the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the loins girt about with truth, over everything that constitutes the armor, we have this blessed mantle of prayer; and what, is it? Unceasing, unfailing dependence upon Himself. Prayer is the expression of the soul’s dependence upon Him, so He says, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Not praying when you are in distress or sorrow that you cannot get out of save by prayer, but “always, with all prayer and supplication... for all saints.” You need not go into your room and kneel down for that. It does not mean the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, but always. It is the soul’s habit looking up to Him in conscious, known, real dependence upon Him. You need not get away into a corner for that. What God proposes for us is the blessed access of known, felt, and expressed dependence on Himself.

Ah, here is a man absolutely free. Did you ever see a man like that? I have; and I can see him now at this moment. Here he is in verse 19, a man with the armor upon him. Now, he says, “and for me.” Here is the great servant, here is die great soldier of Christ. He has that armor, that mantle upon himself; and he says, “ Pray for Ore, not that I may be delivered out of troubles, not that I may go free —go back to my friends and relatives—,but that utterance may be given me, that I may open ray mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Listen to him, dear friends. Here is prayer in the Spirit divinely uttered, divinely recorded. “Oh,” says this man, pray for me, that with all that utterance He gives, I may go and proclaim in this world what the unsearchable riches of Christ are, that I may proclaim among the nations—among my own countrymen, before kings, governors, and rulers, before the richest, to the very lowest, vilest, and poorest—the riches of Him who came with a heart full of love—divine love—to seek and to save, to give His life a ransom for many.

God gave to Ananias the sign of Paul's conversion in the words, "Behold, he prayeth." You will find the divine result of the apostle's conversion in the end of this epistle. It is blessed to see how the Spirit of God in the epistle answers to the sign given in Acts 9 There the Lord points him out as a praying man. At the end of his journey he says, "I need prayer more than ever. Without it all the armor would be useless."

May God in His blessed mercy give us to realize this in the power of an ungrieved Spirit —to be really for God. Being for God in this world, He gives us, provides for us, all that we need. He does not set us to "go a warfare at our own charges." "I give you everything—what you need, and what you delight in too." If that delights the heart of God, can it not, will it not delight our hearts in fellowship with Himself? Wonderful and blessed place to be in.

P. A. H.

## Fragment: Jesus Is Everything

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He who is not satisfied with Jesus does not know Him, or, at least, has forgotten Him. It is impossible to enjoy Him and not to feel that He is everything; that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that, by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

## Zechariah 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:19

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There is an evident connection between these two scriptures, widely different as they are in the instruction they afford. “The stone” laid before Joshua, in Zechariah, is the foundation-stone of the temple which was being built by the children of the captivity. The seven eyes—the perfect wisdom or “intelligence” of God should rest upon it; for that foundation-stone was a type of that which God would lay in Zion (1 Peter 2:6), as the foundation on which He would act to secure the full blessing of His people; in other words, it set forth Christ as “the living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,” on which the Church is now being built, and on which Israel will be built, and the government of God in the earth secured, in the coming age. Hence the Lord of hosts would engrave the graving thereof, “stamp it with its true character,” and it would thus be the expression of His own perfect thoughts. And, moreover, Jehovah would remove the iniquity of the land in one day; for on the foundation of the death of Christ He is able righteously, consistently with all that He is, and therefore with His ways in government, inasmuch as Christ died for the nation, to cleanse His people and their land from all the guilt of their transgressions. The apostle Paul, as led of the Holy Spirit, has doubtless this scripture in his mind when he writes to Timothy of the foundation of God. He had been speaking of sad departures from the truth, mentioning Hymenaeus and Philetus, “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless, he adds—and this is his consolation, and ours in like circumstances— “the foundation of God standeth sure.” That is immovable, and, whatever the actings of men; or the apparent success of the enemy in perverting souls, cannot be shaken or touched. It has, moreover, been engraved with a graving. It has the writing of God Himself upon it, and the apostle is commissioned to interpret it. It reads, first, “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” We may often be deceived as to whether those claiming to be teachers and Christians are His or not. He knows; and though such may delude themselves and others, He is never deceived. We are not called upon to decide the question, and we may therefore leave it to Him whose eyes, whose perfect knowledge, penetrate into the secrets of all hearts. But while this is true, there is another inscription— “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ (“the Lord,” it should read) depart from iniquity.” It is not here, as in Zechariah, a question of God’s removing the guilt of His people, but of the responsibility of His people removing themselves from iniquity, this responsibility springing from the fact of their professing to own the Lordship of Christ. If therefore we do not know, on the one hand, who in all cases are really the Lord’s, we do know, on the other, that it is incumbent upon all who profess to be His people to depart from iniquity. He knows who are His; but we know what is suitable in the walk and ways of those who confess Christ as their Lord.

## **Zechariah 4:7; Matthew 21:21**

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As in the above scriptures, so also in these there is doubtless a connection. The prophet says, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." The "great mountain" is clearly a figure to express the totality of all the obstacles and hindrances that lay in the way of building the temple. The difficulties were so many and so great that it seemed impossible that the builders could ever accomplish their design. But all things are possible with God, and all things are possible to him that believeth; and Jehovah, in this message through the prophet, encourages the faith of His people with the assurance that the "great mountain" should become a plain, and that the hands of Zerubbabel, having laid the foundation, should also finish the house. In our Lord's words to His disciples also the mountain, is without doubt a symbol of some great hindrance to their work. He had just pronounced the sentence on the fig-tree—"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever." Then we are told, "And presently the fig-tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done." Now it is in the context that the key to the meaning of the "mountain" is found. The fig-tree is admittedly the Jewish nation. The Lord had been for three years seeking fruit from it, and had found none. (Luke 13:6-9) The time of its probation was now ended, and the irreversible sentence was uttered, that it should bear no fruit henceforward forever; for indeed man in the flesh, although possessing every advantage and under divine culture, could not produce fruit for God. But it was precisely this truth that the Jewish nation would not accept; and in their violent opposition to it, and to the proclamation of grace, as connected with it through the death of Christ, they became the chief adversaries of the gospel. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) Everywhere, and on all occasions, they sought to destroy the first preachers of Christianity. The Lord foresaw this "mountain" in the way of His disciples, and, as in Zechariah, He ministers encouragement to their hearts by telling them that it would utterly disappear before faith in God. They had marveled at His display of power upon the fig-tree; but if they had faith in the prosecution of the mission on which they should be sent, and doubted not, they should do a greater work than this (see John 14:12), for before the irresistible command of faith this Jewish nation, seemingly a huge mountain of difficulty, should disappear in the sea of the nations; and this, whatever the failure of the apostles, was accomplished. The Lord then added, showing that this pathway of power in service is open to all believers in all ages, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Happy are they who have in any measure learned the lesson.

## Philippians 1:6-10; 2 Timothy 1:12-18

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It is only in Philippians that the expression, “The day of Jesus Christ,” or the “day of Christ,” is found. The nearest to it is “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” in 1 Corinthians 1:8. The period referred to is without doubt the same; the difference in the form of the expression being traceable either to the character of the epistle, or to the context in which it is found, Thus in Philippians—the book of experience, as it has been aptly called—where the whole of the Christian life is summed up in the words, “To me to live is Christ,” the term in chapter 1:10 is, “The day of Christ,” whereas in Corinthians, where the exercise of gift in responsibility is brought in, we read, “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But whatever the variations, and some of these are very instructive, all alike point onward to the period introduced by the appearing of our Lord. His coming is the hope of the Church, as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4; but uniformly, when the saints are regarded as under responsibility in service or suffering, or indeed as strangers and pilgrims, the appearing of Christ is always the goal; for inasmuch as earth has been the place of service and testing, it shall be also the scene of the displayed recompense. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7; 1 Timothy 6:13, 14; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; 1 Peter 1:6, 7, &c) This will explain the expressions in 2 Timothy 1. The apostle says, “For which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed...unto Him against that day.” (vs. 12)

As another has beautifully said, “His happiness, in the glory of that new life, he had committed to Jesus. He labored meanwhile in affliction, sure of finding again, without being deceived, that which he had committed to the Lord, in the day when he should see Him and all his sorrows ended. It was in the expectation of that day, in order to find it again at that day, that he had committed to Him his happiness and his joy.” So in the apostle’s prayer for Onesiphorus, he looks onward to the same blessed moment, desiring that the one who, in the midst of general unfaithfulness, and turning away from God’s chosen vessel of the truth (vs. 15), had often refreshed the weary heart of this devoted servant, was not ashamed of his chain (compare verse 8), and in Rome had sought him out very diligently and found him, might find mercy of the Lord, might then meet with the recompense of his service in the full fruition of “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 21) For the mercy here spoken of is not the mercy shown to a sinner in the forgiveness of his sins, but mercy’s fruit and crown, entered upon by the saint at the coming of the Lord, and exhibited at His appearing. There may be also a reference in the use of the word to the conduct of Onesiphorus. He had, in the tenderness of his heart, fruit of the Spirit of God, shown mercy, as it were, to the apostle. He had “compassion upon him in his bonds;” and the apostle prays that this may, as it will, be publicly owned “in that day.”

E. D.

## Fragment: Practical Purification

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Christ glorified is the measure of our practical purification.

## Obedience; or, How Victory and Enjoyment are Secured

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However, much man may fail, yet with God there is infallibility, and it is for us. There is one infallible rule, one unfailing principle, which will safely guide the Christian in every exigency and intricacy of his path through this world. Oh, that we all had a more distinct grasp of it in our inmost souls, and, flowing thence, a more distinct manifestation in our walk that we are being guided by its maxims, that so we may enjoy this new life which we possess!

Let no one suppose for a moment that the word “rule” here connected with a Christian savors of legality. The delight and joy of the new nature are to “obey,” and our unhappiness is to be traced (may we not say invariably?) to disobedience. Our Lord’s path was marked by this very principle of obedience all along His earthly course. At its beginning we read, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!” And as He trod onward in that dark, that solitary path—a path illumined by no earthly light, and cheered by no human sympathy—it was still the path of obedience. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Darker and darker it became, as it led Him onward, down, down to death, yet He never swerved from it, and in perfect obedience even there He still says, “O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

Volumes might be written, and whole addresses and sermons delivered, all devoted to one object; viz., the restoration of the Christian when he has failed or turned aside out of God’s path. We may write and we may read no end of such works, and every word written and read may be God’s truth for the soul in that condition. But had the principle we are speaking of in this paper been maintained in all its authority in the soul, there had been no need of restoration. The path of obedience bears on it, distinctly and divinely stamped, the word preservation; and if preserved in the path, I do not need to be restored to it. This is God’s desire for us, to preserve us, and to feed us, in the place in which His grace has set us; and may the means, the rule, the principle, He uses to this end, occupy more distinctly our souls as we pass along.

It has been remarked that the book of Joshua and the Epistle to the Ephesians correspond in a remarkable way to each other. In the one we see the accomplishment of God’s purposes for His earthly, as in the other for the heavenly, people. In each He has them in the place which His own heart designed for them, where He can commune with them, and where He has fitted them to enter into and to enjoy that communion. (Ephesians 1:4; 1 John 1:3) It is not heaven, but it is a condition which is ours on earth, and which will be fully known and enjoyed in heaven; and it is a condition, a communion, a joy, which God desires us to possess on earth, in the place of conflict and opposition, but which obedience is the sure and only way into. May we ponder it more! May its reality be more distinctly seen, enjoyed, and displayed by us! But though His people are all thus seen in the place God’s heart designed for them, the old or evil nature remains, and it will remain in each of them until they leave this world. We have said that there is a new nature also which delights to obey, but it finds the members of the body (Romans 6:13-22), yea, the whole man, under the influence of Satan, and all our members active in the service of sin, his power in us as the old master. Satan is moreover the enemy that holds possession, not only of our members, but

also of the place which God has brought us into; that is, he holds us back from enjoying what is really ours, our own, as the gift to us of God's infinite grace, all secured to us by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is, then, this double power of the enemy—first, holding us; and, second, holding the place that belongs to us. Obedience, simple obedience, can wrest both from his grasp, and enable the Christian to pass into the enjoyment of what is, through grace, his own. There is no other way to dispossess the enemy. He is not readily going to give up possession either of us or of what is ours. It is bit by bit that he yields, a hand to hand struggle, yet it is only obedience on our part that is necessary, and with this he can neither hold us nor it.

If we read Joshua 6 and Ephesians 6:10-18 the truth is before us. They are simply to obey, to walk round about Jericho, in patience, the complete seven days. Not a blow were they to strike, and the result would be that the walls of Jericho, that which the enemy held in power and in pride against them, would fall down flat, "and the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him." And thus it came to pass. The key to the whole of Joshua 6 and Ephesians 6:10-18 is the word obedience.

Let us pause a moment here to inquire if Christians generally are found, through obedience, enjoying what is really theirs—a happiness which this world can neither give nor take away from them, as the calm and settled portion of the soul; daily feeding on the old corn of the land, the grapes (of which Eshcol gave a sample), the pomegranates, the figs; the soul dwelling in that land wherein they "eat bread without scarceness," yea, in the Lord's land, "flowing with milk and honey," on which "the eyes of the Lord rest from the beginning of the year to the end thereof." God "hath blessed us" (all Christians) "with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ." And He would have us to be consciously enjoying them day by day.

If we are not enjoying them, it is because the enemy is still holding us back from the enjoyment. One cannot say for another what the walls of Jericho are to him; for they may differ in each individual instance. I cannot tell what they are for you, nor you for me; yet one principle applies to them all. It is only by walking in obedience that they will fall down. The whole point of the apostle's exhortation (Eph, 6:10-18) is obedience to the word of God. The first force of the armor is "the loins girt about with truth," and the last is "the sword of the Spirit," which is again the word of God. The power for you and for me to enter into the enjoyment of these heavenly things, which are all ours in title, is found only as we walk in obedience. The power is not in me, and it only connects itself with me as I walk in obedience. The power is in the "man with the drawn sword," in Joshua 5; so, all our strength is in "the Lord and the power of His might," in Ephesians (6:10). Oh, may we remember it! No effort of yours or mine will put us in possession, or drive out the enemy. Obedience will do both. May the words of Samuel to Saul fix themselves indelibly in the heart of every Christian reader of these lines: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

It is well to know our weak point, so that not on human, but on the authority of God, we have what is hindering us exposed to us. Who can estimate the mighty power of the church of God, were each member of the body of Christ walking in simple obedience to the written Word? What union together, what grace, what joy, what communion with God would flow thence! But when there is

failure in this respect in the company, the individual is called on to hear what the Spirit says to those who have failed— “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Revelation 2:11) “If any man hear my voice,” is the Lord’s word to you and to me.

My reader, I have done. If anything herein should draw your feet more distinctly and firmly and patiently to tread the path of obedience, I am already rewarded. Sure I am, however feebly I have spoken of it or trodden it, that it is the only path wherein blessing can be found today; and equally sure that you will reap true lasting, yea, eternal joy in it. I close these, few remarks with the words of a familiar scripture, which has often cheered and encouraged me (Psalms 81), commending it also to your solemn consideration. But let me first add one word more. Are you conscious of, having left the path of obedience in any one point? If so, let me beseech you in self-judgment immediately to return. Do not hesitate a moment as to consequences; leave all that with your God. Nothing, nothing but trouble and sorrow are before you, as long as you refuse His path for you. “Oh, that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured forever.” Then immediately, the enemy being subdued, “He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.” May my reader know, and infinitely more than the writer, the satisfying power of this heavenly food, through walking in the path of obedience, on earth, and today, for Christ’s sake!

H. C. A.

## **Fragment: The Order of God for Christians**

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The order of God for Christians is, not obedience upon blessing, but blessing on obedience; not to wait for blessing in order to obey, but to act on the command, and the blessing follows. And this is faith; for there would be no faith if the blessing came first.

## Fragment: Obedience

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The Scripture is plain that obedience is the way of blessing; and that we are not to wait for power to obey a command, but to obey it that we may find power. The Lord did not restore the hand that He might stretch it out and show it, but ordered the man to stretch it out, that it might be restored.

### A Letter

The Lord bless you, my dear sister; and if called on to take the journey somewhat more solitarily than your heart had been wont to count upon, and to know sorrows which had not come within the range of your forebodings, may His hand be with you, and its well-known staff. "God is His own interpreter."

There is no providence by which He deals with us that He will not interpret by-and-by, nor is there any promise by which He sustains and comforts that He will not abundantly make good. There is nothing excessive in the divine descriptions. The spirit of revelation is surely under and not over the mark, though the promises are "exceeding great and precious," and the reality will rather be according to the confession of the Queen of Sheba— "The half was not told me, it was a true report which I heard in my own land."

How beautifully does Luke 1 rise upon the heart in connection with this! It has just struck me very peculiarly. I read it like a new scene of light and joy breaking in after a gloomy and wasted interval, and exceeding all that had been in the earlier days, or that had been promised by the prophets. There had been most surely a return from Babylon in the times of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and they were good times. The zeal of the servants of God, the restoration of the house and the city, the revival of the feasts, and the order and services of the people, made them so. But such times had been clouded. The day was overcast; yea, while it was yet but morning a change had come, and Malachi gives us an evil account of his time, in which condition, with a bright promise to the remnant, Israel goes on till the times of the New Testament—a dreary and evil interval indeed, without one single ray, as from the light of the Lord or the spirit of revelation, to animate or cheer it. But through it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, and come with a bright witness. For such is this exquisite chapter. The morning breaks, the heavens are opened as it were, and the dreary wastes of Israel are revisited and as in the twinkling of an eye all this takes place. No special harbingers, no marvelous notices of the coming change; but the priest is at the accustomed altar, and the people in their places according to the manner, and in the ordinary current of everyday life. The women of the land were preparing for espousals (vs. 27), when suddenly the heavens open, and visitations are made alike to the temple and the cottage, to the priest, and to the poor, unknown virgin of Nazareth.

The suddenness and the brilliancy of all this are very blessed. And how it tells us that the distance of heaven from earth is nothing when the, due season comes for bringing them into communion. The ladder is a short one that will reach from heaven to earth by-and-by. And in this chapter we get a sight of it for a moment, or a sample of some of its happy, services. Here the angels of God

are ascending and descending. Gabriel enters without wrong into the place of the priests, and stands even at the right side of the altar. He does not take the high place of the angel Jehovah, and ascend in the flame; nor does he, like Jesus—Jehovah, speak of himself as greater than that temple; but being a heavenly one, he enters without trespass upon the place of the priest. But so, does he enter without reluctance into the place of the poor, unknown Nazarene. The earth may not be so prepared to receive such visitations as heaven is to make them, but Gabriel has for both Zacharias, and Mary the same healing and gladdening word— “Fear not.” And joy, the most satisfying joy, diffuses itself everywhere—old men and maidens, young men and children, join in the millennial dance; Mary and Elizabeth, and the child in the womb, and Zacharias, in their several ways attest their joy, and in principle all creation is lighted up in gladness. Here is more than earlier days had known or voices of prophets had foretold. Ezra and Nehemiah had never had such days of heaven upon earth as these, nor had Malachi told the remnant of such tastes of soul-satisfying joy as Elizabeth had when she saluted’ Mary, and as Mary had when she uttered her song of praise. He had indeed said, that they that feared the Lord spake often one to, another, and thought on His name together; but now in the hearts and on the lips of such a remnant the gladdening light of the Spirit is shed, and the triumphant strains of the Spirit are poured forth. And the suddenness as well as the brilliancy of all this! Who was calculating on a bit of this the day before? And then the ease with which heaven visits the earth when the due time comes. No reserve in coming side by side with the highest, no reluctance in coming side by side with the poorest and meanest. The ladder stretches its ample foot across the length and breadth of the land, and down to every point of it “abundant entrance” is ministered to the angels in the heavens above. All these features of this communion attract me. Would that the soul could wait more in the joy and patience of faith for the great original of all this—for that millennial clay, when the ladder shall thus be raised, and the heavens after this pattern shall open on the earth again when the passage downward shall be thus in full ease and brilliancy; and if the receivers of the joy that brought be made so happy by it, what shall be the happiness of them who bear it to them, and who in their measure shall experience the divine prerogative, and know that it is more blessed to give than to receive? May your heart greatly rejoice in this. He will interpret the doings of His hands, and will outdo the sayings and promises of His prophets. May He graciously hold you up while you are passing the dreary interval.

With Mr.— I continue to have full and unreserved communion; but how painful to think that this should not be the general rule, but the exception! But so it is partition walls are thrown up, as well as veils cast over, by the god of this world, where the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of grace would throw down and rend. May the Lord greatly refresh and sustain your spirit. May the assurance of His love fill your heart. No one thought more blessed than that. It is so precious that the Holy Ghost makes it of His special service to impart that assurance to the heart. (Romans 5) May you abound in hope also, longing as for the morning. He has gathered, many, and will go on. Believe me in unfeigned love, Your brother in Christ, J. G. B.

## 2 Timothy 1:6-7

The expression of the apostle's heart to Timothy, as well as his longing desire to see him, is but preparatory to the appeal contained in verses 6-8. It is indeed the groundwork on which he builds up his exhortations. He thus drew the heart of Timothy to himself to prepare him to receive his message. "Wherefore," he says, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (vs. 6) By the light of the first epistle we may understand the whole history of Timothy's gift. In chapter 1 we find that he had been pointed out as a chosen vessel of gift by prophecies (of course, in the assembly), and that Paul accordingly committed to him a "charge." Chapter 4:14 further teaches that the bestowment of the gift, "given thee by prophecy," was accompanied by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" and now we learn that it was the apostle himself, "the presbytery being associated with him," who was the instrument or channel appointed by the Head of the Church for the actual communication of the gift to Timothy. It is the ascended Christ who, having led captivity captive, gave, and still gives, gifts to men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And Timothy was honored, in the sovereign favor of God, in being made a vessel for the blessing of the saints. It is of this he is reminded by the apostle, and charged at the same time to "stir up" the gift of God. Previously he had been warned not to "neglect it" (1 Timothy 4:14); now he is more urgently exhorted on the same subject. This points to a common danger. When there is a real action of the Spirit of God among the saints, when His power is demonstrated in edification and restoration, or in conversion, the ministry of the Word is welcomed and appreciated.; but in times of coldness, indifference, and apostasy, the saints will not endure sound teaching, but after their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they will turn away from the truth. (4: 3, 4) Then comes the danger to the servant of the Lord. Seeing that his ministry is no longer received, he is tempted to retire, to lapse into silence, or to resolve with Jeremiah not to speak any more in the Lord's name to the people. (Chapter 20:9) As knowing the heart and the tendency of Timothy, Paul provides against this snare by urging him to rouse himself, and to stir up, by constant use, the gift he had received for the correction and edification of the Lord's people. The greater the confusion and departure from the truth, the greater the need for a real and living ministry, but in order to maintain this, the servant must learn to draw his strength and courage, not from the faces of the people, but from abiding and secret communion with the Lord.

If the Lord, through His apostle, summons Timothy to more diligent service, He also draws his attention to the source of his power. "For," continues the apostle, "God hath, not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (vs. 7) The first clause, which might be rendered the spirit of "cowardice," reveals Timothy's especial weakness. He evidently was a man, like Jeremiah, of a timid, shrinking spirit; one who only with difficulty, unless under the sway of the Holy Spirit, could face dangers and opponents. But while the servant of the Lord "must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient" (2: 24), he must be also as bold as a lion in the defense of the truth, and in maintaining the honor of his Lord. Timothy is therefore taught that the spirit God gives is not one of fear or cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a; sound mind.

These are three remarkable words, and they require a little examination. First, it is a spirit of power; for if God bestows gift, He gives also the power to exercise it; that is, it should be added, if there is the state of soul for its use. It is indeed of the last importance to remember the connection between state of soul and the power of the Spirit. The gift may abide even in one who is unfaithful or indifferent, but the power to use it will not be present, unless its possessor is walking in dependence upon God, unless he lives in the acknowledgment that power is outside of himself, and in the realization of his own utter weakness. This is the apostle's point: "God," he says, "has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power." If therefore the servant, and Timothy was to learn it, is animated with fear or timidity, he should know that this is not the spirit God gives, for His Spirit is one of power. These two things are to be noted—the source of the power, and the character of the spirit given. Moreover, the spirit is also "of love." The apostle follows in this the same order as in 1 Corinthians. In chapter 12 he speaks of spiritual manifestations in the assembly; and, at the end of the chapter, of workers of miracles, gifts of healing, and speaking with tongues— all of which are connected with displays of power. And then in the next chapter he proceeds to speak of love, teaching that if anyone spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had not love, he would become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; for in truth divine power can only be wielded by the Spirit, through a divine nature, for of this it is that love is the expression. The flesh, man's sinful nature, can never be used in the Lord's service; and thus power and love—divine, holy love— can never be dissociated. There will also be, as a consequence of love, a sound mind, or, as it has been translated, "a wise discretion;" for when governed by the Spirit of God, the servant will always exhibit divine wisdom in his work, and be kept in quiet control and subduedness in the presence of God. He will know when to speak and when to be silent, when to be in season and when to be out of season, for he will be maintained in communion with the mind of his Lord.

E. D.

## Fragment: Living to God Inwardly

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Living to God inwardly is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly. All outward activity not moved and governed by this is fleshly, and even a danger to the soul—tends to make us do without Christ, and brings in self. It is not devotedness, for devotedness is devotedness to Christ, and this must be in looking to being with Him. I dread great activity without great communion; but I believe that when the heart is with Christ it will live to Him.

## Sight and Light

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The man came back from the pool of Siloam seeing, and the world that had tolerated his presence in Jerusalem as a blind beggar could, never forgive his having received his sight: Some said, "It is he;" others, "No, but it is like him;" but he said, "It is I myself."

The circumstances of the miracle have often been remarked, but perhaps few have really understood the Lord's teaching in it. The clay made with the spittle no doubt represents the blessed Lord's incarnation—Jesus Christ come in the flesh; and the sightless eyes were blind more than ever until the washing in Siloam. It is a solemn fact, that the "human understanding" (compare it to an eye, if you like) can comprehend nothing at all of the mystery of godliness: solemn beyond measure, and the more important, in that we live in days when Christians themselves seem to be led away to reason upon subjects that are only understood by reverent submission to the Word. Man's mind looking at Jesus is compared by the Holy Ghost to blind eyes covered with clay.

But to return to the subject. The blessed Lord, who did the works of Him who had sent Him while it was day, had healed the man after His own divine way, showing us what man's mind is worth in the things of God, and giving sight in connection with the sent One, and the world becomes at once hostile. We may ask ourselves by the way, Do we really understand that we are sent into the world with a divine perception of what it is worth, and of the glory of Jesus? Let us look at the examination or trial the poor man had to undergo, and the religious world's verdict, and then the manner in which the Son of God met him.

In verse 13 they bring him to the Pharisees to be judged by them. That is, we have a seeing man brought before a company of stone—blind judges to pronounce upon his sight. What should you say if a committee, composed entirely of persons born blind were called together to decide upon some question as to the rainbow? It has been proved, by those who have studied the question, that if a sense be wanting, no other senses can supply what is deficient. Morally speaking, all is wanting in the natural man; he is as deaf to the words of Jesus as he is blind to His beauty. But notice one or two things in the man's replies, in the face of the pretended religious zeal in the blind Pharisees. "What sayest thou?" &c. (vs. 17) "He is a prophet:" A prophet is one who brings the soul into god's presence, and such a ministry hardy well received. The prophets (beaten, stoned, sawn asunder) were not exactly popular preachers. It is a solemn thing to be brought into the presence of God, and, as we see here, this always accompanies the reception of sight. The man had been brought before God as under the power of His word; and one can never have been really brought to this without having smaller thoughts of self and greater thoughts of God. To quote one no longer amongst us: "The word judges the vanity of all mere human thoughts, and leaves the spirit tranquil and unpretending." Oh, blessed portion, though one's very friends may disown one (see vv. 18-23), to be brought to hear God's Word, and to learn "the stability of His unchangeable perfection," in the midst of a blind, pretentious world!

But the poor man has to undergo a second examination. (vs. 24 et seq). Called the second time before a tribunal, or select committee of blind Jews (as we see ever in this world, men seem never to be discouraged in consulting the blind on the question of optics), he gives a fuller proof of the capacity conferred on him by grace; and with touching simplicity, and language learned in no human school of logic, he gives to his judges the most convincing proof of the divine mission of the sent One, (See vv. 30-33) It is not for me to dwell on this beautiful passage, so often explained; but notice the steps of proof in these verses—proof that must have been undeniable, though resisted by the willfully blind.

There can be but one course for such judges, and the sentence of excommunication is pronounced by them upon the one whose only crime was to have received his sight, and to have insisted that he possessed it, notwithstanding all their efforts to make him contradict his senses. Do we, dear brethren, esteem sufficiently this gift of sight, and enter into the Lord's words, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent?"

But if one is excommunicated from the synagogue, one is no longer a Jew. "What religion have you now?" would be the question. And, indeed, we may well ask, "What is our religion?" You are no longer a Jew, because the Jews have excommunicated you. What are you?

We come now to the second part of this wonderful story; that is, the revelation made by the Son of God to the excommunicated beggar, blind no longer. In verse 35, Jesus, having found him, says, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" What a preparation there had already been in the man's soul before this moment came when the Son of God drew nigh to him! The Son, whose infinite glory is presented to us in John 1:1-18, was now before a poor man excommunicated by the "religion" of the day, but who had eyes to see. (Compare chapter 1:18 of this gospel) "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with Thee." The eternal Son was there, not in that dazzling glory that would have destroyed all men by one single ray, but there, seen and heard, seen by eyes given expressly to see the Light, seen thus in all His grace and power. The man worshipped; that is, he had now a divine religion.

May the Lord give to us, in the present day, to understand these things. It is written, in 1 John 5:4,5: "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Notice that in this passage Jesus Christ is presented as the Son of God. It is not merely the fact of being born of God, as in the preceding verses, but it speaks of overcoming the world. To overcome the world is far more than is generally supposed, and for this we must know the Son of God, Jesus in His supreme power and might, in such a way that, walking by faith in true communion with Him, we, the weakest of beggars, once blind, but now seeing, may adore Him and glorify His name in true dependence upon Him. Not merely be good and exemplary in our duties, and diligent in meetings, but overcomers of the world through faith of the Son of God. Thus, we also have a divine religion, and may we be found walking thus in the midst of this blind world, that every day grows more pretentious; may we know more of the power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and learn to adore with more and more reverence the Son of God.

E. L. B.

## Divine Love

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The three tests of true Christianity are now distinctly laid down, and the apostle pursues his exhortations, developing the fullness and intimacy of our relationships with a God of love, maintaining that participation of nature in which love is of God, and he who loves is born of God, partakes therefore of His nature, and knows Him (for it is by faith that he received it) as partaking His nature. He who loves not does not know God. We must possess the nature that loves in order to know what love is. He then who does not love does not know God; for God is love. Such a person has not one sentiment in connection with the nature of God; how then can he know Him? No more than an animal can know what a man's mind and understanding is when he has not got it.

Give especial heed, reader, to this immense prerogative, which flows from the whole doctrine of the epistle.

The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested, and has been imparted to us; thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature acting in us rest by the power of the Holy Ghost in the enjoyment of communion with God, who is its source: we dwell in Him, and He in us, The actings of this nature prove that He dwells in us. The first thing is the statement of the truth, that if we thus love, God Himself dwells in us. He who works this love is there. But He is infinite, and the heart rests in Him; we know at the same time that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. But this passage, so rich in blessing, demands that we should follow it with order.

He begins with the fact that love is of God. It is His nature; He is its source. Therefore, he who loves is born of God, is a partaker of His nature. Also, he knows God; for he knows what love is, and God is its fullness. This is the doctrine which makes everything depend on our participation in the divine nature.

Now this might be transformed on the one hand into mysticism, by leading us to fix our attention on our love for God, and love in us, that being God's nature, as if it was said, Love is God, not God is love, and by seeking to fathom the divine nature in ourselves; or to doubt on the other, because we do not find the effects of the divine nature in us as we would. In effect he who does not love (for the thing, as ever in John, is expressed in an abstract way) does not know God, for God is love. The possession of the nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature is, and for the knowledge of Him who is its perfection.

But if I seek to know it, and have or give the proof of it, it is not to the existence of the nature in us that the Spirit of God directs the thoughts of the believers as their object. God, he has said, is love; and this love has been manifested towards us in that He has given His only Son, that we might live through Him. The proof is not the life in us, but that God has given His Son in order that we might live, and further to make propitiation for our sins. God be praised! we know this love, not by the poor results of its action in ourselves, but in its perfection in God, and that even in a manifestation of it towards us, which is wholly outside ourselves. It is a fact outside ourselves which is the

manifestation of this perfect love. We enjoy it by participating in the divine nature, we know it by the infinite gift of God's Son. The exercise and proof of it are there.

The full scope of this principle and all the force of its truth are stated and demonstrated in that which follows. It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit, in an epistle which is essentially occupied with the life of Christ and its fruits, gives the proof and full character of love in that which is wholly without ourselves. Nor can anything be more perfect than the way in which the love of God is here set forth, from the time it is occupied with our sinful state till we stand before the judgment-seat. God has thought of all; love towards us as sinners (vss. 9, 10); in us as saints (vs. 12); perfect in our condition in view of the day of judgment (vs. 17). In the first verses the love of God is manifested in the gift of Christ; first, to give us life—we were dead; secondly, to make propitiation—we were guilty. Our whole case is taken up. In the second of these verses, the great principle of grace, gives us thus the consciousness that He dwells in us. Thus we, in the savor and consciousness of the love that was in it, can testify of that in which it was manifested beyond all Jewish limits, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

J. N. D.

## Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3

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While Melchizedek is confessedly a mysterious personage, his typical significance is clear from the inspired explanation in the epistle to the Hebrews. In Genesis we learn that he was king of Salem (undoubtedly Jerusalem, see Psalms 76) and priest of the most High God, and that, bringing forth bread and wine, he blessed Abraham on returning from the slaughter of the kings. This is all the information the history affords. When we come to the Hebrews, the apostle tells us how, and in what manner, he was a figure of the priesthood of Christ. First, his name, Melchizedek, means king of righteousness, and then king of Salem, which is, king of peace. Now these are the two characters in which Christ will reign in the kingdom; first as David, and then as Solomon, though He will ever combine the two; for He will reign throughout the thousand years in righteousness, and the effect of this will be peace, according to that word, "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." (Psalm 3; compare Isaiah 32:17) But Melchizedek was also a priest, and it is of Christ, as the royal priest, that he is specially the shadow, even as we read in the Psalm, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalms 110:4) It is this of which the apostle writes in Hebrews 7, where he is showing the superiority of the priesthood of our Lord to that of Aaron; and in doing this he tells us that Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." Some, pressing the literal meaning of these expressions, have raised difficulties; but the term "without descent," or without genealogy, makes all plain. It simply means that Melchizedek has no recorded genealogy in the Scriptures; that in this sense he is without father or mother; and that his birth and death are left unnoticed, to the end that he might be a type of the everlasting priesthood of Christ. In this way he is "made like the Son of God," he appears on the scene as God's priest, and, inasmuch as there is no account of his having ever passed away, he is regarded as being a priest continually, and he is so regarded that he might be a more perfect type of the glorious and unchangeable priesthood of our Lord and Saviour. He was not, as some have ventured to assert, the Son of God, but only a figure of Him in the character of His priesthood. It may be added, that the present service of Christ as the Priest is after the pattern of that of Aaron; but when He comes forth in His robes of glory and beauty, He will assume the Melchizedek character; for He will then be a Priest on His throne. But if He is king and priest, all believers, through virtue of association with Him in the grace of God, will also be kings and priests (See Revelation 1:5,6); and hence the twenty-four elders are seen seated on thrones, robed with priestly garments and with crowns of gold on their heads. (Revelation 4)

## Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 10:5-7

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There is no more interesting subject in the Bible (for it opens up the whole truth of redemption) than the servanthip of Christ. It began with incarnation; for the words in Philippians, "And took upon Him the form of a servant," are not prior in time, as some have supposed, to the succeeding clause, "but was made in the likeness of men." It is, indeed, "taking upon Him the form of a servant, becoming in the likeness of men," both clauses referring to the same time. The passage in Hebrews is undoubtedly anterior to the appearance of our Lord in this world: it unfolds to us a transaction in eternity, revealing the Eternal Son presenting Himself to God, in view of the sacrifices all failing to answer His mind, saying, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God." And it was for the accomplishment in this world of this His desire for the glory of God, that a body was prepared for Him, that holy human body in which He glorified God on the earth, and finished the work which was given Him to do. In Psalms 40, whence the passage in Hebrews is a citation, we read, "Mine ears hast Thou opened"—opened, surely, to hear for obedience to the will of God. (Compare Isaiah 1. 4) This was translated in the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, "A body hast Thou prepared me," and the Spirit of God in the Hebrews adopts this translation as the true sense of the words in the psalm. This explains clearly for us, that it was in incarnation the Lord commenced His servanthip, coming down from heaven as He did, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. (John 6:38) His whole life therefore was one of service: every act and every word alike, yea, every thought, being in obedience to His Father's will. And as His life so also His death; for, speaking of His death, He says, "This commandment I received of My Father." (John 10:18) There are two other scriptures, amongst many others, which may be cited. Rebuking His disciples for their self-seeking, He says, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) And again, on a similar occasion, He said, I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:27) Thus He was the servant in all His pathway, in life and in death; but, blessed be His name, His service did not end even at the cross. He might have gone out free, but He loved His Master, His wife, and His children, and became a servant forever. (See Exodus 21:2-6) He is thus in His grace a servant now on behalf of His people: He serves for them in His priesthood with God, in His advocacy with the Father, and in all that He has undertaken as their Representative in heaven; and when the saints are forever with Him in the glory He will still retain His servanthip, as He Himself teaches when He says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) Who can penetrate into all the depths of the grace and love of Him, who at such a cost has thus devoted Himself to the glory of God and the service of His saints?

## 1 John 1:1

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The expression, "Which our hands have handled," is very remarkable. Our Lord uses the same word when, to remove the doubts of His disciples as to the reality of His resurrection, He said, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me. have." (Luke 24:39) It is possible that the Spirit of God recalled this scene to the mind of the apostle, and thus led him to use the word. If so, the reference would be to the Lord's resurrection body; but it is not permitted to us, as to this, to speak with certainty. "That which is from the beginning" dates from the incarnation, and was "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." And John testifies to the reality of this manifestation, and certifies it to his readers on the ground that he had heard, seen, attentively examined, and handled it. Thus the eternal life, "that eternal life," was manifested in a holy human body, and the object of the apostle's testimony concerning it was, "that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Everyone therefore who received the testimony of the apostle received with it (for therein he received Christ) eternal life, and by it was brought into fellowship with all who also possessed eternal life; yea, with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This marvelous possibility of grace is offered to all who hear the gospel message; and hence we wonder not that the apostle adds, "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

E. D.

## Christ as the Searcher of Hearts

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It is a wonderful thing that the Lord came into this world and took all our sorrows and trials, but was entirely above them all. He was thus able to take up everything that was of God, and at the same time to show what the state of man really was, just as the word of God divides soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. As the perfect light and mind of God, it comes and dissects our hearts, recognizing everything that is of God, and showing what we are.

Here the Lord judges all that would attempt to take the cross in a legal sense, that which would deny God in natural goodness, and also the thought that there is some good in man. He has no idea of anything good in man for God, and at the same time all that is of God is put in its own proper place. He owns everything that God establishes in the world, and yet probes the heart to the bottom. There were some who condemned everything, as if God had made nothing good. God never denies nature, because He made it; but Christ goes deeper, and puts the probe to the center of man's intents and thoughts, yet He knows how to 'divide between them, and that shows His perfectness. He was the perfectly obedient Son; who must be about His Father's business. He had power to own everything that was of God, and, if there was occasion, to be subject to it; but He had power too to detect everything of man, and that we have to learn, to have ourselves totally and fully judged. There is progress in seeing it, but we cannot go to God at all unless self is judged. There is a danger too of not getting with God above the evil. Here the Lord, in the exercise of His own blessed grace, can take notice of His own works—all He has done and all He has made; and it is just this One who can also discern what man is. He can say, "Consider the lilies;" not that they were of any value. But I find the blessed Lord, the Man of sorrows, who felt the sin all around, who looked for compassion and found none, and (except where His grace wrought) getting nothing but hatred for His love, yet so completely with God practically (He was God overall) that He was above evil. That principle is fully manifested in Him, and is to be looked for in us. It is not condemning the sins of nature and recognizing it, nor yet saying that man is all bad, or I falsify the holy nature of God. What meets the power of evil is, that He gave His life a ransom. But there is evil all around us, and it is apt to hinder our being gracious, and to get power over us, and that hinders our having power over it, and over ourselves, and judging ourselves, as well as presenting grace, and basking in the sunshine of God's favor.

Our natural tendency is to get pleasures for self. Innocent they may be, but they take the heart from God; they are spoiled by sin. People ask the harm of these things. The question is, What use are you making of them, and where is your heart? The moment there is a turning from the cross (death to everything), our Lord says, "Get thee behind me," for that is all He has. He is going to Jerusalem, and they are amazed, and as they follow they are afraid. There I get the way the cross makes me afraid of following Christ; but He says, "If you do not take it up, you cannot be my disciple." The Lord judges man totally and utterly; we cannot go too deep. People say, "If man is not good, he can be made so." But the thing Christ brings us to is, "In me dwells no good thing." There is no good in talking of good fruit when the tree is bad; there are self-will and lusts. Then we see that before we take up the cross for ourselves there is the cross for us, "He suffered, and gave

His life a ransom.” There my sins were put away, and the old nature judged. I have died, and my life is hid with Christ in God. I am alive to God, not to Adam. That separates me from the world. Christ is my righteousness and my life up there. He has given me His Spirit, and I look down from there in grace, being an object of His favor, at what is of His hand in the creation. When I have got out of it, I can look at it. He had a divine view of the world. He could judge man’s heart as man’s heart, and at the same time admire the beauty of the lilies. Though He was with God, and was God, He could not despise the work of His hand. Everything was corrupted, even the brute creation, through man; but whenever anything had the stamp of God, He could see it. We have to learn this, and it is difficult; but I do look that Christians should walk with God. Either a man is letting his mind, go after what the flesh likes, or he is applying the cross to it, if you admire a flower you see, all right; but if you care for it, all wrong. I can see the hand of God in its beauty, but if I am thinking of the thing it is not the beauty, but my own will and inclination.

The Lord runs the sharp edge of His word in, dividing; between soul and spirit.

First, He takes up marriage, and says, God allowed divorce for the hardness of their hearts; but it was not so at first. There is natural affection; but if it gets hold of us it may become idolatry. A child or a husband may take our heart from God, but being without affection is one of the signs of the last times.

In the last days men are not only not spiritual, but they are not natural. The Lord puts His seal on every relationship. It is an awful thing, even if a child is not converted, to see it failing in affection to its parent; and the nearer the relationship, the more dreadful it is. God owns the relationships, and it is a sign of the last days to be wanting in the affections proper to them.

Then we get the Lord greatly displeased at the disciples sending away the children, not that there was no sin in the children, but they were the expression of what God had created—the confidingness of a child without the distrust that grows up with one. The world lives in distrust (miserable at root), but that is not the case with a child. It has no distrust, but a disposition to believe everything (it often gets cheated); and the Lord says that is what He likes. Unless you receive the kingdom as a child you will not enter it.

Then I find a thoroughly lovely character, and the Lord “beholding him, loved him.” It was not the love of God to the world, nor the special love of relationship and grace for His own; but the Lord loved what was lovely—a ready, willing mind to learn everything. The young man had no idea of the ruin of man. He does not say, “What shall I do to be saved?” or Christ would have given him no such answer. He takes him on the ground of a Jew (vs. 19), and the young man answers, “All these have I observed from my youth.” The Lord does not say, “You have not;” but beholding him, He loved him. He saw what was lovely in his character (and we ought to see natural loveliness); but his conscience must be touched, and his heart was unknown to himself. “Sell whatsoever thou hast, and take up the cross.” (vs. 21) He went away sorrowful. The instant the state is detected the loveliness vanishes. His character was lovely in its ingenuousness; but when it is searched and detected his heart comes out as a thing in which there was nothing for God, He deceived himself as to man’s state; but there was natural loveliness in him (and we often meet unselfish, amiable characters). How does the Lord meet it? He says, “There is none good save God. There is no such thing as a good man in the world. You are totally on wrong ground.” “There is none good but God” is a principle. Why do you call me good if you come to me as a man? The Lord takes him up

on the ground of law that he was on, and says, "Don't say man is good, but keep the law."

Another thing comes out. The disciples say, "Who then can be saved?" And the Lord tells them, "With men it is impossible." There is no such thing as being saved on man's ground; but God can save by His Son, that is another thing. (vs. 27) By man it is impossible; but the means of being saved. has reached man. He can get eternal life; but when his heart is detected it is totally wrong. This young man turned away with sorrow and grief; for his heart was with his money, the gospel does not deny natural loveliness; but that will not do with God, It will not do for Him to have no vile ones. He looks for the vilest sinners (the thief on the cross, for instance), and takes them to paradise He does not take the pretty flowers and leave the weeds. What man calls goodness is often abominable selfishness; and they say, "If that man doesn't go to heaven, who will?" They do not know the heart a bit. The supreme goodness of God takes up the one that will not have God and Christ, and will have his lusts and pleasures, and saves him. "All things are possible with God." The gospel does not build on what is there, but judges it. The flowers of a wild apple may be as pretty as others, but there is no fruit on it. What Christ says is, "Where is your heart? Have you not a will, and the thoughts and intents of your heart and your conduct in everything moved by it?" And the answer of it is only hatred to God.

That is very humbling, but it puts the gospel on the right ground. There was unspeakable love to sinners with all their sins. He was ever moved at oppression and sorrow —never at insult or outrage to Himself, but always moved with compassion for man "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He brings all this goodness to where we are, but He must detect the conscience. He will not build the goodness of God on ours, and deceive us. The Lord lays the young man's heart bare. He does not drive him away; He never drove any one away; but he went because his heart was never reached. Self must be detected— "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." When I learn His goodness in coming in grace into this world to win our hearts, I say, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." I know He has not come to impute sin, and I come into His presence with an open heart. The moment I fully trust this blessed love of Christ my place is that of the man to whom the. Lord imputes no sin. He has given His life a ransom, and put it all away. He lays bare our hearts, but gives us confidence; so that we desire to have everything out before God, and the whole ground we stand on before Him is "truth in the inward parts." He stood where I was, and now I stand where He is, and that is the only place I have before God. The Christian stands between accomplished redemption and the glory, at liberty with God and from the world and sin. We may fail and grieve the Spirit, but there we are set.

The disciples are thinking, what is the meaning of this, that this lovable character is driven away, and can't come to God? Well, the very grace that has come to seek and save drives away the natural heart because it can't bear it. It detects the heart, and must claim it for God both as Creator and Redeemer. They were still looking to tack the new thing on to the old, looking for the glory in a carnal way. The Lord says, "You must take up the cross and follow me. If you follow me, I can give you the cross; that is all I have to give you now." He takes the lowly place as to man and the world; death was all He had for those who followed Him. (vss. 38-40) "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of?" They say, "Yes," deceiving themselves. He says, you will (not atonement, but suffering)—you will have to suffer if you take up the cross and follow me really. You shall be like me, and close to me too; but what you must reckon on is the cross, if you are going to glory. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve

me, 'him will my Father honor." Not that there is not joy, "a hundred-fold now in this time;" but He says, "I must have your hearts. I have to die, and if you are going follow me, the road I am going is to the cross, that is the path I am going to the glory." Are you ready to take up your cross, or have you a question if the cross is right, or if there is any other road? The Lord knew none, and I know none.

There is another point. If we were perfect, all would be simple; but we have a great deal to learn and to detect and correct. At this time the Lord set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and the disciples want to know the meaning of it. "The Jews sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" "As they followed they were afraid." Not only will and lust were detected, but they were afraid of following Christ. Don't you know what that is? The instant you are following Christ there is the consciousness that the world is against you. Nicodemus went to the Lord by night because he was afraid to go by day. There is the instinctive consciousness that the world is against us, and we are afraid to confess Christ in our habits, our houses, &c. It is very base, but there it is. Paul says what things were gain to him he counted loss for Christ; he did not go away sorrowful. He says, "I am glad to get rid of it" (it is dross and dung) "to win Christ." There was the energy and power of the Spirit. Did Paul follow trembling? Not at all. Five times forty stripes save one—beaten, stoned, all sorts of things! It was all on the road, and he had real liberty, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus." These disciples did not dare leave the Lord; they kept in the way; for here was eternal life in Him and nowhere else; but they had no liberty. When He spoke of the cross Peter said, "That be far from Thee;" and the Lord says, "Get thee behind me, Satan" —the very man who had confessed Him as the Christ, and to whom He had said, "Blessed art thou." But if he will not take up the cross, he is "Satan." "Thou art an offense unto me." The cross deals with' all that is of man, and where there is the willing spirit and blessed free liberty with God, the power of Christ rests upon us, and it is no sacrifice to give up human righteousness, or all I possess if need be, that I may win Christ; they are only weights as I run the race.

Natural affection we are to have by the power of God; but the Lord is in heaven, and the cross is the path, because though we are in a world where there are a thousand needed things, and all, richly to enjoy, when it is a question of what our hearts are, there is none good. Christ has been rejected, and I am dead to the world, sin, and the law, and alive to God. It should be so more practically every day with willing hearts. Our steps are feeble, but He shows us the way, and we delight in His love. Of course, the Spirit reproves us, instead of bringing us joy, if we are grieving Him.

How far have our hearts believed this voice of the blessed Son of God in such love, when He puts forth His own sheep, going before them, meeting the dangers and leading them in the path? How far are our hearts in truth and simplicity disposed to follow Him, to think His love not mistaken in the path He has marked out? It is real deliverance from the flesh; but we must trust His love. When my heart thoroughly trusts Christ, it is His cross and His reproach, and it has the sweetness of Christ, and all is sweet (we may be cowards in it), and we judge everything that hinders His leading us in the path.

The Lord give us to trust Him, that we may have" courage to follow Him, and learn what this poor world is!

J. N. D.

## 2 Timothy 1:8-11

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Having then such a spirit, or rather, such being the characteristics of the spirit God gives to His servants, the apostle proceeds to exhortation: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (vs. 8) There is, perhaps, an implied contrast in this exhortation; thus, many are becoming ashamed of the testimony (see v. 15), but be not thou ashamed. And the danger, as before indicated, might have beset Timothy at this moment when almost all were turning aside, and when the elect vessel of the testimony was a poor despised prisoner. It is a remarkable fact that, so early in the history of the Church, as once before indeed at Antioch when Paul withstood Peter to the face, the maintenance of the truth of God depended upon the faithfulness of one man, and he a captive. Courage, and such courage as God alone could give, was requisite at such a crisis, that spirit of power which alone could enable Timothy to stem the adverse currents that were sweeping by him on every side with such velocity and force. Did he waver at this time in his allegiance to the testimony of the Lord? God only knows; but we may be sure that this fervent, pleading exhortation reached him at the needed moment.

Mark, too, that the vessel of the testimony is identified with the testimony; for the apostle adds, "Nor of me his prisoner." Many profess to hold and to love the truth, while they would fain stand, apart from those to whom the testimony is committed. But this can never be, as our passage shows, according to the mind of God; and hence it would have been as displeasing to Him, if Timothy had been ashamed of Paul, as if he had been ashamed of the testimony. Or to put it still more strongly, to have been ashamed of Paul, being what he was, would have been to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. There is however more: not only was he not to be ashamed either of the message or the messenger, but he was also to be fully and openly identified with both. "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Another translation will bring out more clearly the apostle's meaning: "Suffer evil along with the gospel." The gospel is in a way personified, and Timothy is urged to cast in his lot with it fully and entirely, at whatever cost, that the reproaches which might fall upon it might also be borne by him (compare Romans 15: 3); and the significant words are added, to encourage him in this course, "according to the power of God," the power which God bestows upon His servants to sustain them in the presence of the adversary, and to maintain His truth in the face of all danger; for no human energy, no steadfastness of purpose, nothing short of divine power, will avail in the conflicts of service in the gospel.

The mention of the power of God leads the apostle back and upward to the source of all the blessing which was flowing out through the gospel, viz., to God's purpose and grace, as the immutable foundation on which God was working, and as the assurance that no efforts of the enemy could frustrate the accomplishment of the thoughts of God, and thus also as the antidote to all fear for those who were linked with these eternal counsels of grace. "Who hath saved, us," he says, "and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made

manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath, abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility, it should be rendered) to light through the gospel.” (vss. 9, 10) What a comprehensive statement! What a sweep of vision—first, back into eternity, and then onward to the time when death will be swallowed up in victory! For what is it the apostle here brings before us? First, that if God has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, it is not because of anything we are or have done, but according to His own eternal counsels of grace, and grace given to us (let the reader mark the language—given to us) in Christ Jesus before the world began; and then he points out, that the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ was in pursuance of God’s purposes, and that by His death and resurrection death has been abolished, and life and incorruptibility, the resurrection of the body, have been brought to light through the glad tidings which were now being proclaimed. As has been written, “It is a counsel of God, formed and established in Christ before the world existed, which has its place in the ways of God, outside and above the world, in union with the person of His Son, and in order to manifest a people united with Him in glory. Thus, is it a grace which was given us in Him before the world was. Hidden in the counsels of God, this purpose of God was manifested in the manifestation of Him in whom it had its accomplishment. It was not merely blessings and dealings of God with regard to men—it was life, eternal life in the soul, and incorruptibility in the body. Thus, Paul was an apostle according to the promise of life.”

There are several distinct steps in the unfolding or realization of these blessings. After the purpose of God, there was the appearing of Christ in this world, there were His death and resurrection, the means of the accomplishment of the divine counsels, there was, together with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the proclamation of the glorious message of the gospel; then, those who by grace received the message were saved and called with an holy calling, and made to know, at the same time, that all was of grace, and, lastly, there was the possession of life, eternal life, along with the prospect of the resurrection of the body—incorruptibility. It was Paul’s mission to unfold these things in his preaching, as he says, “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” (vs. 11; see also 1 Timothy 2:7) The solemnity of the times led the apostle, it might be said, to magnify his office, to insist upon the fact that he had been divinely appointed as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles; and, by the grace of God, his life was consecrated to his work, so that no adversities, no hindrances, could daunt his courage or extinguish his zeal, for he was able to say, as we find in another epistle, “ To me to live is Christ.”

E. D.

## The Coming and the Appearing of Our Lord

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We need all Scripture. All is given for our profit. One of our dangers is, being taken up with certain parts of the sacred writings to the neglect of others. In, nothing has this been more apparent of late years than the acceptance of our Lord's coming for us as our hope, without being exercised also about the Lord's reign and judgments at His appearing and kingdom. It is this, latter line of things to which Peter refers when he says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn." (2 Peter 19) No doubt the light of unfulfilled prophecy, when received in faith, casts its light back on the path we are now treading, and thus clear guidance and much blessing are vouchsafed to those who take heed unto it. The apostle Paul, in writing to Titus, by the Spirit says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Here the Lord's coming and His appearing are connected, as being both looked for; not only "that blessed hope" of our Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself, but His also "appearing" after that in manifested glory, and taking His rightful place on earth as "Heir of all things" and "Lord of all."

It is not that many believers are not intelligent as to the events which will follow the Lord's coming for us, and able clearly to distinguish between that blissful moment and our subsequent following Him out of heaven, when "every eye shall see Him;" but for our hearts to be in conscious sympathy with our loving Lord Jesus in His present rejection, and to be therefore anticipating with joy, in deep fellowship with Himself, that glorious appearing, when He will have His rightful place of universal supremacy accorded to Him by all intelligent beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, is quite another thing. The fact is, that while some have been holding and rightly contending for the truth of "the Church (or assembly) of God," they seem to have let slip the truth of "the kingdom of God." Paul was emphatically a minister of the assembly, but he tells us also that he testified "the gospel of the grace of God," and preached "the kingdom of God." (Colossians 1:24, 25; Acts 20:24,25) Such a prominent place in the apostle's public ministry had the reign of Christ and its kindred subjects that, though his visit to Thessalonica probably did not exceed three weeks, we are told that he suffered persecution for having preached "another King, one Jesus." We know too that during this brief visit he not only instructed the young converts there as to the hope of the Lord's coming, but that they received it as the truth of God, and "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." And in his second letter, when he referred to "the man of sin," and the Lord's destruction of him "with the brightness of His coming," he said, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thessalonians 2:5,8).

It is a mistake, we believe, to suppose that we learn prophetic truth for soul profit by merely grouping events together as we would link together a series of political facts. It is easy for an active mind thus to occupy itself. But to have the heart and conscience so moved by the divinely-given "word of prophecy," because it so sheds its light on our present path as to produce walk and conduct suited to it, is a very different thing. For example, it is perfectly true that in a little while it will be said, "The kingdoms of this world are become (the kingdoms) of our Lord, and of his

Christ.” If then the Lord’s interests are our interests, and we believe He will yet be manifested as Lord of all, how can we have any relish for the political excitement and party struggles of today? Why not rather wait till “He shall come whose right it is;” and who said, when nearing the cross, “Now is the judgment of this world?” We are also told that “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 10) Do we believe this? How then can we be hankering after the possession of what we know ere long will be under the Lord’s judgment? Again: If we hold that Jesus is “Lord of all,” and that ere long He will reign till He has put down all rule and all authority and power for the glory of God, how can we desire to be now in the place of authority and power in a world that has rejected Him, and where Satan is its “god” and “prince” If we receive the word that the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son, and that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father, and that he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him, we have certainly a plain path opened out before us—the path of honoring the Son till we see His face.

And further: Is it not quite clear that this and other countries of Europe, commonly called the ten kingdoms, form the conclusion of the development of Daniel’s image, and that a “stone cut out without hands” is yet to smite it, and break it to pieces, which will be carried away, so that no place shall be found for them, and that this will have its solemn fulfillment when the Lord comes to reign and establish His kingdom in the earth? How then can we fall in with the common cry, of “peace and safety” when we know that such judgment and destruction are at hand? (Daniel 2:31-35)

It is well known that when, some fifty or sixty years ago, the truth of the coming of the Lord was connected with such faithful testimony and unworldliness, that the coming and the appearing of our Lord were both firmly held. In fact, there was then little intelligence as to dividing between the coming of our Lord and His appearing; so that while hearts were lovingly looking for God’s Son from heaven, there was also a solemn sense of the coming judgments and kingdom of God. God’s truth as to these things was so believed that, with many, there was no other thought than dropping everything contrary to God’s word, and getting practically ready for the Lord: No doubt our Lord’s coming for us will be the crowning act of divine grace in giving us a body of glory like His own, and taking us to the Father’s house; but, after this, we are to be manifested in glory with Him as His joint-heirs, and reign and share His inheritance with Him. How wonderful! “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?... know ye not that we shall judge angels?” Suffering here now no doubt if we are faithful to our Lord, but then to share His glory. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;” and again, “If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” (2 Timothy 2:12; Romans 8:17)

Formerly the truth of our Lord’s coming, and also of His appearing and kingdom, were believed, and therefore had not a little practical power. It was a question of honoring the Lord at all costs, as His loved ones who would soon reign with Him. The question has often been asked lately, “Why has not the truth of the Lord’s coming more power now? “The answer surely is, first, Because the truth is more assented to than received into the heart as God’s testimony, therefore there is not the getting ready practically for our Lord’s coming; and, secondly, because the heart is in little sympathy with the Lord in His present rejection, and therefore is little exercised as to His appearing. Truth is so common at this time, that it is often trifled with; or it may be accepted as reasonable and self-evident, without much exercise of heart and conscience before God.

The fact is that these truths are eminently sanctifying. How can they be otherwise? To suppose, therefore, that we can really hold them as divinely-given doctrines, and go on in worldly and carnal associations, is to do the greatest violence to them. If we really believe that it is possible the Lord may come for us before midnight, could we go on with anything today which we knew would be displeasing to Him? Should we not rather choose to suffer for His sake, and do what we know would suit His mind? If we are truly waiting and watching for His return, could we spend a day without caring in some way or other for some of the members of His body? And is not caring for His household one of the special marks of a wise and faithful servant? (Matthew 24:45. Moreover, if we believe God's word, that the world lieth in the wicked one, and is under judgment, and the Judge soon coming in flaming fire to carry it out, and judge the quick and the dead, how can our hearts but rejoice at the thought of the once humbled Nazarene having His rightful place on this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords?

Do we really love His appearing? Do our hearts burn within us at the thought that in a little while He will be publicly manifested as "Lord of all?" We doubt not that the comfort of accomplished redemption, the consciousness of His present ministry and care of us while He is hid in the glory, and heartfelt sympathy with Him as to His present 'rejection, will accompany loving His appearing. How strange it must appear to the authorities and powers in heavenly places, who know by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, that we are so little moved and acted on by the prospect of the Saviour's appearing and reign! But when we are stirred' in our inmost souls to be practically getting ready for His coming, then will the hope be known in brightness and power; and the more we ponder what He has told us about our reigning with Him, the more we shall realize His present rejection, and love His appearing. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and of things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." (Philippians 2:9-11)

Does it not fill our hearts with joy to see Him now crowned with glory and honor? Are we not assured that His exaltation has been merited, for having glorified the Father, on earth, and finished the work that He gave Him to do? And can we view Him there, where angels, authorities, and powers are a subject to Him, without delight springing up in our souls? Made "Lord and Christ" in ascension, He is surely "Lord of all;" though as to the earth He has not yet taken to Himself His great power and reigned. Still, it is only a question of time, and the present long-suffering is salvation; but what will it be to see His face, and to be with Him, and like Him forever? What will it be to follow Him out of heaven, when He comes forth in power and great glory, wearing His many crowns, to judge first the living, and afterward the dead? No doubt "every eye shall see Him" then; the nations too will be angry, and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him, but come He will; for Jehovah has said unto Him, "Sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." And again we are told, "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever (or in perpetuity) sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:12,13) How soon we may hear the shout! May we meanwhile seek to serve and honor Him, in living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (or the appearing of the glory) of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:12-14)

“Oh, may the glorious vision fire  
Our hearts with ardent love,  
Till wings of faith, and strong desire,  
Bear every thought above!”

H. H. S.

## Wait on the Lord

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“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”—Isaiah 40: 81.

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart.” —Psalms 27:14.

Wait on the Lord, He shall thy strength renew;  
In patience wait, His purpose is to bless,  
And thou shalt prove His word divinely true,  
And rise o'er all that seems but to distress.  
All droop around, and faint, and feeble grow,  
E'en youthful steps drag wearily along;  
But wait on Him, and full soon thou shalt know  
How He can turn thy weariness to song.  
Renew thy strength, and by His power rise  
On eagle pinions to those realms above,  
Where God displays His glory in the skies,  
And then to earth return, His strength to prove.  
And thou shalt run, and still not weary grow;  
Walk in His ways without once fainting here,  
And by thy steps some drooping heart shall know  
The power that comes from yonder heavenly sphere.

Colossians 1

Wait on the Lord. How blessed 'tis to wait,  
To linger in His presence for a while;  
To see Him on His glorious throne of state,  
And read our welcome in His loving smile!  
Not less this joy than all the strength He gives,  
Though strength is needed for our weakness here;  
But joy and strength the waiting one receives,

And from his own delight can others cheer.

Job 22:29.

Mine be this portion, Lord, to wait on Thee,

And in Thy strength and joy to walk below,

Until in glory Thy blest face I see,

And with Thee, like Thee, all Thy fullness know.

H. A. C.

## Divine Intimacy

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The intimacy which the Lord has sought with His creature man is in a very blessed way evidenced throughout Scripture. It may have had different expressions or forms, but still it was intimacy. In patriarchal days it was personal. The Lord God walked in the midst of the human family, appearing personally to His elect—not so much employing prophets or angels, but mixing Himself in the action as it proceeded. (See Genesis) In the times of Israel He was not so much in the human guise as before, but in mystic dress; still, however, He was near them. The glory in the cloud, the Lord in the burning bush, the armed Captain under Jericho, and then the glory filling the temple, or seating itself between the cherubim, all tell this nearness of God to elect man. The God of Israel seen by them on the sapphire throne, and the promise of His own lips to the house built in the midst of Israel—“Mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually,” all this in like manner witness this desired and proposed intimacy.

Then, in the progress of His wisdom and counsels, the actual assumption of manhood, this is the witness of witnesses to this precious truth. I need not dwell on it, as we say, it speaks for itself.

But what at this time has the more strongly drawn my mind is, the intimacy that He so wondrously and graciously seeks and has provided for, and secured, in this our present age or dispensation. He has given the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of truth is in us. The Comforter abides with us forever. Our bodies are nothing less than His temples or dwelling-places. And the Son has borne Himself to heaven as our Head and Representative, and we are in Him and with Him. No form of intimacy so wonderful as this, and none more true and real. If personally the Lord God would take a calf or a cake, as pledges of hospitality to a traveling man, from the hand of Abraham; if in the sight of the congregation He would let the glory dwell, and fill the temple courts, to show His joy in His new-found dwelling with Israel; if in the manhood of Jesus of Nazareth He would sit at a well with an elect sinner, or let another press His bosom at supper, and ask Him about the secrets that were lodged there; in this our very hour He has us, in the thoughts and purposes of His own heart, up in heaven with Himself, and the Holy Ghost is here in the midst of all the thoughts and purposes of our hearts. Is this intimacy of a feebler nature? Is this a retracing of His steps, going back again into His own perfections and glories, or amid the principalities and dominions of angels? No. It is pursuing His former purpose of intimacy, only in a further stage, till He perfect it in the kingdom; for this indwelling of the Spirit tells us that in every pulse of affection that beats, in every duty or service that is fulfilled or performed, the thought of the Lord should mix itself; as in the details of precepts in the epistles we find it, the Lord, love to Him, and respect to His authority, being brought in as the animating and ruling principle. Is this reserve? Is this withdrawal of Himself? This seeing Him, and owning of Him in all human relations and social duties, is this the symptom of a God in the thick darkness, a God afar off? Blessed thought, it is the very reverse. It is only a richer pursuit of that same desire for intimacy with us which broke forth in its infant form in the Book of Genesis, and which is to bloom in its perfection in the kingdom.

It has been sweetly described by another, that the divine intimacy was preserved by Jesus risen, as well as by Jesus in the flesh. This appears from His preparing the dinner on the sea-shore Himself, eating in company with His disciples (John 21); for He would with Himself now invest or clothe our spirits. He would relieve our consciences with a peace which He has made and wrought out for us Himself to perfection; He would satisfy our hearts with attractions that are divine and ineffable, and fitted to teach us, that the half could not be told, because they are the attractions which nothing less than He Himself puts forth; and He would, as I have already said, bring Himself in amid all our occupations and relationships, that the recollection of Him and His authority and His grace may sanctify as well as bless the whole. It is faith that enters into this purpose of God and enjoys it. Faith apprehends a peace made by Himself, and therefore perfect, and clothes the conscience with it; faith apprehends the love and the other blessed attractions that are in Him, and gives the heart as a dwelling-place an unspeakably happy dwelling-place in Him; faith knows Him to be no stranger to the smallest action, and therefore invests the whole course of human life with the sense of His authority and His sufficiency, and His gracious and desired fellowship, with it all, with all the joys and sorrows and doings and circumstances of His people, as He says, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," taking knowledge thus of the place and character of our abode. "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter, he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side."

And where does this intimacy appear at the end? In the Apocalypse redeemed man takes the place of nearness to the throne. The tabernacle of God is with men, and the Lamb's bride becomes the habitation of the glory.

J. G. B.

## Romans 6:6

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Much has been lately said on this verse, and stress has been laid on the word “our.” The inference drawn therefrom is that the phrase, “our old man,” refers solely to the evil nature in us. Accompanying this is an effort to separate the nature from the man in whom the nature is. A few words as to the bearing of this verse may be helpful to souls.

The Holy Spirit is dealing with the question of sin, that evil nature which is inherent in the whole race of Adam. Now it is not in part that we are affected by sin, but “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it.” (Isaiah 1:5, 6) This has been fully brought to light in the cross. Before the cross the Lord could give the law its full moral force as forbidding certain acts, and say that if either of the members became a cause of stumbling, it were better that it should perish than the whole body be cast into hell (Matthew 5); but the cross has demonstrated the entirely sinful condition of man. Who can read such words as, “Away with this Man!” “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” and not feel that the true character of sin was developed as law could not do. “Now have they, both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Consequently, it is not now the question of this member or that being affected, but of the whole man. Hence Christians can say, “Our old man has been crucified with Him.” It is the man—what they were, looked at as of Adam’s race—which has been crucified with Christ; that the body of sin, not sin in this member or in that but as a whole “the body of sin might be annulled, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Note, it is the person (“we”) who does not serve sin. The members can now be presented as instruments of righteousness, and no longer of sin, to God. The old man —what we were as of the first Adam—is put off with his deeds, the fruit of deceitful lusts. It is not this deed or that which is put off, but the man; and the new man is put on, that is, Christ. To use the words of a beloved servant of God, “I acknowledge Him alone as my ‘I,’ and as this new ‘I’ I reckon myself dead to the old ‘I.’” This leads to one more point of great importance—that practical freedom from sin is by our having the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:2) It is only as we live the life of this new “I” (Galatians 2:20) that we see the hatefulness of the old “I,” and approve God’s sentence of condemnation upon it, executed as it has been in the cross. For believers there is no condemnation. Delivered from the old “I,” they are in, Christ, and in the power of His life they live to God. It is Christ in them. The pulses of his life in us must beat towards His God and Father, and delight in His righteousness and holy love, to enjoy which unhindered will be our eternal portion. Nothing of the old “I” could ever be there. Thank God, our old man has been crucified with Christ!

T. H. R.

## Zechariah 9:9

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Everyone has read this beautiful scripture, and noted its striking fulfillment in the gospels, but not all have remarked the characteristic differences in its citation in Matthew and John. Turning first to Matthew, we read, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." (Chapter 21:5) Passing by the expressive change from "Rejoice greatly" to "Tell ye the daughter of Sion," we ask the reader to notice the omission of the words, "just, and having salvation." Why are they not quoted? Because they would not apply to the Saviour's then circumstances. He was going to certain and known rejection, and thus while it was ever true that He had salvation for them that put their trust in Him, He was not at that time going to bring salvation to the daughter of Zion. Nor did He present Himself to her then as the "just," or righteous One; for had He at that time entered her gates in righteousness (as He will do when He establishes the kingdom), it would have been for her destruction. The Holy Spirit therefore led the evangelist to omit these words, and to retain "meek" or "lowly," because it was descriptive of the spirit (although it is His abiding character) in which He, was about to present Himself for the last time, before the cross, to His beloved people. Taking now the citation, as it appears in John, it runs, "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." (Chapter 12:15) Here, in addition to the omissions of Matthew, the word "meek," or "lowly," is also wanting. The reason of this is to be found in the character of John's Gospel. He exhibits Jesus as the Son of God, and thus, consistently with this presentation of our "blessed Lord, he does not use the word "meek." What perfect wisdom is displayed in these differences in the scriptures! And differences so profound, that the devout reader cannot fail to discern their divine origin. But a remark may be added on the fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction. One part of it has been accomplished, Zion's King did come, lowly, and sitting upon an ass; the rest will be fulfilled when He returns to Zion in glory. Then He will be seen as "just, and having salvation," and then, too, the daughter of Zion will "rejoice greatly," and the daughter of Jerusalem will "shout." The whole church period therefore must be interposed between these two parts of the prophecy. Both would have been fulfilled at His first coming had He been received by the Jewish nation as their Messiah; and this teaches that His lowliness or meekness is expressive of moral character, and therefore abiding; not a feature merely of His earthly sojourn, when He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, but a trait of His perfect nature as Man; and hence He is as much the meek or lowly One, now that He sits at the right hand of God in the glory, as when down here He had not where to lay His head. Blessed Lord, how the knowledge of this endears Thee to the hearts of Thine own while—waiting for Thy return!

E. D.

## Salvation is of the Lord

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The first psalm is the position of the Lord Jesus Christ as the godly-separated Man here in this world. The second psalm is the Lord exalted, risen, and glorified. At the beginning of it God sets before us the secret of all that is going on here in this world, and what subsists before Him in the midst of it all, and what is the cause of it. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” The root, so to speak, the spirit of all that is going on, is the determined effort and intention on the part of man to set God aside. Thus, if we find disappointment in this world, it is because we look for something that God does not mean us to find, for something that God is not bringing about. “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly glory; and what the world is seeking for is the entire breaking away from God. “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” But “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”

The third psalm gives us another thing. Passing over the second, and going back to the first psalm, it seems to give us the position in this world of the blessed Lord Himself, and also our position. It shows Him surrounded by enemies. It is the description of the path, and of the infinitely—blessed resources, for Him who is for God in this world. There is nothing more important or more necessary for us. We may speak of sorrows, distresses, and failures; what we have lost, and what we have fallen from; but what remains? What is the remedy? What we have here. It is nearness to Himself. The spirit of the world is just opposed to this. “There is no help for him in God.” That is the way the world points at the separated One (Matthew 27:43); and the world does so still towards those that are of Him and for Him in it.

In the third psalm we have the enemies, the surroundings; and the One who is here for God is the blessed Lord Himself. So it is written, “I cried, and He heard.” That is the great point with us. It is not merely crying because of sorrows and difficulties here, but it is having the sense in—our souls that He hears.

You will find two things invariably go together—rest and power—just as faith and obedience go together. If the soul has real rest in God Himself, it will also have power. There is no power but it comes from rest. It comes through the soul’s known approach to God, and the soul, by the grace of God, availing itself of that approach. “I cried, and He heard;” and the consequence immediately is, “I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.” There is the blessed sense and apprehension of being in His hand, and of knowing and availing ourselves of what He has brought us into; for we are saved here in this world as individuals (I do not speak of the body of Christ now), as those who have been brought to God, to know, to understand; to delight ourselves in this, that the way of approach to Him is open, and we, by the grace of God, can always go there, always lay all bare before Him, and always have the sense, the knowledge, that He has heard.

Now let me ask if you know what prayer is. What is the use of prayer if you have not the sense that you have been heard? Look at the priests of Baal, Elijah said to them, “Cry aloud;” cry louder still, until he does hear. “Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he

sleepeth, and must be awaked.” He said it mockingly. He himself knew what it was to be heard, to be associated in his own soul with a God who always hears. So, it is with us now. It is not that we are at a distance, and have to be occupied with the sorrows and trials and difficulties, but to go to God with them. Do you not think He knows a great deal more about them than we do? He knows the purpose He is working out through them all. He would have us know it; and why? He would have us nearer Him in heart and spirit and soul in the sense and the enjoyment of knowing that He has heard. The blessed sense in the soul that He has heard is the answer. As to the Lord Himself, that is what He was here upon earth; but there was a day when He cried and was not heard of God; but He has put us on the ground where we can always be heard.

Beloved brethren, have we the sense in our souls of what it is to be always heard? We come to God as children, owning Him as our Father and our God; we bring our distresses and our sorrows to Him. When we have the thing given that we have prayed for, the outward answer, then perhaps for the first time we have the sense that we have been heard. But here we have come to God in the reality in our souls of speaking to one who hears. We cannot express the thing perhaps, but He hears the groans in the heart; He hears the soul that comes to Him with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is not the speaking in length of prayer, but just the “five words” to a Person whom he sees, whom he knows; and he knows He hears. The rest that comes from that, through the grace of God, is what enables us to take up the interests of Christ and of God in the world, and consider them relatively to Him. To do that we must be really in our own souls at rest before God.

Do we know what that rest is? Have we apprehended what it is to have the One before us who is the delight of God’s heart, and whom He has presented to us to be the delight of our hearts, and to be wholly set aside as to ourselves? We may say we know something of it doctrinally, perhaps we may say we know something of it in our hearts, but we find we know it very little. To be wholly set aside, thankfully set aside, to have the blessed One taking our place, do we know what that is? That in all its fullness and blessedness is what heaven will be. The Father’s house is before us, and by the grace of God we are in spirit there now. What fills the Father’s house? What is the great joy of the Father’s house? The glory of the beloved Son. Glory will be there surely; you and I will be there; but the glory of the blessed Son Himself fills the house. Every heart and soul there will delight to overflowing in the glory of the Son. He has revealed it to us now, and by His grace brought us to it now, and that is the place of rest. You will find no disappointment there. There will always be disappointment in looking for anything else. Just look for this, and only this, that Christ should be glorified, and you will never be disappointed. He will always be glorified, but it will be by our being set aside and made nothing of, and the more we are made nothing of the more He will be glorified. Does that content us? We shall soon be put to the test as to whether it does. God is real with us, and He would have us as real with Him as He is with us. The only object He has put before us is His beloved Son, His glory.

Verse 6: “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people, that have set themselves against me round about.” Verse 4: “I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me.” Where does He hear me from? “Out of His holy hill.” He is there, and we with all our pettinesses here, our disappointments, our stumblings, our failures, we find that He is there, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high God’s anointed King on His holy hill of Zion; and He says, in the psalm, that is where He hears from—from His holy hill. It is the knowledge of being heard out of His holy hill that gives practical rest, that gives ability not to be afraid of ten thousands of the

people, that have set themselves in array round about, but to go on looking at Him, occupied with the present glory of Him who is there, and seeking afresh that He may be glorified.

Now look at the end of the psalm, a wonderful verse is the eighth. He says, "Salvation belongeth unto Jehovah: thy blessing is upon thy people." We find in two places in Scripture this expression— "Salvation is of the Lord." Here in this Psalms 3 and in the book of Jonah. Jonah sought to evade God, to run away from the commandment of God. Obedience was not there, and he is brought at last to utter, helplessness; but he says, "Yet will I look again unto thy holy temple." He was brought to that point to say, "Salvation is of the Lord." The moment he does say it God orders salvation, and Jonah is saved, and brought up again from the depths to the dry ground.

In this third psalm you have it in another way: "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people." Here is One who takes His place in this world in grace and in goodness, in love and mercy, among men who are in the spirit of disobedience and rebellion against God. He comes and takes His place now, having set us up in this world as dependent beings; it is present dependence upon God. Have you studied His life? Have you learned that that is the truly-dependent Man? The blessed Lord was the perfect expression and manifestation of God's heart, and of dependence upon God. I can understand Satan trying to break that, presenting even His Godhead power and glory to shake Him from that place; but He stood there, in dependence upon God, a blessed thing to gaze upon and delight in. He has set us there in the place of dependence upon God in this world for His glory. That is the way the Lord Jesus Christ can be glorified through us. There is no other way for it. Hanging upon Him, waiting upon Him, guided and led by Him, in order that God may express Him in us and through us —that will bring glory to Christ.

It is no theory —the glory of Christ. There is no theory in it, but power that will disclose to your heart and soul things you never thought of before. It will search you thoroughly. If by the grace of God, we can really get into it, it will leave no part dark. And He sets us up in this world as having found salvation, having, as it were, "the helmet of salvation on our head." On this blessed ground salvation is sure. "Salvation is of the Lord," and I have got it now.

Now look at the last part of that blessed verse "Thy blessing is upon Thy people." Do you think we really understand in our souls that in everything He puts us through He has only one object as regards us, and only one object as regards Christ? As to us it is blessing, as to Christ it is glory. Let us go back to the starting-point of it all. The blessed Lord glorified God in this world, and God has glorified Him in heavenly glory. Thus, He has all the glory, and we have all the blessing. His glory is the measure of our blessing. Do you think we know what it is? The blessing we are set in here answers to the glory He is in at God's right hand. The glory of Christ is the measure of our blessing. So, He draws us near to Himself. He loves to nourish us and turn us aside from everything, that we should have only Christ before us, the cause and reason of our being here.

Beloved brethren, why is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, in this world but that Christ may be glorified, and that He may fill our hearts with the knowledge of what He is? His blessing is upon His people, and it comes from Himself; and if we have only eyes to see it, and hearts to receive it, there is no end to what we might enter into, and the brightness of the testimony that might go forth for Himself, not by occupation with the testimony, but by occupation with Himself. "Thy blessing is upon thy people." In the face of all that is going on in this world, and of the spirit of the world, His

mind is to bless His people. Things in us and our ways may come in to hinder the enjoyment and realization of this; but He has apprehended us for blessing for Himself. May He give us so to enter into this, so to have this truth in power in our souls, that we may live and walk down here in the midst of all that is against Him, in blessed nearness to Himself, and confidence in Him and His mind; and thus instead of being cast down and disheartened by the sorrows and difficulties and trials by the way, find in them occasion for getting nearer to Himself in heart and spirit, and becoming thus' more truly and simply dependent upon Him.

P. A. H.

## 2 Timothy 1:12-18

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In the preceding verse the apostle explains that he had been appointed (not of man, as he informs the Galatians, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) as the herald and apostle of the gospel; and now he speaks of the consequences of his mission as to himself, together with his sustainment and consolation: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." His present sufferings were those resulting from his captivity (vs. 8), and from the opposition now everywhere encountered by the gospel, as also from being deserted by so many professed believers, and perhaps teachers. (vs. 15) And he regards these sufferings as flowing out from the position he occupied in reference to the gospel (2:9); that is to say, the faithful prosecution of his mission entailed upon him these sorrows and persecutions. Nor could it be otherwise at such a moment, nor indeed at any moment. For wherever a servant of the Lord seeks to serve Him alone, and to cling to His word spite of all opposition, against that man will be arrayed all the forces of the enemy. It was so with Paul; so that (as he tells us in the next chapter) he suffered trouble in the work of the gospel as an evil doer, even unto bonds, therein following, if at a distance, in the footsteps of his Master, who suffered unto death, and that the death of the cross, because of His fidelity, perfect fidelity, as God's witness on the earth.

But if the apostle was in his service encompassed by suffering, he knew where to turn for comfort and strength. On man's part it was trouble and persecution, but when he looked up all was assurance and confidence; and hence he could say, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed," and he could leave himself and his circumstances entirely in His hands. Moreover, man was powerless as to the eternal issue before his soul. He might apparently succeed in hindering the testimony by shutting up the apostle in prison; he might, as the tool of Satan, drive away many of his companions; he might even be permitted to make a martyr of Paul; but if so, he would have to learn that he had but been yoked to the chariot wheels of God's purposes, and that he had not been able to touch that which was most precious as to Paul, so also to Christ. Man may kill the body, but can do no more; and knowing this, the apostle was confident that the Lord could and would keep that which he had committed unto Him against that day the day when all things will be made manifest, when the Lord will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. It is to that period the apostle looks; and meanwhile he was able to trust the Lord, not only for his own salvation and eternal happiness, but also for the recompense of his service. The enemy could do nothing with such a man, because his hopes and joys were outside of the scene through which he moved.

Having given the ground of his own confidence in the midst of his present circumstances, he turns again to exhortation. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth, in us." (vss. 13, 14) These are very important exhortations, and require careful attention. The form of sound words is rather an outline—an outline of the truth in the

inspired words which Timothy had heard from the apostle. Elsewhere Paul affirms that his teaching was “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which (in the words which) the Holy Ghost teacheth.” (1 Corinthians 2:13) He thus claimed inspiration, not only for the matter, but also for the words in which his apostolic communications were made; and hence it is, as another has said, that we are never sure we have the truth unless we have the very language which contains it. In a day when rationalism and infidelity (both springing from the same root, the latter being but the full development of man’s reason) are seeking to pervert the foundations of God’s revelation to man in the Scriptures, it is necessary to re-assert the truth which the apostle affirms; for the infallible certainty of the word of God is the only rock on which the soul can securely repose amid the changing sea of the speculations of man’s wandering mind.

It is for this reason that Paul exhorts Timothy to have an outline of Scripture teaching in inspired words, that he might ever be prepared to authoritatively instruct the enquirer, or to confute the adversary. Paul had taught Timothy, as already said, in divine words, and these words were to be used by him in the way directed, forming a compendium in scriptural language of Christian doctrine, as there were but few New Testament scriptures at that time in existence. Timothy then was to have and to hold fast the form of sound words; but if he was enjoined to do this, the manner in which it was to be done is also given. It was to be “in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.”

Dissociate even the truth from Christ, and it will become a dead thing; use it apart from faith and love, it will be a powerless weapon. The apostle therefore guards his “son” Timothy in his service by reminding him of his need of using nothing but the truth in his conflicts, of holding the truth in the living activities of his soul, and as flowing from and being the expression of the glory of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the Word, but if it is produced by it, in its presentation of a God of grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, it leads back to it, not only as the foundation on which it is based, but also as containing the sources of all divine knowledge. Faith, moreover, in attaching itself to its object, Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, works by love, or rather, apprehending the divine and infinite love unfolded in Christ, love also is immediately begotten in the soul, for we love Him who first loved us. And faith and love are necessarily in Christ Jesus; in Him, for He is the source, object, and sphere of both alike. (Compare 1 Timothy 1:14)

If Timothy was to hold fast the objective truth, there was also another thing he’ was to keep; viz., “that good gang committed unto thee.” In verse 12 the apostle had said that he was persuaded that the One whom he had believed was able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day. Literally it is “my deposit;” and in verse 14 the rendering should be “the good deposit keep,” etc. If on the one hand we have a “deposit” (all our hopes of glory) with Christ, He on the other hand entrusts His servants with a deposit. The question then is, What is this good deposit? It cannot be eternal life, or salvation; for the keeping of this belongs to Christ Himself, and hence it is probably the truth—the truth as committed to the stewardship of His servants, to be maintained by them in all fidelity while serving in the prospect of that day. (Compare 1 Timothy 6:13,14) Timothy’s gift was also a deposit, and that, as we have seen, he was to hold and use in the service of his Master; but the connection here points rather to the interpretation we have given.

And, indeed, unless we guard, and carefully guard, the truth in our own souls, we shall never be able to use it rightly in service. It is thus the first thing, in connection with the whole armor of God, that the loins should be girt about with truth. (Ephesians 6) If, therefore, we would be faithful

witnesses for Christ in a day of declension, the truth must first have its rightful place over our own hearts and consciences, and must be jealously watched over and guarded if the witness-bearing is to be continued. The apostle reminds Timothy that the only power for this is the Holy Ghost, and also that he already possessed that power. "Keep," he says, "the good deposit by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." It is well to remember that if the Lord send us on any service, or if He set us for the defense of the truth in a day of difficulty, He has given us a power that is equal to all the demands that can be made upon us. We are too often occupied with the sense of our own feebleness, instead of with the power possessed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle turns again to his own circumstances; but if he does so, it is but to bring out into bright relief the contrast between unfaithfulness and fidelity, as also to teach us how precious the latter is to God. First, we have the dark side: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." (vs. 15) It was through Paul's preaching that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the words of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10), and thus they were, in no small degree, his debtors. But now, together with the aged and devoted apostle in prison, they had lost their first love, the fervency of their zeal had cooled, and they had become ashamed of God's chosen vessel of the truth. It was not that they were not really Christians, nor, perhaps, that they had become open backsliders, much less apostates, but they were not prepared to suffer from identification with the rejected servant. They had undoubtedly fallen in with the course of this age, and would thus be tempted to, regard Paul as an extreme man, as too exclusive, as an enthusiast, as one who imperiled the progress of Christianity by his fanaticism. They thus turned away from him, seeking smoother paths, where the cross would be lighter. Two names of those who forsook Paul are given, Phygellus and Hermogenes; and the fact that their names are given shows that they were well known, probably leaders among the saints, those, therefore, who would lend a sanction to this unfaithful course. It may be that the teaching of these men had adapted itself to the currents of the moment; for the tendencies of any age always find expression through some who claim the place of teachers. Be this as it may, it was a sad spectacle—public Christianity, that is, the outward form of it in this world, severing itself from the chosen vessel of the truth! On the other hand, there is no grander sight than that of Paul—deserted, alone, in captivity, retaining, through grace, his confidence in the Lord, and in the truth committed to his charge. If faint, he was still pursuing; and if he were weary in his lonely conflict, his hand still slave to his sword. (See 2 Samuel 10)

There was, one ray of light amidst the gloom of the moment, one rill of consolation flowing into the heart of the apostle from the heart of God, through His servant Onesiphorus. This godly man, so far from being ashamed of Paul or his chain, being in Rome, sought him out very diligently, and rested not until he had found him, and was used of the Lord to minister refreshment to the captive apostle. Precious privilege vouchsafed to Onesiphorus! Precious also to the weary soul of Paul were these cups of cold water which Onesiphorus put to his thirsty lips! And the Lord saw this blessed service, and esteemed it as rendered unto Himself. "I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25:36)

The gratitude of the apostle's heart turned into a prayer for Onesiphorus. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me in

Ephesus, thou knowest very well.” (vss. 16-18) The apostle’s prayer embraces a present and a future blessing. He desires present mercy for the house of Onesiphorus, that is, he prays that the members of Onesiphorus, family, of his household indeed, might be brought into the enjoyment of present mercy in salvation. The heart of the apostle was thus in communion with the heart of God, who said to Noah, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” (Compare Acts 16:31) He also prays that the Lord would grant Onesiphorus himself to find mercy from “the Lord in that day.” “That day” refers to the Lord’s appearing (see v. 12), when He will display His own in glory, and when the recompense, in grace, of each of His servants will likewise be exhibited. Onesiphorus had already been the object of mercy in his salvation, but, as passing through the wilderness, he was “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 21) And it is this, mercy in its full fruit and consummation, that Paul prays he may find in that day.

The closing statement shows that it was not the first time Onesiphorus had been of service to Paul. In, Ephesus too he had ministered in many things to the apostle, and the Spirit of God has caused it to be recorded here, as it is also recorded in heaven, to teach us that He marks and appreciates the slightest kindness shown to His servants in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. D.

## God's Calling, and Christ Learned

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As believers we have had to do with God in two specific ways; or, rather, God has set us before Himself in sovereign grace according to a twofold revelation, which absolutely controls the soul, and affords a sure foundation for further progress. God has called us, and we have learned Christ. Feeble and defective may be our apprehension, and the effects of such amazing grace consequently lacking their proper fullness; but it is nevertheless true of every believer, that God has spoken personally to his soul, has called him, and that he has learned Christ. Adam in innocence needed no call. The moment sin entered, and he was lost, then "the Lord called unto Adam." That call stayed his downward path of ruin, and marked the point where grace could intervene; viz., sins confessed in the presence of the Lord. God's calling indicates an authoritative and public announcement of what is in Himself, and stamps its character upon him who is addressed. From the first, man's heart, as taught of God, recognized the need of a substitute; but until the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham out of heaven, never had the substitute been identified with the beloved and only begotten Son. (Genesis 22:2; Hebrews 11:17)

In the garden, out of heaven, and for a third time out of the bush, God's call is heard. (Exodus 3:4) Not now in the truth that discovers sin and the love which provides a substitute, but as the Holy One who redeems His people, taking His place in the midst without abating His glory, but enabling them to sustain it. The call implies that man had wandered from God as Adam had, and, proceeding from the heart of God, invites into His own heavenly presence, as to Abraham. (Compare Hebrews 6:13-20) But it is founded on grace, which reigns through righteousness, a substitute being provided, and holiness maintained through redemption. Moreover, the call relates to the counsel and purpose of God—the heavenly scene wherein He has blessed us, choosing us in Christ before the world's foundation. Seated there in Him already, it is nevertheless a call to us, for we are not with Him there as yet.

In addition, the call, as already mentioned, stamps its character upon him to whom it is addressed. Thus, Adam is no longer a hidden but a discovered sinner; Abraham, a man who trusted the heart of God, and saw Christ's day (Hebrews 11:8, 19; James 2:23; John 8:56); in Moses we see specially sanctification to God and redemption (Hebrews 11:24-29) As to the last, it is these two facts that are distinctive of his faith, as precisely pointed out in the passage quoted from Hebrews 11. The election of Jehovah's people, and His purpose to bring them into the land, though mentioned in the call of Moses, were matters of previous revelation. One other instance may be cited as illustrating in this way God's call of the Christian; viz., Elisha's call to be prophet in the room of Elijah. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth; and his first act on being aroused to the imperative nature of the call was to sacrifice his prospects. He "took a yoke of oxen, and slew them," &c. "Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

Thus God has called the believer, and in virtue of this has constituted him, not only a heavenly sojourner and saint on earth, but "in Christ" according to His own nature, holy and without blame

before Him in love. Growth or attainment are not in question here. It is ours wholly in and by the call of God, though it awaits display, and is according to the eternal purpose and choice of God, and is founded surely upon the redemption we have through the blood of Christ. Moreover, we were marked out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. (Ephesians 1:3-5) Have we all understood the imperative nature of this call? How gladly, then, shall we relinquish all the prospect this poor world can offer, as those who are blessed with better, even spiritual blessings, in a higher and a heavenly sphere!

But, even if fairly started, conscious of God's call, and thus constituted according to His own nature, there is yet another thing—the having learned Christ. Neither is this any matter of attainment; though our souls are perhaps slow to receive the truth of it. It is Jesus, and the truth is in Him, and He is eternally, unchangeably the same. This truth is learned by us experimentally, and in the measure that our souls are acquainted with Him. (Ephesians 4:20-24) To have learned Christ is, then, the having put off the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (our former conversation), and being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and having put on the new man, which, according to God, is created in truthful righteousness and holiness. Let us remember that in Christ this is the truth, and the truth as to its. By the cross put off, the old man is, for faith, forever done with. We never could have put him off ourselves; it would have been our own eternal condemnation. But, after four thousand years of trial, the world has been finally judged, sin in the flesh condemned, the old man—the flesh—crucified, and thus put off for us forever—the work of God alone by the cross.

The difficulty sometimes is to accept it because contradicting experience. Perhaps, as illustrating the truth, we may be helped by the history of Elijah. His ministry, his hopes, his affections were connected with Israel in the flesh, and, however he may have failed, his heart clung divinely to that unhappy but beloved people. But, in testimony and, in spirit, the time had come for Jehovah's faithfulness to His promises to proceed upon a new and better ground, even that of resurrection itself. Elijah, as a man of God, must therefore enter into His mind about it all, and, in sealing Israel's rejection, survey the scene of its total failure. He proceeds with Elisha from Gilgal, where at the first the reproach of Egypt was rolled away, and strength acquired for victory as Jehovah's host, but now "all their wickedness was there." (Hosea 9:15) From thence they went down to Bethel, the spot where Jacob lay asleep, and received the unconditional promise of the land. But, worse and worse, the calf of Samaria was there. Neither, therefore, can they tarry here; so they came to Jericho. What of Jericho—proof of the enemy's power while existing, but, when devoted to the curse, the pledge of Israel's possession? That city is built again in defiance of Jehovah's word by Joshua (1 Kings 16:34), and nothing now remains but to give over the whole scene for lost, to accept the divine sentence, and pass out of it by death. Thus, the Jordan is traversed. The divine path is no longer into the land, but out of it. "They two went over on dry ground."

And is it difficult for us to take this journey in a moral way? In every spot where the footsteps of the first man have been traced by the word of God the record given is one of utter irretrievable failure. Eden's innocence, the world before the flood, the law from Sinai, all tell the tale. The priesthood and the kingdom, Aaron's sons and David's seed, confirm it. The remnant brought back in recovering grace from Babylon only serve to close the history of man, and seal his condemnation. His sun sets in the impenetrable darkness, the eternal midnight of the cross. But how bright and blessed is the scene that opens beyond! Weaned from earth, Elijah's faith formed heavenly links,

and carried thither by a chariot of fire and horses of fire, Israel's guide and preserver becomes a man in heaven. His spirit in double measure rests upon the man identified with him on earth. Elisha, who had before heard and answered to the call, now learns the ruin of the old thing, and accepts his portion in Israel on a new footing (typically resurrection), and, in an inverse order, substituting Carmel (fruitfulness) for Gilgal, the place of circumcision.

And cannot we, as having put on the new man, in identification with Christ risen from the dead (for this the Christian is), walk through the old scene in truthful righteousness and holiness, being created thus according to God? The spirit of the mind being renewed, can we not return and bring as it were the healing power of grace into the bitter waters of this poor world? Having done forever with the old man and assumed the new, and supplied with fresh renewals of the mind, may we be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love, even as Christ loved us, and delivered Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor, ever remembering God's calling, and the Christ we have learned.

W. T. W.

## Fragment: Christ's Place in Our Hearts

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It is continuance in the judgment of the worthlessness of all things (Philippians 3) that marks the place Christ has in our hearts, gives true joy and liberty, and makes us bright witnesses for Christ in the world. Only remember that he who seeks finds, that we need force every moment, and that the manna of today will not do for tomorrow. The world solicits always. We need the constant grace of Christ, the whole armor of God; having done all to stand.

## Numbers 32:29

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In these words of Moses concerning the two and a half tribes, he lays down the three indispensable conditions of conflict with Satan's power. First, they must pass over Jordan; i.e., applying it to believers now, they must accept for themselves the truth of death and resurrection with Christ; for it is this which Jordan typifies. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection for us, but the Jordan is our death and resurrection with Christ. Now this is true, as both Colossians and Ephesians show, of every Christian; only there are many who never enter into it, who rather, as to their experience, take up the ground of being in the flesh—a standing like that of the Jew under the law. The exact words of Moses, though he understood not their typical significance, are therefore to be noted. He says that these tribes must “pass over” Jordan if they are to have part in the Lord's wars; and, in like manner, all who would engage in true Christian conflict must take up for themselves (only to be done, of course, in the power of the Holy Ghost) their association with Christ in death and resurrection, as also their being seated in Him in the heavenlies. This involves, it need hardly be said, the total and practical setting aside of the flesh in every shape and form; the truth of Gilgal, which is, according to Colossians 3:5, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, etc.; the acceptance of, death upon all that we are as children of Adam, that only Christ may be displayed in our walk and ways. Furthermore, Moses says that they must be armed; and the apostle likewise exhorts us to take unto us “the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13) It were nothing but folly to expose ourselves to the attacks of Satan, his wiles, and his fiery darts, unless we were clothed in the divine panoply. Finally, he says, they must pass over Jordan, every man armed to battle, “before the Lord.” This is the secret of all courage in conflict, to know that we are before the Lord; that we are underneath His eye. These conditions fulfilled, Moses promises that the land shall be subdued before them, for victory then would be assured. If the reader will now turn to Joshua 6, and read it carefully, he will discover that the children of Israel; when they encompassed Jericho, answered to these conditions (see vv. 7, 9, 13), and that therefore the city was subdued by the mighty power of God.

## Luke 7:40-43

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It would be a great mistake to suppose that the Lord, under the figure of the two debtors, sets forth the moral condition of Simon and of the woman who was a sinner. It could not be that Simon owed only fifty pence, while the woman owed five hundred, inasmuch as before God, according to the teaching of the apostle, there is no difference; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) The Lord indeed takes up Simon on his own ground, who in his ignorance of grace in the person of Christ, and of the attracting power of grace, had judged that if the Lord had been only a prophet He would have detected the character of the woman, and refused to permit her presence. In this comparison therefore of the two debtors He convicts Simon first of his mistake, and then He exposes his condition of soul. For granting, according to his own thoughts, that the woman who had anointed the feet of the Lord was a great sinner, that she owed five hundred pence (and how much more besides!), these lavish expressions of her love did but testify her gratitude to Him who had met her need. Hence the Lord says of her, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.” But what of Simon? He had shown no affection to the Lord; nay, he had failed to exhibit towards Him the ordinary courtesies of a host towards his guest, and thus proved that he “loved little,” and that therefore he was, not one who owed only fifty pence, but one to whom little was forgiven. Altogether it is a wonderful scene, containing as it does a revelation of the heart of God in the person of Christ —of the heart of this penitent woman and the heart of Simon. Divine light floods the scene, and everything is exposed. The heart of the woman, sinner as she had been, does not shrink from the action of the light, because divine love was also there, flowing out in the blessed activities of grace to meet the inexpressible need of her weary and burdened soul. But though the Light was there, it shone in darkness, as far as Simon was concerned, and the darkness (Simon’s soul) comprehended it not; and he showed that not a single ray had entered into his darkened thoughts (compare 2 Corinthians 4:4) when he judged that the One who was reclining at his table, although He was in truth God manifest in flesh, was not even a prophet!

E. D.

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